



OSU sets sights abroad
By Matt Neznanski
Gazette-Times reporter

University launching an international student initiative

In an effort to grow international student numbers, Oregon State University is preparing to become the first U.S. institution to partner with Into University Partnerships, a private company based in London, to create a year-long "pathway" for foreign undergraduate students.

University officials hope the agreement will lead to doubling the university's international student population, constructing a new international residence hall and increasing tuition of as much as \$25 million in five years.

"International students bring with them different experiences and perspectives that are critical to a global learning environment," said OSU Provost Sabah Randhawa. "This will enhance the experience for all students at OSU through a learning environment that integrates cultural and global enrichment."

But some OSU faculty are concerned that a marked increase in foreign student numbers will strain the existing language program.

"A lot of the details have yet to be forthcoming," said Gary Hewitt, an OSU English language instructor. "Teachers here are already working 50 to 55 hours for their 40-hour paycheck."

Because the department has no tenured faculty, the language instructors have little voice in determining university policy.

"It's totally in the Provost's court," Hewitt said. "Unfortunately, our only next step is waiting to see what comes down."

Hewitt also said he and colleagues worry that isolating international students in a separate dorm and classes defeats the benefit of attracting them to Corvallis in the first place.

During their first year, the students enrolled in the program will not be full-fledged OSU students, but will instead take special English language classes

as well as some university core courses. The students would live on campus and in town, but would need to apply to OSU after that first year to be admitted as OSU sophomores.

University administrators say students enrolled in the pathway program will have the same access to sporting events, the university library and campus amenities as Oregon State students.

"True integration is a challenge, even with our existing minority students integrating with the larger student body," Randhawa said. "The university and the faculty have to make a conscious effort."

OSU hopes to enroll between 150 and 200 students in the program as early as 2009, with hopes of attracting as many as 650 new students in five years, each paying \$18,864 in annual out-of-state tuition.

Under the terms of the agreement, Into and Oregon State will split tuition revenue for the pathway program in half. Based on past experience with partner universities in the U.K., as many as 60 percent to 70 percent of pathway students are expected to enroll at OSU as undergraduates.

Oregon State will put up \$1 million in start-up costs for the program, and has plans for a new \$52 million dorm featuring classrooms and laboratory space specifically designed for the transitional program.

The new facility is scheduled for completion in January of 2011 and will be located in a southeast corner of campus between Halsell and Bloss halls.

Over the past decade, the number of OSU students from abroad has dropped by half. International students now represent less than 5 percent of the student body. The university's strategic plan calls for a target of 9 percent.

But ramping up overseas bureaus to entice students to consider college in Oregon is a costly and long-term affair, Randhawa said.

"To do international recruiting, it can't be a single visit; it has to be sustained over time," he said. "I think it's true not just for OSU, but also for other Oregon universities: I don't think we've made a very good case for ourselves given our work globally and our position on the Pacific Rim."

Tapping Into's network of 23 offices and more than 400 "educational counselors" to market the university around the world presents a cost savings and, hopefully, a much faster turnaround for bringing students here.

Yet to be determined is who will ultimately oversee pathway instructors. As currently arranged, they will remain university employees and OSU departments will hire instructors for specific disciplines. But pathway instructors may be placed under the supervision of Into employees.

OSU administrators hope the arrangement will eventually blend seamlessly into the fabric of the university.

“As we go forward, we don’t want people to think of the pathway program,” said Mark McCambridge, OSU vice president of finance. “At the end of five years, we want everyone to think of the partnership as just another part of OSU.”

Matt Neznanski can be reached at 758-9518 or <mailto:matt.neznanski@lee.net>.