

Oregon Daily Emerald



Sarah Ebert dances her way to success Page 6

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Piercy triumphs in mayoral primary

Kitty Piercy won with 51.4 percent of the vote, over Nancy Nathanson's 45.9 showing in the election

By Parker Howell
News Reporter

Mayoral candidate Kitty Piercy outlasted Ward 8 City Councilor Nancy Nathanson on Tuesday night for Eugene's highest position, while incumbent Ward 7 City Councilor Scott Meisner was unseated in a contentious primary race.

Piercy, a former state representative, had a majority 51.4 percent of the vote, according to Lane County Elections' unofficial final tally, besting Nathanson, the other front-runner, who pulled in 45.9 percent of the vote. Candidates in non-partisan races with more than 50 percent of the primary vote automatically advance to the general election, in which they will run unopposed.

The race was tight from the beginning of the night, with initial returns showing Piercy with about 49 percent of the vote, compared with Nathanson's 47 percent. The trend continued throughout the evening as local candidates and their supporters awaited returns at the Lane County Fairgrounds, watching Piercy inch ahead with each return.

As the results came in, Piercy expressed her excitement.

"We're close, you can't get much closer," she said.

Piercy said her volunteer supporters, who "gave unstingingly," helped make the race.

"I actually attribute it to a very, very, very well-run campaign," she said. "That enormous effort has gotten us where we are and I'm privileged."

Ward 3 City Councilor David Kelly, who represents the University area, said he was excited by the results.

"I think (Piercy) will be a mayor who can bring the disparate factions of this city together," he said.

Ward 1 incumbent Bonny Bettman beat challengers Tom Slocum and Adam Walsh, receiving about 67 percent of the vote. Slocum received about 22.3 percent of the votes, while Walsh pulled in about 10.7 percent.

Bettman said she was pleased with the early returns, although she didn't take her race for granted.

"I'm really honored to enjoy the support of voters in my ward," she said.

Turn to **PRIMARY**, page 5

Professors debate grade INFLATION

Some cite recruitment of better students as a reason for increased GPAs

By Chelsea Duncan
Senior News Reporter

Grade inflation continues to be a topic of debate both nationally and at the University as students and faculty question whether it is now easier to get high grades, and whether standards should be adopted for grade distribution.

Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Lorraine Davis said the administration is concerned about grade inflation because it has the potential to undermine the value of grading standards. But she said it is unclear whether students receiving undeserved grades is a problem on campus because the University lacks a mechanism to analyze grade distribution throughout the whole campus.

"That's a matter of who you talk to," she said. "It's one of those things that we do need to pay more attention to."

A list of University GPAs dating over the past 10 years shows a trend toward higher GPAs for all class levels, but some argue the increase isn't due to grade inflation. Instead, they attribute it to increased student quality.

Average SAT scores and GPAs for incoming freshmen have been rising over the past few years, according to the Office of Admissions.

The average GPA of this year's freshman class is between 3.53 and 3.55, a rise from 3.47 last year and 3.39 four years ago.

Director of Admissions Martha Pitts said students are coming to campus with more experiences that have prepared them for a college education.

"There are other indications that we're actually bringing in stronger students," she said, adding that faculty members have also said students seem to be stronger academically.

Davis said administrators do not regulate how professors decide to distribute A's because faculty members have the responsibility to distribute grades fairly and accurately.

"We expect that faculty will indeed be giving A grades when A grades are deserved," she said. "This is a prerogative of the faculty but indeed, I do expect and hope that faculty take grading seriously."

She said the idea of placing limits on the number of A's faculty can distribute hasn't been discussed in her department for about 10 years.

Biology Professor Emeritus Franklin Stahl said he hasn't wandered from his grading standards throughout his nearly 45 years on campus. He said he uses a grading curve to ensure only the top 10 to 15 percent of his students receive A's, with the majority receiving B's or C's. He said grades lower than a C are "really disgraceful."

"I've pretty much stuck with that," he said. "I don't think I've inflated over the years."

English Associate Professor Emeritus William Rockett said his grading standards haven't changed over the past 38 years, either, but he tries to give an equal number of A, B and C grades.

"I don't believe it has changed," he said. "I do my best to weigh each paper individually."

Turn to **GRADES**, page 4



Tanyia Johnson Design Editor

Average debt for loans increases by \$500

Students who put themselves in debt to pay for college have several options after graduation

By Chelsea Duncan
Senior News Reporter

With graduation comes responsibility, and while seniors are visualizing freedom from classes and homework, many are also facing the reality of thousands of dollars of debt.

Members of this year's graduating class who received financial aid throughout their time at the University have to pay back an average of \$17,000 after commencement.

The debt average is up about \$500 from the past six or seven years, Financial Aid Director Elizabeth Bickford said. She said the number is comparable to the national average.

She also said the level of debt many University students will face after completing their undergraduate degree is "worth it."

"In the broad picture, it's actually not a bad decision to take out loans if you need to," she said. The potential earnings students can expect to receive throughout their future careers makes the investment worthwhile, she added.

And there are ways to make paying off the tab a little easier, such as loan consolidation.

"It can make it easier for students repaying one lender rather than repaying three over time," Bickford said.

While consolidating loans can make payments simpler, Bickford cautioned that the process could extend the repayment period and come with higher interest rates.

"Make sure that you're an informed consumer," she said about choosing a payment plan.

Most students can plan on paying about \$200 a month during a 10-year period, depending on variable interest rates and payment plans, she said. This year's student loan interest rate, which changes every year, is 2.82 percent. The highest it can reach is 8.25 percent, according to the Office of Student Financial Aid.

Students can contact the Office of Student Financial Aid or check out the Direct Loan Servicing Web site at www.dlsonline.com for more tips on how to find the best payment method for each person, Bickford said.

Despite these options, some feel the cost of college education is too great of a burden. Oregon Student Association Field Organizer Rocky Dallum said students shouldn't need to be educated

on what is the best method of payment, but rather universities and the state should work to lower the cost of attendance. He said the amount of student debt is a problem.

"When people know what kind of debt they're going to end up in, it turns people away," he said.

Bickford said from the 1998-99 academic year until 2002-03, the amount of undergraduate residents who qualified for need-based aid and attended the University rose by 24 percent. The number of undergraduate residents who applied for aid, attended the University and also worked rose by 11 percent.

"It means needy students are looking at the University as an option," she said. Bickford was unable to provide statistics for students who actually received financial aid, however.

Bickford did say the state needs to better support students while they work toward their degrees. She said the federal and state government need to provide more grant assistance for financially challenged students.

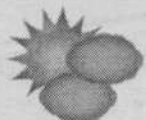
"I think that's where some of the pressure can be alleviated," she said.

Dallum said it is still a problem when students have to work jobs throughout their education.

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