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Lee manages tough balancing act

Bobby Lee says he brings a student's perspective to his job on the Eugene City Council

By Michael Burnham
Community Editor

He attends graduate-level classes at the University.

He works between 40 and 50 hours and pores over almost 300 pages of complex City Council issues each week without pay.

He receives between 20 and 25 calls and reads the same number of e-mail messages relating to his job in an average day.

He can't leap buildings in a single bound and he is not Superman.

He is Bobby Lee, City Council member and University graduate student.

The month of January marks the end of Lee's first year of a four-year term in office as the City Council representative for the University's ward.

Lee, 29, attended the University as an undergraduate public policy and management major in the late 1980s and early '90s, where he served as ASUO president and a campus activist.

During his student career, Lee facilitated the formation of the ASUO Multicultural Center, spearheaded the creation of campus radio station KWVA 88.1 and helped start the Racial Advocacy Group for Equality, which was formed to deal with grievances on hate crime-related issues.

After graduation from the University, Lee took a year off from school and worked for the Clinton-Gore presidential campaign,

Tom Bruggere's senatorial campaign and as the chief of staff for state Senator Susan Castillo.

So why does Lee choose to devote most of his time to juggling the dual roles of Eugene politician and University student?

"I really enjoy politics and the energy and dynamics in being involved in a political culture," he said. However, he chuckled, this means he "basically does not have any social life at this point."

"Being on campus is a relief to me because I don't have to talk about politics," he said, "but outside of campus is a different issue."

Lee has tried to use his life as a University student to help with his job as a City Council member.

"I've tried to essentially create a different kind of relationship between the city and the University," he said, "and more specifically between the administration and the students."

Lee described his role as a "middle man" in creating and sustaining existing city relationships with the University ward.

"From the city's standpoint, I'm their boss," he said.

In the past year, Lee has worked with the ASUO and students from the West University neighborhood, an area that was home last term to two riots and the focus of student rental rights.

Lee said some rental problems have developed and there has been a lack of past council attention because of the high turnover rate for renters. He is currently working with student government on a proposed housing code that would create habitability standards. A draft of the code was completed last year when it was briefly reviewed by the City Council.

"The least thing we could do is to provide [students] with adequate housing," he said.

It has been easier to have a working relationship with an active ASUO and student body because of his past experience in the office and the student insight he brings to his office as a City Council member, he said.

Current ASUO President Bill Miner has been working with Lee on many issues during the past year and expressed his appreciation for Lee as a valuable resource for the University.

"It's valuable to have a University student on the campus who votes for the council," Miner said. "I hope another student steps up to the plate and runs for the council when Bobby's tenure is over."

Although Lee described his first year on the council as "tough," he said his life as a student has helped him communicate with his ward.

"The best part of being a councilman is being a student," he said. "Students are more idealistic and possess a raw intelligence. I would have not run without a presence like the [University] in this district."



LEE

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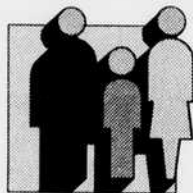
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Winter - Campus Events

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EMU, Century D

7:00pm - 9:00pm

Campus Interviews

Undergraduate and Graduate Students

Friday, February 6th, 1998

Application Deadline

Resume, application, cover letter and unofficial transcripts

are required for the interview schedule by

Friday, January 30th, 1998

Please submit paperwork to the University of Oregon Career Center, Hendricks Hall

Individuals will be chosen for interviews based on a resume pre-selection process. There will be no bidding for interview slots!

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