

Power positions

Student leadership rewarding despite long hours, low pay

ASUO Pres. Rich Wilkins estimates he earns about \$1 an hour for about 50 hours of work a week.

Bob Needham, EMU Board chairer, calls his \$75 a month salary "beer money," while Alan Contreras, ASUO vice president for program administration, says he works at least 30 hours a week while he is paid for only 20.

Many student government participants say their salaries do not mirror the time and effort they put into their jobs. And most say they aren't in it for the money.

"The main reason we all do this is because it's fun. If I didn't enjoy this job, I wouldn't be doing it," Contreras says.

"Part of the reward is making real decisions," he adds. "I know I'm not just spinning my wheels."

Contreras says he has "real control" over more than half a million dollars. "If I screw up, it really counts," he says.

Authority makes the job exciting to Needham, who considers himself a volunteer.

"You work with big numbers and big ideas," he says.

Influence is important to Karsten Rasmussen, chairer of the Incidental Fee Committee. Members of the IFC are some of the most influential participants in student government, he says adding that most politicians enjoy wielding influence and gaining attention.

More important to Rasmussen, however, is the opportunity to work with people, solve problems and organize the work efficiently, he says. That's what makes his position worthwhile personally and professionally, he says.

"It's a mixture of a desire to serve and a desire to do it yourself (that makes people run for office)," Rasmussen says.

"I thought I could serve the students," Wilkins says.

He says it's rewarding to channel resources to people dedicated to a cause.

"Some people think it's like a bunch of kids playing politics," Wilkins says. But students can be a major force in promoting change.

"The student movement was a key factor for social change in the sixties," Wilkins says.

"If student government did not have an influence, there would be radical changes in the way the University of

Oregon runs," he says.

While promoting change is a rewarding aspect of Wilkins' post, he says the experience he has gained is invaluable.

"The experience that I'm getting is unmatched to almost anything. Now I can apply some of the information that I've learned in class," Wilkins says.

"The experience far outweighs everything," Needham agrees.

"This job keeps my analytical skills sharper than if I were looking at abstract textbooks all the time," Contreras says.

But Contreras, like the others, says he's made some academic sacrifices because of the time he must devote to his student government position.

He says he thinks his ASUO position helped him gain admittance to the University law school with relatively low grades.

"Anybody who serves as vice president or higher is not going to have very good grades," Contreras says.

Wilkins also says his grades have suffered.

"I've been on and off academic probation and academic warning," he says.

Wilkins says communication problems also present a problem for him. He's lost friends because of student government actions he had no part in, he says.

"You can't make everybody happy," Wilkins says. "I admit we've raised a few eyebrows, but nobody could convince me that I'm doing things that are irresponsible."

Similarly, Rasmussen says he doesn't mind arguments, but he hates when he is criticized for things he didn't do.

"It makes the job less pleasant," he says. "At times you wonder why you're doing it."

Interacting with people is the most frustrating and the most gratifying part of his job, Needham says.

Working on the EMU Board has helped him learn new skills, such as budgeting and how to work with people, he says.

"The title is nothing; the title is not going to impress anybody," Needham says.

"What you do is important. That's what your going to want to put down on a resume and be able to talk about."

By Mike Anderson



Photo by Mark Pynes

Rich Wilkins "Some people think it's like . . . kids playing politics."

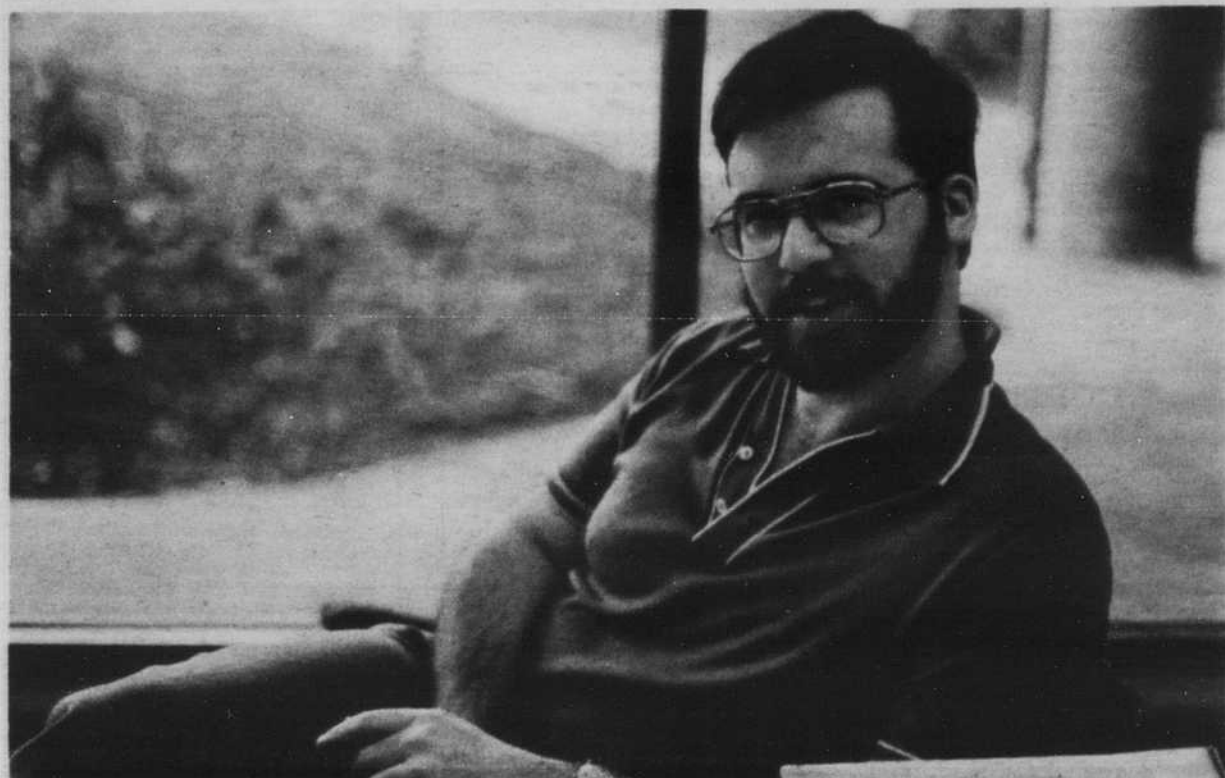


Photo by Mark Pynes

Alan Contreras "Part of the reward is making real decisions."

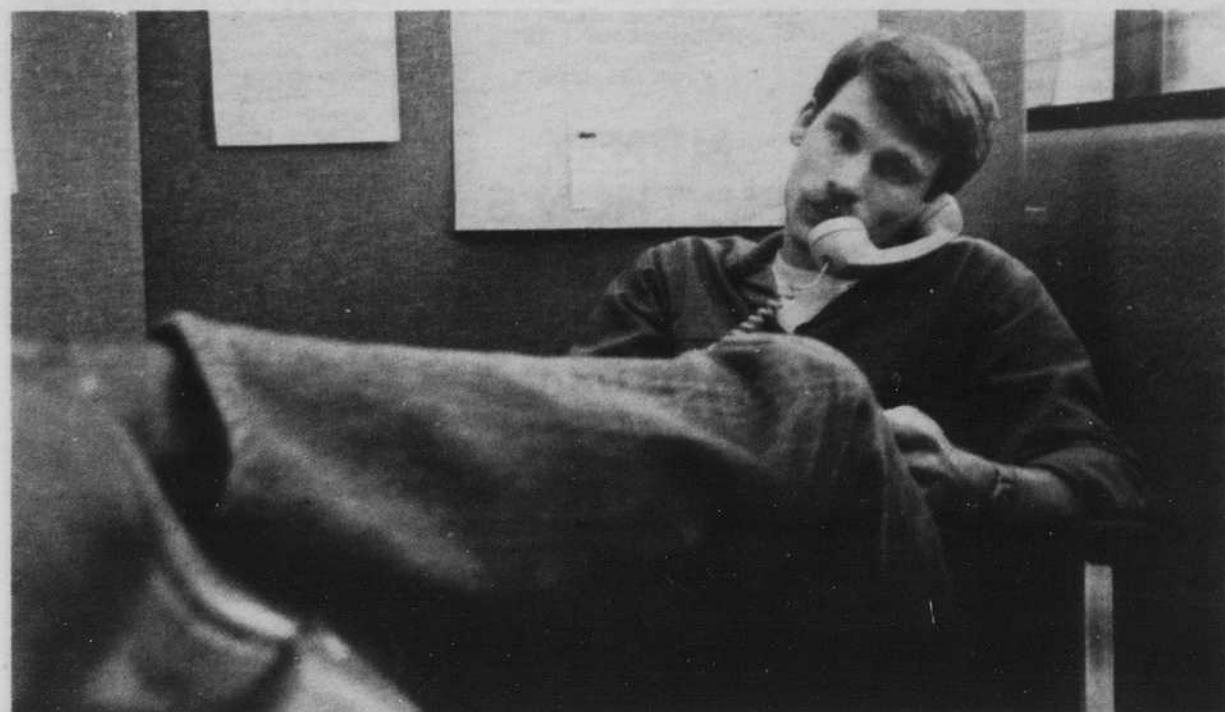


Photo by Brian Erb

Karsten Rasmussen "... a desire to serve and a desire to do it yourself."

ASUO holds hearing today

A public hearing on ASUO elections rules will be held in the EMU Forum Room today — the first day of filing for ASUO elections, April 14-15.

The 4:30 p.m. meeting will cover ASUO election rules and related matters for potential candidates and others, according to Gus Palmitessa, ASUO executive vice president and chairer of elections.

Thirty-five elected positions are open this year, including a new student-at-large position on the Emerald Board of Di-

rectors.

Other positions include the ASUO Executive (president and vice president), 16 out of 18 Student University Affairs Board posts, all seven Incidental Fee Committee positions, four of five student-at-large positions on the EMU Board, and six board posts of the University's Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group.

All interested students are urged to run — with filing closing April 2, Palmitessa says.

The ASUO vice president says ethics will be emphasized at today's meeting.

"The thing that has bothered me the most . . . has been the amount of election sabotage that occurs," he says. Students who report election sabotage will be entitled to 50 percent of the financial sanction imposed on the offender, Palmitessa adds.

Candidates are encouraged to spend time with campaign workers to emphasize ethical conduct, he says.