

New governance system:

Students oppose cuts in representation on Senate

By Sandy Johnstone
Of the Emerald

The room fills slowly Wednesday afternoon. Senate Pres. Gerry Bogen hastily counts for a quorum and finding there are enough people, the meeting begins.

The lack of interest in the governance system of the University by many faculty members caused the creation of a Task Force on University Governance, which was appointed by the Faculty Advisory Council. The group began meeting last fall and in the spring presented a new system of governance to the University.

If the new system passes through the University Assembly, it will strengthen the Faculty Senate, allowing it to make most of the decisions the University Assembly currently decides. The issue will be discussed at the Oct. 26 Senate meeting and at the Nov. 2 Assembly meeting.

"The University of Oregon is the only university to have a town meeting form of government," says James Lemert, chairer of the governance task force. "If it works it is a nice system. But I'm not sure it is working."

The current procedure leaves the 54-member Senate as a sort of "rules committee" for the Assembly. It has little power and most faculty members rarely listen to its recommendations, says Lemert. Faculty members are reluctant to serve on a body with little influence, especially because they all can have input into the system through the Assembly, to which every motion eventually goes.

The proposal would cut down the number of Assembly meetings and give the Senate the power to make final decisions. All motions could be appealed to the Assembly through faculty petition, failure to get a clear two-thirds vote in the Senate or by the decision of the University president.

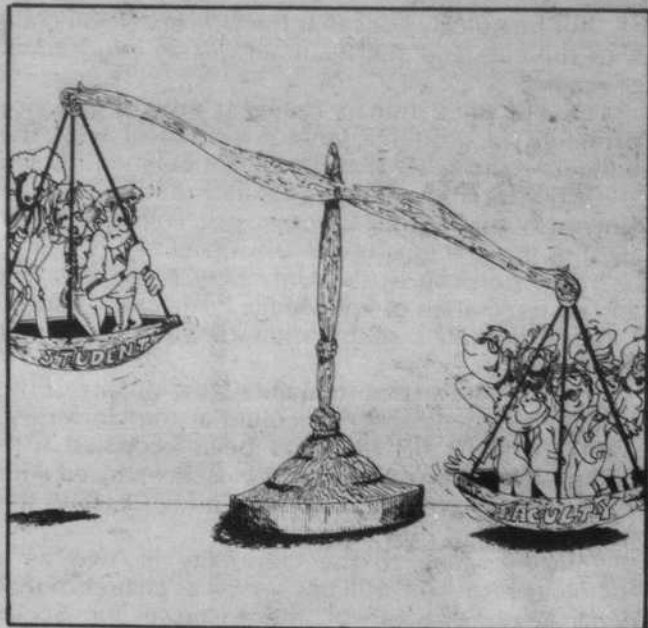
To students, the main issue is representation.

The first proposal presented to the University cut Senate membership to 36, slicing two faculty positions and slashing 16 student slots. Students were outraged, and later the number was changed to 32 faculty and eight students.

The cut is necessary to make the plan acceptable to faculty, says Lemert.

"The membership matter is simply reality," says Lemert. "The assembly will not buy a plan with one-third of the Senate being students when the Senate will get in to the core gut of matters of University operation."

The 18 members of the Student University Affairs Board, who are student representatives elected to



Graphic by Shawn Bird

serve in the Senate and Assembly, strongly oppose the proposal to cut back in membership on the Senate.

"I am unwilling to let SUAB be disenfranchised," says Mike Prothe, chairer of SUAB. "It is not because we are after power. I never thought of myself as separate from the Senate."

The "numbers argument" isn't valid, he says. "I don't think 54 members is unmanageable at all."

The students also object to having the change go into effect at the Senate meeting following the approval of the motion because that will require a restructuring of the ASUO Constitution. The faculty changes take effect at the same time.

The shift in power to the Senate may not be too dramatic, says Prothe. He says most issues will be appealed to the Assembly.

Lemert disagrees.

At other schools that have appeal power to a higher body, it has never been used, says Lemert. Close votes never occur because they work to get a two-thirds consensus.

While the issue of student representation has drawn the most attention, Lemert says many faculty members may be opposed to the proposal because of other factors such as the change in the definition of voting faculty and the new election rules for faculty representatives.

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