

Op-Ed

Process decreases student input

On Friday, Dec. 18, the last day of the term before the holidays, the Oregon State Board of Higher Education will make final revisions to its university presidential search process. The new system is a major shift from a process dominated by the campus community to one controlled by the state board and chancellor's office.

Commentary by
Karen Gaffney

Power in the process of searching for a new president has a long history. In 1968, students at the University spent two nights and three days inside and outside Johnson and Emerald Halls to win proportional representation on a search committee to replace President Arthur Fleming, who was resigning. They demanded equal representation with faculty and administrators on the search committee. The final compromise negotiated with then-Chancellor Lieuallen mandated three faculty members, three administrators, and three students with two board members and one alumni representative.

The committee which chose Dr. Olum included Chancellor Lieuallen, one board member, a member of the board of the University Foundation, a member of the Alumni Association, two students, a member of the University's classified staff and nine faculty members, including a dean and the athletic administrator. In addition, a variety of panels interviewed the final candidates.

In March 1986, the board passed a revised search process. In essence, it shifted much of the power from the campus community to the board and state system to heavily influence who would be president of a system university. The new proposal is a slight improvement over the 1986 version, which was used to choose the new president at Southern Oregon State College and Natale Sicuro, the controversial president at Portland State University. The search committee as proposed will include four

faculty members, three board members, one administrator, one student, one community member and one alumni representative. The vice chancellor for academic affairs will serve as liaison between the board, the chancellor's office, the committee and the institution. The chancellor and an affirmative action officer appointed by the chancellor will serve as consultants to the committee and may attend its meetings. In addition, up to five board members may be present at any committee meeting (more if an open meeting is announced).

Under the new system, the search committee is not a selection committee. The committee will propose a list of three to five unranked candidates to the chancellor, along with a detailed report on the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate. The proposal states, "The board's three members on the search committee should be able to convey the search committee's views on the finalists to the entire board making it unnecessary for the search committee to rank the finalists."

The ability of campus constituencies to interview finalists also has been considerably scaled down, further limiting input to the process.

In a body which will not rank finalists, the influence of the non-voting members such as the chancellor, vice chancellor and voting and non-voting board members could easily have an inordinate amount of control over the final decision. University presidents could be favorites of the board and chancellor, yet have little support from those at the institution they are supposed to administer and govern. Further-

more, students have less representation in this process than they have had for 20 years. One member is about as token as representation gets...

No, this is not the 1960s. Organizing the Friday of finals week before the longest holiday season of the year is next to impossible. We will (probably) not have several hundred people spending nights at Johnson Hall. But we must make our objections heard, even in the face of a procedural freight train. The ASUO Executive will testify at the board meeting, objecting to the timing of the meeting, the minimal student representation on the committee, and the policy shift from a campus-dominated process to one controlled by the state board and system.

If you would like a ride to and from the meeting in Portland, contact the ASUO, Suite 4 EMU, 686-3724. You can also send your views in a letter to the state board at Susan Campbell Hall on campus, or we will carry them by hand to the meeting if you bring them to Suite 4 prior to Dec. 18. Make your voice heard!

Karen Gaffney is ASUO Vice-President.

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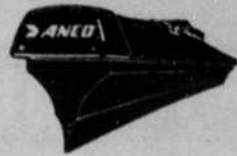
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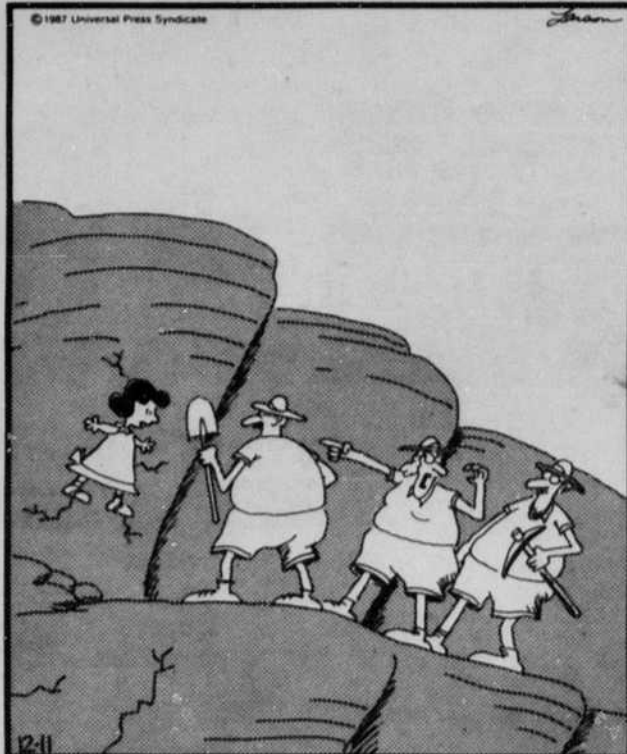


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