

Oregon higher ed faces 20 percent cut

By Carrie Dennett
Emerald Associate Editor

The Oregon State System of Higher Education released on Tuesday its 1993-95 budget preparation guidelines, which call for a 20 percent cut in the higher education budget.

As a result of Measure 5, OSSHE, along with all other agencies supported by the state's general fund, has been directed to prepare 1993-95 budgets at a level 20 percent below the state support needed to sustain 1991-93 levels of services.

This reduction represents a decrease of \$152 million from a total general fund budget of \$760 million. OSSHE's share will drop from \$555 million to \$445 million.

In addition to the 80 percent budget, OSSHE has been told to prepare two supplemental budget requests. The first is an initial 10 percent reallocation proposal that should reflect higher education's present and future priorities. The second is a 10 percent reallocation proposal based on the achievement of specific Oregon Benchmarks, or state priorities.

Chancellor Thomas Bartlett's budget guidelines provide for long-term change in order to protect the capacity of OSSHE institutions to expand in the future.

The guidelines shift the balance of resources toward academics, and call for 50 percent of the targeted cuts to come from administrative and support services.

35 percent of the proposed cuts will come from academic programs through restructuring, increased faculty workload, and program eliminations. The remaining 15 percent of the proposed cuts will be offset by potential increased revenues.

Despite the call for program eliminations, University President Myles Brand has said the University will not be subject to "vertical" program cuts like it was in the 1991-93 budget.

Other guidelines include:

- Reduction of graduate programs at the regional colleges
- Consolidation of undergraduate and graduate programs and majors, particularly in low enrollment/low demand areas.
- Attention to future viability and cost-effectiveness of several of OSSHE's professional schools.
- Better coordination of the lower division courses between Portland State and community colleges.
- Potential use of tuition surcharges to offset the high costs of selected professional career preparation programs.

The Oregon State Board of Higher Education will review campus responses to OSSHE's 80 percent budget plan at the June 26 board meeting, for final action in July. Further and final announcements of campus program eliminations and layoffs will be released in the fall.

TUITION

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Pernsteiner said the urgency of post-Measure 5 budget shortfalls is only one reason why a tuition policy is being attempted now. An increase in the demand for higher education is the other.

A one-third increase in the number of Oregon high school graduates through the end of the decade, coupled with a changing economy, is requiring the state to look at how much access to higher education it should provide.

Pernsteiner said Oregon's job growth is not happening in forestry or agriculture, but in management and professional sectors, where 50 percent of jobs created in the 1990s will be.

"Employers are demanding that people's skills have to evolve over a lifetime," he said. "This requires a college education."

Oregonians need to decide what kind of world they want their state to live in and be, Pernsteiner said.

"This economy will have to grow and change and be somewhat different that it is today," he said.

With an increased need for higher education in mind, Oregonians need to decide how many people should have access to college and universities, and who will pay for it, he said.

The options under consideration are:

- Maintain current tuition level, but cut enrollment
- Raise instruction fee to 50 percent of total cost, with a smaller enrollment cut
- Raise instruction fee to cover full cost, enrollment varies
- Maintain current tuition level and seek new tax revenues

An audience suggestion that

	GENERAL FUND	TUITION	TOTAL COST	ENROLLMENT
1991-93	\$555 million	\$235 million	\$790 million	60,300
No Tuition Increase	\$445	\$195	\$640	49,100
Students Pay 50% of Instruction Cost	\$445	\$260	\$705	54,100
Students Pay 100% of Instruction Cost	\$445	varies	varies	17,900 - 54,000
2001 Cost to Taxpayers if current tuition rate sustained	\$735	\$310	\$1,045	80,300

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George Pernsteiner

the state raise tuition to cover the full cost, but allow students to take out bonds as loans, was criticized.

Robert Nosse, executive director of the Oregon Student Lobby, said if the federal government is concerned about the student-loan default rate, the state should be, too.

"If the system is really interested in providing access," he said, "then they should keep tuition low and put the cost out into the general community."

Another student, a returning Planning, Public Policy and

Management major, said forcing the full cost of an education on students, even with loans, will have disastrous economic effects.

"Piling on tremendous loans on a large number of people in the state means we're not going to be able to buy homes or cars until much, much later," she said.

Joe Greer, a University pre-business major, said financial aid and loans simply don't make ends meet.

"A lot of my friends are leaving Oregon and taking their money with them," he said.

Mike Burton, a state representative from Portland and a member of the tuition committee, said the people at that meeting and the members of the Legislature are largely convinced of the importance of accessible higher education.

"It's the people who are not here who need to be convinced of the issue," he said.

The tuition meetings continue through June 5. The committee will make preliminary recommendations to the state board by late June.

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