

Cyber Sisters mentors to girls

■ The program gives girls the support they need to branch out in all studies

By Maggie Young
Oregon Daily Emerald

It is statistically proven that young girls are in need of older role models and encouragement in the fields of math, science and technology.

Female students from the University and Oregon State University have the opportunity to be mentors for middle school girls from the Eugene, Springfield and Corvallis areas through Cyber Sisters, a mentoring program focused on helping middle school girls set future goals.

Two main concepts were key when the program was organized and implemented in 1997, said Cerise Roth-Vinson, program coordinator and assistant director of the University Social Science Instructional Laboratory.

First, national research indicates that girls' performance, especially in high school, in math, science and technology is not as high as that of boys. Also, the Willamette Science and Technology Center that facilitates the program noticed that girls had little representation in their after-

school programs.

"Strong female role models are important, and most girls don't get that exposure," Roth-Vinson said. "So we created this program to offer that and to improve WIS-TEC classes."

Oona Holcomb, ASUO Women's Center Publicity Coordinator and junior journalism and political science major, said that traditionally girls are directly and indirectly encouraged to go into the arts as opposed to science careers.

"My parents were surprised when I was drawn to math and chemistry as a child," Holcomb said. "It was just assumed that I would write stories, but when I was good at math, they were amazed."

Elizabeth Spencer, a freshman at Thurston High School, participated in the Cyber Sisters program while she was in seventh and eighth grades. Having a female role model in the areas of science and technology encouraged her to focus on her goals, she said.

"Seeing women enjoy being in those fields made my goal of working at NASA seem more realistic," Spencer said.

The skills she learned through the Cyber Sisters program have

carried over into Spencer's schoolwork. Although Spencer is the only freshman in her Integrated 3 math class, she still finds the confidence to raise her hand and give her input.

"This project made it easier to answer questions in class and motivated me to work harder in those areas," she said.

Some girls in high school give up on math and science because they think it's too difficult to understand, Spencer said.

"This program would benefit those girls in the fields of math and science," Spencer said. "You get to learn about what you want to learn, focus on your certain interests and come to a scientific conclusion."

The results of this program are noticeable. Girls who previously said they hated science because of the teacher now say it is their favorite subject because they're good at it, Roth-Vinson said.

"This is one of those incredible gifts in life," she said. "It's an amazing opportunity to work with someone who is just beginning to explore the opportunities that are out there."

Those interested in participating in the project should call Cerise Roth-Vinson at 346-3256.

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Construction

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by a group of University vice presidents and the University provost.

"They pick five to seven projects that most closely fit the University's institutional goals," Ramey said. "Projects are weighted by how likely they are to be funded. In some cases, projects may already have funding."

Once the shortened list is approved by the University president it is sent on to an Oregon University System review board, where it is compared with similar lists from other OUS institutions, Ramey said.

"It boils into an overall strategy and goes to the state legislature" for approval, Ramey said.

After a project is approved by the Legislature, planning can begin on the project in earnest, Ramey said.

Renovation and capital construction is financed by the Legislature in two ways, OUS spokesman Bob Bruce said.

Funds come from the state general fund and through the sale of state bonds, he said.

More than \$7 million has been earmarked for University construction projects between 1999 and 2001, Bruce said.

Sources of private funding have been the Oregon

Foundation, University alumni and Oregonians who have a connection with the University, Deshpande said.

Grayson Hall is an example of fund raising through private donations.

"The Graysons gave \$1.5 million as a gift for the remodel," Deshpande said. "The College of Arts and Sciences raised another \$500,000 and the state matched the donated funds with \$2 million in bonds."

User groups made up of faculty, designers and students are appointed to guide the projects through the design phase.

"User groups are charged with being the University's representative for the design of the project," Ramey said. "The user group turns needs into things. They are guided by our long-range campus plan."

Project decisions are made under a process-based system, Ramey said. "The overall idea is that the campus should be able to grow and adapt to its needs."

The process-based system acknowledges that changes occurring on campus cannot be predicted with enough certainty to make planning decisions. Decisions are made as they come, he said.

"There are still guidelines under which we make decisions," Ramey said. "Participation on the part of the users is mandated in the plan. The end user is in the best position to make decisions about their environment."

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