

At high schools, UO students discuss college life

■ A University program sends students to local schools to offer their perspectives and advice about higher education

By Jessica Blanchard
Oregon Daily Emerald

Some University students will be heading back to high school next term — but this time, they'll be teaching the classes.

Through the University's Building Blocks program, students can earn upper-division credit in the form of an internship by sharing their college experiences with local elementary and high school students. The program attempts to expose youths to the higher education system by having University students speak in the classrooms for an hour a week.

The Building Blocks curriculum includes topics such as different types of colleges, how to pay for college and what to expect

as a new student.

"With the Building Blocks program, [the students] are hearing the information from someone who's not their teacher or their parent — someone who's actually in college," said Sara Kolsky, a senior sociology major and the division head for the Building Blocks program. Kolsky has participated in the program since she was a freshman.

About 20 students have participated in previous terms, but Kolsky said she hopes to attract at least 30 students to the program next term. The participants are scheduled to visit several area high schools and elementary schools, and for the first time in the program's five-year history, some area middle

schools will be included.

But Kolsky stressed that the Building Blocks program is not a primer for the University. Instead, the program participants tend to stress nearby Lane Community College and the financial benefits of transferring to the University.

"We don't try to sell the U of O at all," she said.

Jill McCarthy, an elementary education major, participated in Building Blocks last year. She said the program allowed her to gain valuable experience in the classroom.

"It's an important program, and you can see you're making a difference," McCarthy said. "And it's been a good learning experience for us. Even if [a particular presentation] didn't work well, we were able to stop and say, 'OK, next time we won't talk for the whole 45 minutes — we can do

more group activities or something.'"

McCarthy said she would recommend the program to other students and believes more peo-

ple would volunteer if they knew they could receive credit for it.

Kolsky agreed and said one of the biggest challenges of running the program is letting people know that it exists.

The Building Blocks internship is actually part of the Community Internship Program (CIP), which is split into six divisions. Students can earn credit for various kinds of volunteer work from helping out in a public school classroom or shadowing someone in a position of leadership, to working one-on-one with a child through the Big Brother/Big Sister program.

Amanda McCulloch, a junior journalism major, said she signed up for one of the leadership seminars because she wants to get credit for activities she's already volunteering for.

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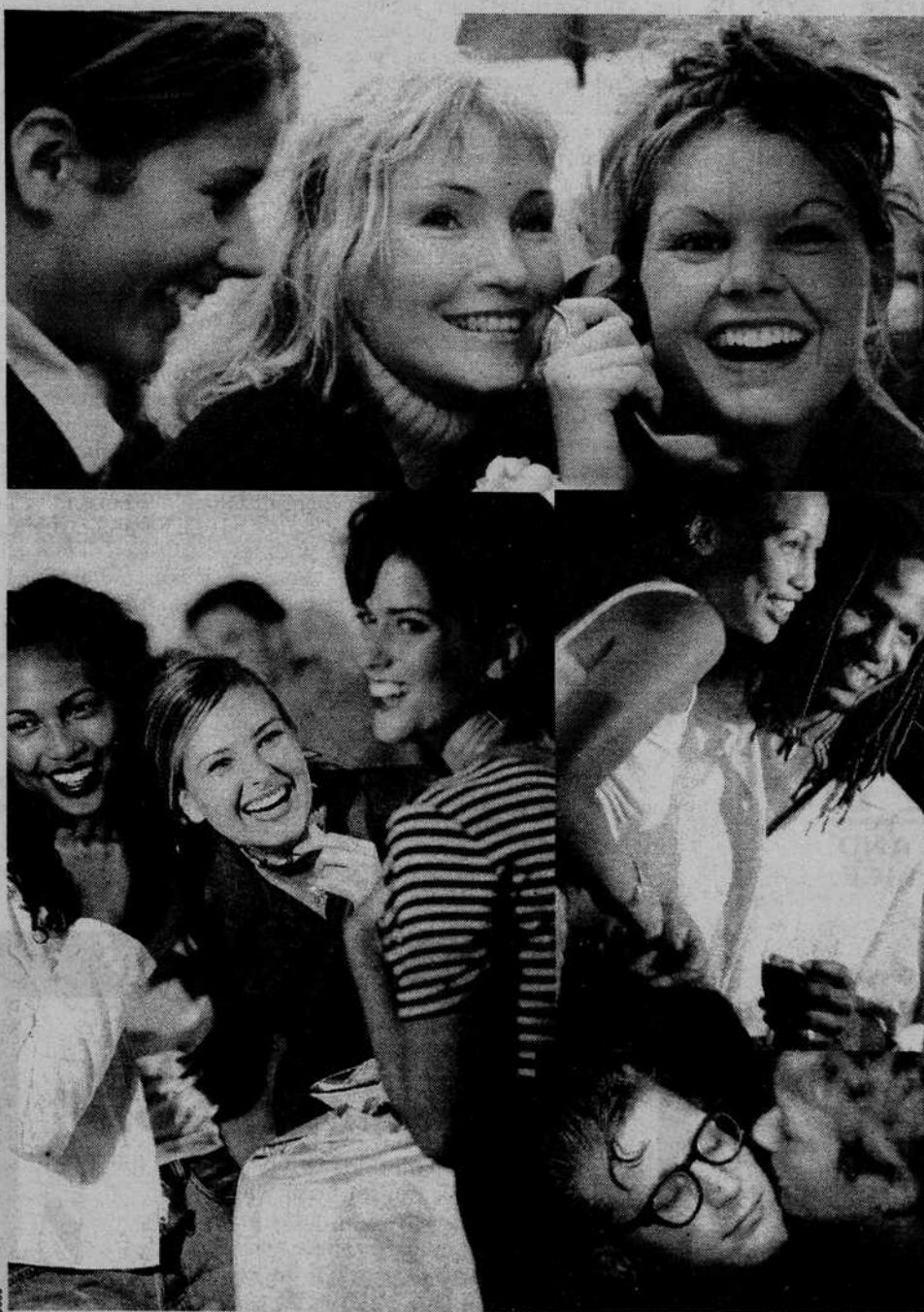
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Office of Student Life



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