Dear FIG Students,

Hello and welcome to the Game of Life FIG! My name is Rebecca Tobe and I will be your FIG Assistant this term. I grew up in the small town of Piedmont, California, which is located in the Bay Area. I am a sophomore at the UO and an East Asian Studies major. I am interested in East Asian Studies but I'm also fascinated by computer sciences, literature, environmental studies, and law. I regularly participate in Think.Play, which is an on-campus group that engages in intellectual dialogue about video games and related media. I love hanging out with my friends, listening to music, and watching movies and TV.

Professor John Conery will be the teacher of the College Connections course. His areas of research include Bioinformatics and Computational Biology and he received his Ph. D. in Parallel Programming Languages in 1983. In 1995 he began working with Bioinformatics, and continues to do so today. Professor Conery has always enjoyed taking on large, complex problems that require computer assistance. He was part of the team at the UO that wrote the proposal to get new parallel computers for the school.

The Game of Life FIG combines two very different kinds of science, computer science and biology. It will include CIS 105: Explorations in Computing taught by Professor Conery, BI: 130: Introduction to Ecology taught by Cristin Hulslander, and the College Connections course, also taught by Professor Conery. These two fields of study may seem very different at a first glance, but you will learn to draw many connections between them. Like living organisms, technology has evolved and adapted to fit its environment. Technologies function and run through processes similar to living things: they observe their surroundings, they make decisions, and they react.

Once the term starts we'll be jumping right in, so we have some summer reading
assignments to help you get acquainted with the subject material! Don't worry, it's not a lot, this is just to help understand the kinds of things we'll be talking about this year. First off is Martin Gardener's article "Mathematical Games" from the Scientific American (see link). After that you can try your hand at the Game of Life. There are a number of predefined patterns which you can execute, but also try to mix things up. Create your own patterns and bring your findings to class.

During Week of Welcome there will be a FIG meeting where we will meet and discuss a bit more about the nature of the FIG. We will be meeting in Columbia 150 at 10 a.m. on Friday, September 21, 2012. It is very important that you arrive on time because we will be splitting up and relocating soon after.

We will also be going to the University Convocation together as a FIG. Convocation, held on Sunday September 23, 2012, is the formal welcome to new students given at the beginning of the year.

We are really looking forward to meeting all of you! If you have any more questions, feel free to email me at rtobe@uoregon.edu or rebeccatobe@gmail.com.

Best,

Rebecca Tobe and Professor Conery