

OSU Wine Institute Almost a Reality

Oregon State University-Industry partnership will assist and improve research and education.

Lisa Shara Hall

PHOTOS COURTESY UNIVERSITY MARKETING, OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

OREGON IS ON the cusp of creating a new wine institute to be housed at **Oregon State University** (OSU), like magic changing the way research and academics in Oregon have traditionally been parsed out into separate departments.

According to winery owner and **Oregon Wine Board** member **David Adelsheim**, "It's a virtual institute. The offices, labs and other facilities already exist within the College of Agricultural Sciences and other schools at OSU. We won't be constructing buildings."

Oregon's wine community has already raised close to the \$2 million initial funding for the new **OSU Wine Institute**, which will help cover the first five years.

"We've raised \$1.8 million of a \$2 million fundraising goal and expect to reach that goal in the immediate future; those funds are for current use and will support Oregon Wine Institute activities over the next five years, giving the Institute a solid base from which to grow," said **Todd Simmons**, assistant vice president, University Advancement at OSU.

The way that money would be used is not as endowment, but rather to meet initial operating costs (see sidebar, page 97). Staffing is envisioned as follows: director, administrative assistant and viticulturist (positions open as of press time); extension viticulturist, **Patty Skinkus**; enologist, **Jim Kennedy**; extension enologist, **James Osborne**; and (half-time) vit/hort entomologist.

Other positions to be paid for with the \$1 million recurring biennial funding from the state are to be determined.

THE PLAYERS

The major players from the wine side have been **David Adelsheim** of **Adelsheim Vineyard** in Newberg, **Jim Bernau**, president and founder of **Willamette Valley Vineyards** in Salem, **Kevin Chambers** of **Oregon Vineyard Supply** in McMinnville, **Earl Jones** of **Abacela Winery** near Roseburg and **Ted Casteel** of **Bethel Heights Vineyard** in Salem, all members of the Oregon Wine Board.

The three people at OSU who have been shepherding this include **Bob McGorin**, OSU Food Science and Technology department chair; **Anita Azarenko**, department chair of the Horticulture program; and **Thayne Dutson**, the outgoing dean of Agricultural Sciences. According to Adelsheim, "Much of the original impetus came from **Jim Coleman**, co-president of **Gallo** and a member of the OSU Foundation."

Oregon Governor **Ted Kulongoski** has also rounded up dollars and support.

EDUCATION

There is already a two-year viticulture and enology program at **Chemeketa Community College** in Salem, but there's no four-year degree program in the state. Instead, classes must be taken at the two separate departments at OSU—Horticulture and Food Science. The Institute will remove the separation of programs as it currently exists and create a single, coordinated viticulture and enology degree program.



The Agricultural and Life Sciences building at Oregon State University will be a major teaching and research site for the new Wine Institute.

RESEARCH

According to OSU-prepared materials, no wine region has achieved or sustained major prominence without the ability to identify and research the unique problems it faces in the vineyard, winery and marketplace and to communicate that new knowledge to its members.

Bordeaux has its **Institut des Sciences de la Vigne et du Vin**, which

coordinates research in four local universities. Burgundy has the **Institut Jules Guyot**, which coordinates research at the University of Burgundy and beyond. The **Australian Wine Research Institute** has played a pivotal role in the rapid progress of the Australian wine industry by coordinating research among a wide array of regional and national organizations and universities across their country.

OSU Wine Institute Initial Operating Costs

Item	1 Year	5 Years
Director's Salary	\$150,000	\$750,000
Director's Benefits	\$75,000	\$375,000
Administrative Asst. Salary	\$45,000	\$225,000
Administrative Asst. Benefits	\$22,500	\$112,500
Recruiting and relocation expenses	\$50,000	\$50,000
Programmatic and operational expenses*	\$97,500	\$487,500
TOTAL		\$2,000,000

*Programmatic and operational expenses include travel, seminars and outreach activities, newsletter and website development, start-up costs, computers, office supplies and other equipment.

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In the United States, funding is more problematic, according to OSU materials. Research on grape growing and winemaking comes largely from the **U.S. Department of Agriculture** and most of these dollars end up addressing problems in California, unsurprisingly. Some private industry moneys go to the **American Vineyard Foundation** to buy research, but again most of the expenditures are in California.

The USDA also funds the **Northwest Center for Small Fruits Research**, which has 12 scientists (six in Corvallis) working on grapes, wine and small fruits in the three NW states. Oregon's grape and wine researchers compete with those in the other states and those working on other crops for competitive grants offered by the center to non-staff researchers. (Editor's Note: For an extensive look at U.S. viticulture and research funding, see the December 2007 issue of *WBM* or visit www.winebusiness.com and keyword search "research.")

In Oregon, the Oregon Wine Board receives state tax dollars (a tonnage tax paid by wine producers and a separate tax on wine sales), works with the

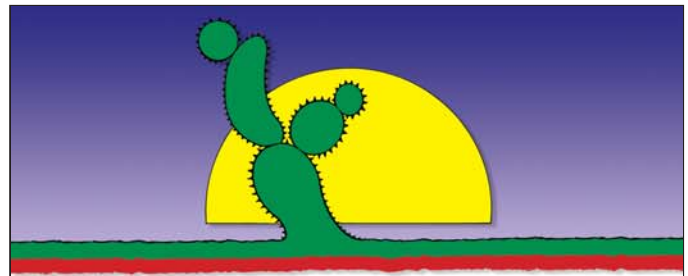
industry to identify priority problems, and parcels out these dollars to buy research from scientists at Oregon State University and elsewhere.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OSU

Oregon State University has engaged in viticultural and enological research almost since the renaissance of the Oregon wine industry in the 1960s. Scientists at OSU were responsible for many of the milestones that are associated with Oregon: isolating the first malolactic (ML) bacteria to grow at cold temperatures and low pHs; devising the lag growth phase crop estimation system used universally; importing the Dijon clones and many varieties for the first time into the U.S. and creating the first **International Cool Climate Symposium for Viticulture and Enology** in 1984 (to be held again in the Northwest in 2010).

During the last decade, as the wine industry has taken off like a rocket (now with more than 450 wineries and growing), cooperation and communication among all agencies has not kept pace.

Yet OSU still has undeniable advantages to the state of Oregon:



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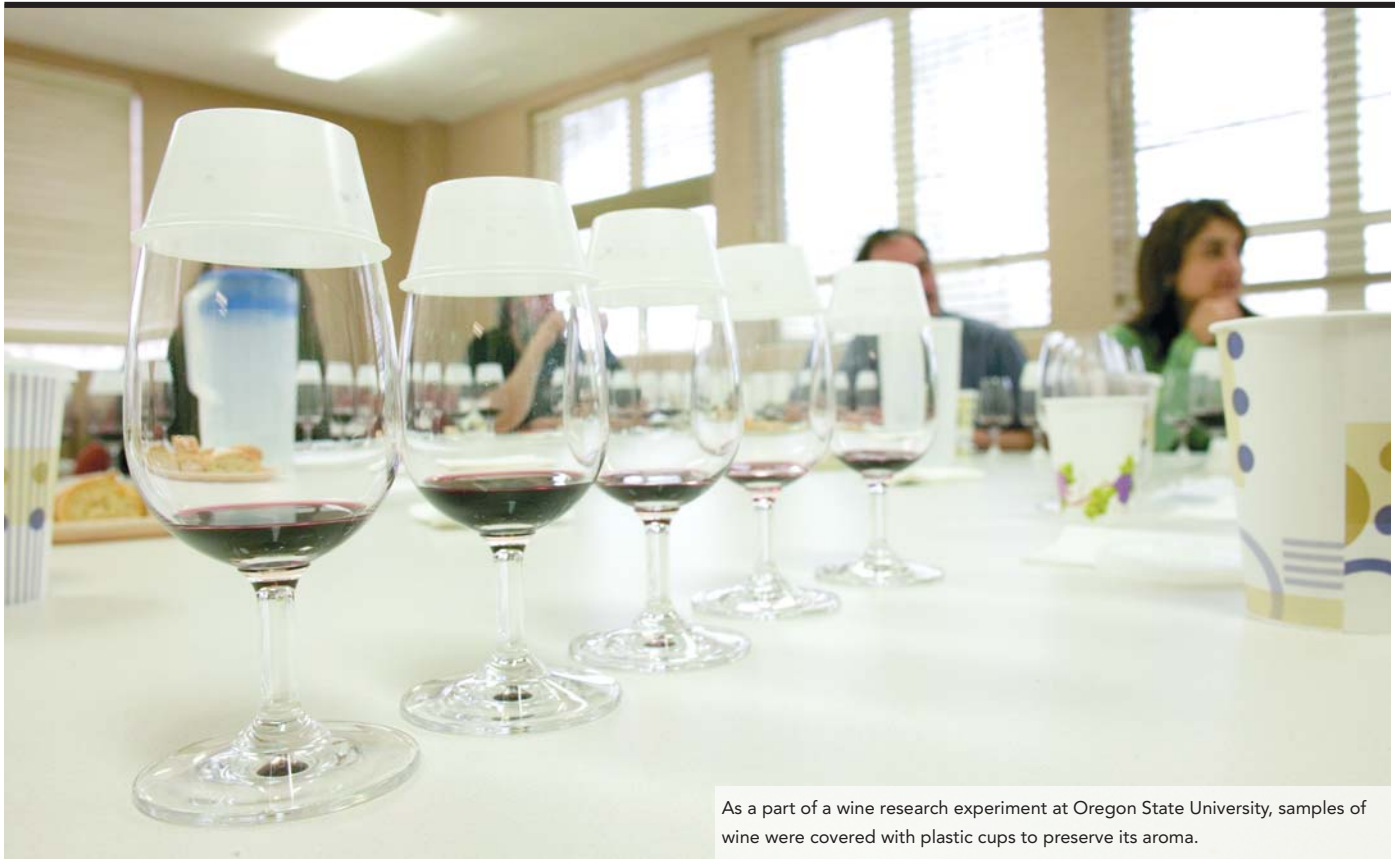


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As a part of a wine research experiment at Oregon State University, samples of wine were covered with plastic cups to preserve its aroma.

- It has a current staff of two faculty members in viticulture (in the Department of Horticulture) and two in enology (in the Department of Food Science and Technology) working full-time on grapes and wine.
- In its College of Agricultural Sciences, there are another eight scientists in the fields of entomology, plant pathology, plant physiology, soil science, microbiology, flavor chemistry and sensory evaluation working on grapes and wine. Together they represent the equivalent of 5.5 full-time positions.
- OSU has a research vineyard (**Woodhall Viticultural Center**) and a 34,000 square foot pilot plant winery.
- It's home to Oregon's highly regarded Extension Service. In some parts of the state, this service provides the only specialized help with viticulture.
- It is Oregon's only land-grant university and, as such, receives annual dollars for agricultural research from and is a partner to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- It has colleges of Business and Engineering, the **Linus Pauling Institute** (researching anti-oxidants in the diet), the **Food Innovation**

Center and the Austin Family Business Program, all of which could undertake work to help Oregon's wine industry.

- The Northwest Center for Small Fruits Research is housed on the OSU campus.

This range of expertise and facilities does not exist elsewhere in Oregon. The new Wine Institute will be able to use all of this research already occurring at OSU, target new research opportunities and educate growers through the school's extension service. It may also be able to help Oregon's many small wineries in business decisions.

CHANGING THE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION ARCHETYPE

It is well accepted among the wine community that Oregon needed to move beyond the existing artificial separation of its core researchers into different departments, namely Horticulture and Food Science.

The impetus for change began in the early days of the then-new Oregon Wine Board (OWB) in 2003, even before Executive Director **Ted Farthing** was hired. At that time, Board chair **Earl Jones** and his group wanted to think outside the proverbial box. Jones

said, "We asked what is wrong in Oregon and how can we make it better?" Farthing was hired and the board sent him out to speak with every winery and ask that same question. Jones said, "We did not want to operate as business as usual; we wanted to set out to fix everything that needed it. We discovered folks were not happy with research. So we went to the president of OSU and to its agriculture dean. We thought the whole thing needed to be fixed. It was no one's fault; it was the structure."

Jones and team noted that a single entity was needed that would address both Viticulture and Enology. And as long as they were envisioning this new paradigm, they wanted to include those aspects of business and marketing that affect the Oregon wine industry.

They first asked about creating an autonomous Department of Viticulture and Enology. That idea was abandoned when they realized that such a department's principal product, 30 new enology and viticulture graduates each year, would greatly exceed the needs of the still small-by-most-standards Oregon industry.

What OSU suggested, and the OWB members have come to enthusiastically

endorse, was an institute. They have defined institute to be an official autonomous entity within the university. It can have faculty and administration but doesn't need to have graduate students or its own building, laboratories or equipment. Its real strength is its ability to bring together a broad range of scientists, members of various departments, even various colleges, all working in a common area of interest.

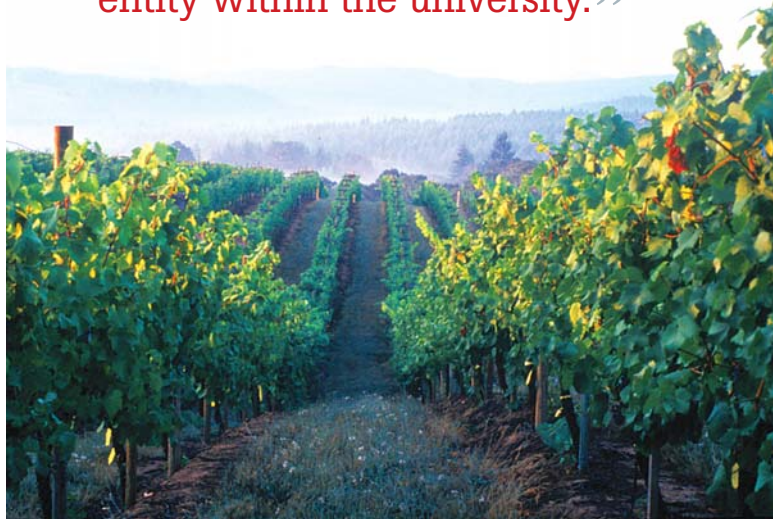
THE NEXT STEP

OSU has shown great leadership with the Institute and drew up most of the materials that are in use today. Members of the Oregon Wine Board have worked with the dean of Agricultural Sciences and department heads at OSU over the last year to envision an institute working in the three areas of importance to the Oregon industry: viticulture, enology and business.

Once the money has been raised—very soon, if not already by now—the search for the director will run in high gear.

This program is critically dependent on the person selected to fill the Institute director role. This person will have to have had experience in aca-

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demia and in the wine industry, be familiar with how basic and applied research is conducted and communicated, understand how a business is run, and possess incredible communication skills. In fact when **Sakkie Pretorius**, the highly respected head of the Australian Wine Research Board, was in Oregon to speak in February, he personified the kind of person sought by the WAB. Was he interested? Yes, but he said he has a commitment in Australia that he cannot abandon for a few more years. But Pretorius consulted with Oregon Wine Board members to plot who might be available and appropriate for the role. The OWB may even bring Pretorius back to consult with the selection process, according to Jones.

GOOD RESULTS ALREADY

Ted Casteel of **Bethel Heights Vineyard** sums it up well, with hope for the future.

“Already, interest in research has undergone a revival among many of the key players, especially on the vineyard side. In the Willamette Valley, we are now meeting monthly at the **Dundee Bistro** with people from OSU, brainstorming problems, reviewing ongoing projects, etc. There were about

40 people at our last meeting. OSU extension viticulturist **Patty Skinkis** and viticultural consultant **Allen Holstein** are organizing the meetings. I sense a real community beginning to form. It is all quite exciting,” said Casteel.

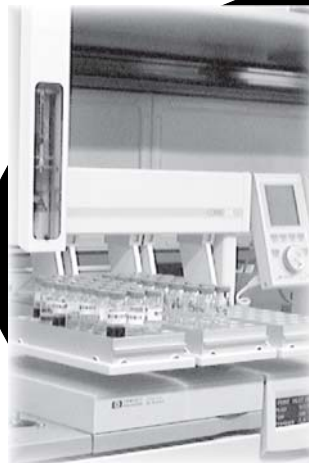
The Oregon Wine Board will support the new Institute by continuing to use a portion of its tax revenues to support research on grapes and wine in the state and by providing mechanisms that facilitate communication between the Institute and the industry.

Those who wish to contribute to the Institute can do so by contacting **Todd Bastian** at the OSU Foundation at 541-737-8724; Todd.Bastian@oregonstate.edu or **Ted Farthing**, executive director of the Oregon Wine Board, at 503-228-8336; ted@oregonwine.org. **wbm**

*Lisa Shara Hall has been a Senior Editor for WBM since 1998. She is the author of **Wines of the Pacific Northwest** and co-author of **The Food Lover's Companion to Portland**, as well as the first candidate in Oregon for the Master of Wine qualification.*

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