

Valley&State

SOU accepts \$140,000 grant

Southern Oregon University is the recipient of a \$140,000 Learn and Serve America Higher Education grant through the Corporation for National and Community Service, an organization that facilitates in service-learning projects at schools, colleges and community-based organizations nationwide. SOU's application was one of nine grants funded out of 206 submissions in the higher education individual category aimed at improving academic achievement, reducing risky behaviors, and increasing civic engagement. SOU was the only higher education institution in Oregon to receive funding from Learn and Serve America.

Besides providing the infrastructure at SOU needed to integrate community-based learning into the curriculum, this grant will support the development and implementation of a model tutoring program, Hispanic Academic Outreach. This project began as an effort led by Rogue Community College Oregon Leadership Institute students who wanted to do something to address the drop out rate of their peers. According to the Oregon Department of Education's 2003-2004 dropout report, the statewide dropout rate for Latinos is 9.8%, which is over twice the 4.6% overall dropout rate, and well beyond the 3.8% dropout rate for white students. In Jackson County, the Latino dropout rate stands at 16%.

A taskforce was formed to create a new vision for education of Hispanic students in Jackson County that included SOU, Rogue Community College, South and North Medford High Schools, Southern Oregon Education Service District Migrant Education, and other institutions and individuals. An important component of the visioning process was having the local **Gordon Elwood Foundation** assist the students to convene community partners and facilitate the process.

"This application stood out because it linked SOU with an important need in the community that was already underway with a strong collaboration of partners, so more students will be impacted by the project and all involved partners will be key to making this grant successful," said Barbara Scott, Associate Provost for Extended Programs at SOU. Utilizing SOU and RCC students as tutors and mentors, the funded project is designed to provide culturally sensitive services to high-risk Hispanic high school students to increase their rates of graduation and enrollment in higher education. The Southern Oregon Education Service District (SOESD) Migrant Education Department will train and supervise the mentors and tutors who will serve in this effort.