

## Ill winds blow for education — again

Just when it seemed Oregon's higher education budget couldn't get much thinner, the House Ways and Means Committee fired its first warning shot that even breaking the spending limit likely will not restore all that was cut in the budget passed by both the House and Senate in April.

Even before the legislative session began, higher education officials were hard at work figuring out how to maintain quality education in spite of small quantity funding. When the session began, officials hoped for increased monies contingent on breaking or modifying the spending limit.

The higher education officials' hopes weren't — and aren't — far-fetched. Gov. Neil Goldschmidt had recommended that the Legislature add \$30 million to higher education's base budget — \$9 million for much-needed salary increases and \$21 million for programs.

Late last month, the Legislature approved funding that is as much as \$15 million less than was hoped — \$5 million less for salaries and \$10 million less for programs. Although the budget passed both houses handily, many legislators expressed outrage at the low funding level. There has been talk of adding an additional \$40 million in revenue.

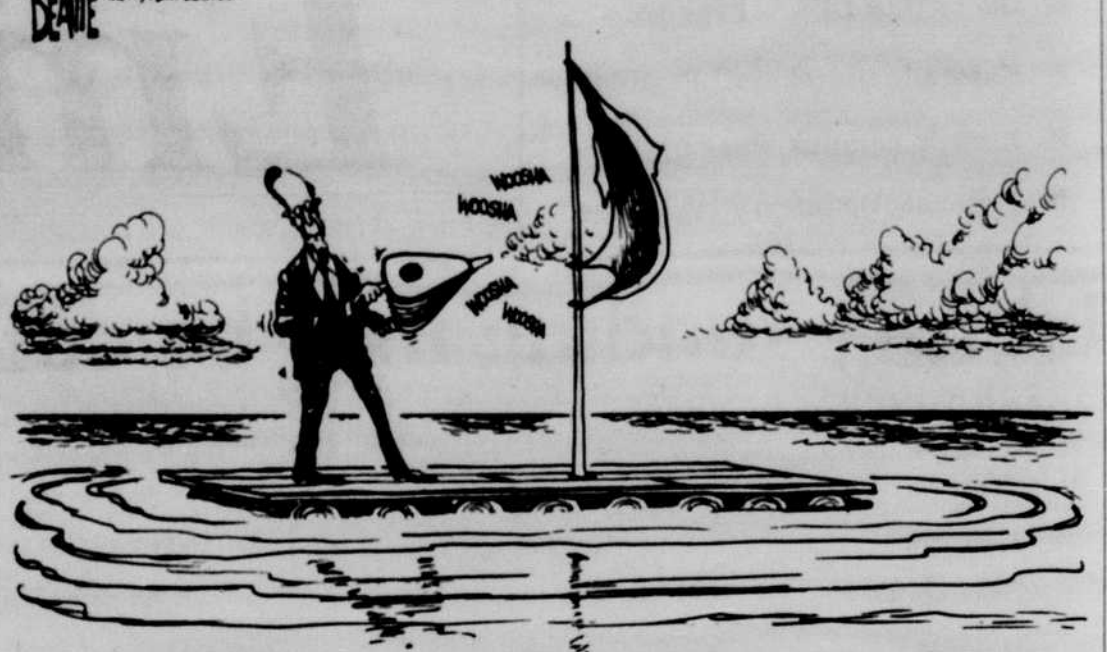
Even with the governor's recommended level of funding, enrollment caps have been slapped on the system's institutions. Further enrollment cuts and potential faculty furloughs and program cuts are sure to follow if additional funding along the lines of Goldschmidt's proposal is not approved.

At this point, the idea of further cuts is a matter of speculation. But then again, nobody is speculating as to what steps will be taken if the state board is forced to make further budget reductions.

Also up in the air is where the state will come up with the \$4 million recently cut from an \$8.5 million lottery revenue proposal, to be spent on a long overdue expansion and renovation of the University's Knight Library. The state board recently approved designs that would call for \$8.5 million in lottery funds to match the \$8.5 million gained from general obligation bonds. Now it will take a complex financial package and some re-designing to re-direct money into the library project.

Oregon's higher education system can't continue to live within the sub-standard means set by the state. Education must be treated as a portent of the future. If the academic community is continually demoralized by budget cuts and students suffer program cuts while being forced to pay ever-increasing tuition rates, then the bleak future spelled out by this Legislature will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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COUNTERING PERCEPTION THAT HIS PRESIDENCY IS ADRIFT, POPPY TAKES CHARGE...

## Letters

### Wrong thinking

For Lane County, "environment" has special meanings. A valued commodity, it justifies offering lower salaries to faculty sought by the University, signals the extinction of the spotted owl, and means protecting the right of seed farmers to pollute the summer air with field burning.

As environmentalists, seed farmers are concerned with the quality of their product. Concerns raised by Exxon's Alaskan oil disaster illustrate environmental wrong-thinking at its best.

Exxon has acted as a responsible environmentalist. The only difference between Exxon and other environmentalists is in choice of technology for correcting a mega-disaster — the devastation to Alaskan waterways, shores and people's way of life.

Alaska's residents would

have preferred to control the oil spill quickly themselves with mechanical technological means (booms, non-poisonous chemicals, etc.). However, Exxon prefers natural means for soaking up the oil, by using animal life itself.

A good-sized furry animal can soak up a considerable amount of oil. With the abundance of furry sea mammals and thick-plumed birds, Exxon's approach to the clean-

up is organic. Birds feed upon the despoiled carnage and become natural sponges after they die and fall onto the beaches. And after all, what is oil, if not a product of nature?

Corporate America has recognized its environmental responsibilities. So is this wrong thinking, or what?

Robert L. Weiss  
Psychology

### Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Comments must be factually accurate and refrain from personal attacks on the character of others.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

## Forum

# Affordable child care options an affirmative action issue

By Jennifer J. Freyd

I have a job. I have a baby. I do not have adequate child care. I am an American woman.

I am a fortunate American woman because my baby and his pre-school brother are healthy and happy. I am fortunate because I have a faculty position in a research university, a position that offers me great satisfaction, scheduling flexibility and the security of tenure. I am

### Commentary

fortunate because I live very close to campus and can accomplish many job tasks at home. I am fortunate because I can afford a variety of child care solutions, including paying for child care in my home. I am fortunate that I have a husband who helps care for the children.

Despite all this, the child care problems I face, especially in making arrangements for the infant, are tremendously draining; I daydream about quitting a job I love. If I feel this way, I can only shudder when I imagine how much worse most working mothers must feel.

What are these child care problems

even a fortunate woman faces?

Although I pay higher-than-average wages for a caregiver in my home, I cannot compete with wages paid by almost any other sort of employer. Whenever a higher paying job comes along, I lose a caregiver.

A quality child care center might provide more stability, but there is none close enough to my office to make nursing feasible.

Some parents in my situation have been especially lucky in finding a long-term affordable caregiver. But if the wage is affordable to most parents, that means poverty-level pay for the caregiver.

This is still true, although sometimes to a lesser degree, in most day care homes and centers. Caregivers subsidize child care in this country.

For most mothers, my problems sound like luxuries. Affordable child care options, especially for infants, are usually limited to group situations in private homes that often do not meet minimum safety or quality standards.

Working mothers almost always give up nursing because of location and scheduling constraints. Many mothers, even in university and college communities, are faced with the choice of either leaving their children each day in a

situation that is not safe or emotionally healthy, or quitting their jobs to be dependent on a husband or on welfare.

What kind of choice is that? What kind of society are we living in?

Despite much publicity about this problem, the United States continues to lag behind all industrialized nations, except South Africa, on support for working parents. This is manifest not just in lack of economic support for child care but in parental leave policies.

In most European countries, new parents have extensive paid leaves required by law. These societies realize that the cost of paid leaves and quality child care are far less, in the long run, than the societal costs of inadequate care for babies and children.

Why is our country so backward? At first, I believed it was just misguided values and bad economic decisions in the past. But my experiences this year have led me to a much darker analysis: The slow progress of child care solutions in this country is a direct result of forces that oppose improvements in the status of women, and this includes powers at universities and colleges.

These forces operate on two fronts: acceptance of appallingly low salaries for child care workers (because women are doing "women's work") and a fun-

damental lack of support for working women. The fact is that great numbers of working women have to struggle with the daily dilemma of assuring care for their children or meeting their work responsibilities and ambitions. Under these conditions, women do not have equal opportunity.

Some may doubt that child care is an Affirmative Action issue. After all, not all women are mothers, and some fathers may be affected by the availability of child care.

Yet the complex combination of biological and social differences in parental roles leads to many more women than men whose work productivity is affected by the accessibility and quality of child care. And when the work productivity of a large number of women is compromised, it follows that their potential for promotion and advancement is compromised. That fact alone makes child care an affirmative action issue.

I also have become aware of a situation that, at the least, has the appearance of discrimination. Many women, especially untenured faculty members, are afraid to even inquire about child care for fear of being classified as less serious about their work than colleagues