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By Mike Drummond
Emerald Associate Editor

The Oregon State Board of Higher Education's executive committee decided last week it will retire University President Paul Olum as of June 30, 1989. Although the full board hasn't ratified this decision yet, the campus community is not happy.

Faculty reaction to the State Board's decision has been swift and vocal. The University Assembly hastily rescheduled a previously cancelled meeting for this Wednesday to deal solely with Olum's retirement, and the University Senate likewise will address this issue Nov. 11.

Celeste Ulrich, professor and dean of human development and performance and a member of the Council of Deans, didn't mince words when expressing her dismay with the State Board.

"I'm shocked and I couldn't believe that an intelligent board of higher education possibly could have made such a judgment," Ulrich said.

"I don't understand their decision at all," she continued. "Their rationale has suggested that they're looking for the orderly transition of management, but there are two, possibly three tremendously large projects impacting the University in which a degree of continued, effective leadership is still needed."

Ulrich cited the search for a new provost and the capital campaign project as two areas in which Olum's participation is paramount.

"No person with the kind of sensitivity we're looking for

Board, Ulrich said.

Ulrich cited another reason for the State Board's decision may have to do with Olum's age — he currently is 69.

"Their (State Board's) announcement implied age, as if

'Their (State Board's) announcement implied age, as if there was something magical about a certain age, and I can't help but point out the United States government is now headed by someone who is older than Olum.'

— Celeste Ulrich

would think of coming to a university when he or she wouldn't even know with whom he'd be working," Ulrich said, regarding the search for a new provost.

Concerning the capital campaign, a program to recruit private investments for University construction projects, Ulrich stated it's "completely dependent on the perception of the leadership of an institution — and people feel comfortable and confident with Olum's leadership."

Ulrich also criticized the State Board for not consulting faculty prior to announcing Olum's retirement date.

"They never sought any kind of advice, and so it's difficult for me to understand what they mean by orderly transition, when it seems to most of the faculty and most of the administrators that their decision is so out of order," Ulrich added.

She speculated secondary motives were at work behind the State Board's decision — foremost being Olum's blunt, to-the-point style of management.

"I suppose some view him as a barb" in the side of the State

there was something magical about a certain age, and I can't help but point out the United States government is now headed by someone who is older than Olum," Ulrich said.

Daniel Goldrich, a political science professor and a member of the American Federation of Teachers, similarly was displeased with the State Board's action.

"I feel real strongly that it's a very serious mistake," Goldrich said.

Goldrich said Olum's academic leadership has been important in maintaining faculty morale, and he said he believes the State Board's judgment was shortsighted "both in terms of the decision and the way in which it was done."

Furthermore, Goldrich said he plans to participate in efforts to persuade the State Board to change its mind.

James Lemert, a journalism professor and vice president of the Association of Oregon Faculty, said the State Board's decision to retire Olum in 1989 "doesn't hold water."

"If the desire was to set a certain date for retirement, it still

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