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OSL studying 'more feasible' tuition formula

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Of the Emerald

With tuition increases becoming as dependable as rain, the Oregon Student Lobby (OSL) is currently studying new ways to make school costs more feasible.

In an unofficial analysis, Robert Liberty, legislative coordinator for the OSL, suggests an "access oriented tuition policy." This would base tuition costs on the average student budget and the average family income which fluctuates in response to changes in the cost of living and peculiar costs associated with higher education.

The level of access could be measured, according to the essay, by determining the current income background distribution of higher education students by institution. Liberty says that in this way, the needs of the public rather than the expenses of the institution would be primarily served.

Resident undergraduates currently pay a 25 percent share of the cost of instruction.

Liberty says the percentage is more the consequence of politics than principle. He feels either 100 percent or 0 percent of the cost of instruction are the two logical alternatives.

"Anything in between is arbitrary, as the Chancellor (Roy Lieualen), has remarked on more than one occasion," Liberty says. "Free tuition is too expensive to be politically palatable, but requiring students to pay the entire cost of instruction would defeat the purpose of public higher education."

Charging students for instructional costs has been seen as a way of assigning costs to beneficiaries. However, Liberty points out that at many state Universities, including this one, student fees also go to non-educational programs.

"It is no more rational," says Liberty, "than allowing the state board to set tuition each year as it sees fit."

Liberty says the whole idea of state subsidized higher education is based on distributing its benefits as widely as possible and avoiding monopolization of the economic elite using its facilities. This is where his plan comes in.

By transferring the focus of tuition debates from cost of instruction percentages to assessing the resources available for Oregon students and their families, students might be better served, Liberty says.

"Access could be held constant or varied to meet certain objectives instead of changing unpredictably with fluctuations in the economy, the impact of inflation on higher education costs, or the unpredictability of politics," Liberty says.

According to Illinois Rep. Tom Corcoran, the largest decline of students attending college have been those in the middle income range.

Liberty points to the declining enrollments of middle income students along with the faster growth of higher education instruction costs than that of the Consumer Price Index as a reason for reassessing the tuition procedure.

The plan is still in its beginning stages and Liberty says the biggest task ahead is to find a workable formula for the system. Also, if the access formula was used, Liberty stresses the need to keep a "student profile memo to keep track of students' income background.

"We'd have to use this student profile tool to know when access is changing and to see what happens to the access when tuition increases," Liberty says.

The plan is still in its beginning stages and Liberty says further study is necessary before an official proposal can be presented.

Getting Oriented

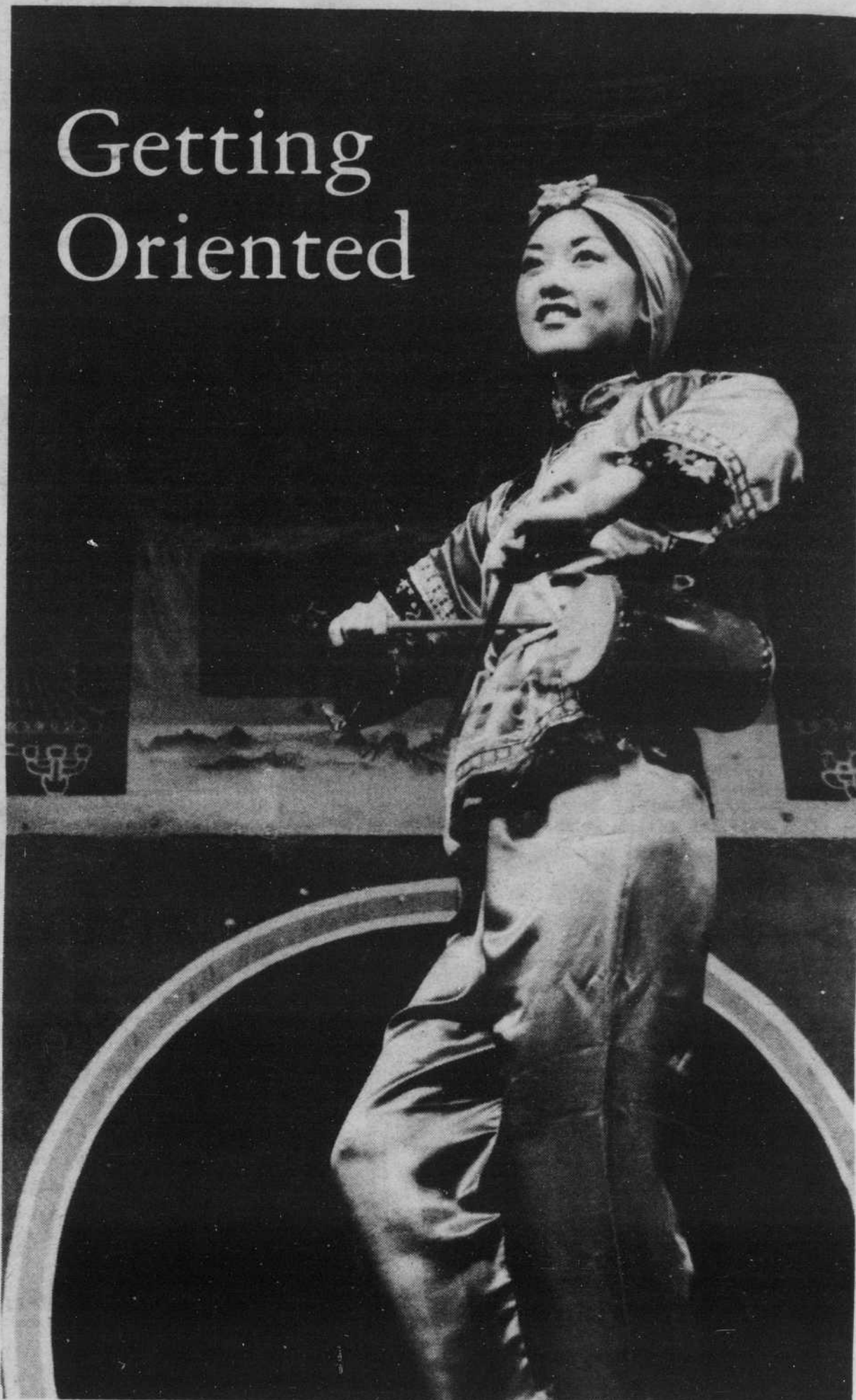


Photo by Dennis Hickok

The sights, sounds and scents of the Orient filled the air Sunday night when the annual China Night dinner and cultural performance entertained a full house in the EMU Ballroom. Twelve performances, including the drum dance, highlighted the program, which was sponsored by the University's Chinese Students Association.

Simeral accepts position for coming year

Economics professor Margaret Simeral has decided to accept a one-year appointment at the University for the academic year 1978-79.

Last term the economics department voted to open her present two-year appointment to other applicants when it expires this June. After public comment in support of her retention, the department reconsidered its original decision and offered her the one-year contract.

"I don't think there was any lessening of the publish or perish criteria," Simeral commented. "If anything, it's made things more clean, and I'm grateful for that."

While the department recognized Simeral as an outstanding teacher, it considered her research to date inadequate for another two-year contract.

"I think they decided I was worth something, but they weren't sure exactly what,"

she said. Simeral said she thinks several of her colleagues became more favorably disposed to her activities during the decision.

Simeral has designed three graduate-level courses: Labor Economics, Issues in Labor, and Women and Economics in addition to participating in the Labor Economics Research Center, the University Federation of Teachers, and other community groups.

Simeral says she will teach half-time in order to do research, continue her extra activities and have "enough time to take care of a new baby" which is due in May.

Because the new appointment is for only one year, the department will notify Simeral whether or not it will be renewed again this June. The department's policy is to consider reappointments a year in advance so that if they are not continued, there will be sufficient time to seek a position elsewhere.