

Davis launches merit scholarship program

University hopes top students will play if their way is paved

By John Healy
Of the Emerald

Imagine a great hand scooping up all of the high school seniors in the land with grade point averages of better than 3.5 and Scholastic Aptitude Test scores of above 620 in math and English.

First the hand sweeps east, pouring the eight Ivy League schools their allotment, enough to fill its freshman classes.

Then the hand moves west to Stanford and begins filling its freshman class.

And then the hand stops. It's empty.

Those schools without an allotment of top students include blue-ribbon MIT, Cal-Tech and every public university in the nation, including the University.

Jim Buch, University admissions director, came to that realization in 1980 when he and another West Coast University admissions director sat down together at a conference.

But even more worrisome to Buch was the knowledge that his fanciful scenario of who gets how many top students was incredibly accurate.

Private schools like Stanford and the Ivy League universities really did get an unequal

share of the nation's top scholars.

But they may not any more, thanks to a merit scholarship program suggested by Chancellor Bud Davis and implemented in some form by all of the public colleges and universities in the state.

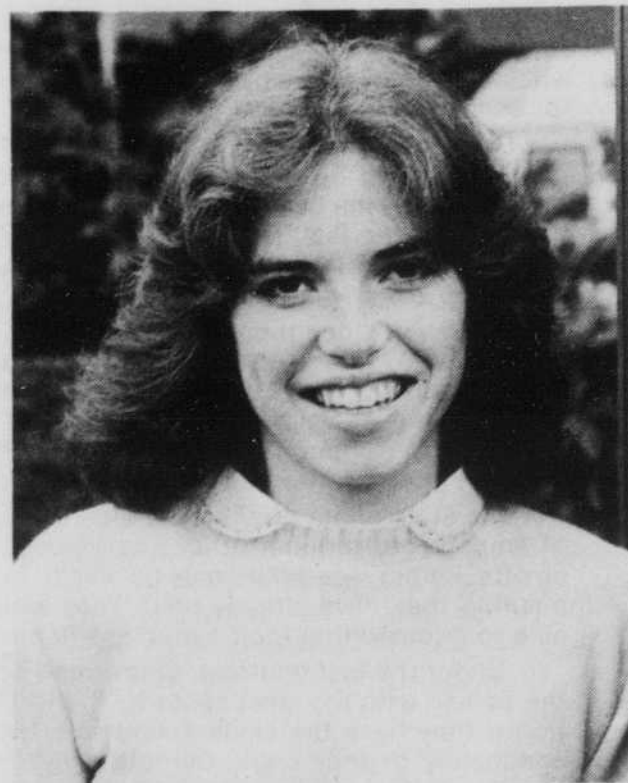
The program is modeled on one implemented by Davis at the University of New Mexico, where he was president before accepting the chancellor's position in Oregon last July.

The program includes scholarships for outstanding high school graduates from Oregon and around the nation. It also includes a housing waiver and textbook credit (see related story).

The University has taken to the program with a vengeance — 50 \$1,000 Presidential Scholarships have already been awarded to Oregon residents, each renewable up to four years if the scholars maintain strong academic records.

"The idea is to go to bright kids and explain that we can offer them an education of comparable quality," says University Pres. Paul Olum. "It's a good idea we should have done a long time ago."

Amy Young, valedictorian at North Eugene High School



Amy Young, one of 16 scholarship winners from Lane County, and the valedictorian this year at North Eugene High School, says the University "doesn't blow its own horn."



Photos by Mark Pynes

Scholarship winner Shelly Usedom of Thurston High School in Springfield says "other schools are pulling us out because they have the money."

and one of 16 Presidential scholars from Lane County, couldn't agree more.

"I really felt they needed to do something to attract top students," she explains. "A lot of the time, the University of Oregon doesn't blow its own horn."

Shawn Buystedt has seen the results of that at Thurston High School. "I know a lot of top-notch people who went out of state," says Buystedt,

who edited her school newspaper.

One of her classmates recently accepted a \$2,000-a-year scholarship from Randolph Macon College in Virginia, renewable up to four years.

"Virginia offered out-of-state scholarship money," points out Buystedt, while Oregon was just beginning to offer scholarship money to resident students.

"Other states are pulling us out because they have the money," she says.

Buch agrees, pointing out that a much larger percentage of the state's top students are leaving now than in 1975.

It's a combination of the rusty wheels of public higher education and the laws of supply and demand.

"We're part of a state system," Olum points out, "and it's kind of hard to strike out on your own."

So the University waited until Davis unveiled the first part of his program earlier this year.

Davis' program is also partially the result of economic necessity, Buch says.

"The 18-year-old pool of students is shrinking," says Buch, pointing to a plunging graph line, "and the private schools see the supply and demand problem."

But now that the state — and the University — are counterattacking, Buch is hopeful the brain drain will be stemmed.

The new Presidential Scholarships are aimed at en-

couraging good students to stay in Oregon and develop, Buch says.

"We want them to take a longer look, and realize they have a real bargain here," he says.

Olum notes that a Presidential Scholarship winner will only pay \$350 in tuition next year because of the \$1,000 award.

But that's not the only bargain, Olum says.

"We can offer an education of comparable quality for \$6,000, \$7,000 or \$8,000 a year less" as compared to private universities, he says.

"I'm not claiming that we have the Nobel prize winners that Cal-Tech does, but we can give a top-notch education in the sciences because we have a top-notch faculty," he says.

Quality is a word Olum keeps using when he talks about attracting top students: The quality of the University's science departments, of the faculty, of the research at the University.

"We aspire to be a certain kind of institution," he says, explaining that the University's mission is to be a "high-level scholarly and teaching institution."

Olum points to the University's credentials as a measure of its quality. It was recently picked as the best higher education research facility in the state; seven of eight of the state's acting National Academy of Science members teach at the University; the University ranked 16th nationally in Guggenheim

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'Excellence' campaign nets awards

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As many as 200 University students will get an early Christmas present this fall from the University because of a recently implemented statewide scholarship program.

The University will split \$130,000 in new merit scholarship funds among 100 Oregon residents and 100 non-residents.

The money follows on the heels of a \$50,000 Presidential Scholarship program announced by University Pres. Paul Olum in early June.

The new scholarship money is the result of a statewide higher education "Campaign for Excellence" began by Chancellor Bud Davis earlier this year.

Besides the 50 \$1,000 presidential scholarships, beginning fall term the University will also award:

- One hundred non-resident merit scholarships of \$1,000. All new non-resident transfer and undergraduate students are eligible.
- Fifty residence hall awards of \$500 each. These will be awarded to the 50 Presidential Scholarship runners-up.
- Fifty \$100 textbook awards offered to students who applied for the presidential

scholarship program but didn't finish in the top 100.

The non-resident scholarships are part of a statewide program designed to stem the decline in out-of-state student enrollment, according to Davis.

Once the awards are implemented statewide, merit scholarship funds will rise from 1 percent of all financial aid awarded in 1981-82 to 2.5 percent this year.

"That's not too high a figure," Davis says.

Non-resident freshman enrollment declined 32 percent from 1981 to 1982 among the state's institutions of higher education.

The University's decline in non-resident freshman was 25 percent during the same period, according to Jim Buch, University admissions director.

The scholarship program is aimed at attracting non-resident students "who haven't been attracted before," Buch says.

"We want to offer those good students a carrot," he says.

The \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to non-residents students who will be enrolled at the University for their first term this fall.

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