

# Project to influence college admission

A new proficiency-based system will help determine admission to Oregon schools

By Tricia Schwennesen  
Oregon Daily Emerald

By 2001, Oregon public high school students will need more than just good grades. They will have to prove proficiency in math and English before being admitted to in-state colleges and universities.

The University will phase in new admission requirements as part of the Proficiency-based Admission Standards System project, funded by a \$1.4 million grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts, a national philanthropic organization based in Philadelphia.

"What we're saying is for Oregon students, before we admit them, we want to know if they can do college level work," said David Conley, an associate professor of education and the director of the PASS project. "The real trick is to get teachers to make

consistent judgments on who is ready for college and who's not."

Ann Vaughn, assistant principal of North Eugene High School, said it all ties in to developing a standards-based system to determine whether students are prepared for college.

"I think grades over the years have not given the information helpful to deciding who will be successful in college," Vaughn said. "Every student that is college bound has good grades."

Martha Pitts, director of admissions, said she doesn't believe proficiency will replace GPA as a criterion for college admissions.

"People around the country are looking for other predictors," Pitts said. "GPA doesn't have the same meaning from one school to the next."

"Students will be able, but not required, to demonstrate proficiency in math and English. I think the impact the Pew grant will have on our admissions process is unclear as of yet."

As part of the grant-funded portion of the project, Conley said 100 teachers at 50 high schools

are currently certifying whether students are proficient in math and English.

About 3,000 students will be certified in the next year and will then be tracked through their college careers to test out whether proficiency-based admissions will work.

PASS is an ongoing project that began in 1987. The goal is to change admissions expectations and to move toward a more standards-based system to evaluate and predict a student's success. Students will have to demonstrate proficiency through tests and in class activities in six areas beginning with math and English. A new area will be added each year after 2001.

In September 1996, the state Board of Higher Education adopted performance standards in math and English and the Common Curriculum Goals, revised in 1995 by the Oregon Department of Education.

"We don't know how well proficiencies will predict," Pitts said. "This will give as a chance to test this out."



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