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Thomas Patterson Emerald
 A solitary figure trudges through the rain past Willamette Hall on the north side of campus. According to weather.com, the campus area can expect rain today and Wednesday but gradual clearing and a warming trend toward the weekend.

Students get 'magical' chance

■ The Walt Disney World College Program offers University students the chance to work in the Magic Kingdom

By Lisa Toth
 Oregon Daily Emerald

When Jen Kubicki packed up all her belongings in her car and drove across the United States in March 2001, she had only a vague idea of how different her upcoming college term would be from any she had previously completed.

Every year, more than 7,500 college students like Kubicki head to Lake Buena Vista, Fla. For the past five consecutive years, the Walt Disney World College Program has been offering students at the University the chance to work and experience the enchantment of the Magic Kingdom.

Students can meet with a recruitment representative today at 6 p.m. in the EMU Fir Room to learn more about the internship opportunities this unique program provides.

"I got a really good feel of the business aspect of the Disney company — seeing how they operate," said Kubicki, a junior business major who participated in the program from March until August of 2001.

Kubicki worked as a lifeguard in Disney's Typhoon Lagoon water park while earning four credits through the University's Career Center for her internship. In addition to a paid job, the program also provides students with an inside look and a real-world experience in the entertainment industry.

Students can choose to take classes related to their jobs that meet once a week. Junior Laura Hornsby said she took seven semi-

nars, on topics ranging from guest services to how to run a business, that corresponded to her concessions job in the Magic Kingdom.

"They expect you to practice what you learn," Hornsby said.

While she was nervous about the experience in the beginning, Hornsby said she ended up enjoying the process of learning how the company — which is ranked No. 73 in the 2002 Fortune 500 listing of America's largest corporations — runs its business. She said while she liked having the term off from regular University classes, by the time the program was over, she was ready to come home.

Launched in 1981, the program first included 200 students from 20 colleges and universities. Now the program serves more than 2,500 students from 350 schools each semester.

"We offer such a wide variety of opportunities to college students from across the country," said college recruiting manager Kristi Breen.

Academic courses are offered in everything from communications to human resource management and organizational leadership, allowing students to enhance their education. Rick Guerra, assistant director of career development internships with the Career Center, said students need to meet with him the term prior to when they plan to participate in the internship if they want to receive academic credit toward graduation.

The program is unique, he said, because it offers students the opportunity to travel and work with other interns from across the nation. He said the program offers both entry-level positions and more focused internships shadowing professionals at Disney.

"For the Disney program, one of the drawbacks is that it requires students to be out of school for a term or two," Guerra said. He added that the program caters to students on the East Coast who have semester instead of quarter systems.

Kubicki said that now when employees see a large company like Disney on her résumé, they are immediately intrigued.

"It's all about being forward, friendly and patient — that Disney personality," Hornsby said, adding that she now also applies that personality to her job in Eugene at Emerald Lanes.

Students in the program also receive free admission to all four Disney theme parks during their internship. They live with other students in fully furnished one- to four-bedroom apartments in close proximity to the Disney property.

"I could stand on my balcony and see the fireworks from Downtown Disney every night," Kubicki said.

She said the program was rewarding because it forced her to work with people outside her "comfort zone" and because of the positive feedback she received from visitors. The program is open to all undergraduate students in any major who have completed at least one semester of school. Kubicki said the only drawback of the program was transitioning from the hot, humid weather in Florida back to rainy Oregon.

"It's a great opportunity to get in with a big company," Kubicki said. "The program is an experience that can help you whether you want to further yourself within the company or just make some good friends and have fun."

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