Dear Science in the News student,

Hello! I hope this letter finds you enjoying your summer and getting excited to start a great year at the University of Oregon. I want to start by welcoming you to the Science in the News Freshman Interest Group (FIG) where you will get a chance to experience applying chemistry as you gain a new perspective on scientific issues in popular news. Before I talk more about the FIG, let me introduce myself.

My name is Opher Kornfeld and I will be the Assistant for the Science in the News FIG. I come from Portland, OR, and am a Junior at the university and the Robert D. Clark Honors College, majoring in biochemistry in the pre-medicine path. Outside of the classroom, you would most likely find me in the Institute of Molecular Biology where I work as an undergraduate researcher for Dr. Hawley. My research focus is on the characteristics and functions of the various subunits of RNA Polymerase II (the enzyme that transcribes mRNA). Besides academics, I enjoy surfing, backpacking, and volunteering at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI).

Teaching the College Connections course (CH 199) will be Dr. Hawley. Dr. Hawley is a professor in the Department of Chemistry, teaching biochemistry, and a member of the Institute of Molecular Biology. She received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Kansas and her doctorate degree from Harvard University. She has been teaching at the University of Oregon since 1986. Her research focuses on the enzymology of RNA polymerases and other mechanisms by which eukaryotic transcription is regulated. Outside of the university, Dr. Hawley sings with various performance groups in Eugene. She also competes with her two dogs in dog agility contests.

As a Science in the News FIG student, you will take the General Chemistry Course (CH 221), the first of a three-term sequence covering first-year chemistry concepts such as atomic structure, thermodynamics, equilibrium, and chemical reactions, and the General Chemistry Lab course (CH 227), a course designed to accompany the lecture course with hands-on experiments, with your fellow FIG students. In addition to the chemistry courses you will be taking, we will meet in the classroom once a week for the College Connections course (CH 199). In this class, you will get a chance to interact with Dr. Hawley, me, and the rest of the FIG students in a small-class setting. You will get the chance explore popular scientific controversies and learn to support various ideas and beliefs using reliable scientific literature. In addition, you will assess the validity of various points of view using critical questions and discover the resources available to you to answer them. It is our hope that through this course, you will be able to adapt to the university’s academic environment, get time to talk to a professor one-on-one, meet new friends, and, most importantly, make the most out of your first term in college! To get you started, we ask that you take your time this summer to find two to three articles about any scientific topic from a popular news source, such as the New York Times or the Oregonian. We ask that for the mean time, you stay away from sources that deal primarily with science, such as Scientific American or Science News. Please read your articles and bring them with you to our first meeting.

The Science in the News FIG is residential, which means that you will get a chance to live in the same residence hall as your fellow FIG students and me! Being in a residential FIG creates many great opportunities to discuss class material, get homework help, form effective study groups, and make friends that have the same interests as you. It is always a great feeling that you can get
help on anything from peers or me, who only live a few doors down. Being in a residential FIG also means that you will get to participate in programs with your peers that are out of the scope of the university’s academic realm as well.

Both Dr. Hawley and I can’t wait to meet you! We will be having our first mandatory FIG meeting on **Friday, September 21st, 2010 (during Week of Welcome) at 11:00 AM in Columbia 150.** It is crucial to be on time as we will move to a different location to meet Dr. Hawley. We will also be heading, as a FIG, to the University Convocation on **Sunday, September 23rd.**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. My e-mail address is: **opherk@uoreogn.edu.** Also, I would love to hear from you and get to know you better before the beginning of the school year, so I would appreciate you e-mailing me with your name, hometown, and major (undeclared is great too!).

W can’t wait to see you on Friday, September 23rd!

Opher Kornfeld and Dr. Hawley

Science in the News FA and FIG Professor

P.S. Please do not forget your Student Handbook (that you got during IntroDUCKtion) when you come in the fall.