



LAUREN WIMER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Ph.D. chemistry students Cathryn McFearin and Adam Hopkins demonstrate the mechanism's function in measuring surface tension. Geri Richmond, back, recently received an award from the American Chemical Society for her work promoting the role of women in science.

Women: Richmond says sexism common

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Committee on the Advancement of Women Chemists at the University. According to the COACH Web site, coach.uoregon.edu, the organization's goals are "to increase the number of women chemists entering academic chemistry departments, succeeding up the ranks and achieving leadership roles."

In addition to \$5,000 for Richmond, the award also involved a \$10,000 grant to the academic institution of her choice. Richmond directed the money to COACH's efforts to reach out to international students.

"There are a lot of countries that are much worse off than we are in terms of women advancing in science," Richmond said.

In the past month, Richmond has written guest commentaries in The Register-Guard and The Oregonian in response to comments made by Harvard President Lawrence Summers at an economics conference in January. While Summers said innate differences between men and women may cause the low proportion of female science faculty at American universities, Richmond emphasized social factors that deter women from academia.

"I think that there are both men and women who are not interested

in science, and that's not bad," Richmond said.

However, Richmond described the situation of female scientists in academia as an "accumulation of disadvantage." She said women have to publish more and perform more service in the department to get the same recognition as men and women advance in their careers more slowly.

Sometimes overt sexism is also part of the academic atmosphere. Richmond recounted a story she commonly hears from female post-doctoral students.

"When they told their advisor they were pregnant, they were told they should probably do something about that because it's not advantageous to their career," Richmond said. "I have 50, 60 pages of stories like that."

Richmond hears these stories as part of her work on a national scale, but she said the situation at the University is comparatively good.

"Here in our chemistry department, we have a large proportion of women faculty. ... I feel very good about our department here in terms of the number of women faculty," she said. "The environment is such that there was, I think, less concern about what your gender was than

the quality of your science."

"The real problem is that women are not looking at this career as being attractive, and we're very concerned about that," Richmond said. Of the 11 students working in Richmond's lab five are women according to her Web site.

Teresa Tarbuck, one of these students, is working toward her Ph.D. in physical chemistry. Tarbuck said she is not sure what she plans to do after graduation, although she has considered the possibility of an academic career.

"I've thought about it, but not on the scale that Dr. Richmond does it — at a smaller school, not as research-oriented," Tarbuck said.

At this point, Tarbuck said she hasn't personally experienced gender-based discrimination in the sciences.

"I've only heard stories, but at this point, I don't feel that it's a detriment," she said. "A lot of those stories are for women trying to get positions like Geri's."

"It's a whole lot of work if you're a professor, and it takes up all your time," Tarbuck said. "Geri's pretty efficient and manages to do everything, but I don't know if I want to be that busy all the time."

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