

ASUO pushes to minimize upcoming tuition hike

■ Student leaders have organized a letter-writing campaign to ask for support from Oregon legislators

By **Jeremy Lang**
Oregon Daily Emerald

Members of the ASUO Executive realize cuts in higher education funding are imminent this legislative session, but they believe state politicians can help prevent double-digit tuition increases for University students.

Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber's recently proposed state budget for the next two years includes \$94.3 million less for the Oregon University System, and although budget

details will be fiercely debated in Salem in the coming months, University President Dave Frohnmayer told the University Senate Wednesday that tuition increases are coming.

"What's being proposed [by Kitzhaber] is a step back, maybe two steps back," said Brian Tanner, ASUO state affairs coordinator.

But Tanner, who through his ASUO position will work closely with members of the Legislature, OUS and the Oregon Student Association, said the big question now is how high the increase will go in the next two years.

He said OUS proposed to Kitzhaber a tuition increase between 5 and 8 percent split between the two years, and Kitzhaber's plan sets an increase at 8 percent. "But there is talk that it

could go higher than 8 percent," Tanner said.

ASUO President Jay Breslow said he wants to halt the tuition increase at a biennium 5 percent, or 2.5 percent each year for the next two years.

To do that, Breslow said, the ASUO is organizing a letter-writing campaign to a group of nine local politicians and two committee chairs, trying to gain support from the legislators who will vote on the specific parts of Kitzhaber's budget.

"It's a mix of damage control and proactive work," Breslow said.

Tanner said the ASUO hasn't organized other campaigns, but he wants to create some that will address the specific effects on students and faculty.

"More than the numbers, students want to know what it means

for them," Tanner said.

Many, including Tanner and Breslow, worry that higher tuition will eventually decrease enrollment and hurt campus programs.

"It's disappointing. The current quality of programs is going to be hurt," Tanner said. "Innovative new programs are going to be hurt."

On Wednesday, Frohnmayer said it's still too soon to know what the final budget will mean for students. He said he did not want to "sound alarmist," and an end to the recent tuition freeze was expected.

Tanner agreed that tuition was going to rise eventually, but said the situation is grim regardless of the final numbers.

"There's about an \$800 million shortfall in a state budget of about \$10 billion," he said.

Breslow said that while the University's needs will remain crucial, the ASUO plans to fight for the proposed increased funding for community colleges.

The Legislature will approve the final state budget sometime in the spring. But Tanner said as specific parts are passed, it will become clear who in government will fight for higher education and exactly how much money will be available.

They might vote first on K-12 schools, which receive more than half the state budget. If that decision becomes bogged down in partisan politics, Tanner said, other budget debates may become heavily political as well.

"If it takes three months [to decide K-12], we're in trouble," he said.

University to provide safety, health programs for workers

■ The Labor Education and Research Center has received a contract that will fund the new training programs

By **Brooke Ross**
Oregon Daily Emerald

Thanks to a \$1.8 million contract from the State Accident Insurance Fund (SAIF) corporation, the University can now offer training in health and safety programs to labor union members off campus.

SAIF, a public corporation that settles worker compensation claims, offered the University's Labor Education and Research Center the contract to increase the

availability of safety and health training programs for labor union members throughout Oregon on Dec. 12. The funding will also help University students explore labor issues.

Established in 1977, LERC hosts workshops on labor law and history, provides guest lecturers for University departments and occasionally offers classes on labor-related topics.

"Our goal is to look for sectors within the labor communities with the biggest safety problems that we can have the greatest effect on," said Steven Hecker, associate professor and director of occupational safety and health programs at LERC.

Hecker said SAIF members, along with various labor union workers, will work with the research center on its advisory board to determine the areas that need the most training based on SAIF's injury claim data.

"We will be looking at health-care problems such as sprains and infectious diseases and high-hazard industries like construction," he said, adding that training programs will be developed where they are most needed.

"We want to give people an overall better understanding of the elements of workplace safety," he said.

David Thurber, vice president for policy holder services for SAIF,

said the contract is already in effect.

"The plans are forming and the advisory committee is underway as we speak," he said.

Thurber said the company was seeking to provide a safety education system with longevity, which is why it chose LERC.

"They're designed to educate on that same issue, so it was a valuable place to partner and train Oregon workers," he said.

One way the research center is preparing to educate more people is by hiring more employees. Hecker said the organization is currently in the process of adding two full-time positions that should be filled by spring.

Marcus Widenor, associate professor and interim director of LERC, said there may also be more graduate teaching fellows and student interns hired if the program expands.

"We will be able to reach a lot more people with this funding than we've had in the past," he said.

Margaret Hallock, a LERC professor who also supervises the center's internships, said students will benefit from the contract.

"The funding will provide for more internships that will give students a hands-on experience about concrete issues of the labor workplace, so students will be left with a better understanding of the labor economy," she said.

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