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University

Continued from Page 6

tors, the University is still viewed by many — including prominent government leaders — as a bastion of liberalism and moral degeneracy.

Charlene Curry, the University's newly created director of governmental relations, is one member of a team of University brass working to improve the institution's precarious position.

Curry refers to herself jokingly as an "evangelist" whose job it is to "spread the word" about the University. She spends much of her time in Salem, where she reminds lawmakers of the benefits of a quality liberal arts university.

"Higher education has had good times," Curry says, referring to periods in the 1960s and 1970s when money for research and salaries was in greater supply. Solid funding for Oregon colleges and universities was guaranteed by healthy enrollment and the University did not have to "sell itself."

"We really haven't had to educate people (about the University)," Curry says.

"We haven't done enough to let them know who our students are," she says. "Their heads are in a different place now."

Students are much more interested in careers and academics than they used to be, Curry says.

"I'm going to have a student with me everywhere I go," she promises.

Included in the beefed-up public relations program are plans to enlarge the University's speakers bureau, in which professors and administrators will extoll the virtues of college to Rotary clubs and other service organizations around the state.

Legislators now will be written personal letters when University students from their districts win awards or receive scholarships; tours of University research institutes have been given to various state and local leaders; pamphlets that describe the University's most meritorious achievements have been printed and are distributed at every opportunity.

Selected students also will be asked to make speaking engagements, Curry says.

One administrator who has done his share of "soul searching" on behalf of the University is Paul Holbo, the new vice provost for academic affairs.

The trouble started in the mid-1960s, says Holbo, a former history professor, when the University went through a transformation from a small liberal arts college to a major university. The state of Oregon made no changes to support a large, high quality campus, Holbo says. "I don't think we've ever gotten over that."

Many faculty members say that the University now needs to acknowledge the fact that it can't afford to be as big as it has become. They ad-

vocate long range planning to prioritize where money should or should not be spent.

In his position as vice provost, Holbo is also partly responsible for that kind of planning. His predecessor, Robert Albrecht, was the head of the University's Long Range Planning Committee. But Holbo isn't sure that committee will continue this year.

"I'm not sure that it should," Holbo says. Committee members — most of them faculty members — expressed too many "protective interests," he says.

According to the final report of the Long Range Planning Committee, members felt that "the shape and nature of the University is being determined more by inertia than by design." In other words, administrators are continually reacting to problems, rather than planning ahead with possible problems in mind.

But Holbo says he's "not sure that planning per se is anything magical."

Among the several proposals listed in the committee's final report were splitting the College of Arts and Sciences in two colleges, one for humanities and one for sciences, and a number of ideas for the creation of interdepartmental programs.

When it comes to specific suggestions for improving the University, the man who is least committal is the University's president. Olum's loudest public complaints are usually aimed at state lawmakers for continually under-funding higher education.

"This may sound crass to you," Olum says, "but if we could have financial support that remotely approaches other universities of our stature we could do terrific things."

Looking down the road, Olum sees some hope for the next legislative session, when the State Board of Higher Education will make its funding proposals.

"Everything proposed is good for us," he says of the board's budget request.

The board's request includes a proposal for freezing tuition at current levels — \$49 surcharge included — and asks for \$35 million beyond what it already receives in state support for higher education.

The University would see increased funding for computer and high-tech training, and extra money for handicapped accessibility and building renovation. Faculty salaries would also be increased to more competitive levels.

The best thing the University can do now is "make sure our legislators know what a strong institution we are," and hope the board's budget is approved, Olum says.

"A winning football team would help," he adds.

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