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OSU grabs top rankings in agriculture, geosciences

A study by Science Watch evaluates the impact of universities on research fields

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OSU ranks No. 1 in agricultural sciences and No. 6 in geosciences, according to a recent study by Science Watch, a publication produced by Thomson Corporation, which provides information about scientific research.

The study tallied the number of times a research paper from a particular university was cited by scientists in peer-reviewed journals, in order to measure the level of impact a university has in a particular field.

Using this system, OSU was ranked first in the nation for its impact on agricultural sciences, with the University of Wisconsin, Cornell University, Rutgers University, and the University of California at Davis rounding out the top five.

In geosciences, Harvard University was the top school, but OSU ranked sixth, right behind Princeton University and ahead of the University of Maryland and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"This is probably one of the most important rankings, because it hinges on much fellow scientists cite your work," said OSU spokesman Todd Simmons, who added that showing up in the footnotes of other journals shows how OSU is contributing to the field's body of knowledge.

Thayne Dutson, dean of the College of Agriculture, said that he was elated by the ranking.

"I know that we rank fairly high in many agriculture rankings," Dutson said. "It's

always nice to see others rank you at a high level."

While Dutson acknowledged that this kind of national attention can be helpful in obtaining funding, he stressed that getting grants is more an effect of the quality of their work.

"It's not the result of a specific ranking. Our scientists get a lot of grants because they're good scientists," he said.

"I think anytime we can show we're effective and successful with our resources, it's a help," Simmons said, who added that 60 percent of the federal research that comes to the state of Oregon goes to OSU.

OSU's No. 6 ranking in geosciences was due to the collaborative efforts of many colleges and departments that publish papers in the topic of geoscience. The two biggest contributors are the department of geoscience and the College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences.

"[The College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences] is a research institute," said Roger Nielson department chair of geosciences. "Geosciences is more balanced ... COAS doesn't have any undergrads."

"It's one of those things that always [helps] us to be nationally recognized; we wouldn't be recognized without the partnership with them," he added.

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