

OSU Sets Spring Visits for Potential Students

Oregon State University is hosting a series of spring and Saturday visits that give prospective students and their families the chance to learn the basics of university life.

Dates set aside for spring visits include March 24 and April 11. The March visit is scheduled when many high schools and community colleges are out for spring break. Spring visits begin at 11:30 a.m. with optional tours of OSU facilities.

Saturday tours are less formal, but can offer opportunities to talk with OSU students and faculty, as well as learn about student organizations and involvement activities. Saturday tours are scheduled for March 15, April 26, and May 17.

The events offer an opportunity to spend an afternoon meeting with OSU students, faculty, and staff. Activities include workshops for transfer students, academic college presentations and overviews of OSU's University Honors College, international opportunities, housing and dining, financial aid, and multicultural opportunities. Sessions also will encourage students, parents, and family members to ask questions about university life.

Students unable to attend these events can schedule weekday campus tours.

All programs are free. For information and registration, contact the OSU Student Visitor Center at 1-800-291-4192 or 541-737-2626. Information also is available at <http://oregonstate.edu/soar/visit/spring2003.html>.



Oregon College Savings Plan to Introduce New Option

SALEM, Ore. – Oregon State Treasurer Randall Edwards in February announced enhancements to the Oregon College Savings Plan. The enhancements include a new conservative investment option with no exposure to the stock market and a further reduction in fees charged to participants.

The public board for the Oregon College Savings Plan, which is chaired by Edwards and oversees the plan, hopes to launch the new investment option by April. The new option, called the Stable Value Portfolio, will be designed to protect participants' principal investment with highly rated fixed-income investments and an insurance wrapper for added protection. This investment option may appeal to families with children nearing or enrolled in college, and to investors desiring a very conservative option.

The board lowered the expense ratio for the new Stable Value Portfolio to 0.85 percent, reduced from 1.25 percent for its predecessor. Another investment option introduced in early 2002, the Broad Equity Market Portfolio, also is an inexpensive choice, with an expense of just 0.975 percent. The plan's remaining portfolios are at 1.25 percent.

"The Oregon College Savings Plan now features two investment options with fees below 1 percent," says Edwards. "This new fee reduction is in addition to having no enrollment fees or annual account maintenance fees for Oregon residents. It's hard to find a better college savings plan than this."

The Oregon College Savings Plan is a state-sponsored Section 529 college savings program administered by the Oregon state treasurer. It features a state tax deduction of up to \$2,000 per tax filing per year for contributions, as well as state and federal tax-free withdrawals. Strong Capital Management, Inc. manages the plan.

Investing in the Oregon College Savings Plan is an easy process that begins with either a visit to the plan's Web site at www.OregonCollegeSavings.com or a toll-free phone call to the plan's college planning specialists at 1-866-772-8464. Representatives are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Families also can contact their financial advisors for more information about the plan.

Ashland Selected as Site of National Fire Workshop

A national partnership of government agencies, private companies, and professional associations has selected Ashland, Ore., as the site of the next regionally oriented workshop on the growing American trend of wildfire in residential areas.

Sen. Len Hannon, president pro tem of the Oregon Senate, will be the keynote speaker at the conference. His address will kick off the three-day session that runs from March 17-19, 2003.

Hannon has been a leader for many years in the Oregon Legislature's ways and means process. In the mid-1990s, his influence set the stage for the development of a key piece of wildfire-related legislation.

This ground-breaking law, entitled the Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act of 1997, calls for classification of urban fringe areas that are vulnerable to wildfire. It's estimated that more than 250,000 Oregonians

reside in the wildland-urban interface. The legislation also specifies establishing standards for property owners to meet in order to minimize fire hazards.

Neil Benson, geographic coordinator for the workshop, described the southwestern Oregon community as a perfect choice in light of the events of the 2002 fire season.

"The Biscuit Fire was Oregon's largest in more than a century and it occurred right next door to Ashland," Benson said.

In 2001, the Quartz Fire burned homes near Ashland and threatened the city's watershed. The forester noted that 1 million acres burned statewide in 2002, claiming some 25 homes and disrupting 20,000 Oregonians when they were put on evacuation alerts.

Benson said a primary goal of the Firewise Communities Workshop is to acquaint people with the challenges of living in fire-prone areas and help them craft solutions tailored to their locales. Attendance will be limited to about 100 people drawn from key occupations and leadership positions in the community.

"We want to bring together planners, developers, realtors, landscapers, public officials, insurance agents, and other folks who really decide how a community gets built," he said.

The intensive sessions will take participants through the individual concerns of landscaping, fire-resistant construction techniques, and fire season home preparation. A computer-aided exercise will guide them through the

complexities of community planning for fire safety.

The March 2003 Firewise Communities Workshop will take place at the Ashland Hills Inn. For registration information, contact Neil Benson at 541-664-3328, or nbenson@odf.state.or.us. Information about the conference can be found at www.firewise.org.

The Firewise Communities Project was launched in the fall of 1999. It will offer more than two dozen workshops through 2003.

More than 30 government agencies, national organizations, and private companies sponsor the Firewise Communities Project. Its central organizing team represents federal land interests, non-profit fire associations, and private enterprise. The Oregon Department of Forestry is a local sponsor of the March 2003 Firewise Communities Workshop.

