

# ASUO awarded for activism

USSA awarded ASUO's legislative team for its involvement with the H.E.A.R. campaign

**Aimee Rudin**  
City/State Politics Reporter

Students may want to thank members of ASUO's legislative team for working to improve access to higher education.

The team recently received the United States Student Association award for its work during winter term on the Higher Education Act Reauthorization campaign.

The group, led by ASUO legislative intern Taylor Johnson, sent more than 1,000 postcards to Oregon senators and representatives, penned numerous letters to local media and traveled to Salem to represent college students in the state capitol.

"It was really interesting to do some grassroots work that I've never done before and have it make such a huge impact in a national conference," Johnson said. "I really wanted to make a difference ... and provide more access to higher education."

The H.E.A.R. campaign included several aspects intended to increase access to higher education. ASUO members lobbied to increase

grants, lower student loan debt, preserve good programs and repeal the drug provision question on the FAFSA form.

A subdivision of the campaign included lobbying for an increase in federal Pell Grants. Students from around the nation successfully placed enough pressure on legislators that the U.S. Senate voted to increase the maximum grant award by \$550.

At the University, more than 4,000 students receive Pell Grant awards, totaling about \$10.7 million.

"The Pell Grant is one of the most important grants out there," ASUO legislative associate Stefan Myers said. "It really opens the gateways to higher education."

Myers was one of eight members of the ASUO legislative team who traveled to Washington, D.C., to lobby at the capitol and partake in the H.E.A.R. campaign award ceremony.

Myers said the USSA award is based on how much of an outreach is made on campus.

"Besides all the postcards, we set up days to have students call their legislators," Myers said. "We would

just try to flood their offices with e-mails and calls from students demanding increased access to higher education."

Myers added that students need to keep lobbying to make sure their goals are realized.

USSA legislative director Mary R. Cunningham said it is important to gain "as much support as possible" for H.E.A.R.

"It is vital that all of Congress know about what we want for H.E.A.R.," Cunningham said.

According to Cunningham, the recent work is just the beginning of the H.E.A.R. campaign. The act could take about two years to reauthorize and go into effect.

Myers encourages students at the University to get involved with the ongoing actions to increase access to higher education.

"Students can come into the ASUO offices and get involved," he said. "We're always looking for students who want to get involved with federal issues."

Contact the senior reporter at [aimeerudin@dailyemerald.com](mailto:aimeerudin@dailyemerald.com).



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Employee Recognition Awards Reception, 3:30-5 p.m., Alumni Lounge, Gerlinger Hall, free.

"Aimee and Jaguar" (German film showing), 7:30 p.m., 115 Pacific, free.

"Director's Cut: A Selection from the Papers of James Ivory" (movie director exhibition), April 14-June 30, East and West Corridors and Special Collection Exhibit Area, Knight Library, free.

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