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Teaching program review to examine fifth-year plan

By Chris Bouneff
Emerald Reporter

A final report recommending changes in the fifth-year teacher preparation program is not expected to be ready for review by the Oregon State Board of Higher Education until March 1.

Roger Bassett, director of the state Office of Educational Policy and Planning, said the review of the new program the state board asked him to conduct is finished but not in final form.

"My intent is to ask for a March 1 deadline for the report," Bassett said. "This will give us a chance to check on our bases."

The higher education board gave final approval last January to a plan requiring all prospective teachers at the University and four other state universities and colleges to study for five years.

The program is slated to begin during fall of 1990, though the board has reserved the right to delay the date if needed.

Judith Grosenick, University

professor and associate dean of teacher education, said University students interested in becoming teachers will face only two major changes.

"The biggest change for elementary education is that students will have to get a baccalaureate degree before entering the program," Grosenick said.

Under the fifth-year program, elementary education has been eliminated as a major. Education students will no longer take coursework in education but will pursue an alternate degree before entering the education program, Grosenick said.

The fifth year will consist of only education classes students need to qualify for both the basic and standard certificate, she said.

Under the present system, prospective teachers qualify for the basic certificate after completing the four-year program, but secondary teachers must take an additional 45 hours of credit to get the standard certificate.

"The focus of the fifth year is on education," Grosenick said. "That is what the concept of a fifth year means."

Bassett's office also changed the number of years secondary teachers instruct before they receive a standard certificate, Grosenick said.

The present program calls for secondary teachers to have at least two years of teaching experience along with the 45 credits of additional instruction to receive the standard certificate.

By the end of the fifth year, students will already have completed the coursework for the standard certificate, but the number of years spent in teaching under contract before receiving the certificate will increase to three.

"Students will end up with the same basic certificate and do enough work to get the standard certificate," Grosenick said.

Grosenick said the education school has advised incoming freshmen and transfer students of the change, and those students graduating after the implementation date are studying under the new program.

"There are always students for whom a decision has to be

made on whether they should complete the old program or move to the new program," she said.

"It's important students come and get advice on what program to pursue," she said.

While higher education officials believe the fifth-year program will be beneficial in improving teacher quality, several education groups still have reservations about the program.

"We've never seen any need to go to a fifth-year program," Oregon Education Association (OEA) consultant Don Shore said. "Teachers don't get fired because they don't know their subject, they get fired because of control problems."

Though the OEA is against the new program, Shore said the plan has several merits, including requiring education professors to return to the classroom every three years.

"The fifth-year program has some good points, but we don't feel like this change came from the teaching ranks," Shore said. "The program will have very little effect on quality."

Grosenick concurred the fifth-year program is still a somewhat debated subject.

"There's no particular controversy about fifth-year programs, but clearly some programs would prefer a five-year program instead of one additional year focusing on education," Grosenick said.

Shore said nothing was wrong with the present four-year program, and what needs to be improved is the amount of time both students and education professors spend in the field.

"The school scene has changed dynamically in the past ten years," he said.

The OEA is also upset over the fact a student will not earn a master's degree for the additional year of study, Shore said.

After conducting the review, Bassett believes the argument over the new program has shifted from acceptance of the plan to questions about what the new program should emphasize.

"At this juncture, I think the problems are much more a matter of emphasis than of substance," Bassett said.

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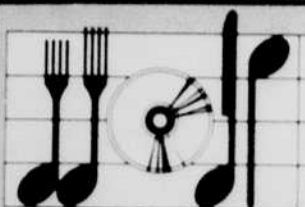
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