

Oliver sees student union potential

Editor's Note: This is the last article in a five-part series that has examined the four ASUO vice-presidential sectors and ASUO Pres. Jan Oliver's administration.

By **BRENDA TABOR**
Of the Emerald

"When I was elected, people came up and told me that for the first time they had a hope and a chance for something better," ASUO Pres. Jan Oliver told students in an informal speech in the EMU courtyard recently.

When Oliver campaigned last spring, she charged that the past administration was "too cold and too professional." Oliver said that former President Jim Bernau's administration was out of touch with students.

Oliver proposed to rectify the communication problem by encouraging diversified students to work in the ASUO. After her election Oliver cut her salary by \$1,200 and appointed four "specialists" as vice-presidents. They deal with everything from campus programs to lobbying in Salem.

"We relate to people on a personal level. We're open, loose, and above all, keep a sense of humor," Oliver says of her administration.

While communicating with and relating to students is in the forefront of the ASUO, so is the "professionalism" that the Bernau administration was criticized for.

Members of her administration work as professionals for the student association, researching students' legal rights, working to reduce incidental fees and gain more control over them; writing student contracts and lobbying both the State Board of Higher Education and the Oregon legislature. The ASUO recently formed an Office of Student Advocacy to "Resolve conflicts between students and institutional barriers," Oliver says.

"Today's students are more professional, competent, and responsible than they have ever been," she says. "Students are more creative than administrators and much more flexible." But too often, Oliver says, their ideas just roll around looking for a place to stop. She believes the "openness" of her administration is creating an atmosphere that encourages students to "come in and do this."

"We now have the potential to make substantial change," Oliver says. "Students are holding commit-

tee positions of power and authority, helping make decisions that affect our lives," she adds.

Last spring she said student unionization would work "(only) if students were behind it." Now she says that the trend toward consumerism and the growing belief that students should have a say in their education clearly point toward unionization.

Last spring, the ASUO hired an accountant to perform an audit of the EMU. Currently, ASUO-hired lawyers are contemplating suing the state, she says, for building tennis courts with student dormitory fees.

"These things would have been unthinkable ten years ago," she says, "now they just happen quietly." Oliver believes unionization will follow, within five to ten years.

On another issue, Oliver promised and delivered a lobbying effort. Last spring she told voters she "would support a strong ASUO lobbying effort at the legislature," although she said it would be "second to campus concerns."

Lobbying has assumed a prominent position in the Oliver administration. The ASUO recently adopted a legislative program covering issues from the abolishment of non-tenure positions to returning the health fee to student incidental fees. Staff members are currently working on legislation that would legally bind institutions to provide the services they describe in catalogs.

Oliver said she wanted to "continue pursuing the academic concerns of the past administration" during spring campaigning. Her administration has pursued the topic of tenure as well as public release of faculty evaluation and continued publishing the Consumer's Guide to Classes. The ASUO also plans to print a financial aid survival handbook.

Basically, the Oliver administration is continuing the momentum begun by former ASUO President Robert Liberty and carried through by the Bernau administration.

"Of course, there's a lot we can't do," says Oliver, and in the short run, we're focussing on what is clearly possible." Her personal objectives include increasing the sense of community among students, assisting in their personal lives and providing options for self-fulfillment.

But Oliver's biggest objective may be to "Stay sane"—"this job really pushes you, and that's the best part."

"I think when all is said and done, the personal victories will be the most important to me. The political successes are great," she says, "but it's what happens inside that really counts."



Jan Oliver

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