



LAND GIFT TO CREATE JOINT ENGINEERING-BUSINESS PROGRAM AT OSU

BY STEVEN LONT, OSU NEWS AND COMMUNICATIONS

CORVALLIS—Robert C. Wilson, a retired area contractor, has given land valued at about \$1 million to the Oregon State University Foundation to create an innovative program in OSU's colleges of Engineering and Business.

The program will allow students to obtain a master's degree in construction engineering management that includes an equal number of engineering and business courses.

For qualified students, the business credits can count toward an MBA.

"R.C. Wilson's gift allows us to deliver what I believe will be a mark of national leadership for OSU," said Ron Adams, dean of the College of Engineering. "We've created a degree program which combines the technical skills of construction management with the business skills at a level you would find in an MBA program."

Adams added that the new program will better satisfy the needs of students and ultimately benefit industry. He said the groundbreaking cooperation between the colleges of Engineering and Business goes "right to the heart of the new economy" because it develops both technical skills and entrepreneurial skills.

Other engineering departments likely will follow the lead, Adams noted, and look for ways to incorporate business classes into their curricula. The new program will be called the Robert C. Wilson Graduate Program in Construction Engineering Management. Wilson graduated from OSU in 1950 with a degree in civil engineering.

Graduates in civil and construction engineering often enter management positions in as few as four to five years. Engineers who do not have business skills can find themselves at a disadvantage.

"A little-known secret of the civil engineering profession

is that to succeed you need solid business skills - finance, management, accounting, etc.," Wilson said. "I had to learn all that along the way. And if you don't learn those skills, you top out."

The gift, part of OSU's campaign to build a top-25 engineering college, will be held in an endowment supporting the new program, which is expected to be fully operational within a year.

Wilson says he began seriously considering donating the land after he heard Adams speak about the need for graduating engineers to be more knowledgeable about enterprise.

"From my experience, I knew that was true," Wilson said. "When I saw that the dean would likely support an interdisciplinary program with business, I decided to approach him about it. He was very receptive."



The property, located at Highway 99 and Walnut, was purchased by Wilson in 1957. Since then, he has parceled some of it off, building the warehouse for the OSU Bookstore, the headquarters of Corvallis Disposal, a self-storage facility, and the offices of his company, Robert C. Wilson General Contractor.

OSU has the largest and most comprehensive engineering program in the state of Oregon, with 2,900 undergraduate students, 450 graduate students, and plans to add an additional 500 students by the year 2003. More than 125 faculty members teach in eight departments: Bioengineering; Chemical; Civil, Construction and Environmental; Electrical and Computer; Industrial and Manufacturing; Mechanical; Nuclear Engineering; and Computer Science.