

Interns learn about government

A program provides students with credit and experience in Salem

By Teri Meeuwse
Oregon Daily Emerald

Students watch bills turn into laws, sit in on senate sessions and schmooze with legislators as part of the Legislative Internship Program.

The program gives students a taste of state government while earning academic credit as interns for state legislators, government staff members and lobbyists in Salem.

Alan Contreras, program coordinator, said the program gives students a chance to understand how government works while providing legislators and other government officials with interns who are eager to learn.

"You can read about government in a book, but it's just not the same as getting the hands-on experience of how it works," he said.

Logan Wood, a senior political science major, gets to work toward her goal of getting into politics through interning for Sen. Su-

san Castillo, D-Eugene.

"I thought this would be a good opportunity for me to experience the responsibilities a legislator has and decide if it is something I may want to pursue in the future," she said. "I plan to run for office somewhere down the road."

Robert Burton, a junior political science major, wanted to supplement his education at the University, so he enrolled in the program. He is working for Sen. Tony Corcoran, D-Cottage Grove.

"I was ready to take my education to another level, one that was more engaging," he said.

The 40 interns from the University update bills and personal information files, run errands around the capital, answer telephones, attend meetings and talk to constituents during their work in 13 different offices, Contreras said.

But the interns learn more than how to file bills, Wood said.

"I am learning more about the initiative process and how seriously legislators take the comments of their constituents," she said.

"I am learning more thorough-

ly how bills become laws and what roadblocks bills face on their way to becoming laws and how individual legislators tend to vote and for what reasons."

While the experience is mostly a positive one, there is a downside to the program, Wood said.

"It's a big time commitment, but it's worth it," she said. "I put in a lot of time, especially with the commute to Salem ... I feel like I put in a lot more work at my internship than I do for some of my other classes."

But the interns have been well received by the legislators, Contreras said.

"I was visiting all of the offices, and they said the interns were doing really excellent," he said. "They said they were glad to have the interns there."

The internship lasts one to two terms and interns work two or three days a week. Interns earn credit through their own departments or through the Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management.

Anyone interested in the program should contact Contreras before spring break at 346-5023.

New Carissa

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said the oil's effect on smaller organisms such as plankton could have a major impact on the area because larger organisms such as shellfish and oysters depend on plankton for food.

Shapiro said the oil's effect on the plankton hasn't been gauged, but the impact could be minimal because new tides come in everyday and help wash away oily water.

Shapiro said she is especially concerned about the oil on the beach. She said she was worried the oil could sink into the sand and damage organisms under the sand for years to come.

"I think the beach will recover more slowly than the water itself," she said.

Hodder said the accident could have been worse if the U. S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Coast Guard and other organizations involved in the cleanup didn't react as quickly as they did.

"Some of the things they have done have worked very well," she said.

Many University staff members are now turning their attention to reforms that would help prevent future accidents.

Shapiro said that a group of legislators, including U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio, is preparing a bill that would prevent ship owners from skirting safety laws.

The owner of the New Carissa, Japanese shipping mogul Nippon Yusen Kaisha, licensed the

ship in Panama because of looser safety laws there.

William Orr, professor of oceanography, places the blame for the spill on the decision of the freighter's sailors to move toward shore during unfavorable weather conditions.

"It was really poor seamanship," he said.

Orr said he would support reforms that would require boaters to demonstrate a higher level of knowledge than they currently do.

The members of the Committee to Re-establish OSPIRG also want to see reforms. The group has been heading a campaign to make the polluters in the incident pay instead of taxpayers. The group is encouraging students to contact their legislators about changing the system.

"The polluters are at fault and the polluters should be held accountable," said Merriah Fairchild, State Board Chair of OSPIRG.

Fairchild said the group hasn't decided yet what its level of involvement, if any, will be in the current clean-up process.

Despite the focus on reforming the system, Orr said he is more interested in another aspect of the case.

"I think we need to focus on how this can be prevented," Orr said.

But Engleking is doubtful that such spills can be stopped.

"We need to know that there are oil spills coming," he said. "When you have oil tankers, you have accidents."

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