

Castillo, Barnhart conduct town hall meeting

■ The state legislators addressed everything from Oregon's budget to comments from constituents

By Aaron K. Breniman
Oregon Daily Emerald

Sen. Susan Castillo, D-Eugene, and Rep. Phil Barnhart, D-Eugene, hosted a town hall meeting Thursday evening at South Eugene High School to update concerned citizens on current legislative issues and provide an overview of the Governor's budget recommendations.

"The goal here is to lay out a context for the budget, and where we are for this legislative session," State Budget Director Theresa McHugh said as she walked

through the 2001-2003 Governor's Recommended Budget.

Addressing the shortfall in this year's state budget, Castillo weighed in on the severity of Oregon's financial condition.

"This is a really tough budget," she said. "People will see, no part of our budget looks good — everybody is getting cuts, big-time cuts."

While discussing everything from budget forecasts to tax kickers, the forum boiled down Oregon's budget woes to one problem: not enough money.

With the constant talk of a federal surplus and the Bush administration's proposed tax cut, one could easily miss the financial crisis Oregon faces.

Castillo expressed concern over the public's confusion between state

government and federal government, citing a recent survey that found nearly 40 percent of Oregonians surveyed believed the state was looking at a projected budget surplus.

"I would love to see television do a better job — all media do a better job — of covering state government," Castillo said. "I think people are getting state government confused with the federal government."

Both Castillo and Barnhart said more should be done to facilitate communication with elected officials. Town hall meetings are one attempt at that communication, but both urged citizens to write their elected officials more often so they can understand the issues of the people they represent.

"We get very few comments from constituents about what people

want," Barnhart said, mentioning that much contact comes in the form of complaints.

Barnhart stressed that this type of contact with legislators can directly affect their everyday work.

He recalled a legislative vote he had participated in earlier that day,

in which he wasn't quite sure how to vote on the issue. But the public comment he had received made the decision for him.

"An e-mail I received from a constituent earlier today ultimately determined how I voted," he said.

Enrollment

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dents in the journalism program in more than a year. He said this may require the school to move classes that are traditionally taught in Allen Hall elsewhere. Incoming freshmen will also have an impact on the faculty, creating an overload for the counselors as well as the amount of grading required in each class.

Despite some predictions of a classroom crunch, James Buch, associate vice president for enrollment services, remains confident the increased number of freshmen will not have a dramatic effect on scheduling.

Buch said his office is working with University departments to

slightly alter the schedule next year, which is primarily due to the Gilbert Hall renovation.

He said the change would entail a redistribution of classes on campus, as well as a slight adjustment in the time slots when classes are offered.

Buch said he expects only 200 more freshmen to attend the University, despite the record number of applications. In the fall of 1999, 2,422 freshmen attended the University, and in 2000, more than 2,780 were on campus.

Michael Eyster, director of University Housing, said the applications could mean a high level of occupancy at the residence halls next year.

"We're hoping that it means we are fully occupied next fall," he

said. "Usually our occupancy is tied into the amount of freshmen on campus."

This year, he said, the residence halls have a larger number of residents than last year. Currently, he said, there are 2,902 residents living on campus. In spring last year, there were 2,638 people living in on-campus housing.

Eyster said that despite the amount of applications to the University, he is worried the freshmen will not apply to live in the residence halls because of the quality of the halls compared to other schools, as well as other living arrangements.

"I've been concerned for quite awhile at the fact that our residence halls are not competitive," he said.

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