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Traffic safety concerns resurface

Several groups have explored options to improve the Franklin Boulevard-Onyx Street intersection

BY AMANDA BOLSINGER
NEWS REPORTER

On March 1, longtime campus-area resident Hatoon Victoria Adkins was struck and killed while trying to cross Franklin Boulevard on her bike against the crossing signal. Her death has raised concerns about the safety of the busy intersection.

The concerns are nothing new. University administrators have been talking for several years

about the need for changes at the intersection to make it safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.

But statistics from the Oregon Department of Transportation show the intersection isn't nearly as dangerous as people think and that accidents are often caused by pedestrian error.

ODOT spokesman Lou Torres said the intersection is not dangerous.

"It's a busy intersection where

undoubtedly there have been some accidents," Torres said in an e-mail interview. "Sometimes an intersection is 'perceived' to be worse than it really is."

ODOT tracks dangerous intersections using a Safety Priority Index System. The criteria for the index include the number and types of crashes at that place. The intersection of Franklin Boulevard and Onyx Street currently has a SPIS score of 27.46, well below the top 10 percent of dangerous intersections. The cut-off score for the top 10 is 44.49.

Between Jan. 1, 2000 and July 31, 2004, there have been

22 collisions recorded by ODOT at the intersection. Of the 22 crashes, 15 have been rear-ends, two turning, two angle, one backing, one pedestrian and one sideswipe collision.

DPS Interim Director Thomas Hicks recorded four vehicle-bike accidents, three vehicle-pedestrian accidents and one fatality since Jan. 1, 2000.

"The intersection is controlled by traffic signs, which people need to obey," Hicks said. "Don't take anything for granted, but there is plenty of time to cross."

The intersection is part of the

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UO submits alterations to medical-leave policy

Students returning after long-term illness would not be guaranteed re-enrollment under the proposal

BY PARKER HOWELL
SENIOR NEWS REPORTER

Students forced to take medical leave by University administrators will no longer be guaranteed readmission under proposed changes to the University's medical-leave policy.

Existing University policy states that students returning from medical leave are "guaranteed re-enrollment in the University provided scholastic and other academic qualifications are met."

The revision calls for the vice president for Student Affairs and a newly formed Suicide Assessment Team to approve a student's return after reviewing a plan submitted by a student who was placed on leave because of "a serious medical or mental health condition or emergency that substantially threatens the welfare of self or others."

Counseling and Testing Center Director Robin Holmes said the change will allow administrators to be aware when a student returns so officials can provide resources to help him or her. She said officials are sometimes unaware when a student returns, which she said is "really a concern with us."

"In reality, I think that's a better check in making sure when a student returns to the community they have everything they need to be successful," she said.

The change is just one component of a revised policy created to clarify under which circumstances students can go on voluntary leave or, on rare occasions, be asked to leave because they are endangering themselves or others.

Changes in authority

Current Oregon Administrative Rules governing student medical leave at the University allow the dean of Student Personnel Services to grant voluntary medical leave after consulting with the director of the University Health Center.

The current rules also allow the dean to ask for a student to be evaluated by a physician or psychiatrist, requesting cooperation and assistance from the student's family if necessary. After recommendations from other administrators and meetings with the student in question, the director can place a student on medical leave.

Under the new policy, final decision-making power is granted to Vice President for Student Affairs Anne Leavitt. The policy also states that the vice president for student affairs can seek input from the Counseling and Testing Center director for psychological cases.

The policy also establishes new "Standards of Responsibility and Self Care" students must follow. Students who do not meet the standards but are not suicidal can be forced to have a dean's consultation. If a student is exhibiting suicidal ideation or behavior, the Suicide Assessment Team, a group of professional staff members who have expertise in the area of suicide assessment, may conduct a review and recommend actions, including possible mandatory professional assessment.

Students ordered to be assessed must do so

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LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT STRIKE NEGOTIATIONS



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Clockwise from top left: Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy, center, joined professional mediator Wendy Greenwald, right, and representatives from Lane Transit District and Amalgamated Transit Union Division 757 Thursday in an all-day mediation that started at 9 a.m. and lasted late into the night. Piercy served as a room-to-room messenger and negotiation facilitator along with Greenwald and other community leaders during the mediation session.

Passing commuters honk their horns and yell their support to LTD drivers Chuck Palmer, left, and Carl Faddis, right, as a group of over 50 strikers chant "fewer buses, more traffic!" at the Ferry Street bridge.

Organizer for Service Employees International Union Local 503 Wayne Moore carries a stack of signs Thursday afternoon.

LTD Board member Gerry Gaydos, LTD General Manager Ken Hamm and LTD Director of Transit Operations Mark Johnson discuss ongoing contract negotiations during Thursday's mediation session. LTD bus drivers have been on strike since Monday, March 7. As of press time, LTD and ATU were still in mediation. If a contract agreement is reached and union members approve it, bus service could resume as early as Saturday.

University may adjust withdrawal penalty

The proposal would abolish the 15-percent fine for dropping a class during the first week of the term

BY ADAM CHERRY
NEWS REPORTER

Students will be able to reduce their course loads during the first week of classes fall term without forfeiting tuition dollars.

Anne Leavitt, vice president for student affairs, and Herb Chereck, University registrar, have submitted a proposal to eliminate the 15-percent tuition penalty for dropping a class during the first week

of any academic term. The proposal, if approved, will be added to the University's fee book for the 2005-06 academic year.

Members of the ASUO Executive, who had a hand in the policy's formulation, said they were pleased their campaign to abolish what they called the "sketchy scheduling penalty," has been successful.

ASUO President Adam Petkun,

who included the elimination of the penalty in his campaign platform, considers the situation a victory for students.

"One of the big keys here is that the first couple of days you can find out whether a class is going to fit into your life," he said. "I think that today's student has so many stresses beyond the classroom; this is a type of freedom we need to have."

Administrators listened to the ASUO's arguments and were willing to work with students to find a solution, Petkun added.

ASUO Public Relations Director Nathan Strauss said the approval

process for the proposal is, at this point, a technicality.

"Everyone who needs to be on board is on board," he said.

Strauss added that it's exciting students can lobby and be successful in making a change at the University that benefits them.

Fees for dropping classes apply only if a student reduces the number of credits that he or she takes during an academic term. If a class is dropped and another of equal weight is added, there is no penalty.

Chereck said the primary reason the policy needed to be changed is

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