

Oregon Daily Emerald

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Monday, January 26, 2004

SINCE 1900 UNIVERSITY OF OREGON EUGENE, OREGON

Volume 105, Issue 85

Senate affirms higher ed board appointments

The Oregon Senate approved all seven of Gov. Ted Kulongoski's new appointees to the State Board of Higher Education on Thursday

By Nika Carlson
News Reporter

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski's push for an investment in higher education got an official boost Thursday when the Oregon Senate approved all seven of the governor's new appointments to the State Board of Higher Education.

Former Oregon Gov. Neil Goldschmidt, who is expected to lead the board and whose appointment drew intense scrutiny and criticism during a Senate committee meeting, was approved by a 25-4 vote.

The 11-member board is now composed almost entirely of Kulongoski's appointees.

"This board is going to focus on ensuring that a college education in this state is not limited to those who have the means to afford it," Kulongoski said in a press release. "It must also continue to ensure that the education and training of our graduates on Oregon's public campuses are meeting the economic and work force needs of the state."

Kulongoski announced a four-part initiative for focusing on higher education in November, saying the system needs to focus on being accessible to all Oregonians, training students in sought-after fields, investing in programs that spur the state economy and generally reinvesting in higher education.

When Kulongoski made his announcement, four board members stepped down to give the governor room to make new appointments.

"I think that the change in the board was to make a statement about the importance the governor wants to give to higher education in the state," Vice President of Academic Affairs Lorraine Davis said. She added that the new members, who she said are strongly committed to education, will serve the state well.

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Neil Goldschmidt
State Board of Higher Education appointee

Police face forensic staff layoffs



Casey Roberts, a scientist at the Oregon State Police Springfield Forensics Lab, will lose her job for a second time in three years if Measure 30 fails. Roberts was laid off after voters rejected Measure 28 in 2003. Adam Amato Senior Photographer

Oregon State Police will cut 56 percent of its forensics positions if Measure 30 fails, leading to a massive backlog

By Jennifer Marie Bear
News Editor

More than half the employees at the Oregon State Police's forensics division stand to lose their jobs if Measure 30 fails, and such a massive loss in manpower could translate into a slower-moving wheel of justice.

OSP spokesman Lt. Glenn Chastain said without the extra funding from Measure 30's tax increases, OSP will be forced to cut \$3.92 million from its budget. That would mean laying off 60 forensic positions out of 107, a 56 percent reduction.

Locally, that would lead to reducing the staff at the OSP Springfield Forensics Lab to three scientists, according to lab director Brad Putnam.

Forensic scientist Casey Roberts will be one of the workers to lose her job if Measure 30 fails. Roberts has worked at the Springfield lab for three years analyzing evidence for the presence of illegal drugs, and in her time at the lab, Roberts estimates she has worked on around 1,500 drug cases for the state.

"I was the only full-time drug chemist, and that's a lot to be on one person's shoulders," Roberts said. "And if I get laid off, who's going to do it?"

Putnam said if Measure 30 fails and OSP is forced to reduce half of its forensics positions, labs across the state will have to cope by arranging cases in a priority matrix. High priority crimes like homicide, rape and

aggravated assault will be handled first, and low priority cases like property theft and drug cases will be dealt with last.

But Putnam said there is a problem with this system: High priority crimes would keep coming in and the low priority ones would just sit in a file and not get finished, which would create a huge backlog. Putnam said he's already seen this occurring since Measure 28's failure in 2003. The Springfield lab is dealing with a backlog of 450 drug cases, Putnam said, which is an "unprecedented" number. And if Measure 30 fails, the

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Thursday: Education

Friday: Social services

Today: Police

Tuesday: Pros and cons

OSPIRG budget causes controversy at PFC meeting

A motion to defund OSPIRG was defeated during a PFC funding debate Thursday

By Moriah Balingit
Freelance Reporter

Thursday night's Program Finance Committee hearing was a hotbed of controversy, with PFC reaching decisions for the budget proposals of the Student Bar Association, MEChA and OSPIRG after intense debates.

The budgets for the Recreational Sports Program and Physical Activity and Recreational Services were passed with a few snags at \$152,961 and \$779,293 respectively, and the PFC voted unanimously to defund Quiz Bowl after it failed to show.

The central topic of debate during

OSPIRG's controversial hearing, which drew nearly 50 supporters, was the transparency of the group's budget, which was not itemized to the specificity that some PFC members desired. OSPIRG transitioned from a referendum process just two years ago and thus has had trouble getting its budget up to PFC standards.

For PFC Sen. Colin Andries, this lack of transparency was reason to motion to defund the group. The motion failed.

Andries also expressed concern that OSPIRG's funding does not benefit the University proportionally, as OSPIRG consolidates funding it receives from its university chapters into a statewide fund for efficiency.

"(The funds) just go to Portland, and they get to spend it as they please," he said.

Senior Tim Johnson, chairman of

the University's Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group chapter, said he believes it was more than the numbers that bothered Andries.

"I felt that he was making a decision based on ideological reasons as opposed to the numbers that were before him," he said.

"We'd attempted to contact him on numerous occasions to clarify any budget concerns he might have about our group, and he didn't ... express the type that would warrant defunding our group."

Andries insisted the implication that there were political motivations behind his decisions is "a complete fabrication," adding that it was primarily the lack of transparency in the budget proposal that concerned him.

The members finally came to a

consensus after two and a half hours of tedious number-crunching and debate. PFC members approved the ASUO Executive recommendation of \$115,265, a 14.6 percent increase from last year's budget. Despite his previous motion to defund the group, Andries voted for the proposal.

"I had already lost ... I was supporting the PFC," he said.

The Student Bar Association hearing was another item on the docket that drew a fair amount of controversy. PFC voted to table the budget proposal after ASUO Senate President Ben Strawn pointed out a potential conflict of interest.

"My primary concern is that Colin (Andries') signature is on the front of the budget," Strawn said.

Andries, who put together the budget as SBA's Business Officer, refused to say

whether he would abstain during the organization's next PFC hearing.

MEChA's budget hearing was hindered by their troubled fiscal past. Some PFC members were hesitant to increase the group's budget because its audit indicated that all of the funds had been transferred to cover its budget deficit. The group's budget was frozen after it spent itself into deficit after hosting a statewide conference.

"We've never let bad leadership be an excuse before," PFC Vice Chairman Toby Piering said, referring to the group's fiscal problems.

PFC eventually decided on \$20,072 for the group, a 7.6 percent increase from last year. The budget passed 4-2 with one abstention.

Moriah Balingit is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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change lives