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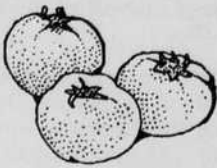
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## Keisling, student leaders discuss voter registration

■ **ELECTION:** The ASUO says it has registered about 3,800 students this year

By Doug Irving  
Politics Reporter

The question of the day was simple: How do you get students involved in the political process?

The answers were more complicated.

Oregon's Secretary of State Phil Keisling met with student leaders Friday to discuss student participation and tactics for registering more students to vote.

The Nov. 5 general election will be held at the polls. However, ballots will be mailed to absentee voters in the middle of this month.

The ASUO has registered about 3,800 students this year, according to ASUO President Matthew Scotten. About half of these registered for the first time, while the remainder simply updated their information, he said.

About 70 percent of the student body is already registered, Scotten said.

The ASUO also took advantage of the entire student body lining up for ID cards to push voter registration, he said.

"That sounds like a nice, captive audience there," Keisling said. "If you can't get them there, then you're not going to get them."

However, the ASUO did not get everyone, Scotten said. Some students declined because they're already registered at a different address and don't think they need to update their registration. Others are out-of-state students who don't want to register in Oregon.

"I've even had people give me feedback in terms of, 'Well, they're not going to give me in-state tuition, so I'm not going to vote here,'" Scotten said. "It's like this attitude of 'I'm going to show this state.'"

The ASUO's goal is to register

8,000 students this year, said Leslie Gray, the ASUO state affairs coordinator. That complements similar goals at other state universities, adding up to a state-wide goal of 21,000 new and updated registrations, she said.

As part of the drive, the ASUO mailed about 16,000 voter registration cards to students in September, Gray said.

However, the ASUO will have to push to meet their 8000 student registration goal, Scotten said. A lack of time could hinder their registration drive, he said.

Student voters will face a confusing election this year because it's at the polls, instead of being a vote-by-mail election, Keisling said. Nonetheless, over 500,000 Oregonians have registered for absentee ballots, he added.

"It's the worst of both worlds," he said. "It maximizes the cost and it maximizes the confusion."

Some voters may correctly fill out an absentee ballot, but then be confused when they hear it's a polling place election, Keisling said. Others may assume this is a vote-by-mail election and wait for a ballot that will never come, he said.

"There's going to be a lot of confusion in this [University] age group, too, because [sometimes] the only elections they've voted in so far have all been mail," Gray said. "And then they think that's always the case."

Many students also get mail at their permanent address instead of their school address, Gray said. Because of that, an absentee ballot might not catch up to the student, she said.

Vote-by-mail offers far more convenience than polls, Keisling said. In some cases, unforeseen problems could arise that would affect poll elections.

For example, the special Senate election was almost held on Dec. 13 and could have been a polling place election. That was the day a large storm hit Oregon. Luckily, the election was neither held on Dec. 13 nor held at the polls, Keisling said.

"That's not the most compelling reason to vote-by-mail," he said. "But it's a consideration when you look at what affects elections."

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