

Experts remain somewhat hopeful about economy

At Wednesday's 10th annual Economic Forecast symposium, local economists address a slow but steady rise for Oregon in 2004

By Caron Alarab
Senior News Reporter

Despite predicted increases in property, health care and utility costs, industry experts and economists remain "cautiously optimistic" about the future of Oregon's economy in 2004.

At the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce's 10th annual Economic Forecast on Wednesday, local and state representatives addressed issues ranging from the importance of improved investment statewide to the increasing economic value of higher education, especially the University.

"The University is a tremendous force in the local economy," University Vice President for Research Rich Linton said.

Speakers at the forum focused in part on the economic benefits of the technology industry in Oregon.

"Oregon's high-tech companies are doing big things in small places," Jack Isselmann, deputy director of the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department, said during his keynote speech. Isselmann stressed the importance of high-technology companies as private manufacturer employers and as a means of leveraging statewide investment.

After the speech, local industry panelists — including representatives from markets in real estate, health care, tourism, utilities and higher education — gave an uneasy forecast for 2004.

Real estate experts predict more record-high vacancies and record-high prices, while those in health care expect hospital, physician and pharmacy costs to continue rising. Utility costs are also expected to increase, locally and regionally, by five to 15 percent in 2004.

On the other hand, the tourism industry

hopes a new Eugene airline and new University buildings will help to bring back visitors.

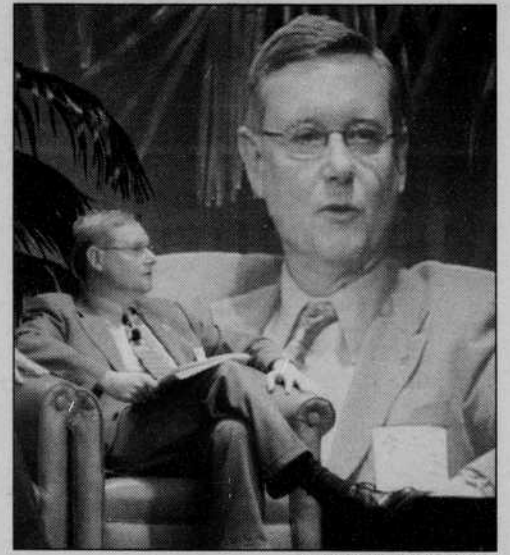
Linton, representing higher education, had the most optimistic outlook for 2004 as he referred to a recent multi-million dollar fundraising campaign, and he predicted an end to the statewide salary freeze by 2005.

The event also featured an economist panel, which included representatives from the Oregon Employment Department, ECON-Northwest and other organizations. The panel estimated a four percent growth rate in 2004, despite major job market challenges and ongoing investment issues.

Linton, who called the overall forecast for 2004 "cautiously optimistic," said he was proud to have represented the University at the event.

"I felt very gratified that there is growing appreciation for the University as an economic engine," he said.

Contact the business/science/technology reporter at caronalrab@dailymerald.com.



Tim Bobosky Photographer

Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies Rich Linton discusses the University's economic contributions to Eugene at Wednesday's Economic Forecast.

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"The money was wonderful," SMART's South Valley Area Manager Liz Degner said.

Degner said the money SMART received paid for 14 children to enter the program, which works with children in kindergarten through third grade who are struggling with reading.

She said she was impressed with the students in the class because they took

their responsibilities seriously and researched the organizations thoroughly.

Degner said she believes the class connects students to their community.

Irvin agreed an important aspect of the class is helping students become more involved with the community.

"This is a class that sort of opens people up to other things that are out there," she said.

Lenzser said getting out of the classroom and visiting the organizations made the seminar unique to the University.

"There are few other classes that give students such a hands-on experience," she said.

Contact the higher education/student life/student affairs reporter at chelseaduncan@dailymerald.com.

NEWS BRIEF

ASUO Student Senate approves realignment plan, releases money for events

The ASUO Student Senate approved a seat realignment plan, sending it to the ASUO Constitution Court for their approval, and passed four special requests at a one-hour, forty-minute

meeting Wednesday night.

The realignment of senate seats, long in the works, aims to shift the seats of academic senators so they represent as equal a number of students as possible. Senators said that is extremely difficult to do, given that seats represent certain majors.

"We're making it better than it was before," Sen. Colin Andries said.

The senate also dealt with special requests, releasing \$2,075 from the Chinese Student Association's accounts to pay for the group's China Night event.

The Multicultural Center also filed a successful request to release \$300 from the group's account to pay for food during a guest speaker event, and the senate released \$70 of the Students of the Indian Subcontinent's funds for food.

The International Student Association received a \$117 release for Friday coffee socials during winter term.

There was some debate about whether to give the group \$116 or \$117.

"I think it's a waste of time to argue over a dollar or two," Ombudsman Mike Sherman said. "You will probably never hear me say that again."

—Chuck Slothower

Have some great UO stories to share?

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CAMPUS BUZZ

Thursday

- Public Safety Advisory Group meeting, EMU Walnut Room, 3:30 p.m.-5 p.m.
- Romance Languages lecture featuring Sharon Kinoshita from the University of California-Santa Cruz, Room 221, Friendly Hall, 5 p.m.
- Author Nancy Hopps will present a variety of relaxation methods. Bring pillows and mats. University Bookstore, 7 p.m.
- Honors College lecture featuring Population Institute President Werner Fornos, EMU Fir Room, 7 p.m.
- Faculty ensemble and guest artist concert featuring jazz violinist Diane Monroe, Beal Concert Hall, 8 p.m.

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