

School budget cuts rip local economy

By DONALD COULTER
Of the Emerald

Where's the sixth-toughest city in America to find a job? This article is the second of a four-part series exploring the University's relationship to the local economy.

Eugene, Oregon, is a horrible place to look for a job. Just look at the statistics.

A national magazine recently rated Eugene as the sixth-toughest city in the United States to find employment. (Flint, Mich., was number one.) The unemployment rate in Lane County was 11.7 percent in October — 3.7 points higher than the national average — and although no official figures have been released for November, the consensus is that it will undoubtedly top 12 percent. As a result, EWEB has estimated that 15,000 Eugene-Springfield residents have moved from the area in the last year in search of work.

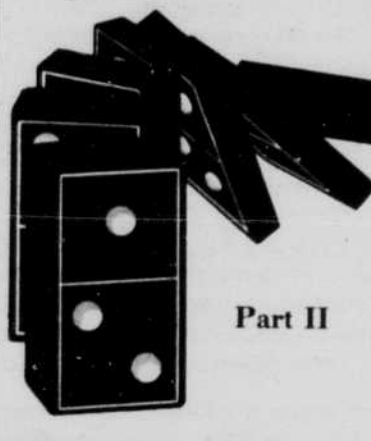
"I've been in personnel employment for the last 10 years in Eugene," says Mari Burton, manager of Emerald Employment Agency, "and I've never seen it like this. Even the last recession (1975) wasn't this bad."

"There's very little turnover (of jobs) in any field. People won't leave their jobs because there's nothing better for them to go to."

Even optimistic predictions about Eugene's economy are bleak. Most experts say that the employment situation won't improve until at least May or June. This upswing is sure to be brief, especially if the University — Lane County's largest employer — is forced to absorb the 20 percent across-the-board cuts requested by Gov. Vic Atiyeh.

"Until now, the unemployment problem in this area has been related almost exclusively to the lumber industry," says Margaret Hallock of the State Employment Division. "It will be another problem if the

The economics of employment



University faces an enormous cut. All recovery will be blunted."

Although it is impossible at this point to project exactly what the effects of a major budget cut will be on the economy, it will surely mean the layoff of both faculty members and classified employees. In addition, students who can no longer afford higher tuition costs — which may increase by 80 percent — will be forced into the job market.

"Losing students as well as staff will have far reaching effects, because the University utilizes so much of the community's services and goods," says Don Mason of the Eugene Chamber of Commerce. He says the effects of a 20 percent cut would ripple down to the economy, eventually knocking other people out of their jobs.

Obviously, some out-of-work professors and University employees will join the exodus out of the area, but it won't be easy for those rooted in Eugene.

"How many jobs do you know that are open in Eugene to middle-aged English professors?" quipped one faculty member.

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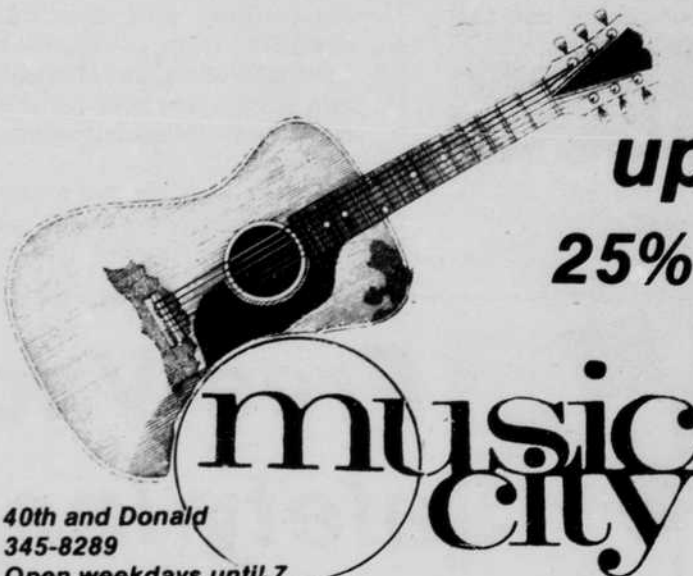
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