

ASUO plans to focus on student involvement in elections



LAURA GOSS/Emerald
Vice President Morgan Cowling (left) and President Geneva Wortman say they have the skills to fulfill their campaign promises.

The University's new campus organizer is only one of two in the entire nation

By Peter Breaden
Oregon Daily Emerald

Gov. Kitzhaber's "year of reinvestment in higher education" has begun in Salem, Congress recently reauthorized the Higher Education Act, and with the start of classes, students will set up their own campaigns for everything from medicinal marijuana to outreach programs for disadvantaged students.



Student government officials are turning their attention to the fall elections, where prominent issues for voters will be a forestry ballot measure, a governorship and a U.S. Senate seat. Student voter registration will enable or disable any campaign for change, said ASUO President Geneva Wortman.

"[What] we're working on, on a statewide level, [are] tuition freezes and faculty compensation," Wortman said. "It gives us that many more guns in our war chest to have students registered."

Though their goals for voter turnout are standard for an election year, ASUO will begin its campus programs with a fuller spread of tools than earlier years. The executive's campaign slogan goals of tuition freezes, better faculty compensation, and concerts at McArthur Court, though they were also arguably unimaginative, were realistic, given the lobbying experience and ability of vice president Morgan Cowling and herself, Wortman explained.

"All the skills necessary to get those goals, Morgan and I have those," she said.

One ASUO tool of note will be the new full-time position of ASUO Campus Organizer. Joelle Lester holds only the second campus organizer post in the country. The first was at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, from where Lester hails.

"Campus organizer, basically, is to do leadership development," Lester said. "I'll do a lot of intern and volunteer recruitment and development."

The campus organizer position operates through the Oregon Student Association, a statewide, student-lobbying group, Wortman explained.

"Her position will change the face of student government," Wortman said. "Someone who's been trained by OSA, she has that campaign mindset."

"They say, 'We want 6,000 voters, and I help them do that,'" Lester said. "There's a science to organizing."

Dealing with the organization of national student representation, the United States Student Congress convened in Boulder, Colo., this summer. The University was represented by Cowling, federal affairs coordinator C.J. Gabbe, Hispanic and Chicano student union representatives Mario Sifuentes and Sarita Amaya, and YWCA representative Mercedes Cruz.

"We had to choose our three main campaigns, which were appropriations, affirmative action, and campus democracy," Gabbe said.

The University's delegation was instrumental in bringing about the campus democracy campaign which addresses the right to collect student incidental fees, Gabbe said.

"We're taking a pro-active stance," he said. "It's necessary to have the incidental fees because it supports such a wide variety of options. While you may not personally benefit from each group [that is funded by incidental fees], you will benefit from having the debate on campus."

Gabbe was elected to the vice chair of National Students of the Jewish Community Caucus, Cowling won the vice chair position for the Northwest region, and Amaya was elected chair of the national Hispanic and Chicano Coalition.

But back in Eugene, Cowling stressed the new student government's campus focus.

"We're really committed to is-



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