

Debates continue over who controls student fee money

Administrators and students continue to disagree on how much input students should get in the budget process

By Kara Cogswell
Oregon Daily Emerald

Questions of control over student fee money continue to strain the relationship between students and University administrators.

They say they want to work together to establish budgets and programs funded by student fees.

But when it comes to determining what role each should play in the decision-making process, students and administrators often disagree on how much control students should have.

Last spring, EMU administrators angered many students and staff members in the EMU when they decided not to renew the contract of Cultural Forum program co-ordinator Linda Dievendorf — who had been at the University for 21 years.

Student supporters of Dievendorf said because her position was funded with student incidental fees, administrators should have asked for their input before they made the decision to not renew her contract, which ends on May 24.

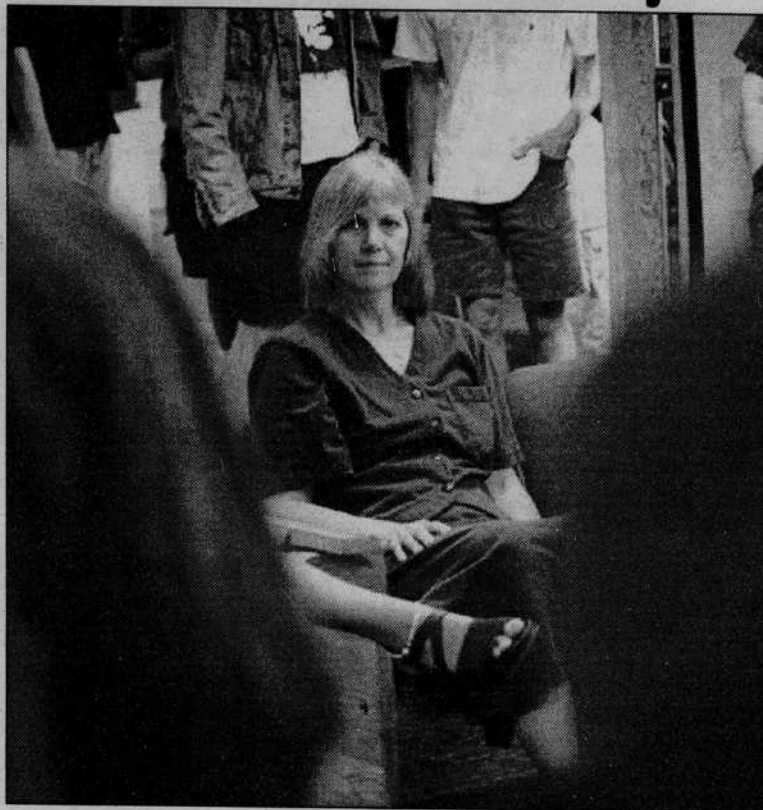
Dievendorf said EMU administrators Gregg Lobisser and Dusty Miller did not tell her why her contract was being terminated after 17 years.

But in the months that led up to that announcement, she said she clashed with administrators over how to run the Cultural Forum. Administrators told her she needed to direct students more on how to spend the program budget, she said.

Dievendorf said that went against her philosophy of letting students learn through experience. Typically students discuss programming possibilities and then reach a consensus as a group about what to do, she said.

Administrators rarely attended Cultural Forum events last year, she said. And she said administrators do not understand how the program works, or what students are capable of.

"I really think they're out of touch with the programs we do," she said. "And I think they're out of touch with students on campus. ... My termination is the tip of the iceberg. I think it is reflective of administrative desires to control stu-



Adam Amato Emerald

Former Cultural Forum co-director Linda Dievendorf sits at a meeting held last year. Students attended the meeting to protest EMU administrators not renewing her contract.

dent fees and student programs. And they're not even trying to hide that fact anymore."

Lobisser, the director of student activities in the EMU, said he could not comment about Dievendorf's termination.

Overall, he said he considers the relationship between EMU administrators and students to be "positive and constructive."

He said he works with students on a daily basis, and keeps in touch with what student groups are doing by attending fall open houses and other events throughout the year.

Accusations of administrators abusing power usually stem from a lack of understanding of the student incidental fee process, he said.

"Many students see the incidental fee as essentially outside of state budgets and state funds," he said. "The legal reality is that they are state funds, and they must comply with the statutes that exist for the University."

Lobisser said EMU programs such as the Cultural Forum should

be managed differently than ASUO sponsored groups, such as student unions. In the EMU, he said, administrators take a more "directive" approach to provide continuity from year to year and to ensure programs fit with University missions.

Graduate student Roger Adkins is the Cultural Forum Queer Film Festival coordinator and a member of the Student Empowerment Group (STEP), which was formed in response to Dievendorf's termination.

The goal of STEP is to change University policies so that students will always have a say over the use of student fees, including hiring and firing situations, he said.

Over the summer, student government leaders, faculty members and community members attended the STEP meetings, he said.

Administrators do not trust students to create their own programming, Adkins said. And when they do ask for student input, he said, it is often after the fact.

"That's University administra-

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