



The Outdoor program, located in the EMU basement, provides tools to fix your bike as long as the repairs are done outside.

LAURA GOSS/ Emerald

Peer advising helps explain requirements

Many departments have peer advisors who help students plan and track their degree progress

By Stefanie Knowlton
Oregon Daily Emerald

University life can be hectic, but there are people who can make a student's job a little easier.

Peer advisors help students by explaining general university requirements and specific major requirements. Advisors also give information about the University, internships and student programs.

Jessica Blumberg, campus-wide peer advising coordinator, believes that students benefit from having peers as advisors. "Peer advisors are available, easily accessible, easier to talk to, and they know what it is like to be on the inside track of a particular major," Blumberg said.

Ranging from biology to journalism, the University has peer advisors in more than 20 different departments. Starting this fall, a women's studies advisor will be added to accommodate the new major.

Advisors are also available for students who have not yet picked a major and need information on various programs.

The peer advising program was developed 20 years ago at the University to increase the accessibility of academic advisors. The program has been met with great acceptance and has run every year since its initiation.

"I joined because it is a good

way to meet students, develop a relationship with faculty and to help people," said Jim Driscoll, a peer advisor for the business college.

Driscoll is proud of the work he and his advisors have done at the business school.

"We have a particularly good program here," he said.

The business college peer advising team was voted the best on campus last year.

"My goal is to continue our track record of providing good service and to be the leading program," said Driscoll.

Advisors go through an application and interview process to become admitted into the program.

After an advisor is accepted, he or she is required to participate in a peer advising class that stresses communication skills and general knowledge of the University and requirements for graduating.

Advisors are usually required to have at least a junior standing and a good GPA to be admitted into the program.

In addition to earning two credits per term, advisors also benefit from this program through a sense of personal accomplishment.

"It is rewarding to notify someone that they are graduating," Driscoll said.

Students also benefit greatly from the peer advising program due its accessibility, Blumberg said. Peer advisors have been so successful that, as she pointed out, in some departments they "are the primary resource of information."

Outdoor: Maps, equipment on hand

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there has to be a trip initiator who comes in and fills out a trip sheet explaining when and where they want the expedition to take place.

Then other students who are interested meet with the initiator and begin planning the adventure. All decisions are made by a group consensus.

The Outdoor Program provides equipment, maps and maybe a few suggestions with trip planning.

Similar programs at other universities hire an outfitter, who plans the trips, and trained guides to head the trips.

According to Geiger, students

end up paying a lot more for this type of program, and they do not get as much freedom.

"This is about student empowerment," Geiger said. He also speculates that programs at other universities that do not operate on a co-op model spend ten times as much for the same trips.

The OP takes about 300 trips per year ranging from hiking Spencer Butte to sea kayaking in Mexico.

Some of the few trips that are actually initiated by the program happen during the Week of Welcome for incoming students. They plan about 15 trips that all take place the weekend before school starts.

Last year, 250 incoming stu-

dents participated in these trips sponsored by the OP.

In addition to sponsoring trips, the OP is also a resource center for those who wish to plan private trips.

Maps, books, guides and equipment are all available for any student to use.

There is also a common interest board that is used to connect people together who enjoy similar outdoor activities.

Geiger comments that people need to realize the importance of the out-of-classroom experience.

"It draws people together and a lot of life-long friendships are made at OP," Geiger said. "It changes people's lives."

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