

# Oregon Experiment stresses user input

By JOYCE DeMONNIN  
Of the Emerald

Imagine a university where students, faculty and staff design all of the buildings—a university developed by the users as needs arise.

If, for instance, a group of students decides it wants a reading room or perhaps a coffee shop on the periphery of campus, it would submit a proposal to the Campus Planning Committee to put the ideas into reality.

The University Campus Planning Committee, together with an architectural firm headed by Christopher Alexander, have implemented such a plan they call the Oregon Experiment.

The Oregon Experiment will direct the future growth and development at the University. According to Alexander, it is an "innovative planning process stressing user participation breaking from a 'master plan' . . . which would control where buildings in the future would be built."

The Oregon Experiment is based on six principles: organic

order, participation, piecemeal growth, patterns, diagnosis and coordination.

"Organic order," according to Dean Robert Harris of the School of Architecture and Allied Arts, a member of the Campus Planning Committee, "is the growth and development of the campus guided by explicitly debated and approved basic policies, called patterns."

The Oregon Experiment uses no master plan as such but allows users of the University to participate by developing new projects. This plan directs energy and funds away from large developments, such as the Administration Building, and channels them toward continual repair and "piecemeal growth."

"Piecemeal growth," according to Alexander, "hinges on a view of the environment which is dynamic and continuous." He says this concept is a change from "large lump development" which tears down and replaces buildings. This plan renovates and repairs.

"Buildings adapt to changing users and changing needs," says

Alexander. "They are never torn down, never erased; instead (they are) always embellished, modified, reduced, enlarged and improved."

There are currently nine construction projects underway throughout campus as a result of Oregon State Legislature funding for an Omnibus Rehabilitation Process.

Presently, each project is reviewed in detail before funding is

approved. Harris said the system would be improved if the state would use a post-auditing system which would release future funds pending the project's success.

"I would prefer that the University would have funds available to develop ideas as the needs or interests develop."

At the present time, groups who would like to repair a building or add an arcade will have to wait for the next legislative session for funding approval, Harris said.

The Oregon Experiment does not rely strictly on users, however. Each year the campus will be diagnosed to determine which areas are active and lively, which areas are dead, or unused. This will help determine which areas need repair or renovation and which areas should be left as they stand, according to Alexander.

According to Harris, the Oregon Experiment is attracting national attention as an innovative design and development process.

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The work of people like the above four played a key role in developing the modern scientific approach to nature.

Sir Isaac Newton, as an example, never considered his scientific research and discoveries to be at odds with biblical revelation and his Christian faith. He never doubted God's existence and control over nature, and he held that in the last analysis the scientist and his work are dependent upon God.

The genius of people like Newton led to a true revolution. But this scientific revolution fails to demonstrate in any way an inherent conflict between a Christian world view and scientific progress. The modern scientific movement developed in a culture stamped by the biblical revelation of a God who is personal, rational and unchanging.

But the very success of modern science in explaining natural phenomena led to its deification in the nineteenth century. Scientism has now become a modern religion whose devotees claim the potential, given enough time, to solve all human problems. Yet, when science attempts to answer ultimate questions of meaning, value and purpose it proves untrue to its genius and heritage.

Mankind should, while facing today's problems, value the scientific method for what it can produce. But science presents only a partial view of reality. Therefore, it cannot, by its very nature, solve the deepest human problems. Its results must be guided by an ethic and morality whose source is elsewhere.

We discover this guidance in history, in the self-revelation of God as Creator and Redeemer, the Lord of both nature and human history.

While chemistry depicts man simply as a complex of compounds, and biology describes him simply as an animal organism in a population, the Bible represents the human race uniquely in the image of God. Although defaced by sin, that image is restorable in Jesus Christ.

In Christ, man experiences full reality. From Christ, people gain both the perspective and the motivation to use the results of science for the glory of God and the good of their fellow humans.

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