
OSU kicks off new certificate

By KYLE ODEGARD
Gazette-Times reporter

The Oregon University System earlier this month approved a new graduate certificate in water conflict management and transformation at Oregon State University. The certificate would be the only one of its kind in the Pacific Northwest.

"We're hugely excited. This has been five years in the making," said Aaron Wolf, director of OSU's water conflict management and transformation program. "It's basically made up of courses already in place."

With water becoming scarcer across the globe, conflicts are arising, and OSU experts have helped mediate those. The certificate could attract more people to OSU's program, which was created in 2002.

Some students could graduate with the certificate this spring, having already completed classes, officials said.

"We are estimating 10 new students will be served in the first two years," said Lynette de Silva, associate director of the OSU program in water conflict management and transformation. Those could be graduate students or professionals looking to update their resumes and skills.

"We know there is demand for this both among our students and professionals in the Northwest," Wolf said. "We also in the next two years will be developing an online version, because these are skills needed worldwide."

The program may be useful for students in engineering, hydrogeology, political science, or even those seeking legal careers, de Silva said.

Training in conflict management would be specialized for students seeking to apply their skills in the United States or abroad. Wolf was the editor of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization water conflict training book, which will be used for the international component of the OSU program.

Patrick McQuarrie believes he'll qualify for the certificate when he earns his doctorate at OSU, and he's already done work in the Mekong region in Southeast Asia and on the Columbia River basin here in the Northwest.

"I'm trying to take these international basins and look at how conflict is managed," he said. "We really are doing revolutionary work. We are right at the front of this wave."

According to the Oregon University System, OSU has led training efforts in water conflict management throughout the United States and the world, including work with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Water Ministry of Mexico. The World Bank also has asked OSU to design a course in international water conflict management.

Kyle Odegard covers Oregon State University. He can be reached at kyle.odegard@lee.net or 758-9523.