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## Ackerman

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onto the Ducks' basketball team as a freshman next season.

Polansky was one of four women given awards prior to Ackerman's speech, accepting the high school athlete of the year honor.

"I'm really appreciative to everyone who helped me out the whole way through," Polansky said, "and obviously Warsaw program for putting this on. It was an evening filled with things I wanted to hear."

What they heard was Ackerman's account of how women's roles — not just as athletes, but in positions ranging from accounting and medicine to sports marketing — have expanded since she was a wannabe cheerleader in junior high school.

"People are sometimes surprised to learn that I'm a frustrated cheerleader," Ackerman said. "When I was in seventh grade, my school had no organized sports for girls, the only thing that they had was the cheerleading squad. It was either that or nothing. But I got cut. It was devastating — and probably life altering."

"I vowed that from that point I would try to be associated with something where women were



Katy Polansky and Shaquala Williams chat with WNBA President Val Ackerman.

the stars."

After a prolific college career at Virginia, a one-year stint of professional play overseas, and then eventually her "dream job" as a staff attorney for the NBA, Ackerman now oversees the four-year-old women's league, which has exceeded expectations, Ackerman said. The league averages more than 10,000 fans per game for both of the past two seasons and drew more than 2 million fans total last summer.

The WNBA's highest-ranking official correlated the WNBA's success with the continuing saga of women's empowerment.

"The WNBA is part of the bigger story," Ackerman said. "I wouldn't in any way compare the WNBA to the women's suffrage movement; I'm not that immodest. But I don't believe that it is a stretch to view the progression of women's sports as an important part of the progression of women's rights in this country."

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## Study abroad

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panding international exchange opportunities and increasing the diversity among American students who study abroad.

In Riley's announcement he noted about 9 percent of American college students study abroad, and of these, less than one-third stay for more than a semester. The memorandum would increase support across the board but also with historically black colleges and universities.

At the University, in 1998-99, 571 students studied abroad. Only six, or 1 percent of the total, of those students identified themselves as African-American.

The motivation for some students to look into studying abroad is to explore their cultural heritage. Although the University offers 70 programs, including 11 to African countries, nationally there are fewer programs to places like Africa.

For Salina Coefield, an accounting major who works at the Office of International Education and Exchange, part of her desire to go to Japan was to experience the culture from which her mother came.

Many students, Coefield said, want to go where their families are from, but the University does not offer programs for some of those areas.

Jack Van de Water, the Oregon University System assistant university chancellor for international programs, said, "Some-

times it's a problem of finding a good partner university."

Because African studies programs in Oregon are generally not strong, Van de Water said, it is difficult to create the necessary connections with African universities to establish a partner university in Africa.

Amber Boyd, a sophomore majoring in computer and information sciences, said many African-American students do not know

**“I don't have to go international to experience something different. I'm not ready for that step. I'm still trying to comfortable in the college environment period.”**

**Amber Boyd**  
sophomore, CIS major

from what nation their families came so they are more inclined to look into national exchange programs.

"I don't have to go international to experience something different," Boyd said. "I'm not ready for that step. I'm still trying to get comfortable in the college environment period."

Boyd will participate in a national exchange to Southern Louisiana University, a historically black university, beginning next fall.

Mario Sifuentez is planning to

study abroad in Cuernavaca, Mexico, next fall, partially to better understand his family. Sifuentez's mother is Mexican, and he said he wants to be able to communicate what he is doing in college to her. He described his Spanish oral skills as conversational but not fluent.

Sifuentez said being a part of MEChA has helped him get a better idea of what to expect and said he thinks students who participate in MEChA take advantage of University-sponsored exchange programs.

"I had a list of people who have gone, and they encouraged me," Sifuentez said.

The Clinton memorandum would also increase funding for scholarships, and, as Van de Water said, "The best thing you can do is put scholarship programs out there."

Gabbi Solis, a senior who spent the fall 1999 semester in Cuernavaca, said, "I think you should take advantage of all the opportunities you can — even if you don't think you can afford it. It's worth it." Dan Ma, a senior fine arts major, said he plans to travel after graduation but the economic barrier is something that prevented him from pursuing University-sponsored international programs.

"I didn't think it was something I could be doing," he said.

Van de Water said students who are interested should pursue it.

"They are often closer to affording it than they think," he said.

## Oregon Daily Emerald

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