

Ambassador Program entices prospective students

■ The orientation workers ease the fears of those interested in the University with phone calls and tours

By Kara Cogswell
Oregon Daily Emerald

When prospective University students ask Amy Farley what college life is all about, the junior education major said she tells it like it is.

Farley is one of 20 students involved in the Ambassador Program — a new orientation program that focuses on establishing connections between current and potential students.

"It's a huge thing to know that a student who goes here cares and wants to share that with others," said Farley, who has been an ambassador since the program began in winter term 2000.

Ambassadors, who are responsible for calling students admitted to

the University, as well as giving daily campus tours, are able to give students straightforward, honest answers to their questions based on their own experiences at the University, Farley said.

And that, she said, is something that cannot be found between the pages of a glossy admissions booklet.

"It's really easy to throw away letters and pieces of mail," she said. "But when you actually talk to someone, it makes a difference."

Laura Connell, director of Student Orientation Programs, said she began the Ambassador Program last year by combining two existing student orientation programs — a small telephone campaign and a volunteer-run campus tour program.

Ambassador positions, which are paid, include the responsibilities of the previous positions and more, Connell said. Ambassadors are involved with orientation activities throughout the year, including

Week of Welcome, Duck Preview, Duck Days, fall college fairs and winter Oregon nights.

While the Ambassador Program began as a pilot program, Connell said she now has no doubts that it is a success.

"It's been very, very well received," Connell said.

So well received, in fact, that this year the Ambassador Program was put in charge of Duck Days, a series of spring recruitment events which in the past have been handled by the Office of Admissions.

Bryan Orthel, one of two student directors of the Ambassador Program, said Duck Days play an important role in recruitment because they are primarily attended by high school seniors, many of whom are seriously considering enrolling in the University.

Attendance at this year's Duck Days, which ended in April, was nearly double that of the previous year. Orthel said this is because of a combination of factors, such as this

year's increased effort on recruitment across campus. But, he added, he would like to think that the Ambassador Program had something to do with the high attendance as well.

"I think we do have a significant impact on people coming to the University of Oregon," Orthel said.

Orthel was quick to give credit for this to the work of the students involved in the program. In addition to the effort they put into special events like Duck Days, he said, ambassadors make about 500 calls weekly to students admitted to the University, and they give tours to about 60 to 70 people every day.

The ambassadors are a special group, he said, because they exemplify all the qualities the orientation staff would like to project to new students; dedication, motivation and, of course, a certain amount of "Duck pride."

Junior Nelly Ganesan, one of this year's ambassadors, said one of the strengths of the program is that it al-

lows high school seniors to develop a relationship with a University student before they attend. Often, she said, ambassadors will meet the students at orientation events that they have talked to on the phone.

Ganesan said she still remembers the call she received from a student after being admitted to the University. The conversation, she said, helped calm the student's fears about coming to college.

"It makes a big difference to have a [current] student's perspective," she said.

Next year, in an effort to increase diversity on campus, the Ambassador Program will add five new positions, Connell said, adding that these students will work exclusively to recruit students of color.

Students interested in becoming ambassadors for the 2001-2002 school year can pick up an application at the Student Orientation Programs office in Room 372 Oregon Hall. The deadline to apply is May 11.

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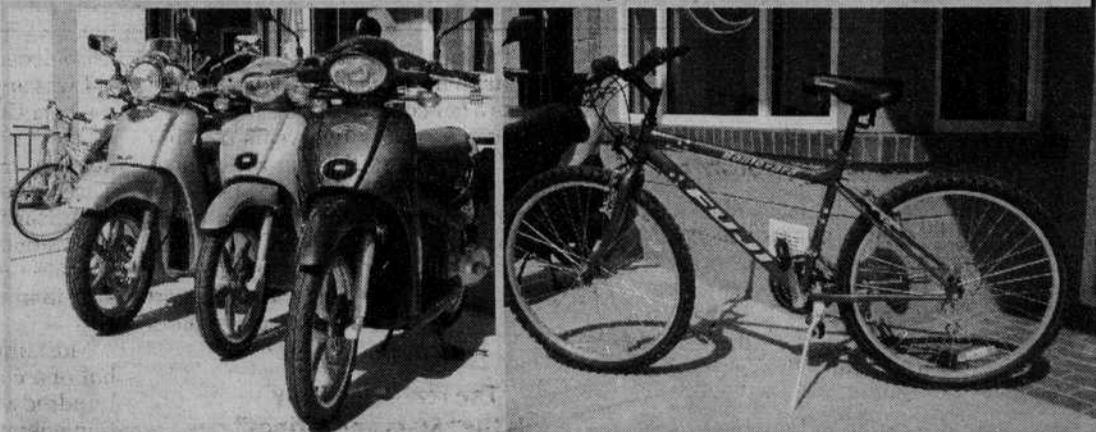
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