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Packwood committee approves tax exemption

Congress will vote on GTFs' tuition waiver

By Chris Norred
Of the Emerald

After three weeks of heated controversy over graduate teaching fellows' tuition waiver tax, the Senate Finance Committee approved a tax bill this week that reinstates the exemption of tuition waivers from taxation.

The provision reinstating the exemption will closely resemble the exemption that expired January 1, an aide to Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore, said. Packwood is chairman of the Finance Committee and chief author of the tax bill.

But Bill Lemman, vice chancellor of the Oregon State System of Higher Education, said he and his staff are discussing whether to continue withholding taxes on tuition waivers from GTFs' paychecks.

If passed and signed into law, the tax exemption would be retroactive to January, but enactment of the law cannot be expected until this summer. "Nothing has happened yet," Lemman

said, referring to the political process awaiting the bill before it will become law.

"We have to decide, based on that set of facts, whether it's proper or appropriate to continue withholding," Lemman said. He did not speculate on what the eventual decision might be.

The State System began withholding the tax in mid-April to comply with the U.S. Tax Code. The section of the code that made tuition waivers tax exempt expired January 1 this year.

University GTFs claimed that the decision to begin withholding the tax was a mistake and that other states were not withholding it while awaiting Congressional action to reinstate the exemption.

Lemman said Oregon's decision to withhold the tax and the ensuing controversy that was brought to Packwood's attention may have been partially responsible for the reinstatement of the

exemption.

But some GTFs believe Lemman is trying to take undue credit for the exemption's reinstatement.

"The (OSSHE) administration has wanted to believe that (the exemption reinstatement) was not going to happen," said Chuck Hunt, president of the GTF Federation union local.

"We have been guaranteed (by Packwood's office) for months that their position was in support of reinstatement of the exemption," he added.

Lemman and his staff contacted Packwood's office before deciding to withhold the tax and were told that Packwood was aware of the problem and that it would be considered by the Finance Committee in due course, Lemman said.

An aide at Packwood's office said there was no way to predict the Finance Committee's decision on the exemption



Chuck Hunt

provision, but Packwood expressed confidence that the tuition waiver provision would be passed as part of the House and Senate tax bills.

IFC cuts Commentator's funding by one-quarter

By Stan Nelson
Of the Emerald

The Incidental Fee Committee on Wednesday voted to appropriate \$4,739 for the Oregon Commentator for the upcoming year, ending a two-and-a-half month battle over its means of funding.

The IFC originally recommended placing funding for the Commentator on the general election ballot February 18, but the Constitution Court ruled that it could not be placed on the ballot against its will.

Representatives of the Commentator had requested \$6,300, the same amount the paper received last year, with the provision that a refundable subscription be given to students who do not wish to read the paper.

"We fulfill our role on campus," said Commentator production editor Rob Young. "Our very existence is setting a precedent." The paper serves a vital purpose in discussing issues not addressed in other publications, he added.

A motion to fund the Commentator for \$6,050 failed by a 2-3 vote.

The ASUO recommended that the Commentator be funded for \$3,428 for the 1986-87 school year. The lesser amount was partially because the Commentator is not an Affirmative Action employer, said ASUO assistant finance coordinator Mary Kay Menard.

Excessive student criticism of the publication was also a consideration in the funding decision. The Commentator has received 10 times the number of stu-

dent complaints that all other student organizations combined have received, IFC chairman James Randall said.

But if the paper did not receive criticism, it would not be doing its job, Commentator executive editor Thomas Mann said. The paper is an opinion journal, and it should speak out against the status quo, he said.

When the opinions amount to name calling and petty squabbles, the paper is no longer furthering discussion or debate, said Donna Lawrence, Student Senate chairwoman. She likened the Commentator to the right-wing equivalent of the National Enquirer.

The paper should try to raise more of

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Rob Young

University Assembly discusses new G.P.A. requirement

By Craig Loughridge
Of the Emerald

The University Assembly discussed raising the grade point average requirement for entering freshmen students from a 2.75 to a 3.0 for guaranteed admission to the University at its meeting Wednesday.

At the request of University President Paul Olum, assembly representatives provided ideas about raising the G.P.A. requirement. Olum will present the ideas to the State Board of Higher Education for discussion.

Olum said that during a time of projected decline in University enrollment, the number of students entering the University increased. The University had about 15,400 students in fall term 1983, and now has about 16,400.

University enrollment should top the 17,000 mark by next fall, according to projected fall figures.

The primary reason for the new G.P.A. requirement would be to limit the number of newly admitted students and hopefully stabilize enrollment at about 17,000, Olum said.

The University is approaching the

limit of its capacity, according to University faculty and administrators, and it will soon be difficult to accommodate any more students.

"It's hard to know what we'd do without a new building program and some changes," Olum said.

The University is very close to capacity, said Provost Richard Hill. With the additional students expected in the fall, the University will have to add more night and afternoon classes, he said.

"We don't have the ability to add more (students) without the quality of this institution going down," Hill said.

Olum and other administrators hope that raising the University's G.P.A. requirement would boost the number of new student applications the University receives, giving the University the opportunity to admit only the most promising students.

Olum used the University of Washington and the University of California at Berkeley as examples of what a higher G.P.A. requirement might attain.

"The best schools are the ones that are the most over-applied," Olum said.



Photo by Michael Wilhelm

University faculty members discussed increasing the G.P.A. requirement for entering freshmen from 2.75 to 3.0 at a Wednesday assembly meeting.

In other business, the University Assembly decided to postpone until June the vote on a proposal to extend the deadline for dropping and adding classes from 10 days to 20 days.

Student Senator Randy MacDonald motioned for the postponement, saying

he wanted a postponement of the vote because of intense faculty opposition to the proposal.

If the assembly had voted on the proposal Wednesday, there would have been "no way it could have passed," said MacDonald, the proposal's sponsor.