

By upgrading admission standards

State board panel eyes getting tough on getting in

By IAN THOMPSON
Of the Emerald

Whether or not admission requirements to Oregon's state universities and colleges should be changed is the subject of a current study by a State Board of Higher Education ad hoc committee.

The study is intended to determine the academic success of a 20 percent sample of resident students who graduated from high school in 1976 and went directly to college.

The committee is comparing students' high school performance as indicated by grade point averages, class ranking, and courses against similar performance in college.

The study will help fill a large information gap by examining how students are performing academically in Oregon, University High School Relations Director Richard Pizzo says.

The state board last fall initiated the study, agreeing that Oregon's modestly selective admission standards need upgrading.

"The board started the study out of concern for the lack of preparation by too many students in basic courses to do collegiate work in composition, math and reading skills," Pizzo says.

The state board is also concerned with declining student proficiency in such basic college courses as math and English.

"They are of the broad notion that in prescribing high school curriculum, students would also be better prepared for college," Pizzo says.

Currently, admission requirements for state universities and colleges require that a resident high school graduate hold a grade point average of at least 2.5. A student may also be admitted if GPA and Scholastic Aptitude Test scores combine to indicate at least a 2.0 college GPA. Those two measures, and tuition, of course, are the only requirements for entry.

A state board move to change admission requirements would, if passed, require students to take four years of English, three years of math — including algebra, geometry and advanced algebra — two years of science and three years of social science.

Many state board members, as well as college and university administrators and faculty members, approve of the requirements. But still there are ques-

tions.

University Admissions Director James Buch says he doesn't know if such requirements might confine the high schools, and points out that even if such requirements were levied, the content of courses would vary among high schools.

Buch points out that students applying to the University score about seven to 10 points higher on the SAT test than the nationwide average of college applicants. However, he notes the validity of those test scores in college preparation can also be questioned.

University departments have no way of precisely figuring how well their students are performing college-level work except through a major study. Glenn Beelman, assistant to the head of the math department, says that on the average, performance of non-math majors in mathematics courses has declined.

Beeman says that decline may come from a change in the student body that results in fewer science majors. "These students probably didn't realize in high school they would be needing math for such majors when they go to college," Beeman says.

Beeman adds that there are other factors, however.

"In general, the math department favors some math requirement," says Beelman, "but if they continue to send us students that aren't prepared well, we'll do our best to prepare them for their fields."

The English department also favors a high school English prerequisite. Professors say they too have noticed a decline in perfor-

mance of non-English majors, but there is no reliable way of estimating student performance there either.

According to administrators, tightening admission requirements may lessen student enroll-

ment in state universities and colleges in the future. To lessen the impact, any new requirements would be phased in over a four-year period.

The new requirements would, in many educators' opinions, im-

prove the quality of future students and encourage high schools to give more emphasis to college prep courses. It also may give more credit to the opinion that the University does give students a higher quality education.



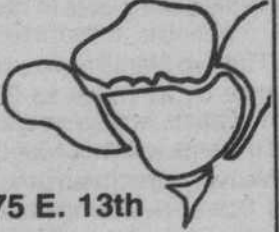
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