

## University

# Education promoted at USSA conference

By Jolie Andrade  
Emerald Reporter

Oregon's congressional representatives showed support for the United States Student Association's proposals during a weekend long lobbying effort to promote higher education, said Tim Hughes, chair of the USSA North West Pacific region.

"I would say it was the most successful conference USSA ever had," Hughes said.

Representatives generally supported USSA's issues of immediate concern, he said.

The top issues addressed by USSA were the reauthorization act, National Service Act and child care.

The first and foremost thing on the agenda was the reauthorization act, because it is up for consideration and modification this year, Hughes said.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 established many programs through which the federal government supports higher education, according to a fact sheet by USSA. USSA is working closely to ensure that Congress will improve federal financial aid programs and services.

Ten years ago 80 percent of the financial aid being distributed was in the form of grants, Hughes said. Today grants make up only 30 percent of financial aid.

"We (USSA) would like to see a more reasonable balance between loans and grants," Hughes said.

"Right now 14,000 students are going to lose their Pell grants next fall because of the current status for the higher education budget."

Hughes also discussed some of Bush's recommendations with representatives, including one on the national budget.

"Right now Bush is proposing only 2 percent of the entire national budget go to education," Hughes said. "USSA wants to double it to 4 percent."

Hughes said the representatives agreed that it was a good idea, but didn't see how Congress could afford the increase.

"The representatives replied, 'that's a fine idea but where are you going to get the money?'" Hughes said.

Armando Morales, USSA vice chair of the Pacific Northwest region, said he suggested to the representatives that they use U.S. military weapon funds to make up for the difference.

Members addressed the National Service Act with the same concerns as they did in previous years, Hughes said.

USSA is lobbying to change the act so that it will allow students to pay back their loans through community or military service after graduation rather than before, Hughes said, adding that they also are seeking more options for students to pay their debts.

USSA also addressed the issue of child care on campus, Hughes said.

One plan that is being considered involves a tax credit system that would reimburse students for child care services at the end of the year, he said. This poses a problem because students with children don't usually have the money to pay

for child care in the first place, Hughes added.

"What we want is more funding from the state for child care," he said. "We're also asking the federal government to match state funds."

Currently, Hughes said the University is lacking in funds for adequate child care.

"There are no infant care and no off-hour care for people with night classes and other programs are just sitting there because there is no money," Hughes said. "Child care is too expensive and it's not serving the needs of student parents."

Other issues addressed included the Clean Air Act and the Civil Rights Act of 1990 and minority issues, Hughes said.

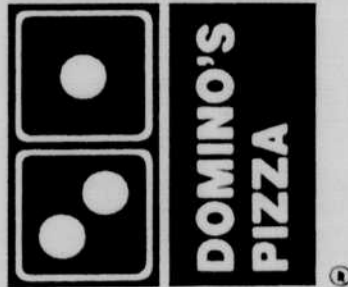
"We're alarmed at the horrible decline in the number of students of color entering colleges," Hughes said.

Morales, who conducted a workshop on racism on campus, said students of color are being discouraged from attending universities because of the lack of financial assistance and discrimination on campuses.

In the workshop Morales discussed ways to deter discrimination on campus by bringing in the different cultures. He said he gave examples of how student groups like MEChA, who donated a mural to the EMU, are enabling others to share their cultures.

More than 3,000 students participated in the lobby efforts that climaxed on March 5 on the steps of the Capitol building.

USSA will be launching a campus and state drive this spring focusing on these issues, Hughes said. They will also be conducting phone-ins and letter campaigns.



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