

Medical leave rule changes criticized for suicide policy

ASUO President Adam Petkun says students were left out of the decision-making process regarding the revision

BY PARKER HOWELL
SENIOR NEWS REPORTER

A proposed revision of the University's medical leave policy "comes up a little short" in helping students who may be suicidal, ASUO President Adam Petkun said Friday at a hearing about the changes. He said the alterations no longer guarantee students' rights to receive credit for interrupted work, to be readmitted after being placed on leave or to use the health-care provider of their choice, among other issues.

He also said in written testimony that students weren't adequately included in the revision process, calling it a "serious oversight."

"I support the University's efforts to update the student medical leave policy and to address suicide issues in a way that protects the University community," he said. "However, I am concerned that it comes up a little short in terms of helping, assisting and showing concern for students who are at a difficult time in their lives, usually for reasons beyond their control."

As the only student who spoke at the event, Petkun was one of three people to attend the hearing organized by the Office of the General Counsel.

Vice President for Student Affairs Anne Leavitt and Student Advocacy Director Hilary Berkman also attended the hearing.

Leavitt, who helped create the revision along with General Counsel to the University Melinda Grier and Counseling and Testing Center Director Robin Holmes, said she would take the testimony "to share it with others and take a look and see if there's something there we haven't thought through."

She added that if Petkun and Berkman find aspects of the change confusing, others might find them confusing as well.

"If there's a showstopper in there we'll fix it," she said, adding that if no major changes are needed the revision will move forward.

If approved, the changes will amend

the Oregon Administrative Rules governing medical leave at the University.

Petkun, whose written testimony was the only one logged at the hearing, said he worked with Berkman to formulate it.

Berkman said that while she's had "opportunities to consult the rule and advise students about the rule," she's never been involved in the application of the medical leave policy.

"I have a lot of questions about the rule, and I think a lot of the comments made address small features," she said. "The students that this rule is going to impact are ... in a really difficult moment in their lives, and I would think that the University would want to be in the position of both doing what they consider best practices for the University and also taking into account the individual needs of the student."

Petkun said that under the changes, students are no longer guaranteed incompletes in classes they have substantially completed. In a memorandum to Hearings Officer Connie Tapp, Petkun said incompletes suggest a student will return, while a withdrawal "does not leave a similar suggestion."

"Under the existing rule, a student is assured of not losing the work that he or she has earned at the time of the medical leave, if that leave occurs late in the term," Petkun wrote. "Under the proposed rule it is entirely up to the Vice President's discretion whether the student forfeits the work. ...

"(The University) should continue to require mandatory incompletes for students that must leave on medical leave late in the term."

Petkun also expressed concerns that the changes no longer guarantee students readmission after being placed on mandatory leave, noting that the new rule's "requirement that a student submit a 'plan' for re-enrollment is vague, unclear and confusing."

"It appears that the rule anticipates that a student returning from medical leave will or should be required to act differently than other students, but it is

unclear in what manner," he wrote. "The new rule should provide clear direction to students attempting to resume their student status and should not include ambiguous requirements."

He added that "there are no rules for re-entry for those students that have taken a voluntary leave."

Leavitt said voluntary medical leave cases will be treated like other instances when a student leaves voluntarily.

Petkun also wrote that while students are currently "entitled to select professional assistance and evaluation by a private physician or psychiatrist of their own choice," the proposed rule mandates that a newly formed Suicide Assessment Team must approve students' choices.

"It seems unlikely that members of the Suicide Assessment Team will be more knowledgeable and skilled than licensing boards in assessing the ability of individuals to practice their professions," Petkun wrote. "The new rule adds a level of unnecessary arbitrariness and potential bias to the process."

Leavitt said the changes are designed to give students a choice but also to give administrators a check on students' selection to "ensure us that they use someone who we have some confidence in."

Petkun wrote that there "appears to have been no opportunity for students to participate in formulation of this rule change or to offer advice and suggestions."

"As ASUO president, I never actually received a physical copy of the draft of the proposed rule," he said. "I was never included in the conversations on the specific rule."

He proposed forming a committee, which would include students, to "review and comment on the proposed rule in some detail."

Leavitt said officials working on the policy consulted with Petkun but did not include him in the process. She added that she thought both her office and the Office of the General Counsel shared a copy with him.

Community members have until noon today to comment on the proposed changes.

parkerhowell@dailyemerald.com

Funding: A UO graduate will design arena

Continued from page 1A

holders last month informing them of the need for donations and listed specifics about the arena already confirmed by the firm working on the preliminary designs.

"We are currently seeking major gifts for the arena and hope to announce our 'construction gift' campaign within the next 6-12 months, followed by a donor seating campaign," the March 7 letter reads.

According to the letter, the project is in its first phase of fundraising and is focused on securing gifts of more than \$250,000 and soliciting and accepting pledges for construction gifts between \$25,000 and \$100,000.

"The strategy again is to raise the money from a limited group of donors and not be in competition with priorities in (Campaign Oregon), and we'll build an arena that we can afford," Williams said.

Each department of the University has its own base of constituents to appeal to, and members of the Athletics Department's base are usually constituents of other areas of the University, Williams said.

"What we tried to do is identify the people who we know either have the capacity or whose primary interest is athletics from among our major donor

group and told athletics essentially that the money you want to raise for the arena will need to come from this limited group," Williams said. "We don't raise money for the arena at the expense of other academic facilities and other campaign projects."

Once funding is secure, the University will need to acquire several parcels of land surrounding the Williams' Bakery site, the location for the new arena.

Williams said there is no question about whether the University will be able to acquire the additional land through eminent domain, the practice of the government taking private property for public use.

"We'll always be able to purchase them; the question will always be 'at what price?'" Williams said. "So we're not at risk in that regard."

University spokeswoman Pauline Austin emphasized that the University is not looking to exercise such property acquisition rights unless doing so is absolutely necessary.

"While we will do it, it's not our preferred way," Austin said.

Williams agreed. "Condemnation is an act of last resort," he said.

Williams said the vacant car lot near the bakery site that was recently purchased by the University of Oregon Foundation will likely be used as

parking space for the arena. A multi-story parking structure is very expensive, and more space to park could reduce the size of such a structure, Williams said.

"If we could have surface parking at the (car lot), that would reduce the cost of the overall arena project," Williams said.

Thompson, Vaivoda and Associates Architects Inc., an architecture firm in Portland, is working on the arena design with another firm but cannot do anything too elaborate until funding is secured, Williams said.

Firm member and University graduate Bob Thompson was an obvious choice to design the arena, Williams said, not because he is Nike CEO Phil Knight's primary architect but because of his extensive ties to the University and his prominence in the architecture field.

"A lot of our conversations about the arena have been with Phil Knight over the years, and (Thompson) has been Phil's preferred architect. So on the assumption that the Knights will be involved in that, they would prefer to use Thompson," Williams said. "But we're not using him to try to induce (donations)."

meghanncuniff@dailyemerald.com

Pregnant?

Talk with a friend.

1.800.848.LOVE

possiblypregnant.org

Students Fly Cheaper

summer travel, study abroad & more

Sample roundtrip Student Airfares from Eugene to:

San Francisco	\$124	London	\$598
Denver	\$168	Paris	\$639
New York	\$212	Lima	\$684
Maui	\$418	Sydney	\$804



StudentUniverse.com

Students Fly Cheaper

Terms: All fares are based on roundtrip travel and include a StudentUniverse service fee of \$5. Fares displayed are for travel within 250 miles of the US/Mexico or US/Canada border include 7.5% US Transportation tax. Other taxes, fees, and charges are not included. Fares displayed to all other destinations do not include taxes and fees. Complete rules apply. Fares are subject to availability and change without notice. Visit StudentUniverse.com for more information.

University of Oregon Athletic Department

Marketing and Promotions Internships Available

Apply now for a volunteer undergraduate internship for the 2005-06 academic year and gain valuable experience in:

- * Sports Marketing
- * Event Management
- * Advertising & Promotions
- * Athletic Administration
- * Special Event Coordination
- * Sports Sponsorship

Applications and job descriptions available now at the following locations:

Career Resource Center - 220 Hendricks
Business School Career Services - 240 Lillis
Warsaw Sports Marketing Center - 445 Lillis
Duniway Resource Center - 134 Allen
Len Casanova Athletic Center

Application Deadline: Wednesday, May 11th
For more information, call 346-5417.

GOT A STORY IDEA? give us a call at 346-5511

OREGON DAILY EMERALD