

## Willamette University gives students, staff Flex-ability in their transportation options

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Lukas Strandberg, 21, doesn't have a car at Willamette University, so he relies on the bus or his own two feet to get places off campus.

Now, the Willamette senior has a third option: Flexcar. The car-sharing program allows him to rent vehicles by the hour.

"You don't have to rent it for the whole day," Strandberg said. "You can rent it for a short period of time."

Willamette University partnered with Flexcar to bring the national program to Salem this fall, offering students, faculty and residents an alternative form of transportation.

The goal is to encourage people to use public transportation, get fewer students to bring cars to school and support sustainable programs.

"By bringing Flexcar to Salem and our campus, we can get people out of their cars and encourage them to use mass transit," said Joe Bowersox, the director of the Center for Sustainable Communities at Willamette.

Flexcar members reserve vehicles online at the company's Web site, [www.flexcar.com](http://www.flexcar.com), or by phone. They pick up the car at a designated location, using a membership card to gain access. When they're done, they return the car to its parking spot.

In Salem, there are two vehicles available: a Honda Civic Hybrid parked by Kaneko Commons on Mill Street and a Subaru wagon on Ferry Street at Church Street NE.

Rental rates start at about \$9 an hour or \$65 per day, which includes gas, insurance and maintenance. Usually there's an annual \$35 membership fee, but it is being waived for the first year of the program at Willamette for those who sign up by the end of this month.

Bowersox said Flexcar gives faculty members a way to run errands in the middle of the day without having to drive to work. It also provides a vehicle to students who don't own a car, especially 18- to 20-year-olds who typically can't rent one. Ross Stout, the director of campus safety at Willamette, estimated that there are about 800 Willamette students who aren't yet 21.

"Their choice is to have no car or bring one from home," he said. "We're hoping to promote the idea that they don't need to bring a car to college."

That would help alleviate parking issues at the university where spaces are at a premium, Bowersox said. More people using Flexcar also could help address downtown parking problems while supporting those who want to live a car-free lifestyle.



Willamette University student Lukas Strandberg has registered to use the Flexcar program. He is shown with one of the company's shared vehicles near campus. Photo by Timothy J. Gonzales, Statesman Journal

### Link

[www.flexcar.com](http://www.flexcar.com)

"Willamette is encouraging and subsidizing that lifestyle in downtown Salem," Bowersox said.

Flexcar, with its low-emission, fuel-efficient vehicles and car-sharing model, dovetails into Willamette's commitment to sustainability, Stout said.

The company already has partnered with more than 30 other colleges and universities to bring Flexcar to their campuses, including Portland State and the University of Portland.

Flexcar was founded as a public-private partnership in 1999. It started operations in Seattle in 2000 and since has expanded into many metropolitan areas across the country, including Portland, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Members can reserve cars in any of the cities where Flexcar operates.

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