

News brief

Student Senate funds Pacific Islands Club

The ASUO Student Senate allocated money to the Journal of Environmental Law and Litigation and the Pacific Islands Club at Wednesday's meeting.

JELL requested money to fund a symposium scheduled for Jan. 31 and Feb. 1. The group is host-

ing several speakers for the two-day environmental law conference, including Winona LaDuke, and needs money to cover expenses. The board voted 10 to 2 to allocate \$2,771 to help fund the event.

Nicole Shanahan, a representative from the Pacific Islands Club, requested \$300 to get the group up and running. She said the group was started in 1999, but it never received funding and has been inac-

tive for the past two years.

"We want to bring the various and vast cultures of the Pacific islands to Eugene," she said.

Senate President Peter Watts supported the group's request.

"We should try and nurture new clubs, especially since this is a culture not represented on campus," he told the board.

The board unanimously agreed to allocate \$300 to the club.

— Diane Huber

OUS Budget

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now the sky's not falling."

On January 7, Kitzhaber announced a potential re-balance plan — based only on program cuts — that would have reduced the OUS budget by \$84 million. Kitzhaber was constitutionally required to make the proposal but repeatedly said that he did not consider it fiscally responsible or politically possible.

But according to John Wykoff, legislative director for the Oregon Student Association, some officials feared the proposal just the same. The OSA expected to see

6,000 state opportunity grants eliminated. Under the new plan, only 1,300 grants would be eliminated, he said.

OUS spokesman Bob Bruce agreed that the new proposal hurts OUS less, but it is too early to tell how the proposed cuts will affect individual universities.

Others are not so optimistic. State Rep. Vicki Walker, D-Eugene, noted that OUS "took a pretty big cut."

"I don't know how we are going to meet these cuts" while trying to accommodate higher levels of enrollment, she said.

University of Oregon Provost John Moseley said the new proposal still fails to address increased en-

rollment projections facing state universities. There could be 1,000 new students at the University next fall with no state funding to offset costs, he said.

But Moseley would not predict how the final budget would pan out.

"This is just one more proposal in a series of proposals," he said. "But we do appreciate the fact that higher education's situation has improved at each stage. I hope that (the governor and the legislature) will be able to continue to improve the situation."

Community editor John Liebhart contributed to this report. E-mail higher education editor Leon Tovey at leontovey@dailyemerald.com.

Budget

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"This recession is national — even international — in scope, and state government can affect it only minimally," Kitzhaber said in a statement. "However, that doesn't mean we shouldn't do all we can."

Kitzhaber's budget cuts include \$44.5 million from the Oregon University System, \$112 million from K-12 schools, \$15.5 million from community colleges, \$69.7 million from human services, including the Oregon Health Plan and \$73.1 million from public safety programs, such as the Oregon State Police.

Because of the relationship between Oregon's faltering economy and high budget deficits, both the Legislature and Kitzhaber will be doing a lot of hand wringing over these program cuts, said State Sen. Phil Barnhart, D-Eugene.

"Anything we do is painful. Rais-

ing taxes is painful, cutting budgets is painful," he said. "We just have to find how much pain the people of Oregon can handle."

Kitzhaber will call Barnhart and other legislators into session Feb. 8 to deal with the budget shortfall. However, the Democratic governor will face a Republican-controlled Legislature with budget plans of their own.

State Sen. Gary George, R-Newberg, predicted that the governor will have a hard time finding the votes to create the tax plan. He said any tax increase calls for an 18-vote majority in the 30-seat Senate and a 36-vote majority in the 60-seat House.

Currently, Republicans control the Senate 16 to 14 and the House 32 to 28.

George chided Kitzhaber for not supporting a bipartisan budget plan from the so-called "Gang of Five," a Senate and House group of 3 Republicans and 2 Democrats.

The group released a plan Thursday that called for \$525 million in program cuts, but called for no tax increases.

"Our folks got together to make a plan, and (Kitzhaber) put it in the trash," George said.

If any tax increase has a chance of passing in the legislature, it is so-called sin taxes, said state Rep. Vicki Walker, D-Eugene. "There are people out there who think people who smoke and drink should pay for it," she said.

However, the 5-cent tax will force bars and restaurant owners to raise the price of a drink, said Bill Perry, director of government relations for the Oregon Restaurant Association.

"In good times, we could have handled the (extra tax)," he said. "But this has a greater effect in an economic downturn."

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