Educators: regents proposal 'strange'

By Sandy Johnstone
Of the Emerald

A proposal in the Oregon Legislature to change the governance of the state's education to a Board of Regents system has little in common with other states' organizational methods, say board administrators in several states.

The plan is "very strange," says T.K. Olson, executive director of Oregon's Educational Coordinating Commission.

The proposal would set up a statewide Board of Regents that would submit a budget for all education to the Legislature. It also would coordinate education in the state and make some policy decisions.

The Board of Regents would oversee a State Board of Higher Education, a Board of Education and a Board of Community Colleges.

Several other states with Board of Regents have significantly different systems.

In New York, a 16-member Board of Regents, elected every seven years, proposes a master plan to the governor every four years and accredits schools to "ensure minimums," says Christopher Carpenter, assistant director of public information for the board.

Individual schools formulate their own policies, Carpenter says.

Michigan's Board of Education mainly coordinates the state's education. However, the board has no governing power over higher education institutions that grant bachelor's degrees.

Lad Dombrowski, the board's secretary, says the statutory power and the actual power of the board differ.

"We are not a governing board, but a planning coordinator," he says. Each institution has its own governing board, Dombrowski says.

Idaho's eight-member Board of Education is the single governing board for the state and is responsible for policy and budgetary decisions, says board secretary Kay Jensen.

An independent task force has been studying the issue of governance in Idaho and should be releasing recommendations for improvement soon, she says.

None of the states have lower boards as the Oregon proposal suggests.

The boards from all of these states deal with fiscal concerns differently than Oregon's proposed board would.

In New York and Michigan, each university submits its own budget.

In New York, money for higher education goes directly to the institution after it has been appropriated.

"We don't have the kind of budgetary authority Oregon does," Carpenter says.

Right now, Idaho's board is worried about getting money, not the process. Recently Idaho's governor vetoed the education appropriation and a May 9 special session is scheduled to deal with the problems, Jensen says.

"There just isn't enough money," she says.

Michigan is having the same problem with tight purse strings and decreasing revenue.

"Support has been dropping the last several years for education," Dombrowski says. "The major problem is we have been in a severe recession for a number of years."

He says the social programs in the state have been built up to cope with those problems and education has suffered as a consequence.

Because the Legislature controls the purse, Dombrowski says they are "emerging as the strongest policy-making body."

Loyalty good only so long

University profs underpaid, report says

By Frank Shaw
Of the Emerald

A recent report shows the salaries of professors who have left the University is 34 percent higher than what they would be earning if they had stayed at the University.

Prepared by community service and public affairs majors Steve Earl and Ronald Gartshore, the 34-page report surveys faculty who have left the University in the last two years. Comparisons are then made between current salaries and projected University salaries.

Another section of the report tabulated reasons the professors left.

Seventy-four percent of the professors surveyed left due to a lack of income potential, and 66 percent left because of lack of professional development. Only 7 percent listed the friendliness of their new community as a reason for leaving and 4 percent cited the cost of housing as a reason for leaving.

"The salary comparison data analyzed in this study suggest that University of Oregon salaries are deficient," the report says. "Our survey results indicate that the main reasons departed faculty left the University were inadequate salary and limited income potential."

The report uses a 1975 Carnegie Foundation Study which ranked universities by quality group on a scale of one to seven, with one the best and seven the worst.

The University is ranked as a quality two institution, but its pay scale is below the group averages, with an even larger salary discrepancy between the University and fellow Association of American Universities members.

The report's conclusion states that if the University is a high prestige institution, faculty salaries are below par.

"The question is whether Oregon is willing to pay the cost of being exceptional," the report concludes.

"I'm not that surprised," Provost Dick Hill says about the report. "It reflects what we have known about the relative salaries of faculty (as compared to other universities). It's a problem."

Another facet of the report worries Aaron Novick, head of the biology department.

While "loyalty to each other" keeps faculty here, the loyalty does not apply to hiring new professors, Novick says.

"There's an enormous advantage in having colleagues you respect," he says, adding that faculty who have been here for years are often willing to work for less.

Novick cites an example of a faculty member getting an offer to go to Princeton and turning it down, but "I don't know how long that will keep up."

And as faculty get older and retire, Novick worries about being able to replace them with equally qualified people.

"There's no queston but that we're at a substantial disadvantage in terms of faculty salaries," says Bob Berdahl, dean of the arts and sciences college.

"Our quality is far greater than the level of funding would indicate," he says.

Berdahl also says professors stay for reasons other than money.

'Good will, granola and jogging paths will not be enough to keep professors here," responds Glen Love, president of the University chapter of the American Association of University Professors. "We're losing good people."

Professors are "voting with their feet" in leaving the University, even though the study shows it is clear they did not want to leave, Love says.