

FUNDING

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bowl lobby against giving state system funds to athletics before packing the meeting's audience seating.

"If you are not able to go to school, who gives a damn if you have a sports program, because you can't enjoy it," said Jennifer Bills, ASUO president and chairwoman of the Oregon Student Lobby.

Student senator Chris Cellars said "It's amazing that we will spend money to entertain ourselves while our educational system continues to diminish."

Members of faculty organizations who spoke at the board meeting said a vote to give state funds to athletics may send a false message to the public that the OSSHE has all the money it needs to operate.

Despite the unanimous vote in favor of the task force, some board members expressed dismay at postponing a final decision.

"We've put off this decision for 15 years," said Vice President Bob Bailey. "It would be my statement that if we think intercollegiate athletics are important, then we vote to fund it."

Richardson said the task force will begin in January to look for additional funding for intercollegiate athletics, with a report due in April. The board will make a final decision in June.

Task force members will include two board members, two campus presidents, representatives from the fund-raising foundations at each of the three universities, one executive department representative, two legislators, one OSU representative and one representative from the Interinstitutional Faculty Senate.

Richardson also asked the board to reaffirm the present policy that intercollegiate athletics are "integral to the educational experience" and sustain each campus conference affiliations.

'If you are not able to go to school, who gives a damn if you have a sports program, because you can't enjoy it.'

— Jennifer Bills, ASUO president

Although student protesters were relieved that the board did not vote Friday to transfer the \$3.35 million, many feel the delay will not bring a new solution to the deficit problem.

"I'm happy that they are at least making an attempt," said student senator John Thomas. "But, I think they have already made up their minds."

Bobby Lee, ASUO affirmative action coordinator, said he is

reserving judgment on the benefits of the new task force until he finds out when and where meetings on the issue will be held.

Student leaders have been critical of what they call a lack of advance notice of three public hearings held on the athletic funding issue.

The hearings were held after the board voted in September to delay action. According to a board report, support at the Corvallis and Eugene hearings were about 2-to-1; at the Portland hearing, support ran about 4-to-1.

However, at a press conference Wednesday in the EMU, student leaders said that the hearings were packed by local business owners who benefit financially from intercollegiate athletics.

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Roberts wrote to board members to say she opposed diverting state system funds to athletic programs.

"It was pretty clear that when the governor began to raise reservations that the board was going to have to change its position, that is the political reality," said Dan Williams, University vice president for administration.

"If there are people who have not been as closely involved in the process who can bring a fresh perspective, then great," he said. "But, if that fails, and we go back to the original proposal, then everyone should be satisfied."



Photo by Jeff Paslay
Thomas Bartlett (foreground), chancellor of the Oregon State Board of Higher Education, and George Richardson Jr., board president, were key players in the board's Friday decision to postpone a vote on transferring state funds to college athletic programs.

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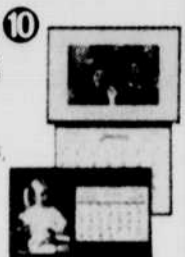
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