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Bill proposed for suicidal students

Senator Bill Morrisette says the legislation, which could force suicidal students who refuse help to leave school, protects students

BY KARA HANSEN
NEWS REPORTER

State legislation has been drafted in response to a proposed University policy that could force suicidal students out of school if they continually refuse help. It is unclear whether the legislation will actually impact the University.

Oregon Senator Bill Morrisette requested the legislation, drafted by retired pharmacist Jim Whittenburg on Thursday. Morrisette called it a "student protection bill to make sure a student isn't put on mandatory leave without due process."

"We're protecting both the University and students by making sure they don't make any off-the-wall diagnoses," Morrisette said.

But drafting the final language has been difficult because the University has not released a copy of the proposed policy to the senator's office, he said. The Emerald has also been unable to obtain a draft of the proposed policy.

University General Counsel Melinda Grier said Monday she has not had time to review the draft of the policy, which she has had since November 2004. She hopes to release a copy of the policy sometime in the next few weeks, she said.

The University proposed changes to the mandatory leave policy in fall 2004 in response to increased rates of suicidal students, University Counseling and Testing Center Director Robin Holmes said in a November interview. She said the proposed policy would shift the decision to

use mandatory leave from health center personnel to the Division of Student Affairs with the director of the health center or counseling center making a medical recommendation.

Morrisette said the goal of the bill is to give students safeguards against mandatory leave.

The proposal is modeled after a bill introduced by Morrisette and passed in 2003 that forbids public school teachers and officials from recommending that students take mind-altering drugs, such as antidepressants, in response to behavior problems. The proposed bill would, among other things, extend the rule to Oregon colleges and universities.

However, Health Center Director Tom Ryan, who helped create the new policy, said mandatory leave wouldn't hinge on whether high-risk suicidal students would take prescription drugs; rather, it would depend on whether they were still suicidal and unwilling to accept help after

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State funds at all-time low; tuition still rising

The University plans to maintain enrollment caps to help counter the decrease in state funding

BY ANTHONY LUCERO
NEWS REPORTER

With a Jan. 15th deadline for admission applications, the University's potential freshmen for Fall 2005 are sending in their paperwork, but those applying face higher tuitions and lower assistance by the state, a growing trend in the past few years.

"This is the lowest state funding has been," said J.P. Monroe, Institutional Research Analyst for the University Resource Management department. "It's unprecedented."

Monroe said students are spending more and more on tuition, while the University received only about \$59.7 million in state appropriations for the 2003-2004 schoolyear — a meager 13.8 percent of the University's total revenue. In fact, the percentage of revenue secured from gifts and grants was slightly more than double the state funding at almost \$105 million. Even "auxiliary" revenue — at about 24 percent or more than \$430 million — is more than state funding.

Student tuition made up slightly more than one-third of University revenue at about \$142.7 million.

The 1992-1993 schoolyear was the last time state funding provided more revenue than student tuition. That year, tuition made up about 27 percent of the University's revenue while the state provided for about 28 percent.

But in the next year, students' tuition made up 32.5 percent and state funding dropped to 21 percent. The gap widened in the next two years. In 1996-1997, tuition revenue accounted for about 37 percent of the total revenue, or \$106.5 million, while state funding was at its second-lowest point in University history, only accommodating for 15 percent, or about \$43.9 million.

Last year marked the lowest point of state support with tuition at its highest. Resident undergraduates paid \$5,121 and non-residents paid \$16,065 for the schoolyear. And the trend continues — residents this year will pay \$5,568 and non-residents \$17,424.

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Rescue ME



Tim Bobosky | PHOTOGRAPHER

Above: Firefighter engineers Tim Bradley and Greg Deggelman practice river rescues in the Willamette River on Monday. Drills are designed to prepare the firefighters to be ready to rescue a real person within seven minutes of getting a call. Left: Deggelman leaps into the water to save Bradley as part of their river rescue drill. They are keeping their skills fresh for the dozen water rescues they have to do every year.



State senators hold town hall meeting in Springfield

Senators Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith carried on an Oregon tradition Monday answering the questions of citizens and officials

BY MEGHANN M. CUNIFF
SENIOR NEWS REPORTER

Lane County residents were given a rare opportunity to air their concerns about issues they feel should be tackled during this year's legislative session when state senators Ron Wyden (D) and Gordon Smith (R) held a town hall meeting on Monday at the Lane County Regional Sports Complex in Springfield.

The senators are the only ones in the country who hold yearly town hall meetings in every county.

More than 15 citizens and public officials asked questions on topics such as the surge of

methamphetamine users in the state, the United States' treatment of war prisoners and prescription drug coverage for senior citizens.

Wyden said it is crucial for Oregon to deal with the growing problem of meth addicts and promised "a comprehensive effort on the part of your two senators" to enact laws that will combine aggressive law enforcement with effective addiction treatment.

Both senators said they would like the state to lead the country in taking on the growing methamphetamine problem.

"Meth is moving from west to east," Wyden

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Sen. Gordon Smith speaks at a bipartisan town hall meeting Monday night at the Lane County Regional Sports Complex.

NICOLE BARKER | PHOTOGRAPHER