

Task force calls insurance 'feasible' for OUS students

■ A health task force appointed by the State Board of Higher Education will propose a trial version starting in fall 2002

By Leon Tovey
Oregon Daily Emerald

University health centers at schools in the Oregon University System offer an array of services at a fraction of the cost of off-campus medical centers, but there are some things they just can't provide. As a result, students without insurance can sometimes find themselves in dire straits.

In order to address the healthcare situation, the State Board of Higher Education passed a resolution in March 2000 assembling a student health insurance task force. The task force was charged with determining whether it would be possi-

ble to institute a student health insurance program for the entire Oregon University System. Last week, the task force had its answer.

"We've come to the conclusion that it looks like a feasible thing," said Larry Roper, director of the task force. "After two years, we're now closer to the end than to the beginning."

The task force has narrowed its focus from extended insurance for all OUS students to a more manageable plan of mandatory basic insurance, Roper said. This would give students access to care outside university health centers at a cost similar to what they pay at the health centers.

While the details of the plan still have to be ironed out, Roper said, the idea is that the cost of the insurance would be added to the existing health fee paid by all OUS students.

According to Dr. Gerald Fleischli, director of the University Health Center and a member of the task force, the goal is to keep the cost to students in the \$20-\$25 per term range. Students at the University currently pay a \$96 per term health fee that helps subsidize the Health Center — allowing them to charge \$6 for an office visit that might cost between \$50 and \$75 somewhere else.

However, there are some services that the Health Center does not offer, and that's where the new plan comes in, Fleischli said. For example, the Health Center does not provide CAT scans or MRIs. Fleischli said one of the aims of the new OUS plan is to offer students access to off-campus medical services.

Details are still being debated about what treatments or costs the new coverage would subsidize. The biggest problem, according to Fleischli, is that different health

centers have different needs. For example, the University of Oregon's health center is the only OUS facility that has its own X-ray machine, so the task force needs to determine whether the insurance will cover X-rays before submitting a proposal to the State Board of Higher Education.

The next step would be for the board to approve the proposal. Tim Young, a University political science major and student representative to the Board of Higher Education, said that while he hasn't seen any proposals, he would have a number of questions before approving a policy of mandatory basic insurance.

"My big concern would be how this relates to the Oregon Health Plan," he said. "A lot of students over 24 have access to the Oregon Health Plan, and I would like to

know how this would affect them."

The Oregon Health Plan offers medical, dental and mental health benefits at little or no cost to Oregonians below the poverty line. It is available to Pell-eligible students statewide who have not been covered by major health insurance providers for at least six months.

Fleischli, however, is confident that the process will go forward, and he said that if all goes well the new coverage could be in place as early as next fall.

"We're a couple weeks away from giving a proposal to the board," he said. "Our recommendation will be to implement a trial version of the program in the fall of 2002."

Leon Tovey is a higher education reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald. He can be reached at leontovey@dailyemerald.com.

Wind energy provides alternative to fossil fuels

■ For a higher electric bill, Eugene residents have the option of using wind power

By Diane Huber
Oregon Daily Emerald

Since April 1999, Eugene Water and Electric Board has offered its customers the option of getting a percentage of their electricity from Wyoming wind generators as part of EWEB's wind energy project. Choosing to use wind power costs extra, but it allows clients to have more control over where the money they pay for their monthly electric bill is allocated, EWEB Energy Service Department Manager Mat Northway said.

"You know a portion of your bill is going to a specific, renewable resource," he said.

According to a September 2001 National Renewable Energy Laboratory study, Eugene ranked seventh in the nation for having the highest participation rate in "greenpricing" programs, with 3.5 percent of customers paying extra to use 10, 25, 50 or 100 percent wind power.

He said residences usually choose the wind power option, and although there is no demographic breakdown, Northway suspects that students are using wind power. Northway said students tend to be more aware of environmental issues and have small houses with manageable electric bills.

OSPIRG's energy campaign leader, Jacob Meyer, allocates 10 percent of his electricity to wind power. He wants to increase to 25 percent, but the cost is holding him and his roommate back.

He said he supports wind power because it is the fastest growing energy source in the world and will move the country away from a reliance on fossil fuels.

"As individual citizens, we can make a choice to support progressive utilities," he said.

OSPIRG campus organizer Paul Helstrom added that wind power is a more favorable alternative to other types of renewable energy, such as solar or hydroelectric power, because of its cost competitiveness.

Birds were once an additional concern because they would fly into the blades, but modern windmills are constructed to protect birds, he said.

The Wyoming windmills constructed for the EWEB project were built to reduce bird mortality, Northway said. Birds often die because, after perching on top of the windmills waiting for prey, they swoop down to snatch a bird and get caught in the blades, he said.

But the Wyoming windmills were built with rounded tops and all power lines are underground, which prevents perching. The blades also move at a slower speed and are painted.

Northway said that once the program was launched, there was a steady increase in customers until it leveled off a year later in April 2000. Since then, there have been two rate increases, which has pushed some people to drop out of the program. Overall, Northway said participation has remained steady.

For more information, call 388-WIND.

Diane Huber is a student activities reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald. She can be reached at dianehuber@dailyemerald.com.

News brief

Search dog was up to big task

SEATTLE (KRT) - Highly trained and obedient, focused and tireless, Ricky, a 3-year-old Rat Terrier, is the smallest urban search dog in the country. He can climb aluminum ladders, run complex patterns on command and tell the difference in the scent of the living and the dead.

For 10 days starting Sept. 19, Ricky and his trainer, Janet Linker, a Seattle firefighter and dispatcher, worked the night shift at the site of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, searching for survivors and, toward the end, bodies.

They were sent as a part of Puget Sound Urban Search and Rescue - 62 firefighters, police, doctors, engineers, public-safety personnel and

three other search dogs. They were one of 28 elite teams coordinated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Ricky sat quietly recently on top of the podium in front of the Seattle City Council, wearing his official vest adorned with official patches from FEMA and Puget Sound Urban Search and Rescue, while the human members of his team received thanks and commendations.

Linker and Ricky worked together with trainer Kent Olson and his canine search partner Thunder, a golden retriever, to locate several victims in the rubble, among them a firefighter and a policeman.

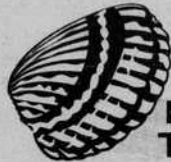
— Caitlin Cleary

(c) 2001, The Seattle Times. Distributed by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services.

The Money is NOT There!

A few local politicians are playing a shell game.
They need another \$71 million
to pay for the West Eugene Parkway.

Where will they find it?



More Taxes



Canceled Road Projects



Slashed Services

FANTASY: "The money for the West Eugene Parkway is there."

FACT: Ballot Measure 20-54 clearly states that the money is NOT there. "If WEP is included on funded project list, other projects totaling at least \$71.2 million must be removed from list, or ... need to be funded from other federal, state or local revenues."

FACT: The state has only \$17 million for the WEP. \$71 million is missing! WEP can only be paid for with a combination of the following:

**HIGHER TAXES! CANCELED ROAD PROJECTS!
CUTS IN PUBLIC SERVICES!**

FACT: The WEP would destroy 50 acres of unique wetland habitat that is home to endangered species.

Protect Eugene's Quality of Life.
Vote NO on the West Eugene Parkway.



It's Highway Robbery!

For more information, to volunteer, or to make a financial contribution, please call 686-6761 or visit our website: www.westbynorthwest.org/no20-54

Authorized and paid for by "No on 20-54 PAC" — Audrey Erickson, Treasurer



Recycling makes a world of a difference.