OSU Signs Degree Partnership Pact With Two Hawaii Community Colleges

By Mark Peterson, 541-737-0786

CORVALLIS, Ore. – Oregon State University signed its first degree partnership agreement today with institutions from Hawaii in a ceremony on the Corvallis main campus.

The new agreements are with Hawaii Community College in Hilo and Leeward Community College in Pearl City. This brings to 15 the number of degree partnership agreements the university has struck with other institutions. OSU has pacts with 13 of the 17 Oregon community colleges and hopes to come to terms with the remaining four during this academic year.

OSU's Degree Partnership Program has served as a model for universities across the nation, said Bob Bontrager, the university's director of partnership programs. “The program allows students to concurrently enroll at two-year institutions and OSU. It effectively eliminates many of the barriers to attending a four-year university such as OSU,” he said.

OSU President Ed Ray was joined in the ceremony by Rockne Freitas, chancellor of Hawaii Community College, and Peter Quigley, chancellor of Leeward Community College, as well as delegations from both Hawaii schools.

“This begins to speak to democracy in higher education. This gives students open access and support,” said Freitas, also an OSU alumnus and well known as the center on the university’s 1965 Rose Bowl team and a subsequent NFL standout for the Detroit Lions. “It’s a powerful option for us.”

“This gives students cultural and geographic diversity,” Quigley said. “There has been a good tradition between OSU and Hawaiian students, and this will make the transition easier for them.”

Students who complete the Associate of Arts degree in Hawaii will be guaranteed junior standing at OSU, with their lower division baccalaureate core requirements completed. Also, while enrolled at the Hawaii community colleges, students will be able to co-enroll in OSU online courses through OSU Extended Campus. This will allow students to complete a bachelor’s degree in less time and at a lower cost.

“Thirty percent of our graduating seniors leave Hawaii to attend school on the mainland. Some don’t go for financial reasons and this gives those students two years to get their finances in order before transferring,” Freitas said. “This is a way of saying, ‘If you’re going to the mainland, go to OSU.’”

OSU’s partnership program differs from many “co-admission” programs developed by other institutions, which offer students what amounts to a traditional transfer opportunity in a slightly
repackaged form. Oregon State’s program has one application, coordinated financial aid, and the flexibility to take courses at the partner institutions at the same time.

“Higher education needs innovative programs like this. The leadership at OSU needs to be applauded for opening up access beyond Oregon,” Quigley said.

Bontrager said OSU hopes to create partnership agreements with the remaining five Hawaii community colleges in the next two years.

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About Oregon State University: OSU is one of only two U.S. universities designated a land grant, sea grant, space grant and sun grant institution. OSU is also Oregon's largest public research university, garnering more than 60 percent of the total federal and private research funding in the Oregon University System. Its more than 19,000 students come from all 50 states and more than 80 countries. OSU programs touch every county within Oregon, and its faculty teach and conduct research on issues of national and global importance.