

New grievance policy intended to deal with sex discrimination

By Scott McFetridge
Of the Emerald

The Oregon State System of Higher Education adopted a new grievance policy last week to deal with potential sex discrimination claims by faculty women, but a leader of a faculty women's group believes the new procedures will have little positive effect.

The new policy gives more authority to individual institutions and allows them to delegate this power to specific departments. Because institutions in the Oregon State System of Higher Education vary so widely, members of the chancellor's office believe a binding system-wide policy would not be effective.

The policy adopted by the state board should speed up the grievance procedures, while at the same time involve the faculty, said Bill Lemman, vice chancellor for administration at the monthly meeting of the State Board of Higher Education.

The initial decision in a grievance procedure will typically be reached at the department level, but faculty will be able to appeal this decision directly to the presidential level. If faculty members choose to, they may appeal a president's decision to the state board.

The new policy also calls for the creation of a three- or four-member panel, which will be responsible for reviewing cases referred to the state board. The panel would be made up of "individuals experienced in issues of academic employment but not employed by the" OSSHE. The state board would be bound

to the decisions of the panel except for decisions involving awards of indefinite tenure.

The panel would be appointed by the state board, Lemman said. Members of the board would likely be retired judges or out-of-state faculty members, he said.

One part of the new policy, which states that announcements for open faculty positions must contain a minimum salary, has provoked criticism from Margaret Lumpkin, co-chair of Faculty Women for Equity.

Lumpkin, an unsuccessful plaintiff in the recent \$33.1 million sex discrimination lawsuit against the state board, said that minimum salary statements were already available at most institutions. Furthermore, previous announcements had contained maximum salary statements, Lumpkin said.

Lumpkin also criticized the new grievance policy for not demanding evaluations of affirmative action procedures at the various state institutions. Although presidents are told to remind deans and department heads of their affirmative action obligations, this is not enough, she said.

"What they did has no teeth, no time line and no change in the status quo," Lumpkin said. "This is really nothing more than we have now."

The new procedures will not apply to the 22 plaintiffs of the Penk case because their claims have already gone through litigation.

Legislative update

Editor's note: Here are highlights of the Oregon Legislature last week.

Unemployment Benefits

The Senate on Friday voted to continue extended state benefits for the unemployed in the wake of a federal phase out of extended jobless benefits.

The bill (Senate Bill 448) would continue a state-funded program providing an additional six and one-half weeks of benefits if no federal program is in force. The state program will expire at the end of June if the bill, which is now headed for the Senate, does not pass.

Miscellaneous

Senate Bill 402, passed by the Senate on Wednesday, would require employers to establish and maintain written policies for smoking in a work place.

The House State and Federal Affairs Committee on Wednesday approved a bill (House Bill 2433) to establish the third

Monday in January as a holiday in honor of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.

The House on Thursday voted to repeal a law that bans "sighting" of the country's founding fathers in textbooks used in Oregon public schools.

Public officials, doctors, and others required to report child abuse will face increased penalties if they fail to do so, under a bill (HB 2160) that passed the House on Thursday.

This Week

The Senate's Business, Housing and Finance Committee on Wednesday is to consider State Treasurer Bill Rutherford's request that the open records law be revised to exclude records dealing with negotiations involving investments of state funds.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee is to work Tuesday on a bill expanding the beverage container refund law to include carbonated wine bottles and cans.

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