

# 'Exigency,' Olum warns

## Staff salaries, four programs face axe

The latest special session of the Oregon Legislature was short, but it wasn't sweet for higher education in Oregon.

According to University Pres. Paul Olum, Gov. Vic Atiyeh's decision to include higher education in this latest round of state budget reductions probably means financial exigency — a form of bankruptcy — for the University.

The Legislature, reacting to a predicted \$100 million revenue shortfall, last week approved Atiyeh's recommendation to cut \$10 million from state agency budgets as one element of a five-part package of reductions. Higher education's share of the cut is \$2.4 million.

Atiyeh's announcement that the state colleges and universities would be included in the cuts caught many higher education officials off guard. Earlier, the governor had said the state system of higher education would be spared further cuts because it had suffered enough.

But something changed his mind. In his final recommendation to the Legislature, Atiyeh included the \$2.4 million reduction in higher education. The Legislature approved all of Atiyeh's recommendations during the 14-hour session last Monday.

"Of course I'm disappointed," Olum said at a press conference the day after the session. Atiyeh appeared committed to exempting higher education from the cut, Olum said, but "then he went and did it."

If the University is forced to cut a proportionate share of the \$2.4 million, four "outreach" programs would probably be eliminated, saving about \$650,000, Olum said.

### Analysis

The programs Olum named are the Bureau of Governmental Research and Services, the Labor Education and Research Center, the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology at Charleston and the University radio station, KWAX.

In order to make the layoffs legal for the tenured faculty involved in these programs, exigency would have to be declared, Olum said.

If the University is forced to follow through with the cuts, they would represent the most serious program surgery since Olum took over as head of the University.

"I am vigorously and uncompromisingly opposed to such

closures," Olum said in a letter to state Sen. Ed Fadeley of Eugene, chairman of the budget-writing Ways and Means Committee. "It would constitute a terrible loss to the State of Oregon and it should be pointed out that once closed it would be almost impossible to restore them later."

Perhaps even more serious was the Legislature's decision to impose a 6 percent pay reduction on all state employees. Although teachers are exempted, classified employees are not.

The announcement of the pay cut came barely a week after the University worked out an agreement with classified employees for a voluntary 3 percent decrease. That agreement is now "moot," Olum said.

Because the initial pay cut was in response to previously mandated budget cuts, the University will face an additional \$400,000 shortfall by withdrawing the agreement. Olum was not specific on how the University would handle that deficit.

Olum was the only state system representative present during the special session. Although he did not testify during the session, Olum said he spent hours alerting legislators of the effects further cuts would have



*Emerald photo*

on the University.

Before the session opened, outgoing state system Chancellor Roy Lieuallen had answered questions from legislators on the effects of further cuts in the higher education budget.

"The Chancellor's remarks seemed to imply that higher education could handle the cuts by cutting special expendi-

tures," Olum said. He went on to say further cuts in services and supplies or library expenditures were unrealistic.

Unfortunately, the worst may not be over. Legislators already were predicting another special session for September to deal with another possible revenue shortfall.

**By Harry Esteve**

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