

# MAKING THE GRADE: CAMPUS A PLUS FOR MANY

More than just faces in the crowd, students at the University are a surprisingly diverse group pursuing sundry goals

By Kristina Johnson  
Oregon Daily Emerald

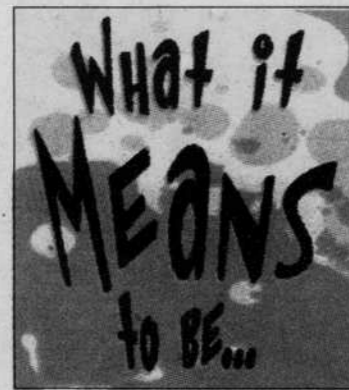
College. In "Animal House," John Belushi proudly wore the word emblazoned on his chest. He was a student at college — it didn't matter what college, it didn't matter where. He was having a good time.

But in the age of mass production, college is one experience that still defies uniformity. While students are drawn to the University for many of the same reasons — the beautiful campus or a strong academic department — they also bring different histories and inter-

ests when they come. And when they step off the curb on 13th Avenue for the last time, no two students will remember the University the same way.

Here, a sampling of students talk to the Emerald about why they're here and how they pass the time.

**Brian Weeks**, a 22-year-old from Goldendale, Wash., just started his first year of law school. As an undergraduate at Central Washington University, Weeks spent every summer fighting wild fires. He decided to study labor law after he helped his firefight-



er's union negotiate for better overtime pay during his first summer out of high school.

Weeks said his backup plan if he didn't get into law school was to become a paramedic. He wasn't interested in the University until he saw the campus.

"Before I visited, it was my third or fourth choice, but the law school building was beautiful," he said. "It was the best I've seen."

So far, Weeks said he's happy to be here.

"People here seem to care about you as a person and seeing you succeed," he said. "Everyone's been very supportive and nurturing."

**Stephanie Benz**, a 21-year-old senior from Portland, said her decision to come to the University was rough on her family, who are all Oregon State alumni.

"My dad kind of didn't get it," she said. "He always took us to OSU football games when we were little, so I think he expected I'd go there. He still jokes about it,

but they know I love it here."

Benz, a sociology and journalism major, will be reviewing local punk and indie bands on a KWVA radio show this fall. She said she's studying journalism because her dream is to write music reviews for a music magazine similar to Rolling Stone. Benz likes to watch bands play at the WOW Hall and John Henry's in her free time.

She just moved into a house near campus with four other women. Before that, she lived in the Alpha Phi sorority and said she was glad she experienced Greek life.

"I did a lot of things I won't get to do again," Benz said. "You always hear older people talk about it ... it's the classic college experience. I wanted to check it out."

**Valerie Meldrum**, a 36-year-old journalism major and mother of 4 boys, worked at a fish cannery in Astoria before coming to the University two years ago. Meldrum said she came here because a counselor at Klamath Community College in Astoria encouraged her to go after a bachelor's degree.

"She had a vision for me," Meldrum said. "Every time I went into her office, she would pull the University catalog down off the shelf and say, 'Let's just see what classes you could take at the University of Oregon.'"

Meldrum applied for financial aid for school through Aid to Families with Dependent Children, but she said she never heard back from them.

"I already had all the paperwork done, so I just kept going,"

she said. "I did as much as I could do with my education in Astoria. At the community college, they want you to get a vocational degree, but that was no way to raise kids."

Meldrum said she wants to start her own publication when she graduates in a year.

"Graduating from the University of Oregon means I gain my independence and control over my life," she said.

**Michelle Nelson**, a 22-year-old senior and business major, came to the University from Ontario, Ore., along with some of her friends from high school.

As a child, Nelson lived in the Philippines and at her school in Manila, she spoke Tagalog but studied English. When she was 9, she moved to the United States to live on her stepfather's cattle ranch in Idaho, where she learned to ride horses and perfected her conversational English.

She said she came to the University because of the reputation of its business school and because she wanted to stay in Oregon. She's a member of the Alpha Kappa Psi business fraternity, and works as a marketing intern with a new company called Universal Shapes, which creates a device used for shaping baseball caps.

Nelson said she's glad she came to the University, but she's noticed that, "there's not a whole lot of diversity."

She said she's never met another Filipino student at the University, but added, "I've never really felt any racism toward me."

As far as her future is concerned, Nelson said, "I'm really open. I'll go wherever a job takes me."

She said she'd like to get some experience working in marketing after she graduates, then possibly return for an MBA.

Runyan said she's been living off campus, but is returning to the dorms this year as a resident assistant. She works in the University's neuroscience lab, where she helps research the nervous systems of zebra-fish.

She said she'd like to continue to do research and will probably go on to grad school somewhere else.

"I can't say what I'll be interested in in two years, or five years, but I probably won't be in Eugene," she said.

**Warren Kennedy**, a 45-year-old counseling master's student, moved to Eugene after serving in the Air Force in Richmond, Va. His 22-year-old son also attends the University as a law student.

Kennedy said that his experience at the University has been "OK," but that he's very aware of the lack of diversity on campus. He said professors have often acted surprised to find out that his African-American son is not an athlete.

"We should be coming here for academics, not sports," said Kennedy. "There's no support here for people of color. They only care about you if you play football."

He said that he's working with other students to try to recruit minority faculty to the University, and that he'd like to see more cross-cultural classes offered.

"A large amount of professors of color don't want to be here because they can't do research on communities of color," Kennedy said. "I go to places here, and I feel

out of place. It takes a long time to adjust. I want to try to work at developing that — a sense of unity and community for blacks here."

**Steve Mital**, came to Oregon from New Mexico because he wanted to experience the Northwest region.

"I wanted to check out a different part of the country," the 30-year-old said.

Mital is a third-year master's student in environmental studies and planning, public policy and management. He studied literature and outdoor leadership at Prescott College as an undergraduate, then worked as an Outward Bound instructor for five years. He decided to go back to school, he said, "because I was getting sick of the seasonal life. It was time to think about what to do next."

As part of his master's program, Mital co-produced a documentary film about the Dalles Dam's inundation of Celilo Falls, an ancient Native American gathering and fishing site. The film, "Echo of Water Against the Rocks: Remembering Celilo Falls," premieres at the International Student Film Festival in Philadelphia in October.

Mital said he'd like to produce more documentaries after he finishes his master's program this year.

**Aimee Gerot**, a 17-year-old freshman, grew up in Eugene. Gerot plans to major in elementary education and said she's excited for school to start. She'll be living in a residence hall with one of her friends from Sheldon High School, but she said she doesn't feel like



Kristina Johnson Emerald

Stephanie Benz is a 21-year-old senior from Portland studying sociology and journalism. The rest of her family went to school at Oregon State University.

the University is an extension of her high school experience.

"It's not like my hometown," she said. "I lived on the other side of town. This is completely different, so it's all new to me just as much."

Gerot spent the summer working at the Greatful Bread bakery in the

EMU, which has given her a chance to observe the habits of fellow University students.

"Everyone's kind of laid back," she said. "It's a casual campus — it seems fun. People are always doing something. They seem to study a lot."



Kristina Johnson Emerald

Steve Mital is a third-year master's student in environmental studies and planning, public policy and management. He moved to Eugene from New Mexico.

“My dad kind of didn't get [why I chose Oregon]. He always took us to OSU football games when we were little, so I think he expected I'd go there. He still jokes about it, but they know I love it here.”

Stephanie Benz senior, sociology and journalism

Courtney Runyan, a junior biology major from Junction City, chose the University because she wanted to stay in the state and she thought the biology department here had more to offer than OSU's.

"I felt better on this campus when I visited," she said.

Runyan just returned to Eugene from Queretaro, Mexico, where she studied Spanish and lived with a Mexican family for 6 weeks.

"I didn't want to go through college without having that experience," she said. "It wasn't a requirement, it was just a personal goal, something I wanted to do."

# OPEN UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER HOUSE

Thursday, September 21 • 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

Refreshments • Prizes • Tours

Clinic hours: Daily, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. except Tuesday, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Located at the corner of 13th Ave. and Agate St. across from Oregon Hall

(541) 346-2770 • <http://healthcenter.uoregon.edu>

## UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

HEALTH CENTER  
We're a matter of degrees



KIRIUM  
Chronograph  
By TAG Heuer



Since 1922 • Member American Gem Society  
1027 Willamette St. • 345-0354  
Valley River Center • 342-4496

An authorized TAG Heuer dealer.



Late Night at Lyons is back!  
Open 24 hours, Fri. & Sat.

Thursdays are U of O Student appreciation day.

Show us your U of O student ID and receive a 10% discount (food purchases only).

Come play pool and electronic darts in our Sports Pub or watch sports action on our big screen or one of our 5 other televisions.

*The way we do it here.*

Buy One Sandwich or  
Hamburger, Get One\* For

\$1.99

\*Of equal or lesser value CTC2. Offer expires 11/31/00

Served After 11 a.m.

Not valid with other offers or discounts.  
One coupon per person per visit.  
Dine in only.



Buy One Get One\* For

99¢  
BREAKFAST

\*Of equal or lesser value CTC15. Offer expires 11/31/00

Every Day  
Not valid on Pyramid Breakfast or  
Weekend Brunch Specials  
Not valid with other offers or discounts.  
One coupon per person per visit. Dine in only.



Student Groups. Advertise your upcoming events in the Oregon Daily Emerald. Special student rates. Call 346-3712