

# Free tax service provides relief to students

■ Beta Alpha Psi fraternity sponsors a series of tax workshops to help teach students how to file

By Simone Ripke  
Oregon Daily Emerald

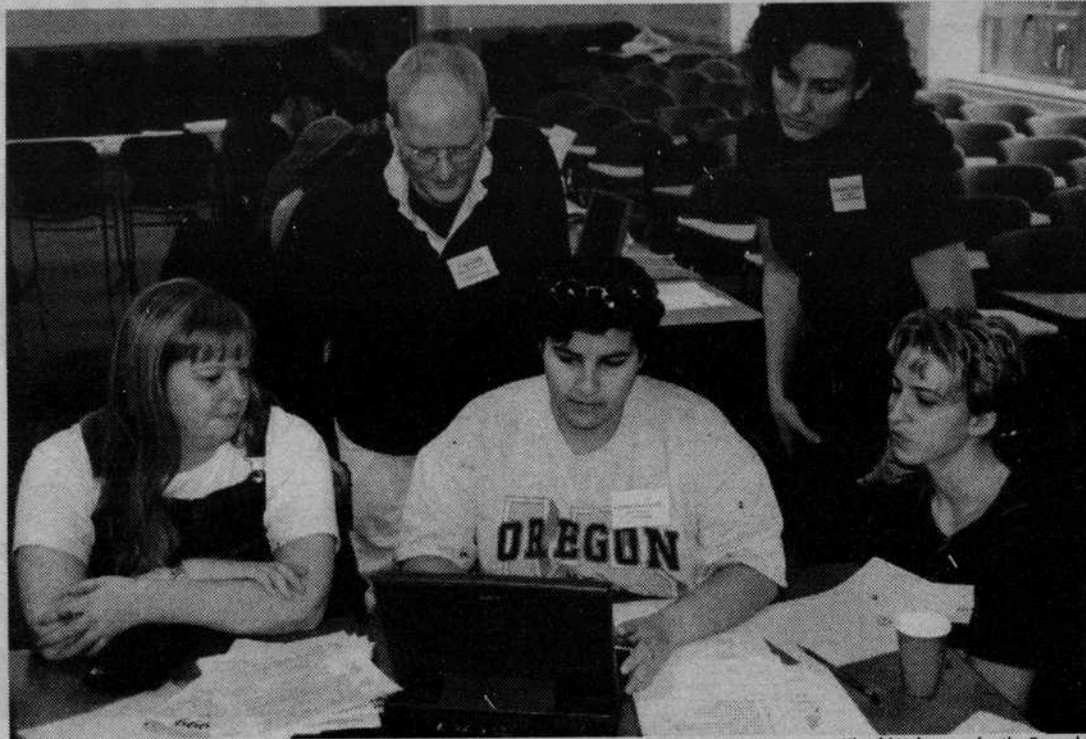
Megan Wilson, a senior journalism major, spent hours trying to make sense out of her tax forms. Even the Internal Revenue Service help line could not clear up her confusion about multiple W2 forms, numbers and more forms.

But there was help. On Saturday, Wilson and 16 other students took advantage of free tax help offered by Beta Alpha Psi, the accounting honors fraternity. Volunteers from Beta Alpha Psi teamed up with IRS experts to work one-on-one with students and help them fill out their tax forms correctly.

"It went just great," Wilson said. Her forms were filled out and filed after only 45 minutes.

Tracy Fisher, a senior majoring in accounting and the community service head for Beta Alpha Psi, said the event was made possible by volunteers from the fraternity, tax preparers from the IRS and such accounting firms as Arthur Andersen, Price Waterhouse Coopers, Deloitte and Touche, and Moss Adams, who donated money and equipment.

Every tax preparer had a computer available to enter students' information. Students had access to IRS software, which enabled



Crystal Hernandez (center) helps answer the tax questions of Michelle A. Johnson (left) with other student advisors Alan Gilds, Shannon Dolan and Tracy Fisher. Beta Alpha Psi sponsored the program, which helps students learn the ins and outs of filing.

them to have the computers do the math and file on-line.

The IRS also gave the Beta Alpha Psi volunteers a crash course focusing on the tax needs typical for students.

"We had people help out on all levels of this," Fisher said.

Fisher said e-filing usually costs \$50 and has the advantage that any tax refund someone might be

entitled to is usually received within 11 days, which is significantly faster than the months some people wait when they file in the mail.

Students who came to get tax help were able to e-file for free but could also choose to send in their forms by mail.

Beta Alpha Psi President Shannon Dolan, a senior accounting

major, said Saturday's workshop was only the first of five such events. Students will have more opportunities to get tax help March 4, March 18, April 1 and April 8. Tax help will be available from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Dolan said she expects the demand for help to increase as the April 15 deadline for filing comes closer.

Dolan said she hopes the work-

## Need assistance?

**What:** Free tax help  
**Who:** Beta Alpha Psi  
**When:** March 4, March 18, April 1, April 8: 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
**Where:** 133 Gilbert Hall

shops will become an annual event sponsored by Beta Alpha Psi members.

"This is the first time we have done this, and we are hoping that future students will be encouraged to continue the tradition."

Dave Bullard from the IRS provided the crash course for tax preparers and was one of three IRS experts who volunteered at Saturday's workshop, answering the questions of the brand new tax preparers and their clients, who did not all fit the mold of the standard college students with typical tax needs.

The crash course provided volunteers with the basics and focused specifically on the need of the average student, Bullard said.

Fisher said the crash course was helpful but was glad IRS experts were on site to help.

"I don't think you can go through a tax form without questions," she said.

Diane Schoeffler, a second-year graduate student, said she came to the workshop because filling out tax forms in the past has cost her a lot of time, effort and nerve.

The program "really saved me a lot," she said.

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