

Oliver supports 'non-traditional' students

By BRENDA TABOR
Of the Emerald

Jan Oliver's election as ASUO president last spring opened formerly untapped reserves. It was the second time a woman had assumed the office. But it marked a first for a woman, student-parent minority to assume leadership of a student association normally operated to benefit "average" students.

Categorically, Oliver was a "non-traditional" student grouped with other students whose shared characteristics were that they didn't act like or look like average students, nor did they hold the same interests. The non-traditional student also found barriers getting through the University's door and, once in-

side, coping with the situations they found. Oliver directed her administration toward finding the closed doors and dealing with the attitudes inside.

Oliver's administration has focused on barriers that affect handicapped, ethnic minorities, student parents, low-income, middle-income, older and other non-traditional students.

"If there's anything that runs through everything I've done, that's it — access," she says.

One of the obstructions for non-traditional learners, she says, is coming to a barrier which says: "The reason you're not there is because you're not supposed to be there." The fallacy blocks the way of the handicapped, minorities, low-income and other non-traditional students.

"The value of my being here was that I spoke to the idea that students don't all do the same things, live the same way or think the same way," she says. "Everyone has different experiences."

Oliver says she seemed like a non-traditional student. "Now I see non-traditional students in the (ASUO) office, involved in programs or in the EMU. We're here, and there are more of us coming all the time, and more chance of breaking down the stereotypes of what all students think and do," Oliver says. Removing those preconceptions, she notes, could make educational experiences more accessible to students who don't fit into any mold.

She views the idea, that all programs should benefit large segments of the student population, as dangerous. "Saying the Center for Self Development shouldn't exist because there aren't enough students to support it — that's backward."

Oliver says the same thinking clouds child care and its necessity. "We have a history of the way it was," she explains, "confining people from seeing the way it should be." Such narrow thinking,

she adds, prevents beneficial change that could remove barriers and open new opportunities.

Oliver also advocated lowering tuition and increasing financial aid eligibility, changes that would make education more accessible to another often ignored group — middle-income students.

At the beginning of her term, Oliver says she thought she had a good chance of succeeding with a minority program, legislation providing students aid for child care and holding tuition down.

Now, Oliver says, she may be able to decrease tuition. "The child care bill — it's a matter of how much money we'll get to distribute," she says confidently.

She has also attempted changes from within the University to help students resolve discrimination and other injustices inside the classroom. "For some people, getting through the door isn't the problem," she notes. "It's what is going to be here once you arrive."

The ASUO funded a student advocacy office this year to help students solve administrative problems in the University — a continuation of the idea of access. "We can initiate the process" to

resolve disputes and open channels to students, she says.

Class action may become a popular student tool for dealing with academic and administrative grievances in the University. "If students handle grievances collectively, the weight of the situation isn't going to topple them," says Oliver.

Student-produced course evaluations could be another method of dealing with inequities and injustices in the classroom — sometimes the final barrier for the non-traditional student. "If we could find a way to do our own course evaluations, there would be a place on the evaluation so students can note the derogatory and demeaning remarks that originate in the classroom, like a business professor who refers to black students as 'spooks'."

Calling them on it now may endanger the success of the programs, she says, but could enhance (and open) the University later.

Oliver notes that she hasn't involved as many students in or reached as many students as she hoped through the ASUO. "It takes a while for them to catch on to the idea that students here care about students."

Women advance up legislative ladder

By MARY BETH BOWEN
Of the Emerald

SALEM — Is there sex discrimination among legislators at the Oregon Legislature?

The reply from most legislators — male and female — is a resounding "no."

"The political process makes everyone equal," says 12-year-veteran Sen. Betty Roberts, D-Portland. "They need my vote just as much as I need theirs."

But while women legislators may not be discriminated against at the Capitol, they seem to have a hard time getting there. Women make up 13 per cent of the 1977 Legislature — three out of 30 in the Senate and 9 out of 60 in the House.

But the percentage is a strong improvement over 1967, when only 5.5 per cent of the legislators were women.

With such a small minority, the Legislature undoubtedly picked up the flavor of a men's club. But as Rep. Hardy Myers, D-Portland, pointed out, "If the decisions were made primarily by men, it was because of their numerical predominance. I think the atmosphere now is probably more favorable in terms of the advancement of women."

A look at the number of "madame chairmen" bears out Myers' contention.

In the House, eight-year-veteran Rep. Nancie Fadeley, D-Eugene/Springfield, chairs the Environment and Energy Committee for the third time. Six-year-veteran Rep. Peg Dereli, D-Salem, wields the gavel of the Social Services Committee and Rep. Pat Whiting, D-Tiger, also a six-year-veteran, chairs the Transportation Committee.

In the Senate, Sen. Betty Browne, D-Oakridge, is the second-time chair of the Judiciary Committee.

Perhaps the greatest stride this session was made by Rep. Vera Katz, D-Portland, who became the first woman to co-chair the powerful Joint Ways and Means Committee.

Women legislators are adamant about the absence of discrimination or negative attitudes toward women at the Capitol.

"I've never had any negative vibes from male legislators," says Dereli. "If there are any conflicts between legislators, usually they are over personality, and not gender."

Whiting says the only negative attitudes she has encountered are from people not accustomed to Oregon's system.

"I've had trouble with out-of-state lobbyists," she said. "They just aren't used to the idea of a woman serving as a legislator. But I've never had any problems here."

Rep. Mary Rieke, R-Portland, says she has seen no discrimination in her six-years at the Capitol, "although I've certainly been aware of it at earlier times in my life."

The absence of discrimination was also commented upon by most men legislators.

"There may be some clubbiness here," said Rep. Ed Lindquist, D-Milwaukie, the House Majority Leader, "but it's certainly much less than in other state legislatures."

Ten-year-veteran Rep. Sam Johnson, R-Redmond, says he thinks today's men legislators have an easier time accepting women as equals than they have in the past.

"Before, women were supposed to be housewives rather than equal partners," said Johnson. "The major thing for men was to get over their self-consciousness, and to be able to look at women eye-to-eye, as equals. Now men legislators are more willing to accept women, not because of any loss (that says they must), but because they are competent. There are a hell of a lot of good women around these days."

One of the ironies of being a woman legislator, says Roberts, is although you aren't directly discriminated against, you can see it happening to other women first hand.

"The worst episode was back in 1969, when the League of Women Voters was introducing some elections reforms," laughed Roberts. "Sen. John Bain was arguing against the reform and said the women from the League of Women Voters — who were packed into the galleries that day — had no business being there; they should be home in the kitchen. I got up and asked him if he was implying that I shouldn't be in the Senate since I was in the League of Women Voters. He came running up to me afterwards and said, 'Oh Betty, I wasn't talking about YOU, I was talking about all those other women out there.'"

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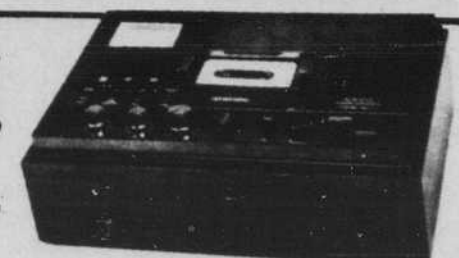
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