

Accessibility

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through legislation.

"Probably the best thing that the ADA has done is to raise the level of awareness," Oregon ADA Program Coordinator Denise Spielman said. "People are now starting to realize that people with disabilities are people first; they deserve the same rights as everyone else."

Although there has been an increase in awareness over the past 10 years, perhaps one of the biggest problem areas with the ADA is the lack of knowledge.

"A lot of times businessmen don't understand that they need to make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities," Spielman said.

According to Spielman, people tend to shy away from making accommodations because they assume that it will be a big cost to make the appropriate accommodations.

"In actuality the costs are usually under \$500," Spielman said. "People also don't realize that tax credits are available to small businesses to help defray the costs."

The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research has established 10 regional centers across the country to provide information, training and technical assistance to employers, people with disabilities, and other entities with responsibilities under the ADA.

"These sites provide tons of material on how the laws are enforced, information telling people with disabilities what their rights are and site evaluations, which will tell agencies how they can most effectively comply with ADA regulations," Spielman said.

As well as being seen at the national and state level, the effects of the ADA are also apparent in the Eugene community and campus areas.

"A significant amount of city

funds go towards accessibility projects," said Mary Feldman, ADA coordinator for the city of Eugene. "Two of the biggest projects have been increasing accessibility at the Hult Center and City Hall. We have also added hundreds of curved ramps around the city."

According to Feldman, LTD and other city agencies were addressing accessibility issues even before the ADA imposed its regulations.

"What the ADA has done is brought more focus and public notice to the issues," Feldman said. "The act is evening the playing field for people with disabilities."

The effects of the ADA can also be seen on the University campus.

"This act has increased awareness all over the place," said Hilary Gerdes of the University's Disability Services. "It has also given us opportunities to examine what we are doing and what we aren't doing for our students and visitors."

According to Gerdes, the biggest impact of the act can be seen with museums, libraries and historical buildings.

"It has made us become more creative ... figuring out how we will make a historical building accessible without changing it."

Classroom accommodations are also being made on campus, leading to increased awareness of disabilities to faculty members.

"The ADA has created opportunities for individuals who prior to were not afforded those opportunities," said Molly Firois, also of Disability Services. "But there still needs to be more education to the general public and the community about people with disabilities."

For more information on campus, call Disability Services at 346-3211. For more information on projects concerning disabilities in the city of Eugene call 682-5177. For information technical assistance from one of the regional centers across the country, call toll free 1-800-949-4232.

Tuition hike

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Final budgetary decisions for the 2001-03 biennium won't be available until this time next year, Bruce said.

He assured that for the 2000-01 fiscal portion of the biennium, the 1996 tuition freeze would remain in effect with any in-state undergraduate increases in tuition beginning in 2002-03.

Portland State University stu-

dent and state board member Tim Young explained that since 1990 tuition in Oregon has risen by 80 percent, which led to the implementation of tuition freezes throughout the state.

"In conversations I've been a part of it appears unlikely that students will be organizing around another tuition freeze," he said. "In my humble opinion it's been great PR for the Oregon Legislature, and I wouldn't be unhappy to see that continue, but there are other battles to be fought."

OSA Communications Director

John Wykoff indicated that this recent turn of events comes as no surprise.

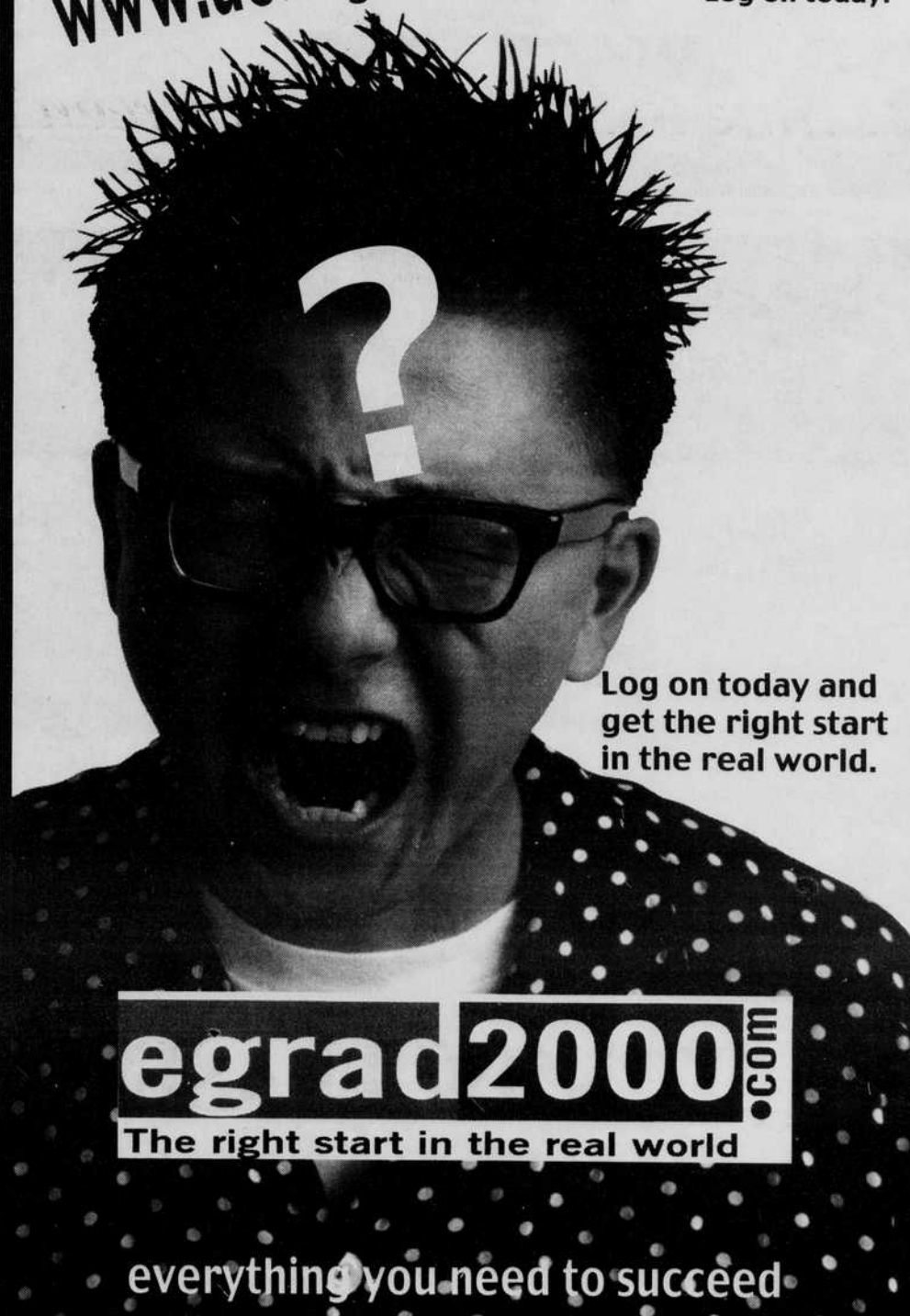
"It will be our goal in the legislature to help pass the OUS budget to assure that the tuition increase isn't any higher. We're cautious about it, but our board likely won't be opposing an increase that is inflationary like this."

From the State Board, the budget proceeds to the governor's office and then to the 2000 Oregon Legislature for further consideration and approval.

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