University of Oregon President Dave Frohnmayer spends his Tuesday and Thursday evenings leading about two dozen people in some serious high-level discussion about his favorite topic: leadership.

Where can you sign up? You can’t. This course isn’t for up-and-coming CEOs or graduate students or even university seniors. This course is for UO freshmen only. Political Science 199 “Theories in Leadership” is one of the university’s Freshman Seminars — interactive courses that introduce first-year students to thought-provoking and challenging subjects.

Leadership translates to impersonal lecture-hall general courses, where students are unknown to their professors. But at the University of Oregon that’s not the rule. In many courses, and every Freshman Seminar, the experience reflects more of an upper division course atmosphere.

Freshman Seminars are not lecture-based. The emphasis is on critical reasoning, writing and discussion. And enrollment is small, limited to 18-23 students, so professors are sure to know who they’re teaching.

The benefits are many. “Because these courses are for freshmen only, the atmosphere is more comfortable for asking questions,” said Katie Schumm, Freshman Seminar coordinator. “The professors welcome interactions and questions.”

Freshman Seminar students are encouraged to engage with the professor and the subject, Schumm said. “It can be inspiring to see professors teach unique subjects that they’re passionate about,” she said. “It really personalizes academic scholarship.”

Over the 12 years that Frohnmayer has been teaching this course, his past students have written him often, telling him how the class has had an impact on their lives. Some move into leadership roles even before graduation, such as his former student Emily McLain, the current UO student body president.

“It’s always very gratifying to hear from them,” Frohnmayer said. “It gives me a sense...
that the class touched a person’s thinking beyond the term.”

This term his students are reading “The Prince,” exploring Machiavelli’s emerging theories and what can be gleaned from them today. They’re discovering which characteristics are inherent in great leaders throughout history. And they’re analyzing the role gender plays in an individual’s capacity to rise to positions of leadership. Every week, Frohnmayer invites guest speakers from the upper echelons of various professions to discuss aspects of what it means to lead.

The students also will be invited to the president’s home for dinner and they’ll play a game called “Diplomacy,” where teams are given a country to lead. The goal is to negotiate with other countries, creating allies and improving their country’s strategic position. It promises to be a course to remember indeed.

“Being in this seminar is a phenomenal opportunity that I sincerely appreciate,” said freshman Will Prull who is in President Frohnmayer’s class this term. “I had high expectations for college. I wanted to be in classes where the professors really pushed me.”

Prull, who plans to major in political science, registered for the course for three reasons: “I liked the idea of building a good foundation in both new theories and classical. I knew my writing would improve because the class is so demanding. And I know President Frohnmayer is a very intelligent, articulate, generous and thoughtful man.”

As president, Frohnmayer isn’t required to teach. He has chosen to make it a priority among his many presidential responsibilities. When he was an undergraduate, the president of his university never taught. Frohnmayer remembers him as aloof and distracted by other duties, rarely a part of student life. When Frohnmayer became the UO’s president, he decided he would be different.

“I think the president of a university ought to be in the classroom,” he said. “I teach a Freshman Seminar so I can stay in touch with freshman life and the UO experience. It’s great to watch students grow tangibly, in intellectual and social skills.”

Another of his current students, freshman Kyla Thompson, already feels she’s getting a lot out of the course. She said, “Taking this course has set really high expectations for other courses at the university.”

— KC

### Student Wins Geography “Map Mashup” Contest with Bike Route Web Site

Zack Ham, an avid bicyclist and motorcyclist, always wanted a better way to connect with locals in his community to share bike routes and find new friends to join him in his outdoor pursuits.

When this UO senior realized he could combine his degree in computer and information science with his love of the outdoors, he built a website to do just that. His site, RideWithGPS.com, connects recreation enthusiasts with other like-minded individuals throughout the U.S. to create a collective “route sharing” community.

Using data from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and directions generated by Google, users can follow streets or create off-road trails to track a new route, recording mileage and the elevation gains and losses in a planned biking trip. The site can also be used to map out a hike in the woods or find a new urban path to jog. Users across the country can now log on, plan rides with friends and later share photos of the trip.

Combining social networking with Google maps and satellite images, this new interactive web experience gained attention on GIS Day, part of the UO’s celebration of National Geography Awareness Week last November.

A panel of local Eugene mapping experts deemed Ham the winner of the student Map Mashup, a contest in which students submitted their web-based map creations.

“I like the idea of developing a site that might appeal to someone like me,” Ham said. “It’s a niche interest website, which is where I’d like to think the future of social networking is going.”

— KN