

Do what you will with this, it is a pressing issue

More than 1,000 higher education advocates convened on the capitol steps March 31 in a powerful rally. The rally, which included bands, balloons and hooting participants, was the people's way of saying we've had enough.

We've had enough disinvestment in higher education. We've had enough program cuts. We've had enough drastic increases in tuition.

A decade of disinvestment is enough.

Students have weathered significant increases in tuition with an increase of more than 80 percent from 1989 to 1996.

From 1989-1996 the percent increase in tuition at Oregon public universities was: University of Oregon, 98 percent;

Oregon State University, 100 percent; Portland State University, 79 percent; Western Oregon University, 83 percent; Southern Oregon University, 85 percent; Eastern Oregon University, 90 percent; and Oregon Institute of Technology, 78 percent.

This far outpaces the average inflation rate, the average annual wage increase and the Oregon minimum wage. Increased tuition affects enrollment rates, the number of students who can afford to go to school, the amount of money a student will borrow and the amount of time students have to work during their education.

Oregon is at the top of the tuition pile in the 13 western states.

Without the \$15 million for a

tuition freeze that has been included in both the governor's and Senate president's budgets, tuition will increase 5.2 percent per year. With this tuition increase, enrollment can be expected to drop. Enrollment

Commentary

Matt Swanson

The undergraduate tuition freeze has already been recognized as important by the governor, Senate President Brady Adams, House Speaker Lynn Snodgrass and many others.

The Oregon University System has reworked its budget model as it was directed to do. The model was the product of two years of work by a task

force on higher education that included members from the government, business and education sectors. The budget model is designed to be market-driven, more accountable to the state and more effective for students.

The Oregon Student Association is advocating for full funding of the Oregon University System budget model, including a tuition freeze.

Funding the Oregon University System is fundamental for Oregon's future. The more than 1,000 people who took time out of their day to rally in Salem realize the importance of higher education for Oregon's future.

Forecasts estimate that 45 percent of Oregon workers will need at least a bachelor's degree

in the workforce of 2010. It is vital for Oregon's future economy that the Oregon University System be fully funded.

The March 31 rally was successful. It culminated in Senate President Adams and Speaker Snodgrass signing a \$100 million dollar check for the Oregon University System.

The state's investment in higher education is too low. This lack of support directly affects the cost of tuition. Oregon University System students need a zero increase in instructional fees for the 1999-2001 biennium to keep them in school and out of debt.

Matt Swanson is the ASUO state affairs coordinator. Responses may be sent to asuostat@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

Letters to the Editor

Election outrage

Unbelievable. For those of you still hanging onto a sliver of hope that our current student government is not corrupt or incompetent, please let it go now. OK, some parts aren't, but the ones that are go big and it's messing with some innocent students.

I'm talking about the ASUO Elections Board's decision to have a runoff between Wylie Chen and Dan Reid. Jessica Timpany, a Reid campaign supporter, filed a grievance against Chen for distributing campaign materials in the residence halls. The Elections Board's decision means they believe that Chen's campaign had unfair access to the residence halls. In reality, Chen's campaign didn't break any rules, it was just more intelligent.

Reid could have had the same access had

he had the foresight to use it. Chen/Anoushiravani got permission to distribute their campaign material in the residence halls. They read all of the rules and followed them religiously. No one wanted a repeat of last year's paper wasting fiasco, so both candidates ran clean campaigns.

The Elections Board is doing students a significant injustice and people need to know about it. If you've been apathetic, disenchanted or jaded by student government, find it in yourself to care — VOTE.

Read the Emerald's coverage of the elections, write an e-mail to either candidate, arrange a meeting with them — figure out who you can trust. The people we elect have more power than the average student knows about.

Serena Maria Selah Markstrom
Journalism/Spanish

OSPIRG misuses fees

Reasons why you should vote no on OSPIRG:

1. A no vote does not mean you are anti-environmental. It means you are tired of OSPIRG's misuse of student incidental fee money.

2. OSPIRG's budget reveals that the organization spent more than \$88,000 on salaries for professional staff in Salem and Portland. Why isn't that \$88,000 being spent here on campus to benefit students?

3. The EMU doesn't charge rent, so how come OSPIRG's budget shows \$1,333 for rent off campus?

4. The 1997-98 OSPIRG budget reveals that only 22 percent of OSPIRG's money

stays on campus. This is reason alone to question its funding. Of this 22 percent, only 12 percent is seen by students in the form of publications, fliers, seminars, speakers, etc. Don't you think that is irresponsible?

5. OSPIRG claims to be an environmental organization, among other things. If this is true, why does OSPIRG print on neon paper? Or print colored fliers that are much harder to recycle? This doesn't seem very environmentally sound to me.

These are just a FEW of the reasons why a no vote on OSPIRG is the wise choice. OSPIRG spends most of it off campus. Don't you think there are better ways we could be spending \$128,000?

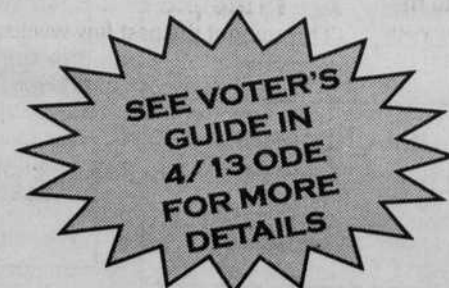
Courtney Konopacky
Political Science/History

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