

Summer session: Laid back or intense?

6,500 will find answer beginning on Tuesday

The mention of summer — even the slightest hint — is enough to send a lot of people into a tailspin, as they launch a frenzied search for shorts and sandals.

But the onset of summer and the University's "Summer Session," which begins today, is sending about 6,500 people into a headspin — directly toward the books.

Officially the University says it "endeavors to provide through its Summer Session, an educational program of the same quality, proportionately varied and well-balanced, as it makes available during any other term."

Summer Session is generally considered to be a laid back term to catch up on studies and break in a few easy credits. But while that may be the case for some students, it's not for the majority who attend summer term.

And and if the faculty has a say, most would equate the summer term with any other at the University, says Dick Schminke, summer session director.

"If I said (Summer Session) was that way, I'd have 16 letters from faculty members," Schminke says. "I suppose in some ways it might be . . . I have a feeling it's less frenzied, from the students perspective, I suspect the pace is slower," Schminke adds.

Schminke also says most of the students, about 60 percent, are

working on advanced degrees, especially in the education, music and health, physical education and recreation schools.

"About 25 years ago, 80 percent of the students were teachers, now about 65 percent are in education-related fields," Schminke says. "The education business still tends to pay by degree level."

But for the estimated 40 percent of the undergraduate students, Schminke says a number of factors come into play. A lot of the students find summer a good time to catch-up, especially students between their junior and senior years who want to graduate with the class they came in with, Schminke says.

But Schminke says there are other reasons. "I think there are some young people trying to get the hell done before the price goes up again."

Whatever the reason for enrollment, the University, along with Portland State University, has about the largest summer session in the state.

The University and PSU both catered to around 6,800 students last summer, but Schminke also says that a larger than average percentage of the University students in summer session are from out of state.

Oregon State University usually finds about 5,500 students enrolled during summer term, and Schminke says that about 4,000 of those students are Oregonians. For



Emerald photo

The University expects 6,500 students will enroll in this year's Summer Session.

the University to match the 4,000 Oregonians figure, Schminke says enrollment would have to climb over the 7,000 student mark.

According to Schminke, the number of students enrolling in this year's session, compared to last year's, is likely to decline, but he says he doesn't see the economy as the place to put the entire blame.

"Our enrollment isn't usually tied to the job market," Schminke explains.

Schminke predicts a drop in enrollment this summer of about 300 students, which will lower the summer student population to the 6,500 level. Because Summer Session has become entirely self-support-

ing, Schminke says that enrollment decline might hit a little bit harder.

The reason for the tightness in the money margin isn't necessarily because of the state Legislature's mandate that all state colleges and universities have self-supporting summer schools.

Schminke says that the University has always met about "97 or 98 percent" of the cost, and adds that the decline in the number of students enrolled has always hurt.

"It's always kind of a gamble, if we go under 6,300 students, I expect next year Summer Session wouldn't be this large. A couple of hundred students do make a difference."

Schminke alludes to the magnitude and diversity of Summer Session as he glances over the summer catalog. Several times he says that the numbers he has are for "formal" classes only. "Informal classes," Schminke says, "are the open-ended ones, like Research 509, or Thesis work 456."

"There are over 1,000 classes with regularly scheduled meeting times," he says.

It seems that this session will be as much an education as any other, but Schminke qualifies that, saying "you can say all you want from both sides, it's still less fast-paced."

By Debbie Howlett



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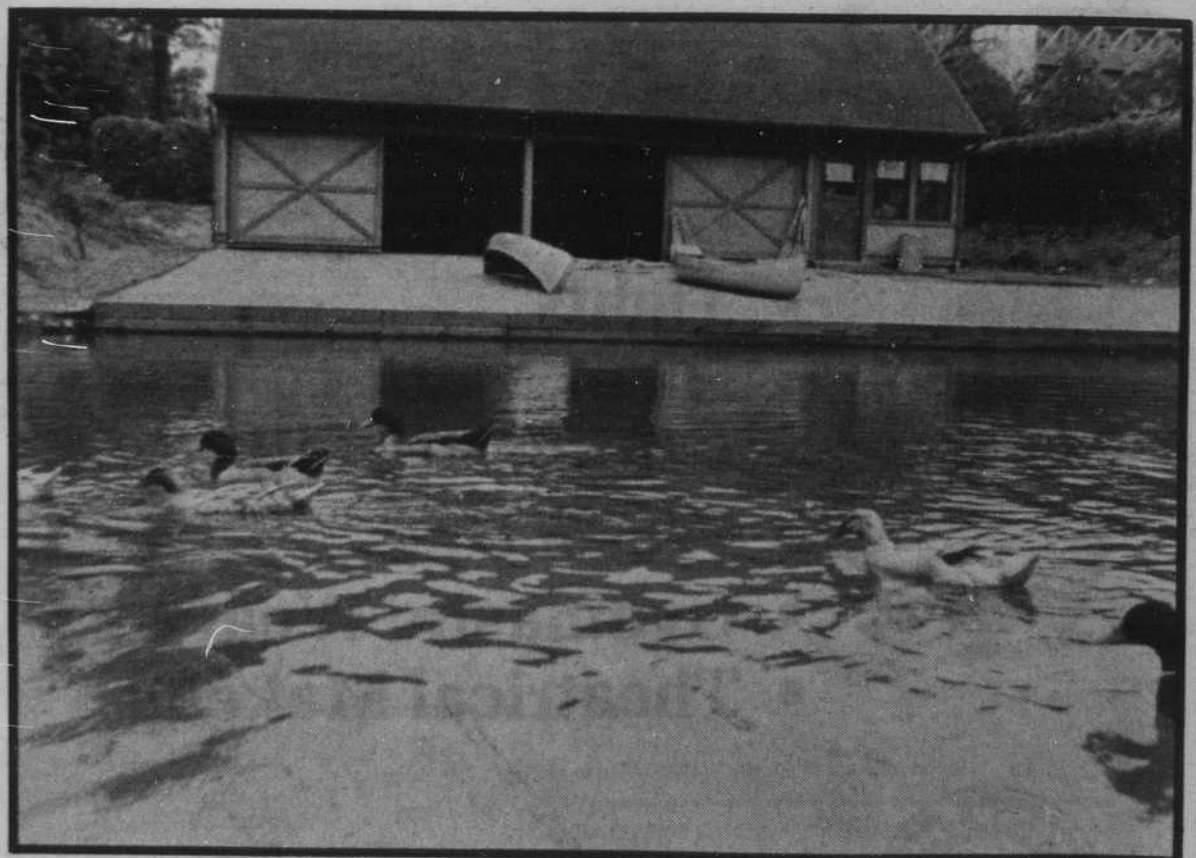
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