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Computer 'bugs' clog registration

No systems go on pre-registration plans

By ANN PORTAL
Of the Emerald

After fall term's almost overwhelming computer problems and setbacks, the dream of computer pre-registration for University students this winter is dead.

Unwilling to continue extending "overly optimistic" promises, two University administrators immersed in planning pre-registration say they are no longer able to even predict a "birthdate" for the complex new system.

"It's been a very difficult pregnancy," says Gerald Moseley, associate provost for student affairs.

In the past, some University personnel have said, "Yes, we can do it by a certain time," but that's never been true, says Registrar Wanda Johnson.

"Pre-registration is a nice feature, and this institution should be moving toward that," but the University must first build a solid foundation, she says.

With a pre-registration plan, students would submit course requests and alternates, allowing the registrar's office to pinpoint problems resulting from overcrowding.

"That's what we need desperately. That's the soul of pre-registration," Johnson says.

The student would be given a tentative schedule, and changes could be made through a MacArthur Court process similar to the present one. The new system would give students more time to talk with advisors and would allow the University to eventually adopt a computer billing system, enabling students to pay by mail.

The first brick in the pre-registration foundation, conversion from an old computer to a new IBM 43-41, was laid in July, six months behind schedule. Student records were then fed into a new Student Information File containing basic biographical data on each student. That conversion has been the source of most of this fall's problems.

During the conversion, the University should have run the old and new computers as parallel systems in order to monitor problems, Moseley says. Although some parallel programs were run, time limitations pulled the plug on others. The old computer's lease expired and the University was forced to rely on the new computer, "de-bugging" while operating on line, he says.

"We asked for trouble, and we got trouble," Moseley says. "Everybody's at their wits' end."

Among the problems have been transcripts with information missing, registration packets (for 5,000 new students) lost because no program for producing them had been written, reversed drop-adds and 17,000 forms printed with incorrect information.

Before pre-registration can even be considered, the Student Information File must be completely "de-bugged" and the second layer of the foundation — a Student Records Master file — must be laid, Johnson says.

The Student Records Master will con-

tain the cumulative academic records of students, past and present.

Unfortunately, the file that contains student information from previous years is poorly documented and not in good order, Johnson says. Every time information is taken from those disks (currently stored in a locked closet), the accuracy of the files is jeopardized, she says.

"The integrity of that file is very troublesome to some of us who work with it day to day."

The central issue, which will be the

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most difficult to "de-bug," is a familiar one — a lack of funds.

Over the past three years, as much as \$750,000 has been spent on the conversion, Moseley says. But no development money was given for the project, so the money has come from deferring maintenance on the old system and increasing workloads. People have resigned and some classified positions have been moved from other areas to work on pre-registration and conversion, he says.

The new files require additional software and programs that staff have attempted to create in their "spare time" using programs from other universities.

But many programs still need to be written, and there will be much discussion of whether certain registration policies should be revised to eliminate the need for some of those programs, he says.

Moseley says administrators in charge of pre-registration have been asking for additional money since 1968. Even if there were an "ample pouring on of money" now, pre-registration is impossible this year, he says.

At the direction of University Pres. Paul Olum, the pre-registration team is trying to assess the simplest, most cost-effective system for "some form" of pre-registration, without going all the way, Moseley says.

Johnson says there is a possibility of going ahead with a "crash system," depending on what the administration decides, but she says she wants at least an 80 percent chance of success.

"I bet I want pre-registration more than Johnson Hall does," she says, but pre-registration without adequate computer programs would be a "nightmare." Without more money for development, pre-registration is impossible, Johnson says.

It may take four or five years for the entire system to be converted, Moseley says, yet intense efforts and a commitment to pre-registration survive.

"It isn't a lost idea. It is to be done."



Photo by Bob Baker

Windy Weekend

The weekend weather left its mark on the Kappa Sigma fraternity at 1090 Alder street. Saturday, at about 6:30 a.m., a tree bounced from a neighboring roof onto the frat's, causing extensive damage to both. Dan Delaney, president of Kappa Sigma, surveys the damage.

Local pair's generosity graces University, OSU

A Eugene couple who believe higher education needs relief more than home owners do, have donated their rebate to two Oregon universities.

To send a message to state legislators, Norman and Elizabeth Boyles split their 1981 property tax rebate, sending equal amounts of the "\$280 and some cents" to the University and to Oregon State University.

"We thought one was as hard up as the other," Norman Boyles says.

Boyles, who worked for 10 years as a custodial supervisor at the University before retiring in 1974, says he and his wife feel higher education is less of a priority in the state right now.

Gov. Vic Atiyeh's property tax relief program is more concerned with returning money to those who may not really need it than supporting necessary state services, he says.

"To me, it doesn't make very good sense," Boyles says. "Why don't they give that money to the universities?"

The Boyles' son and daughter attend the University, three nephews graduated from OSU with degrees in mechanical engineering, and a son-in-law teaches landscape architecture at OSU.

But Norman Boyles says his son-in-law had to find another job when it was announced his department would be eliminated at the end of the year.

He says he hopes he can influence others to spend their property tax rebate the same way, although he says he doesn't know of anyone who's thinking about it.

University Pres. Paul Olum and Roy Lieuallen, Chancellor of the Oregon State Board of Higher Education, both sent letters thanking the couple for their contribution. Boyles says he hasn't heard from OSU.

Giving back the nearly \$300 means "a little belt tightening and a couple less Christmas presents," Boyles says, adding "we just thought it might help."