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GTFs take complaints to chancellor's office

By Chris Norred
Of the Emerald

Oregon has jumped the gun by withholding taxes on graduate teaching fellows' tuition waivers, according to University GTFs who settled in at the office of William Davis, State System of Higher Education chancellor, Friday morning.

About 15 GTFs lounged on the floor in Davis' office correcting papers and exams while waiting for a Friday afternoon meeting with University President Paul Olum.

The GTFs are protesting the decision by the State Board of Higher Education to begin compliance with the U.S. Tax Code and withhold tax on tuition waivers from their paychecks. Until Dec. 31, 1985, tuition waivers were exempt under the tax code. Congress has not renewed the exemption, and the State Board decided in mid-April to begin withholding the tax.

Nearly every other state in the nation is not enforcing the tax code, according to GTF leaders.

"The president's office has confirmed that 49 other states are not withholding," said Chuck Hunt, president of the GTF union local. "It almost looks like we're the only ones."

But Davis and Virginia Boushey, assistant to the executive vice chancellor, say appearances are deceiving. Boushey said she has contacted many California state system colleges and learned that they pay GTFs with a large stipend from which tuition must be paid, rather than a tuition waiver.

The stipend has always been subject to tax, so the tax code change does not affect them, she said.

"There is a case where the date of registration made a difference," Davis said.

He says a large percentage of other colleges are on the semester system, so the tuition waivers were issued in December of last year, making them part of 1985 income, when they registered for second semester.

This means the GTFs at those schools have not been taxed yet, and the tax will be withheld beginning next semester, Davis said.

Other schools are just hoping against hope that the exemption will be reinstated, Boushey said.

"We can't take that gamble," she said. "Once we have the legal opinion, any administrator who says we'll ignore that advice and continue not to withhold would be personally liable. I don't think any of us can afford a million dollars."

But the GTFs claim the financial burden has unnecessarily been shifted onto their shoulders, although they are the least able to carry it. They feel that the board should have put more effort into finding alternatives to comply with the tax code.

The Office of the Attorney General of the state of Washington, citing a case from a federal district court in Ohio, has informed higher education officials in Washington that withholding on tuition waivers is not necessary," Hunt said.

"The law is open to interpretation,"



Graduate teaching fellows grade papers and exams during a protest in Chancellor William Davis' office Friday.

said Ken Summers, a GTF in sociology. "The (tax code) is very specific about the amount to be paid, but the enforcement is very vague. The whole system of enforcement depends on the cooperation of the employer. So all of these other universities have decided that they'll wait until they absolutely have to withhold."

What the GTFs want, Summers said, is to know the basis for the board's decision to withhold the tax at this time.

The decision was based on a reading of the law, and an opinion by Oregon Assistant Attorney General Jerry Lidz

that the department of higher education is liable for payment and penalty of non-payment if the money isn't withheld from the GTFs' paychecks, Davis said.

The new tax takes about \$150 in additional income tax from the average GTF's April and May paychecks. Most GTFs earn between \$400 and \$500 each month.

Generally, tax on tuition waivers will be about \$50 each month from GTF paychecks, but because the State Board waited until April to begin withholding, three months' worth of back taxes on tuition waivers were already due.

Pinckney, IFC oppose special fund for GTFs

By Stan Nelson
Of the Emerald

A University request to provide short-term loans for financially ailing GTFs failed at an Incidental Fee Committee hearing Friday.

University President Paul Olum's office requested the special hearing to ask the IFC to loan surplus incidental fees to GTFs.

The state of Oregon, not students, is responsible for providing assistance to GTFs, said ASUO President Lynn Pinckney, who made the ASUO recommendation to the IFC on the proposal.

In a letter to Olum, she said there were several problems with the proposal. The GTFs entered into an agreement with the state to provide a service for a set amount of money. Because the state knew the withholdings would occur, GTFs should be issued payments equal to the amount of the withholdings.

Using incidental fees for loans would benefit individual students only and be tantamount to subsidizing teaching, both of which have been considered inappropriate uses of the fees before, she said.

GTFs might not be able to pay back loans, she added. It is wrong also to charge student's interest on their own money, she added.

Emergency loan money is depleted and the University has no more money to lend, said Alison Baker, ex-

ecutive assistant to the president.

However, students have a reserve of about \$300,000 in overrealized incidental fees, and the attorney general's office ruled that these funds can be used for short-term loans, Baker said.

"The state won't give the GTFs \$150 so they can eat this month," she said. At least the University is making an attempt to ease the financial burden of the GTFs, she said.

However, "If (the GTFs) don't want loans and will only accept money as a gift, they won't get anything," Baker said.

The decision to withhold \$150 from GTF's wages in April and May for winter and spring term tuition occurred in mid-April when it became evident the federal tax exemption that expired January 1, 1986, might not be renewed, Baker said.

The Oregon attorney general's office ruled that GTF tuition waivers are taxable income, and the State System of Higher Education had no choice but to withhold, she added.

"The crux of the matter is how do GTFs feel about the proposal," said IFC member Adam Apalategui. There was too little time to consider the proposal, he said.

The IFC voted 5-1 to deny the administration's request. It did indicate that the GTFs could still make a direct request to the IFC for assistance.

Local leaders of sanctuary affirm movement's future

By Michael Rivers
Of the Emerald

Leaders of the Eugene Interfaith Sanctuary Network reaffirmed their commitment to the sanctuary movement at a noon rally and press conference Friday. The reaffirmation came despite the felony convictions of eight Arizona activists on Thursday.

About 70 supporters gathered in the rain to hear sanctuary movement activists declare their strengthened resolve.

Karen Hemmingsen, a member of the Eugene Friends Meeting, said in reference to the Arizona verdict, "Twelve reasonable people reached a reasonable decision based on the facts given. But they were not allowed to hear the real case."

Hemmingsen's statement referred to the prosecution's success at narrowing the scope of the trial to exclude such issues as religion, humanitarianism, international law and political asylum.

Augustine Lopez, a Salvadoran refugee being sheltered in Eugene, believes the convictions "demonstrate massive repression," but said, "we have seen much worse."

American sanctuary efforts are saving thousands of lives in Central America, Lopez said, speaking through an interpreter. Reassuring the crowd that he wasn't trying to judge the sanctuary movement, Lopez said, "We risk disappearing, losing our lives, and you risk only one or two years (in jail)."

Marion Malcolm, a member of the Interfaith Sanctuary Network and a staff person for Clergy and Laity Concerned,

called the movement "a powerful threat to U.S. policy in Central America." She accused the United States of "perpetuating torture, death and killing in El Salvador."

She said there are more than 240 congregations across the nation involved in the sanctuary movement.

Onlookers were invited to sign a statement of complicity in support of the Arizona defendants. The statement will be turned over to the assistant federal prosecutor at the Eugene Federal building today.

The statement says: "If the United States government finds our obedience to the highest laws of God and of nations to be in violation of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, then we declare our complicity with the actions of love and concern for refugees from Central America which have led to the convictions, in Federal Court at Tucson, Arizona, of our fellow workers in the sanctuary movement."

"We the undersigned acknowledge our complicity in upholding the Refugee Act of 1980, the Geneva Accords and other international laws prohibiting the refoulement of refugees."

Jack Maddex, a spokesman for the Central Presbyterian Church, said they are offering sanctuary to refugees "not in disrespect for authority, but for the proper ordering of authority." There are currently five Salvadoran refugees in sanctuary with the church.

Bill Cadbury, representing the Eugene Friends Meeting, said the fundamental

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