

# Overlooked Group: First-Generation Students

## Mentors ease the transition to college

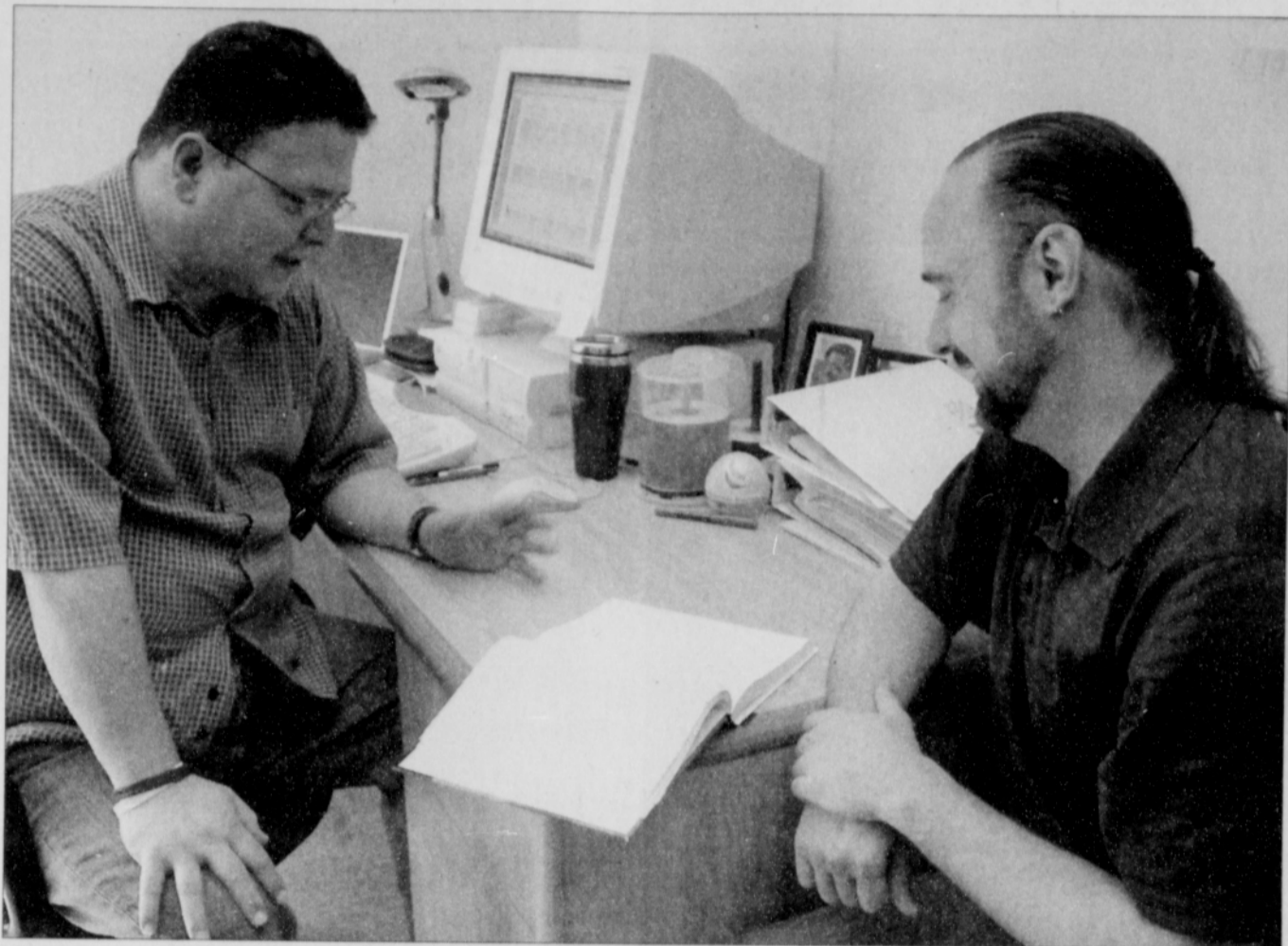
BY SARAH BLOUNT  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Before their first research paper, the infamous first all-nighter, and long before their thesis, college students have to master the little things that are scarcely taught and rarely mentioned: What's a syllabus? What do I call my professor? Why do I have to stay the full hour, if nobody's taking notes?

Many college students feel comfortable with these issues and easily transition from high school to college life. Other students arrive on campus without knowing the right questions to ask, which can lead to embarrassment, intimidation, or in some cases, dropping out.

Portland State University's Student First Mentoring Program is there for students who don't know the unspoken rules of college life. They're called first generation college students, whose parents didn't go to college and were not able to prepare them for higher education through their own experience.

PSU's pilot program started in the fall quarter of 2005 with about 80 students. The program is technically a Department of Education funded research project aimed at creating successful first-generation freshmen and transfer students.



Chris Solario (left), a Portland State University graduate student, helps junior PSU Darrin Howard with his environmental sociology coursework as part of the university's program helping first-generation college students.

Face-to-face mentoring, computer and Internet resources, videos and discussion groups help new students familiarize and prioritize college life and avoid becoming overwhelmed.

"They're kind of an invisible group,"

said Cathy Gordon, project manager. "Many don't know they are first generation, they just know they're a fish out of water."

Student First is the brainchild of Peter Collier, project director, budget creator

and liaison between PSU and the Department of Education.

Collier, a sociology professor who specializes in socialization and identity, became interested after learning about the federal Educational Opportunity Program,

which provides students with academic support services and advisement. Thousands are low-income PSU students are eligible for EOP but the program reaches less than 300.

Last fall's first wave of students within the program were mentored by graduate students, who tailored face-to-face time to each student's needs and availability. Some students had a couple of hours of face-to-face mentoring while others met every single week. Every mentor is a former first-generation student themselves.

Collier is the only second-generation student on staff since his father attended night school. Even so, his college experience came with a fair share of trials. Collier dropped out of Iowa State University to raise a family, got into the bar business, returned to school for nursing, and finished with a Masters degree and PhD from PSU.

"A big piece for me was the disconnect between why I was going to school and what I would do with a degree," Collier said. "I went because it was expected, but I had people who could give me advice. A lot of these students don't have that."

According to the EOP, nearly 20 percent of PSU students are first-generation. Of that group, 12 percent are low-income. When the research project's three years are up, Collier and Gordon said they want to see the experiment continue as a program at PSU. They hope to take their resources and incorporate them into the university's existing services.

"The best benefit is that it could be expanded to all students trying to make transition," Collier said.

## Restaurant Empire Defends Hiring

continued ▲ from Front

Smith, R-Ore., and was a member of the finance committee for the Republican National Committee.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, he ran the Oregon fundraising effort for Bush and was listed as one of his cam-

paign Pioneers, meaning that he bundled at least \$100,000 in contributions for the president.

Last year, Bush appointed McCormick ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa.

Diana Tate, one of the attorneys for the plaintiffs, said the lawsuit seeks class action status based on

their investigation of 30 McCormick & Schmick's restaurants from across the country. She would not disclose details of the investigation or if one of those locations was in Portland.

Tate said the case is on-going and her side is hoping to hear from other employees of the restaurant chain

who wish to report their experiences.

To learn more about the lawsuit you can contact lawyers for the plaintiffs by calling toll free 866-854-4165 or visiting the website at [lieffcabraser.com/mccormick.complaints](http://lieffcabraser.com/mccormick.complaints).

Associated Press contributed to this article.

## Alberta Street Art Hop

continued ▲ from Front

Northeast 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The night parade heralds the start of "Alberta After Hours," moving art hoppers inside to more than a dozen music and entertainment venues.

The art happening on Alberta

really comes together because of the street's local business owners and artists, who create community through the power of the arts and put on the creative/cultural arts festival.

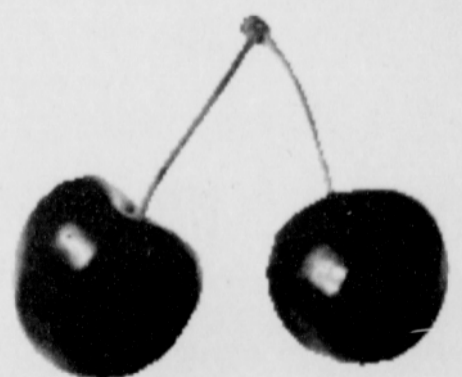
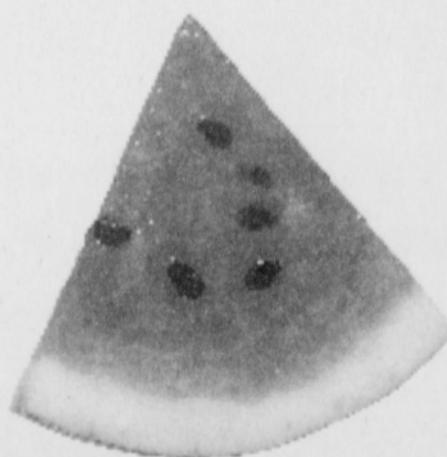
For more information about this year's Alberta Art Hop, visit [www.artonalberta.org](http://www.artonalberta.org).

# NEW SEASONS MARKET

THE

# First Taste of Summer

Saturday & Sunday • 11am-5pm



EASY & FUN TO SHOP • LOCALLY OWNED & OPERATED

ARBOR LODGE: N Interstate Ave & Portland Blvd Portland OR 97217 503.467.4777

CONCORDIA: NE 33rd & Killingsworth Portland OR 97211 503.288.3838

...and five other Portland area locations. Visit us online at [www.newseasonsmarket.com](http://www.newseasonsmarket.com).