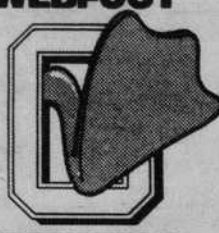


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Phi Beta Kappa boosts its profile

■ The liberal arts honor society tries draw in more members with a new Web site and financial support

By Brooke Ross
Oregon Daily Emerald

Each year, only about half of all the University students invited to join a nationwide academic honorary society accept. The low turnout has prompted University society members to make several changes in hopes of obtaining higher membership this year.

The Alpha of Oregon Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa Society honors top students who fulfill the objectives of a liberal arts education. But only about 60 to 70 percent of students invited to join the chapter actually accept. This number is significantly lower than at other schools.

But executive committee members hope a new Web site, added financial support from the University administration and changes in how the committee selects students will increase membership acceptance.

Nan Coppock-Bland, secretary-treasurer of the Alpha of Oregon Chapter's executive committee, said the recent creation of the chapter's new Web site is just one way the group hopes to raise its profile.

"Students just don't recognize what this is," she said. "So we're really trying to make an effort to make ourselves more visible."

In addition to the Web site, Coppock-Bland said the committee has also extended the cutoff time it normally takes to evaluate potential candidates for membership. She said in past years, potential members had to reach the society's requirements once winter term grades were finalized, which often made students ineligible if they were lacking certain requirements that would likely be fulfilled by spring term. She said this year the committee included last spring term in its selection process in hopes of increasing the number of eligible students. "In the past we

didn't even consider works in progress," she said. Coppock-Bland said one major reason why students may choose not to join Phi Beta Kappa is because of a lack of financial support. She said other schools pay for their students' initiation fees, which may be one reason why the University has lower membership acceptances than others.

She said although the University cannot pay for everyone's fees, the University Office of the President plans to pay for the initiation of students from the Phi Beta Kappa Oregon Six, who are six members-elect who have particularly excelled in the liberal arts while maintaining high grade point averages.

"It isn't a huge thing, but it's something," she said. "We hope it will make students feel a little more special."

Marie Vitulli, a math professor and president of the Alpha of Oregon Chapter's executive committee, said many students may not know about the honor society because so many societies exist.

"There's so many honor societies out there that students just don't know which is which," she said.

But Vitulli said the University's chapter usually invites a higher number of students to join than other schools, which she said shows the high quality of University students.

"Although the acceptance rate is not as high as it could be, we have a lot of outstanding students who are eligible," she said.

Jack Bennett, a counselor with the University's Office of Academic Advising and member of the Alpha of Oregon Chapter's executive committee, said students should consider joining Phi Beta Kappa because it may help them get into graduate school or land jobs later in life.

"It's the oldest and most prestigious liberal arts society in the country," he said. "Phi Beta Kappa is understood as a top honor in liberal arts education."

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