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Program help students attain high school levels and more

**By Polly Campbell
Emerald Reporter**

The High School Equivalency Program (HEP) provides education for people 17 years or older who have not completed high school and have worked as migrants or seasonal farmworkers. Students in the program are

Oscar Hernandez. Hernandez travels to high schools to meet with high school counselors and look for people who fit the program requirements.

School counselors refer students they believe would benefit from the program, Hernandez said. The employment division

students in work study and volunteer positions, said Hernandez.

"Not everyone who applies gets accepted to work in the program," Hernandez said, "You must apply and go through an interview with every teacher."

According to Hernandez, most of the students working for HEP are education majors who have Spanish as a second language.

The objective of the program is to teach students the skills necessary to obtain the equivalent of a high school diploma or GED. Along with those academic skills, HEP also works to teach students the skills needed to survive in the outside world, said Hernandez.

"HEP is not just a program to get you GED, it's something special — geared to motivating and inspiring the student to continue on with his or her education,"

—Oscar Hernandez.

selected from throughout Oregon according to skill level, interest in getting a high school diploma, as well as economic need, said Oregon HEP recruiter

also is helpful in referring names, he added.

When prospective students are found, they apply to get into the program and are then given a test, said Hernandez. The test focuses on the main skill areas — reading, writing and mathematics, Hernandez said.

Students are chosen according to skill level as shown in their test scores, Hernandez said. Those who will benefit most from the program are chosen, he said.

When the application process is completed, Hernandez, with the help of the teachers in HEP, selects 40 students for the program.

HEP is run under the direction of Hernandez, 5 program teachers and personnel, and a placement counselor.

Of the 40 students in the program, 10 use English as a second language. For these students, an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher is provided.

Apart from the regular staff, the program also has University

These skills help the students continue on after they are finished with the 8-10 week program, Hernandez said. Hernandez, himself a HEP student 5 years ago, can attest to the 90 percent success rate of the program. Hernandez is currently a student at the University double-majoring in psychology and political science.

"HEP is not just a program to get you GED, it's something special — geared to motivating and inspiring the student to continue on with his or her education," said Hernandez.

Although HEP is run on the University campus and the students live in the dorms, it is independent from the University. The program pays for its students to live in the dorms, Hernandez said.

By having HEP students live in the dorms, Hernandez said it helps them make new friends.

"By having a lot of people living in the dorms you get a different perspective of culture from everyone," said Hernandez.

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