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## CAS Program Inspires Kids

Remembering her boring high school biology class, Lacey Whitwer, 15, wasn't thrilled about spending a summer morning at UO staring into a microscope.

But then one of her classmates exclaimed, "Look! It's moving!"

On the slide was a smear of mayonnaise -- which was indeed moving. Magnified beads of oil and water were merging and separating like the globs in a lava lamp. Whitwer stared in awe.

Suddenly science wasn't boring at all.

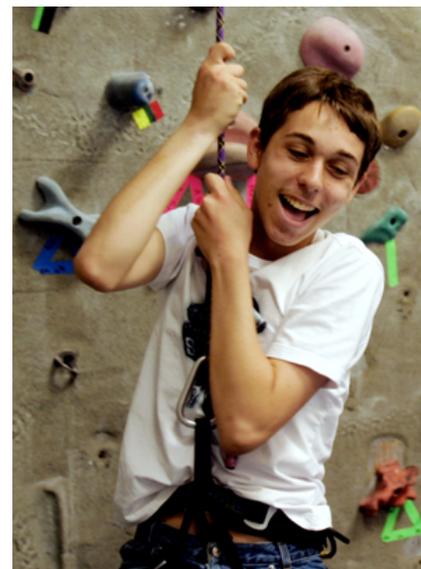
That's just one goal of the UO's week-long program called **SAIL** (<http://sail.uoregon.edu/>), the Summer Academy to Inspire Learning.

SAIL is a free program designed to encourage bright students in middle and high school to start thinking about college early -- introducing them to college classes, the UO campus and even dorm food.

SAIL is especially aimed at students who might not think of themselves as college-bound: students from low socio-economic backgrounds, or whose family members didn't go to college or who are otherwise underrepresented at the university level.

"We started this program because we wanted a concrete plan to get more low-income students to go to college," said SAIL co-director and economics department head **Bruce Blonigen** (<http://www.uoregon.edu/%7Ebruceb/>). Volunteering their time and expertise, Blonigen and fellow economics professor **Bill Harbaugh** (<http://harbaugh.uoregon.edu/>) started the program in 2006 with 18 ninth graders, who learned about such topics as how markets work, international trade and environmental economics.

The following year the program expanded to 31 students and included a program in psychology neuroscience led by professor **Helen Neville** (<http://bdl.uoregon.edu/Personnel/people.html?helen>). This year, with 40 students, they added a session covering physics and nanoscience, led by professors **Raghu Parthasarathy** (<http://physics.uoregon.edu/%7Eraghu/people.html>) and **Heiner Linke** (<http://www.uoregon.edu/%7Elinke/>). Next



year the hope is to expand into the humanities as well as add more science.



From the beginning, the program has been geared toward students from nearby Springfield Middle School because the school serves the lowest socioeconomic population in the area. About 75 percent of its students are eligible for free or reduced price lunches and the school has a significant population of recent Hispanic immigrants.

To learn what college is all about, SAIL students attend lectures, learn about various UO research projects and do hands-on activities that expose them to the more accessible and fascinating sides of academia, like how banks make money, the role of psychology in aviation and the physics of rock climbing (which of course includes actually scaling a rock wall).

"We don't really 'teach.' It's about exposing them to ideas," said Linke, one of the 26 UO faculty who volunteered their time in the most recent SAIL week last August. Students need this kind of inspiration early, he said, because they need to take courses in high school that will prepare them for college.

SAIL students also attend a session on financial aid options, including UO's new **PathwayOregon program (<http://pathwayoregon.uoregon.edu/>)**, which pays tuition and living expenses for low-income students. They also tour campus, hang out with current college students and eat in the cafeteria.

Of the original 18 students from the first year, eight have come back every year. They're now entering their junior year in high school, so will have the opportunity to apply for college before the year is out -- giving SAIL its first real-world test of its long-term success.

**- Story and photos by Katie Campbell**

For more information visit **[sail.uoregon.edu](http://sail.uoregon.edu/)** (<http://sail.uoregon.edu/>)

Photo info: Justin Latta, 16, of Eugene learns about gravity in the "Physics of Rock Climbing" session. Sol Van Horn, 15, of Springfield tests out a flight simulator as part of the SAIL program's class on aviation psychology.

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