



Photo by Mark Pynes

Ann Portal and Debi Lance of the ASUO State and University Affairs Office.

ASUO reinforces lobby effort

When the Oregon Legislature meets in January, about 30 University students will be ready to lobby the lawmakers as part of the ASUO's beefed up Eugene-to-Salem connection.

The volunteer lobbying network is part of a statewide strategy, with University students contacting legislators in their home districts, says Ann Portal, ASUO vice-president for state and University affairs.

The ASUO, along with the Student University Relations Council and the Student University Affairs Board, hopes to "tighten up" the University lobbying effort this summer in time for the January session, Portal says.

The main goal of the lobbying group will be to give legislators information about the University they don't already have and persuade them that the University serves the whole state and not just Lane County, she says.

By and large, the lawmakers are sympathetic toward higher education, Portal says, but they question the priorities created by the State Board of Higher Education. For instance, many legislators advocate cutting some programs to ensure the quality of others rather than preserving all programs, she

says.

The ASUO lobby will attempt to convince legislators to repeal the \$49 a term tuition surcharge in January as the first step toward tuition reduction, Portal says. The lobby group will strive for a return to a "rational" policy of using a fixed percentage of instruction costs to determine tuition, she says.

The loss of programs coupled with rising tuition will only drive students out of Oregon to get a college education, Portal says.

Oregon has the second-highest tuition of the western states, and the state must get that rate in line with other states' tuition to remain competitive, Portal says.

Mobilizing legislative support is not the only goal of the ASUO lobby. In addition to testifying before legislative committees and meeting with individual lawmakers, the lobby will also try to mobilize the student vote, Portal says.

The ASUO voter campaign includes registering students to vote as well as getting students to go to the polls once they are registered, she says. Students as a group have historically had low voter turnouts.

During the summer and fall, 20 to 30 volunteers will begin

preparing the lobbying network for the January session. The volunteers will instruct newcomers how to lobby during fall and winter terms, Portal says. The student lobby group should have about 50 students, she adds.

Bob Watrus, executive director of the Oregon Student Lobby in Salem, says he expects the OSL to have a "tight" working relationship with the ASUO lobby.

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