

News & Views



Faculty and Staff Newsletter of the University of Oregon

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Oregon Hall bolsters customer service

Customer service is job one for Team Oregon Hall, to borrow from a couple of recent advertising slogans. It is the overarching priority for the 220 staff and supervisors who dispense and collect money, offer information and support, and recruit and retain students and UO employees from offices in the multistoried structure.

Meeting since last November, representatives of the 15 or more offices in the building that some disgruntled customers have been known to call "Oregon Hell" are working diligently to turn around their clients' perceptions. Leaders in the effort say they've already accomplished a lot but admit that more is needed and say they're committed to achieving a complete transformation.

"By consulting with our students and other customers, we're learning what procedures and attitudes are working and which ones need some adjustment," says Larry Tergesen, Business Affairs, who chairs the Oregon Hall Customer Service Committee. "Soliciting input from our staff at the service counters and on the front line also has been invaluable as we look for ways to improve."

Changes are as simple as telling customers where they are and how to get to where they need to go. A more complicated change, just beginning, is reconfiguring Business Affairs work spaces to enhance customer service and increase efficiency.

On entering either the east or west entrances of the building, one of the first changes that visitors probably will notice are "Welcome to Oregon Hall" signs that list the floor locations for

all departments housed in the building. Smaller informational signs also are posted on each floor.

"Already, people have told me they find these signs attractive and informative," says Kathie Stanley, Student Academic Affairs.

To assist people with disabilities, Business Affairs has ordered power-assisted doors for the entrance from the main lobby into its office lobby.

In addition, the information booth in the east lobby, staffed from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekdays by trained student coordinators who answer visitor questions and operate the ConDUCKtours program, will be enlarged and redesigned for better access.

Based on seven floor plan proposals produced by staff focus groups and employee comments about each of them, Tergesen says that Business Affairs work areas will be re-aligned by the end of June to place more student-related operations in the front counter area and to simplify access to rear offices.

Turning around ingrained perceptions is another approach taken by Oregon Hall employees whose `can-do' attitudes are making the process easier.

"For many years we perceived ourselves as a `bank' so Business Affairs kept `banker's hours' of 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. that weren't always very convenient for our campus customers," Tergesen says. "Since expanding our hours to 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in December, complaints have dropped because our customers now may transact business with us throughout the day."

To teach and re-enforce good customer service attitudes, he says Business Affairs staff will complete training in working with students and other external customers during March. This summer, the training will shift to giving top service to departments and other internal customers.

Since mid-February, a procedural change in Accounts Receivable has cut red tape for students and shortened lines in Student Financial Aid.

"Instead of standing in a long line upstairs and then completing an application in our office, the 6,000 students a year who seek routine emergency loans of \$200 or less now have a one-stop place to apply for and learn if they can return the next day after the note has been prepared to get the money," Tergesen says. "We've had lots of compliments on this change."

Technological advances are supporting and, in some cases, making possible the changes that are afoot in Oregon Hall.

The Registrar's Office and Academic Advising have installed Internet access points. Current

students with an access code can use Duckweb at <http://duckweb.uoregon.edu/> from anywhere on campus or at home to check their class schedules, print unofficial grade transcripts and view the status of any outstanding bills.

A new Services for Students website just went online at <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~stacaf/>. Still in its infancy, the site will evolve over time as people use and comment on it.

"It is a comprehensive list of links to those services and programs that students tell us are important," Stanley says. "We tried to organize it so students would not have to know how the university is organized to find what they are looking for."

To enhance communication and support cross-training for Oregon Hall staff, the customer service committee is creating an electronic bulletin board. Designated information officers for each office will post procedural changes on the bulletin board and relay changes posted there to their own staffs.

Making resource guides available online and offering training will give referral skills a boost.

"The Oregon Hall Customer Service Committee currently is forming three break-out groups to focus on further changes affecting the building itself, on communication and on training," Tergesen says. "This reflects our long-term commitment to turning `Oregon Hell' into `Oregon Heaven.' "

Hold May 23 to honor Chris

The President's Office asks friends and colleagues of Christine Leonard, assistant to the president, to mark their calendars for 3:30-5:00 p.m. May 23 when a campus-wide retirement reception is planned in her honor at the Alumni Lounge of Gerlinger Hall. Leonard retires June 30 after many years of service to the university. A more detailed invitation will go out later.

Merrick solves mysteries of purchasing

Problems are like good mysteries to Harriet Merrick, Purchasing Support Services manager.

"I enjoy the mental stimulation of problem solving and of being able to come up with resolutions. It is kind of like a mystery to unravel, and I like be able to get to something, take care of it, and move on," she says after 21 years in the business office.

"My job affords me the opportunity to interact with a number of different departments and people who are all doing a bunch of different things. I am continuously amazed as to how many different things we are involved with as a university, such as grants and programs. And

every time I have a chance to interact with a department, I learn a little bit more about what is happening on this campus, which in and of itself is fascinating," Merrick says.

Merrick characterizes purchasing as something of a "tidal wave" that sometimes seems to come straight at her, forcing her to be constantly on her toes.

"It's kind of like backpacking at night, where you are not always sure what the next step is going to be. It can be exciting, but it can also feel as if someone has opened up the floodgates. But, it's all part of that mental stimulation, and I try and do the best I can to get the people out there what they need, so that they can do their best," Merrick says.

In her spare time, she enjoys organic gardening, reading, cooking and being a so-called "ranch hand" on her sheep ranch about 13 miles southeast of Roseburg. Community service is a key interest.

"I come from a place where I believe an individual can make a difference, and that together we can make a large difference," she says.

Yet despite all she does for others, her stress level appears to remain just that--level.

"For me, I think it depends on how you look at stress. Generally speaking, I have a pretty 'up' way of looking at my life, and where I think I am going, and where my work is going.

"I look at things," she says, "more like a marathon rather than a sprint. I think of things in terms of lifetime progress rather than end-product situations. I believe in setting small attainable goals geared for repeated success instead of trying to win on every situation or have a major accomplishment around every corner."

--COURTNEY HEDBERG, COMMUNICATIONS STUDENT

Accrediting agency seeks evaluators

The Council on Naturopathic Medical Education, the federally recognized accrediting agency for naturopathic medical schools, seeks administrators and faculty members who have experience as evaluators with other accreditors. A one-day training workshop is set April 19 in Vancouver, B.C., with travel and hotel costs reimbursed. For information, call the council's executive director Robert Lofft, 697-7183.

Staff offered early retirement option

Classified employees wanting to retire on June 30, 1997, can apply for the new Early

Retirement Incentive Plan between April 1 and May 31. The plan, a product of the first labor agreement between OSSHE and OPEU, includes a seven-year health insurance subsidy of up to \$386 per month for retiring classified employees.

Benefits Administrator Helen Stoop says this one-time incentive isn't entirely new here.

"We have offered a similar plan to academic and management staff, but this is the first time it has been offered to classified staff," she says.

If they are thinking of retiring early, employees should talk it over with their departments.

"This is important since the departments are required to pay the health insurance subsidy for the seven-year period," says Stoop.

All eligible employees will be sent an application during the last week of March. Employees and their departments both must sign the application before it is submitted to Human Resources for approval. Once the application is approved by Human Resources, employees will sign a contract stating their intent to retire on June 30.

"The plan is beneficial to both the employee and to the university," says Stoop. "Employees benefit from having their insurance paid for seven years, and the university benefits from lower replacement costs and is able to reorganize and reallocate FTE."

The health insurance subsidy can be applied to either a Bargaining Unit Benefits Board (BUBB) or a Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) health plan.

Any OPEU-represented employee who is PERS retirement-eligible by June 30, 1997, and who has five years or more of OSSHE service can take advantage of the program. To participate in the new retirement plan, no more than 50 percent of an employee's pay can come from grants.

A similar plan is being offered to Graphic Communications International Union staff.

For information, call Stoop, 6-2967.

--ANGELA SPANN, COMMUNICATIONS STUDENT

'UO Today' debuts on cable access

"UO Today," a half-hour interview show exploring the scholarly interests and activities of UO humanities faculty, debuted this month on cable-access television channels in Eugene and Portland.

Hosted by Oregon Humanities Center director Steven Shankman, English and Classics , each program includes two segments on topics ranging from music, literature, art and theater to languages, Asian studies, history and anthropology.

"This program offers us a vehicle for showcasing the multifaceted talents and expertise of the many humanists spread throughout the UO faculty," Shankman says. "It is the latest in the Humanities Center's ongoing efforts to connect with the state's citizens through lecture series, performances, readings, conferences, workshops and symposia."

In Eugene, "UO Today" airs at 9:30 p.m. Wednesdays on TCI cable channel 11. The series also will be broadcast twice weekly on channel 12--at 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays and at 3 p.m. Saturdays.

In Portland, viewers should consult Portland Cable Access program listings for channels 27 and 33.

Faculty featured in the initial run of the "UO Today" series are Joseph Gilg and Alexandra Bonds, University Theatre; Marc Vanscheeuwijck, Music, and Esther Jacobson Tepfer, Art History; Robert Grudin, English, and Susan Boynton, Music; and Shankman and Stephen Durrant, East Asian Languages and Literatures and the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies.

Others appearing on "UO Today" are David Robertson, Museum of Art, and Sidner Larson, English; Jeffrey Hurwit, Art History, and Kathleen Karlyn, English; Regina Psaki, Romance Languages, and C. Melvin Aikens, Museum of Natural History; and Kenneth George, Anthropology, and James Mohr, History.

Parking fees slated to go up

You're going to pay \$9 more a year for that parking permit starting July 1.

To ease the parking crunch on campus, the university plans to add up to 200 spaces by 1998, to be paid for with increases in parking permit fees. No one showed up or submitted comments on the parking fee plan at the March 3 public hearing

The plan will increase the cost of full-year day-use and overnight permits next year for faculty, staff and students. For the first time, a limited number of "unrestricted reserved spaces" will be provided for faculty and staff who do not qualify for ordinary reserved parking spaces.

"We are trying to optimize parking availability by working within the given space we have around campus. We are scrutinizing every corner of our current system to improve it and use it to its full potential," says Public Safety Director Stan Reeves.

Under the plan, full-year day-use parking permits are increasing 8.3 percent to \$117 for faculty and staff, up from \$108 during 1996-97, and to \$65 for students, \$5 more than this year. Overnight parking permits will increase from \$24 to \$75 per term.

The new unrestricted reserved permits will cost \$75 per month in addition to the day-use fee. Annual fees for regular reserved spaces would increase from \$315 to \$342 on top of the day-use fee.

The main reason for the rate increase, Reeves says, is so that the self-supporting parking program can keep pace with current costs and maintenance required to keep it operating.

He says the amount of revenue generated from the fee increase will determine whether the plan's options for adding up to 200 spaces by 1998--to expand the Bean Complex lot at East 15th and Moss Street or to develop a new lot east of Moss Street behind the Williams Bakery--are accomplished.

"How much additional revenue we bring in will determine whether we will have the finances to expand existing lots and/or create new ones," he says. "We hope the combination of the proposed cap on overnight parking slots and the increase in overnight fees is going to continue to deter people from storing their cars, and will open up already existing space for more folks to use."

Parking fees last went up in 1988. A 25 percent boost proposed last year was not implemented after administrators opted for a more thorough review of parking program finances and options, resulting in the current smaller increase.

Faculty, staff exercise class set spring term

Physical Activity and Recreation Services (PARS) will offer its Mature Adult Fitness Class from 12:10-12:55 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays in 352 Gerlinger Annex during spring term. To register for the \$37 class, taught by Becky Sisley, visit the PARS office, 181 Esslinger Hall, or call 6-1041.

Our People

In the spotlight

Lani Loken-Dahle, Physical Education, received the World Acrobatic Society's Distinguished Service Award and was elected a director and appointed to be editor of the society's newsletter.

Geraldine Richmond, Chemistry, is one of nine 1997 Kansas State University Alumni Fellows who were recognized in February for distinguishing themselves in their careers.

Chris Ramey, AIA, University Planning, is 1997 president of the Southwestern Oregon Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

The Spring 1996 issue of Research Roundup focusing on year-round schools and written by **Jim McChesney**, formerly ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management and now President's Office, received the 1996 Print Media Award on Feb. 7 from the National Association for Year-Round Education.

Twenty-three faculty are winners of or alternates for 1997 Summer Research Awards. Awardees are **Jacqueline Cruz**, Romance Languages; **Matthew Dennis**, History; **Mary-Lyon Dolezal**, Art History; **Maram Epstein**, East Asian Languages and Literature; **Jon Erlandson**, Anthropology; **Laura Fair**, History; **David Frank**, Honors College; **Theodore Gerber**, Sociology; **Evlyn Gould**, Romance Languages; **Wendy Larson**, East Asian Languages and Literature; **Kenneth Liberman**, Sociology; **Emilia Martins**, Biology; **Ronald Mitchell**, Political Science; **Madonna Moss**, Anthropology; **Jeffrey Ostler**, History; **Christopher Phillips**, Mathematics; **Elizabeth Rocha**, Planning, Public Policy and Management; **Jennifer Rondeau**, History; **Arlene Stein**, Sociology; and **Henry Wonham**, English. Alternates are: **Alexandra Bonds**, Theatre Arts; **Stephen Haynes**, Economics; and **Malcolm Wilson**, Classics.

Brent Mallinckrodt, Counseling Psychology, is associate editor of *Psychotherapy Research*.

Grace Low, American English Institute, was elected to a three-year term as a director of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

Five UO graduate programs are among the best in the country, according to U.S. News & World Report's annual Best Graduate Schools edition that appeared on newsstands March 3. **Education** climbed to 20th from 30th place a year ago. **Special Education** ranked fourth best in the nation, up from fifth last year. **Environmental Law** ranked seventh, while **Law** was listed in the top 25 percent based on its overall reputation among judges, lawyers and academics. **Architecture** was 15th in the country, up from 17th.

In Print

Stephen M. Johnson, Oregon Survey Research Laboratory, and **Judith M. Sheridan**, Geological Sciences graduate student, authored "Distinguishing Between Random and Nonrandom Patterns in the Energy Release of Great Earthquakes" in *Journal of Geophysical Research*, Vol. 102, B2, pp. 2853-2855, Feb. 10, 1997.

On the podium/stage

Cristina Calhoon, Romance Languages and Classics, presented "Venus and Venom" at Harvard on Feb. 21 for the Ford Foundation Seminars, "Ancient Medicine, Between Religion and Magic." She also gave a seminar lecture, "Divine Mothers and Healers in the Iconography of the Empress Livia" at Harvard on Feb. 20.

In memoriam

Shang Yi Ch'en, Physics emeritus, died Feb. 23 in Eugene. Recognized worldwide for his work in spectroscopy and atomic physics, Ch'en, 86, was a fellow of the American Physical Society. A faculty member in his native China, he joined the UO faculty in 1949 and retired in 1975. A memorial service was held March 3. Memorial contributions may be made to the Parkinson's Disease Foundation or to the First Congregational Church.

G. Douglas Straton, Religious Studies emeritus, died Feb. 26 in Eugene. A faculty member since 1959, Straton, 80, retired in 1986 after serving as department chair from 1959 to 1973. A graduate of Harvard and Andover-Newton Theological School, he received a Ph.D. from Columbia in 1950. A memorial service was held March 7 at the First Congregational Church. Memorial contributions may be made to the Friends of Pine Mountain Observatory.

Go back to [Current Issue](#).

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