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CAMPUS VIEW

MONDAY'S TOPIC: Health & Science

OSA seeks more health coverage

CARE: Organizers are campaigning to put students who qualify for Pell Grants on the Oregon Health Plan

By Amy Palanuk
Higher Education Reporter

Getting sick can be expensive for students without health insurance.

The cost of medications and physician visits can add up to major bills, forcing students to quit school in order to pay for medical care, said Dr. Gerald Fleischli, director of the Student Health Center.

But this shouldn't be a problem if student organizers get their way.

They're asking the state legislature to put full-time students who qualify for federally funded Pell Grants on the Oregon Health Plan.

"During the 1995 legislative session, a policy decision was made to exclude full-time college students from Oregon Health Plan coverage," said Jon Isaacs, a field organizer for the Oregon Student Association (OSA). "Now needy students are forced to choose between going to college full-time and their health care."

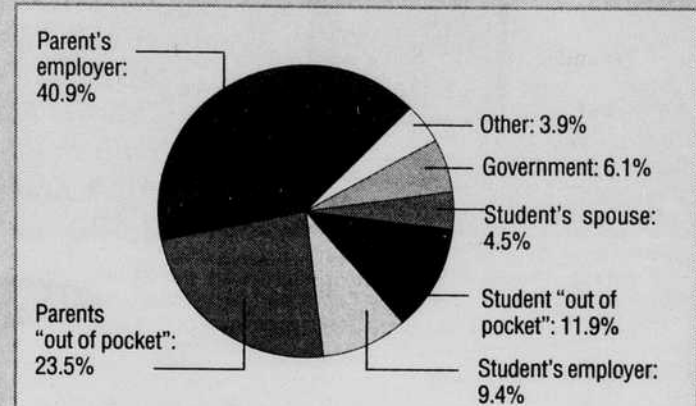
The number of students at the University who go without health insurance is estimated at 1,870. The number of students who received Pell Grants this year at the University is 2,886.

Student organizers believe that if all uninsured students had Pell Grants then everyone would be covered, Fleischli said.

Under the proposed coverage, students would have to qualify for all the guidelines of the Oregon

HEALTH INSURANCE

Most students are covered by health insurance — 87.9 percent — but the money for that coverage comes from a variety of sources.



SOURCE: Oregon Survey Research Laboratory, UO

Health Plan, including qualifying for a Pell Grant.

"Students who receive Pell Grants are considered the neediest students [and are] least likely to get health insurance from other sources," Isaacs said.

Ultimately, organizers want all full-time students to be covered under the plan.

But convincing legislators to add full-time students to an already tight Oregon Health Plan budget is a job organizers say they can't do alone.

"We want to organize grass roots pressure on the legislature," said Leslie Gray, state affairs coordinator for the ASUO.

The ASUO has posted flyers in the Student Health Center urging students who are uninsured and qualify for the Oregon Health Plan to lobby legislators in support of House Bill 5049. So far the ASUO

has received calls from students with medical problems ranging from routine procedures such as getting their wisdom teeth pulled to major medical assistance such as chemotherapy.

"A common myth among legislators is that students are covered by their parents and never have serious illnesses," Fleischli said.

Full-time students are the only group excluded from the plan that insures Oregonians with low wages, and for many students being privately covered is not an option their finances permit.

Many times students are dropped from their parents' coverage, or just can't afford health insurance, Fleischli said.

"The big thing is cost. We're looking for a way to get students back on it, and this is the first step. It will only cost the state \$1.3 million," Isaacs said.

Expert says animals talk — and lie, too

The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Animals have elaborate languages which can identify food, distinguish between threats — and are even used to tell lies, say scientists meeting in San Francisco.

Peter Marler, a University of California at Davis researcher considered one of the world's top animal communications experts, told the conference at the California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park that animals lie for the same reasons many humans do — sex.

Field researchers in Africa have observed male vervet monkeys attracting females by uttering the vervet word for "food," Marler said.

Just as some human females discover that their blind date's BMW is a rusting Chevy and his "high-powered job" is the night shift at a fast-food restaurant, the female vervet rushes up to the male and discovers the "food" is a twig or leaf.

When they're not trying to pick up a mate, vervets have an elaborate way of distinguishing between var-

ious threats, Marler said Saturday.

The vervet monkeys utter one type of cry when threatened by a snake, another when attacked by a leopard and yet another when assaulted by an eagle, he said.

That way, Marler explained, their fellow vervets will know where to hide: say, in a tree, far above the snake; or in a bush, where the eagle can't reach them.

The contentious science of "animal communication" peaked in the 1970s. Back then, scientists claimed they had trained primates how to communicate with sign language.

But critics analyzed videotapes of the training sessions and claimed the primates didn't really "understand" what they were "saying." Afterward, the field withered and federal research funds largely dried up.

Nowadays, most animal communication experts' goals are far more modest. Instead of trying to "talk" via sign language with animals, they passively observe animals in the laboratory or the field and tape-record their utterances.

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