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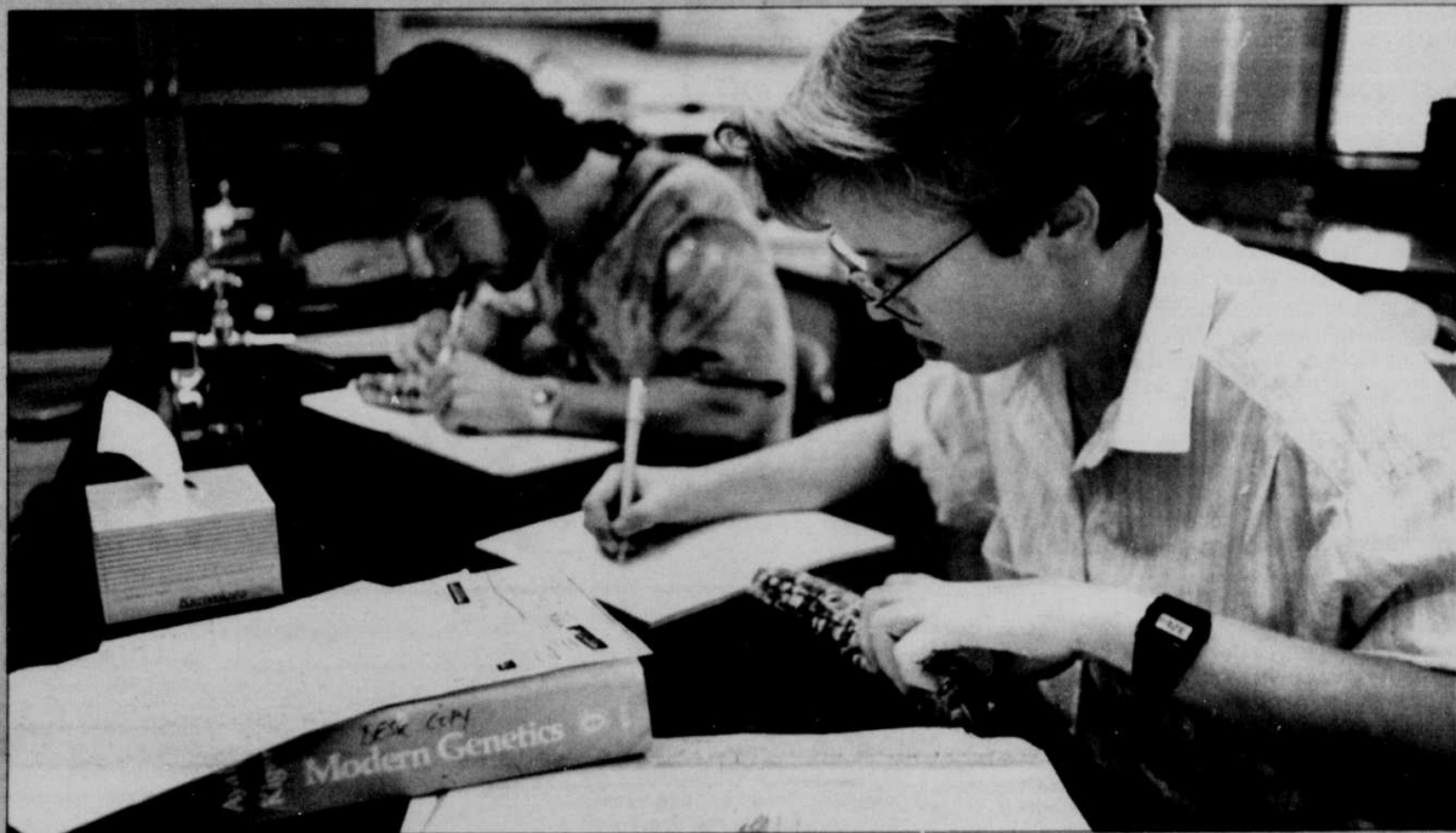


Photo by Shu-Shing Chen

Med students face tough tests

Stress, expenses weed out classmates of select few accepted by medical schools; future doctors can expect 12 more years.

By Will Holbert
Emerald Associate Editor

The Oregon Health Sciences University sits on the summit of what some Portlanders call "Pill Hill," overlooking the affluent Southwest Hills. It is a fitting site for a medical school in one sense, symbolizing the academic Everest pre-medical students must climb in their quest for a career in medicine.

This is serious stuff. The students at OHSU have survived successive waves of requirements designed to weed out the unqualified, the disillusioned, and in many cases the poor. So the prevailing atmosphere is one of intense concentration, and one bereft of the bouncy "let's party" mood at the University.

The only sign of humor is an awning over the entrance to a lecture hall, emblazoned with the cursive inscription, "Club Med."

Students spend nearly 40 hours a week in classes, labs, and in hospitals. They

spend anywhere from six to nine hours a day studying. After four years of medical school, and as many as eight years in residency, they finally become full-fledged medical doctors.

The University contains approximately 500 pre-medical students who are engaged in the drawn-out process of becoming a doctor. For now the process revolves around getting accepted into the OHSU, or any other medical school.

The first step in the process is completing the academic requirements. For example, OHSU demands two years of chemistry, including organic chemistry. Other requirements include biology, physics, psychology, and math.

Throughout the years spent fulfilling the undergraduate requirements, students must maintain a high grade point average to stand any chance of being accepted by a medical school.

"There aren't a lot of people below 3.3 who are admitted," said Marliss Strange, associate director of academic advising.

The GPA requirement applies only to science courses. However, medical

schools are paying an increasing amount of attention to those who stray away from the strictly scientific majors. One major looking increasingly better on medical school admission forms is music, according to Matthew Lonergan, vice-president of the Asklepiads medical-student organization at the University. Many schools find music an attractive sign of discipline and dedication to developing a skill.

Schools also seek out English majors, and are impressed with extra-curricular activities. But whatever major a pre-med student chooses, the hardcore chemistry and biology classes remain a firm and fast requirement, especially if one hopes to pass the major hurdle in the road to medical school — the Medical College Admissions Test, better known as the MCAT.

Most pre-meds take the MCAT in the spring of their junior year, although it also is offered in the fall. The six-and-a-half hour test examines science ability in biology, chemistry, physics, and quan-

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