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Education officials seek funding

Colleen Pohlig
Oregon Daily Emerald

While students were buried in books during finals week and then relaxing over spring break, higher education officials were busy pleading their case in the state capital for more funds to feed the starving state system.

A sub-committee of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, which is the state legislature's budget-writing body, began hearing testimonies March 13, and the budget hearings will continue at least through the rest of the week.

Higher education officials, some legislators and students are concerned that Gov. John Kitzhaber's budget will cut too deeply into a system that has already suffered under a \$130 million drop in state funding since 1989-91.

Kitzhaber proposes to spend \$602.8 million on the state's four universities and four colleges, which is about 15 percent less than in 1993-95.

If the governor's budget is approved, Oregon will be the only state to cut higher education funding in 1995-96. Tuition at Oregon schools is already higher and faculty salaries lower than at most public colleges across the nation.

Today and Tuesday are deemed Presidents'

Days in which presidents of the state schools will be asked questions about their institutions.

"They will ask specific questions about various issues such as whether we've reached our efficiency goals," University President Dave Frohnmayer said. "Also, the faculty productivity issue may arise again, and student access and tuition issues. We need to be a potential encyclopedia for any questions they may ask."

Frohnmayer said he has seen a more positive attitude in the Legislature this year compared with past years.

"Part of it is that there's more of a realization that the system is taking some very deep cuts, and if general fund dollars continue to be cut, we'll be the only state in the nation to disinvest in education," he said.

It's too early to tell, however, whether this transforms into more actual dollars for state higher education. A final budget for higher education may not be ready until the end of the Legislative session, Frohnmayer said.

The two major points Frohnmayer has discussed in the hearings are the "long suffering" of faculty and staff in state schools, and the importance of keeping tuition costs down to maintain access to students, he said.

OSPIRG

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The IRF got involved with the ongoing battle against OSPIRG at the request of Students for Legal Government, a recently formed student group that claims OSPIRG illegally receives incidental fees.

"I invited them here on behalf of Students for Legal Government," said the group's president, Friederich von Carp. "The

only way, realistically, we could stand up for our rights was with their help."

OSPIRG, which received \$137,775 in student fees this year, had its goal statement rejected at the group's March 2 budget hearing. OSPIRG volunteers will go before the student senate spring term to have the group's goal statement re-examined.

Without approval of the goal

statement, OSPIRG cannot receive student fees next year.

The IRF has been involved in cases at several colleges where constitutional issues were in question. The group has received national media attention for legal battles against the "politically correct."

Several IRF victories required university administrators to participate in First Amendment sensitivity training classes.



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