

Summer Academy to Inspire Learning

# O R E G O N



COLLEGE OF  
ARTS AND  
SCIENCES

University of Oregon

## A NEW AMBITION



Katie Castro (pictured left) comes from a large family who has struggled financially. She started with the SAIL program as an 8th grader and has continued on each summer while attending Springfield High School. Katie worked for SAIL as a student counselor this past summer before entering the UO this fall of 2010.

She describes herself as having been very unmotivated and unsure that she would go on to college when she was a high school freshman. She thought the SAIL program just sounded like something fun to do for the summer so she signed up for the no-cost camp. She has loved the camp and the relationships she developed with the professors, claiming SAIL gave her the confidence to make college her goal.

She then started to take her high school classes more seriously, joined the cheer team at SHS and worked after school to help pay family bills. During the summer SAIL program, her time on campus helped create a sense of familiarity and comfort for Katie, so as a freshman entering college she felt right at home. The faculty involved with SAIL have helped Katie throughout high school with selections, college applications, scholarship information, FAFSA forms and professors who were accessible by phone/email anytime to answer her questions. Katie is our first SAIL student to enter UO, but this up-coming year 2011 we have 12 SAIL students eligible for UO or the college of their choice. In fact, Anthony (pictured on the left) is one year younger than Katie and applying to UO for the fall of 2011.

## TURNING CAN'T INTO CAN

The essential mission of a public university is to provide access to education and the promise of greater achievement. Each year financial barriers prevent more than half a million students from attending a four year university. Many talented students from low socioeconomic backgrounds never reach college. The University of Oregon is committed to opening doors for these students by creating innovative new programs that empower students to envision college as an option for their future.

## REACHING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Launched in 2005 by the UO Department of Economics, the Summer Academy to Inspire Learning (SAIL) program encourages bright students to attend college by showing them what university life is like. SAIL, led by volunteer UO faculty, aims to increase the number of low-income students enrolling and succeeding in college. Beginning with an initial week-long economics camp, the program has grown from 15 to 80 students, one camp to five, and from 10 faculty volunteers to more than 40. Four students from the first 2005 cohort have completed all four years of SAIL camp and two are attending four-year colleges this fall. The 2006 group started with 18 students and 12 have completed four years with SAIL. Camps now include programs from psychology and neuroscience, as well as journalism, in addition to economics.

Our retention rates have been strong and are increasing. The goal is for them to finish four years of SAIL with the belief that applying to college is the natural and normal next step in their lives, and with the tools to get admitted and to succeed.

A unique aspect of the program is the participation and involvement of college faculty in the camps. Volunteer UO faculty organize the camps, give lectures and demonstrations, take the students to lunch daily and engage in formal and informal interactive sessions and discussions with the students. Faculty volunteer year after year, tell us how rewarding they find the interactions with these students, and they recommend the program to their colleagues. We have many more faculty volunteers than we have been able to accommodate in the program at this point.

In addition to academics, all the programs include talks from the UO admissions and financial aid offices about getting ready for college and about how to get grants, scholarships and loans to pay for college. Perhaps most importantly SAIL students get a chance to interact with professors, talk with current students, and experience a little bit of college life.



## SAILING INTO UNCHARTED WATERS

We hope to continue to expand the program. Our first goal is to double the number of students in SAIL over the next two to three years. In order to do so, we will need to create one to two more camps involving new faculty, academic departments and staff supporters.

Our second goal is to expand our capacity to interact with and advise our students and their parents year-round, not just during the summer camps. We are developing a support/mentorship/tutorial program to assist the schools in helping our students make sure they are taking college prep courses and preparing for the upcoming college application process. Below are some of the ways we plan to make this happen.

- *Individual academic counseling at high school.* Each spring, we will visit individually with our SAIL students before they select courses for the following academic year. The goal will be to keep all students on a college-preparatory track and provide another adult voice encouraging hard work. We will coordinate and communicate with the existing advising staff at the high schools.
- *SAT prep courses.* The negative correlation between income and SAT scores is well documented. We feel that our students will benefit substantially from SAT prep classes. SAT exam fees are already waived for low-income students, but we would like to purchase SAT materials so we can provide this service since public schools lack this funding.



- *UO Credits for SAIL.* We would like to offer HS juniors and seniors UO credit for completing their summer camps. We feel this will give them a sense of college attachment. Students will know they will be finishing high school with some college credits in hand. However, we will need funding to pay the modest fee UO charges for enrolling in a course taught by volunteer professors.
- *UO tuition for SAIL seniors.* Transitioning from high school to college courses can be challenging, especially for low-income and first-generation students. We hope to pay for students in the SAIL program who are on track for college to take a regular UO course in the summer of their senior year in HS, and to hire a UO undergrad majoring in that subject to mentor them.
- *Integrating UO students as mentors for SAIL students.* The Pathways program is a separate UO program that provides financial support and academic services to the sorts of students in our target population, after they are enrolled at UO. We would like to recruit UO students in Pathways to work with our SAIL students during the camps and school- year events because we feel they will serve as good role models. Depending on staff time, we may also help the UO students coordinate a more socially-oriented event or two with the SAIL students.



## SUPPORT FROM THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE

Parental involvement and support can be crucial for students' likelihood of attending college. This is especially true for low income students where parental involvement is often much lower. While recognizing that the family backgrounds of our students are often troubled, we plan to engage the parents of our SAIL students through college preparation events for juniors and seniors and their parents. At this stage, SAIL parents report informally that they see the positive effects of the program on their children, giving them some trust in us and our objectives. These meetings will help familiarize them with higher education and the college application process, important objectives since many of them did not attend college themselves. We will provide them with financial aid information, as well as individual help with filling out and filing financial aid forms in a timely fashion.



### A Program with Growth

SAIL has a committed volunteer base, assistance from UO staff, private seed money, an associate director and support from the highest levels of UO leadership.

UO President Richard Lariviere and his wife Jan Lariviere have expressed strong support for the program, and we are proud to count President Lariviere as one of our newest faculty volunteers. He gave a presentation on Sanskrit (his academic specialty) this past summer, joined the students for lunch and invited SAIL students to meet him in his office. President Lariviere writes "Given its success, we have a keen interest in expanding SAIL's reach."



## PROVIDING CONTINUED SUCCESS

We would like to offer a UO scholarship for top students in the SAIL program who have completed all four years. Recipients will be chosen by SAIL faculty. A \$2,000 scholarship will go a long way in providing significant encouragement for the students to further their education. These students will be eligible for other need-based scholarships throughout their college years.

A gift of \$50,000, payable in annual investments of \$10,000 will establish a permanent scholarship endowment that, when fully funded, will allow \$2,000 to be awarded each year to outstanding SAIL students on the path to a college degree at the UO. A fund of this size will be the first of its kind available to SAIL students and will greatly assist them in achieving their educational aspirations. As the endowment is building we encourage you to consider small annual gifts to support SAIL students attending the UO today. Thank you for considering an investment in the future of our students.