

STAR RECRUITER

Dave Hatch works to increase the number of Native Americans on campus

By Michele Taylor

Students enter the Cordley Hall lecture theatre, glance at the guest speaker and relax. His jeans, cowboy boots and unfailing smile reflect an easygoing attitude. He wears a baseball cap that keeps his long, black, ponytail neatly in place. If appearance betrays personality, Dave Hatch's two-hour presentation on the restoration of sea otters to the Oregon coast promises to be engaging.

Twenty-five years ago, Hatch, '76, '78, sat on the opposite side of the lectern. As a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, he was one of the few Native Americans at OSU pursuing a graduate degree in engineering. In 1981, he formed the campus chapter of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) to promote science careers to other Native Americans. He has been mentoring AISES students ever since. "[But] we still are not seeing enough representation in the professional ranks," says Hatch.

In 1986, former OSU President John Byrne created the Board of Visitors to promote under-represented minorities on campus. The board addresses the needs of students of color by considering how recruitment policies and funding opportunities affect their enrollment numbers, retention rates and graduation rates. No other institution within the Oregon University System has a board of this kind.

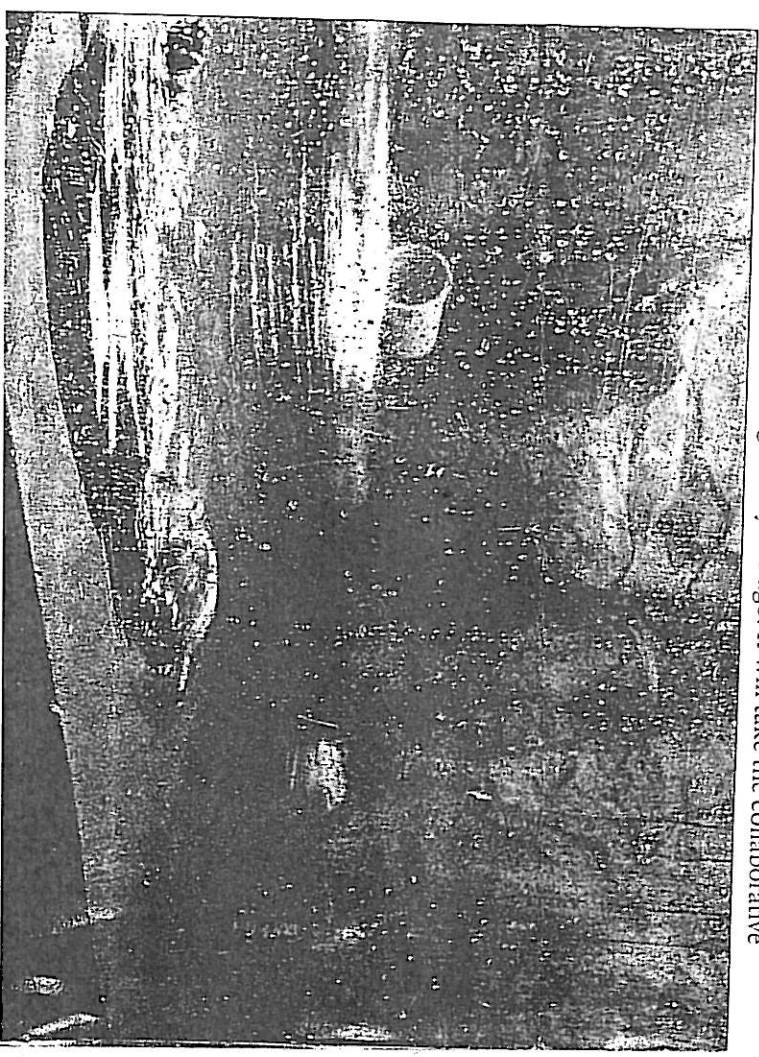
Hatch joined the Board of Visitors 12 years ago. "At one of our early meetings we recommended [to Byrne] that the first minority office should be the Office of Indian Education," he says. "At that time, the Indian population had the worst track record [on campus]. They

university's assessment and academic programs coordinator, the number of Native Americans and Alaskan Natives on campus has been increasing during the past 10 years. Their presence on campus is almost double the national average for four-year institutions of higher education.

"Dave Hatch has played a major role in enhancing our recruitment efforts in the Portland area," says Allison Davis-White Eyes, the coordinator of the Office of Indian Education. He meets middle and high school students by leading them through Salmon Camp, a hands-on environmental studies program he developed with the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. He alerts high

school students about scholarship opportunities at OSU during their senior year. "We have to educate the next generation because they are the ones who will make a difference," he says.

Hatch also lectures for the university's Native Americans in Marine and Space Sciences program. He stands in front of the Cordley Hall audience, not as a successful engineer from Portland encouraging students to follow suit, but as an environmentalist demonstrating the diversity of scientific careers. He explains how Oregon's coastal ecosystem lost its main predator when Russian and European fur traders wiped out the sea otter more than 100 years ago. It will take the collaborative



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efforts of anthropologists, molecular biologists, wildlife biologists and ecologists to bring them back, he says. Last year, Hatch created the Elakha Alliance, a nonprofit organization that unites scientists from these disciplines to reintroduce sea otters to Oregon's waters.

He is joining forces with the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, the Oregon Coast Aquarium and the Oregon Zoo to develop a sea otter conservation curriculum for Native middle and high school students. Now, OSU students also are aware of the project. When the Elakha Alliance gets off the ground, Hatch intends to integrate any interested students with the experts already on board.

Twice a year, he assists Portland-area Native Americans with their career choices. He administers the Howard Vollum Endowment Fund, which supports minorities, and in particular Native Americans, in their pursuit of science, math and engineering educational opportunities at the college level.

The program invests in eight to 10 freshmen every year until they graduate.

Hatch counsels freshmen and their families about campus life, emphasizing to undergraduates that they are consumers of education. It is their responsibility to get their money's worth. He connects incoming freshmen with AISES members, upperclassmen and Native American faculty. "The new student has a critical person who provides the couch and the coffee pot," he says. With all of these campus contacts, Hatch reassures parents that their child won't get lost in the campus throng. It's a big part of the success story, he says.

"When it came time for me to pick a college, Dave was right there with me."

That success story can be traced through Robin Elliott, a junior at OSU who is sitting in on Hatch's lecture. She attended the inaugural Salmon Camp 10 years ago. She became a counselor for the camp in subsequent years and kept running into Hatch. He quickly

became a family friend, says Elliott.

While she was in grade school, Hatch fueled her engineering instincts by giving her the latest LEGO sets on her birthday. "When he found out that I was studying drafting and engineering in high school, he got me a job working for the city of Portland as a summer intern to draft the city's traffic signal plans," says Elliott.

"When it came time for me to pick a college, Dave was right there with me," she says. "He helped me weed through scholarship applications and gave me tips on how to write the scholarship essays." Currently, Elliott is working toward a bachelor of science degree in math and a bachelor of arts degree in international studies. She served as the vice president of AISES last year. "Dave has been one of the most influential people who has molded the clay of my life into the person I am continuing to become," she says.

Now that Hatch is catching up with Native American middle school and high school students with Salmon Camp and the new sea otter curriculum, he hopes to bring more Native students to OSU. "Any environment without diversity is tedious," he says. OSU

THE ELAKHA ALLIANCE

By Michele Taylor

The tide went out on Oregon's marine ecosystem when fur traders obliterated the sea otter in the mid-1800s. The sea otter's demise spawned a massive spike in the population of its main food source — the sea urchin. In turn, the urchins destroyed kelp beds, where young salmon played hide and seek with predators.

Last year, Dave Hatch created the Elakha Alliance to re-establish sea otters and ecological harmony to Oregon's coastal waters. The nonprofit organization unites the conservation expertise of university researchers, the Oregon Zoo, the Oregon Coast Aquarium and federal wildlife biologists.

OSU professor of anthropology Roberta Hall provided molecular biologists at Portland State University with teeth and bones of Oregon's extinct sea otters she excavated from 2,500-year-old Indian coastal settlements. Currently, researchers are extracting DNA from these ancient skeletal remains and comparing it with the DNA of sea otters living in Californian and Alaskan waters. Genetic analysis will determine the closest cousin to the Oregon's extinct species. Wildlife experts and ecologists will further examine this population for translocation to Oregon.

The Elakha Alliance won the approval of the Affiliated Northwest Indian tribes, representing Native Americans from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, California and Alaska. The National Congress of American Indians also endorsed the project. Ecotrust, a conservation group based in Portland, honored Hatch as a finalist for the 2001 Buffett Award for Indigenous Leadership in Conservation.

Hatch learned about the fate of the sea otter when the Board of Visitors asked him to name OSU's recently commissioned research vessel. It was crowned Elakha, the Chinook-jargon word for sea otter. He researched the history of the mammal for a speech he was to deliver at the vessel's dedication ceremony. But the tragic story did not fit with the festive occasion, so Hatch never gave his speech. He formed the Elakha Alliance, instead.

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DENNIS WOLVERTON