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Emerald Photo

Debbie Lance heads one of several student lobbying groups which will try to influence legislators into voting in favor of higher education.

Lobbyists want a united front

By Richard Burr
 Of the Emerald

Student lobbying is a necessary and effective tool, most student officials say, but a Student University Affairs Board member disagrees.

The ASUO will lobby more effectively than last year because it formed the Legislative Council, says Debi Lance, ASUO vice president of state and academic affairs.

The council, consisting of two

representatives from ASUO, SUAB and Student University Relations Council, will coordinate legislative activities to avoid overlap and duplication, she says.

The Oregon Student Lobby, which represents student interests for most of the state colleges, will do detailed work and follow student-related bills through the process, says Bob Watrus, OSL executive director.

Watrus says he is encouraged by the activity at the University campus. The activity is important because student groups are an integral part of the OSL's lobbying effort, he says.

The ASUO will complement the OSL's lobbying efforts by having its lobbyists explain how legislative actions have affected students, Lance says.

Legislators say they want to hear about students' University experiences, not students' "pseudo-expert opinions," she says.

"If that's what the legislators want, how can the University lobby without us?" Lance adds.

Some student lobbyists last year made a bad impression on legislators, expecting to see them without appointments and presenting an uncoordinated front, Lance says. She says the legislative council will remedy those problems.

But even the constant presence of student lobbyists in Salem will not ensure success, Lance says.

"I doubt just because students are in Salem, higher ed will get more money," she says.

SURC will keep alumni and the parents' association aware of campus lobbying efforts and other activities, says Liz Mann, SURC president. SURC "en-

hances the goals of the University Relations department," she says.

SUAB is considering two trips to Salem, says Dan Allen, SUAB chair. The board also may plan other legislative activities, such as a repeat of last year's conference with Gov. Vic Atiyeh, he says.

Board members will not go to the capital to "moan, bitch and whine about the U of O," Allen says. The board will be more informed than last year about how the cuts have affected different parts of the University, he says.

Although SUAB lobbying may have limited influence on legislators, "there's never been a question in my mind that it's worth it," Allen says.

But SUAB member Lori Lieberman disagrees.

"I don't think SUAB should be involved," she says.

The ASUO and OSL should handle the lobbying because they hire experienced student lobbyists, Lieberman says. SUAB could do "as good a job as anybody," but SUAB officials are not elected for their lobbying skills, she says.

But ASUO will not have any impact on legislators either, Lieberman adds.

"Legislators have to have told their constituents how they'd vote on higher ed already," she says.

The OSL is holding a legislative planning session Tuesday at 2 p.m. in the EMU Forum Room to discuss the different processes and strategies student lobbyists will face and initiate during the legislative session in Salem.

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