

Even as a child growing up in Klamath Falls, Gwynne Mhuireach knew deep down that she wanted to be an architect. Life also instilled in her a love of science and dancing, so she earned a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Washington and ran her own dance studio in Portland for ten years. But that dream of engaging in the field of architecture never died.

Now, thanks to a gift from the Portland-based architectural firm SRG Partnership, the mother of two-year-old twins is applying her scientific background as a graduate research fellow in the UO's nationally acclaimed Energy Studies in Buildings Laboratory. The lab, directed by UO architecture professor G.Z. "Charlie" Brown, works in partnership with the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance to assist designers, utilities, and developers in creating deeply green buildings.

"This fellowship means a great deal to me," Mhuireach said. "It allows me to begin impacting the world in a small way by doing research that helps architects while I'm working toward my master's degree in architecture."

Brown said fellowships like the one funded by SRG provide students with a stipend, tuition for three terms, and a paid summer job. "The only way that dynamite students can come here is with this type of support," he said, noting that all students have a stake in the university's ability to attract the best of the best. "Much of what you learn in graduate school, you learn from your peers," Brown said.

"The better your peers are, the better your education will be."

SRG's managing principal, Dennis Cusack '72, B.A. Arch., says the firm's relationship with Brown's lab has permeated virtually all its projects since the late 1990s, when Brown first became involved with the firm by helping with the UO's Lillis Business Complex, lauded as a model for sustainable design. "This fellowship will help develop a more comprehensive way of evaluating how well buildings actually perform after they are occupied," Cusack said.

"I certainly hope it will benefit other firms as well."

One of Cusack's partners, Kent Duffy '71, B.A. Arch., says Brown's lab is unique because it functions very similarly to a private consulting practice. "We need to prepare a whole group of leaders for the future, and that's what Charlie's lab is doing in spades," Duffy said. "Charlie's level of experience in sustainable design is very rare. He was doing it when nobody was paying attention."

Last year's SRG Fellow, Dylan Lamar, was a civil engineer from Jonesboro, Arkansas. He said the value of graduate research fellowships simply can't be



Gwynne Mhuireach uses a heliodon to analyze how sun and shade would affect the outdoor spaces around a building as part of her work as the SRG Partnership Graduate Research Fellow in Architecture.

expressed in dollars. "When people support such fellowships, they're supporting a unique part of the university's educational system," said Lamar, who received his master's degree in architecture in June. "Seeing the rubber meet the road provides a much more powerful education than simply listening to lectures or reading textbooks."