

Oregon daily emerald

Vol. 78, No. 123

Eugene, Oregon 97403

Wednesday, April 13, 1977

Colleges brace for more enrollment losses

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Of the Emerald

Some of Oregon's colleges are bracing themselves for decreasing trends in enrollment leading into the 1980s.

Last week, Willamette University in Salem took its first step in preparing for enrollment fluctuations when University Pres. Robert Lisensky announced he would ask the college trustees to dissolve the College of Theatre and Music and merge them with

the College of Liberal Arts.

Lisensky's plan aims at "streamlining administrative responsibilities," according to Bob Woodall, director of information services.

If the college trustees approve the merger in May, a general tightening of the administrative ranks will result, according to Woodall.

Lisensky says he believes the change will save money in the face of expected enrollment declines.

This could be the start of a series of precautionary measures taken to guard against enrollment declines in many of Oregon's colleges.

As Glenn Starlin, vice-provost at the University of Oregon points out, current data indicates a decrease in the 18 to 24-year-old age group leading into the 1980s. "We're just in the first phase of there being fewer people in this age group," he said. "We expect in the next five years, there will be a definite decline."

This represents a severe change from the large number of college-age students in recent years, a result of the post-World War II baby boom, according to Starlin.

Enrollment figures for this University show a decrease, with fall term, 1976, down 2.9 per cent from fall 1975 figures. Winter term enrollment figures showed a 3.7 per cent decrease from the year before.

The decrease already has caused a financial squeeze on this campus since the University is funded by the number of fulltime equivalent (FTE) students, or those taking a 15 credit hour load per term.

Southern Oregon State College (SOSC) in Ashland has also taken steps to cushion the blows of these projected enrollment declines, according to SOSC Pres. James Sours.

Enrollment was down four per cent fall term from the previous year. Winter term enrollment figures also showed a four per cent decline from the year before.

"We've reduced our faculty by 10 positions" in order to stay financially stable, says Sours. The college also is gearing up on programs for returning students and older "non-traditional students," according to the president.

Sours says SOSC initiated a study of high school enrollment two years ago. The study included students in grades nine through 12 in Josephine, Jackson and Klamath counties. Report findings showed an increase in these students, but Sours said at the same time Multnomah County, the largest county in Oregon, showed a steep decline in students within the same age group.

"The number of high school students just aren't there any-

more," he said.

Currently enrollment decreases are non-existent at Oregon College of Education (OCE) in Monmouth but OCE Pres. Leonard Rice says, "We are expected to have enrollment declines from 1981 until 1989."

In preparing for any decreases in enrollment Rice says, "We do a great deal of employing people on a fixed-term basis. He explained that in the California State School System people are hired for shorter periods or term appointments.

OCE is also going to count on what Rice terms as "normal attrition," or the expected vacancy of faculty positions caused by retirements.

"The most fundamental reasons why institutions are facing drops is because the veterans didn't stay in school as long as we expected," explains Rice. He points to OCE's case where this year there has been an eight per cent drop in men and an eight per cent increase in women enrolled in classes. He believes the decline of veterans enrolling in colleges "caught people off guard."

Robert Blummel, Portland State University (PSU) president, says "By our own estimates, we're not likely here to suffer reductions."

He says PSU draws students of varied age groups instead of the traditional 18 to 24 year-old group. PSU also has more students enrolled on a part-time basis.

But Blummel adds that regardless of PSU's stable enrollment, the school "will be making contingency plans."

While higher education officials have gone to the drawing boards to devise more stable methods of funding for state system institutions in the future, Starlin believes the projected declines forecasted for the early 1980s will affect all colleges.



Photo courtesy of the Oregon State Highway Commission

Escape into nature

Up a dead-end road, past the mangled remains of abandoned automobiles, Silver Falls, near Coos Bay, spreads its waters over a huge, dome-faced rock as it descends more than 200 feet. For a tour through Oregon's dense forest growth, see Page 10.

ASUO filing deadline today

Deadline for filing for both ASUO and OSPIRG positions is 5 p.m. today. ASUO candidates may file in Suite 4. OSPIRG candidates may submit applications in Suite 3, EMU. (See related story, Page 3).

A mandatory candidates' meeting is scheduled for 4:30 p.m. Thursday. Voter's guide statements are due 5 p.m. Friday in Suite 4, EMU. The ASUO president will be allowed 400 words while all other candidates are limited to 250 words.

Positions open and the number of applications filed by 4 p.m. Tuesday include: ASUO president (4),

the offices of president, vice-president and secretary/treasurer for the senior (0), junior (3) and sophomore classes (2), three positions on the EMU Board (1) and seven Student University Affairs Board (SUAB) positions.

SUAB positions open include: No. 7, health, physical education and recreation; No. 9, science and math; No. 11, fine and applied arts; No. 15, liberal arts and undeclared; No. 16, education and librarianship; (no applications filed for any of these positions), No. 2, journalism and speech (2); and No. 1, law/CSPA (1).

today

Fluoridation

The fluoride issue is back. Lorraine Nelson reports why the city council decided to return the issue to the voters on Page 7.

Herbicides

A workers' co-op in the coast range have proposed an unusual idea to Lane County. In light of recent herbicide suspension, its members have offered to brush-clear the roadsides for \$4 less per mile than the job would otherwise cost with herbicides. Kevin Harden reports on Page 9.

Day care

Student parents were rejoicing Tuesday at the state Capitol, where they managed to secure a date for a public hearing on House Bill 2459, which would expand the state's current day care program. See Page 14.