



THE OBSERVER

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Good day to our valued subscriber Retta Hoxie of La Grande

Phil Wright named editor

■ Veteran journalist comes to La Grande after 15-year career in Pendleton

Observer staff

The Observer has a new editor.

Phil Wright, a veteran journalist in Northeast Oregon, will lead the newsroom beginning Nov. 18.

He takes over a newsroom that has been without an editor since March, something Observer Publisher Karrine Brogoitti said is long overdue.

"It wasn't just about hiring an editor — it was about hiring the right editor to lead our news team and to propel us forward," she said.

Wright comes to La Grande after 15 years as a reporter at the East Oregonian in Pendleton. During his time in Pendleton, Wright has primarily covered Umatilla County government, public safety and courts. He is excited by his first leadership opportunity.



Wright

"I'm intrigued with it. I'm excited. I'm nervous," he said. "I think there's some untapped potential in La Grande."

He said while it is his first time leading a newsroom, he's had the opportunity to learn from some good leaders during his time in Pendleton.

"I've worked with some really good editors. It's a very biased judgment because I've only worked for the EO. But (former editors) Skip Nichols and Daniel Wattenburg and (current EO editor) Andrew Cutler are all good editors. I hope to pull some of what I learned from them and apply it in La Grande."

EO Media Group Regional Publisher Chris Rush said The Observer is in good hands.

"We're delighted to be able to fill this position internally with such a competent and

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EASTERN SEES ITS NUMBERS RISE

■ Retention rates also strong for EOU



Dick Mason/The Observer

Eastern Oregon University students walk to class on campus late Thursday morning. EOU's total student enrollment is up 3% from last year.

By Dick Mason, The Observer

Eastern Oregon University's enrollment is on an upward trajectory. Fourth-week figures indicate that enrollment is up at EOU for at least the second year in a row. Eastern now has a total of 3,067 students, 3% more than a year ago.

"I see our numbers as very positive," said Tim Seydel, EOU's vice president for university advancement.

This fall's overall increase reflects a rise in online enrollment. The online undergraduate student head count has jumped 7% from a year ago, and online student credit hours have increased 4.5%. Eastern now has 1,246 undergraduate students studying off campus, according to an EOU news release.

Eastern's online enrollment has also been bolstered by the addition of an online recruiter, according to Executive Director of Regional Outreach and Innovation David Vande Pol.

"Having a dedicated online recruiter responding to inquiries and guiding them through the enrollment process has been a game changer," Vande Pol said in the release.

EOU on-campus enrollment is not as bright. The number of credit hours being taken by on-campus students and the number of full-time equivalent

(FTE) students on campus is down slightly. The FTE number is determined by taking the total number of credit hours on-campus students are taking and then dividing them by the number of on-campus students.

Eastern's fourth-week enrollment figures are providing encouraging news regarding student retention rates, which is the percent of students who enroll for a second year. Eastern's overall retention rate is 72%, EOU's highest rate since 2016. The retention rate for on campus students was the highest at 77%.

Dixie Lund, a member of Eastern's board of trustees and a former EOU president, credits the strong retention rate to efforts of faculty and staff to help students address their academic, emotional and economic needs.

She also praises the EOU Foundation and its Crisis Fund, which is used to help students who have hit barriers that could sideline them. The fund is used to help students such

"Having a dedicated online recruiter responding to inquiries and guiding them through the enrollment process has been a game changer."

— David Vande Pol, EOU executive director of regional outreach and innovation

as those who suddenly can't afford rent because a roommate moved or have experienced a major automobile breakdown or other financial issues.

Lund said Eastern's retention rate is also boosted by its TRIO program, which provides support for students who tend to be underprepared for college. These include students who are from lower-income families or are the first in their families to attend college.

Lund said that Mike Williams, the head of Eastern's TRIO program for the past five to six years, is doing an

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A step closer to fire protection

■ Commissioners OK petitions by Morgan Lake road residents

By Dick Mason
The Observer

The homes in the lower Morgan Lake Road area are now one step away from being granted fire protection from the La Grande Rural Fire Department.

The Union County Board of Commissioners voted to approve petitions from the homeowners Wednesday. Next the petitions have to be approved by the Oregon Department of Revenue. Once this occurs, all 14 of the homes in question will begin receiving emergency fire service.

Currently, only the land surrounding the homes are protected during wildfires by the Oregon Department of Forestry. Should approval be granted, residents on lower Morgan Lake Road will

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Beverage files for second term

■ County commissioner running for re-election to Position 3

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Union County Commissioner Donna Beverage has announced she will run for a second term.

"I have enjoyed serving my county these last three years and want to continue to serve," said Beverage in a Nov. 7 news release.

Beverage, who is completing her second year as commission chair, was elected in 2016 for a four-year term. She is running for re-election to Position 3.

Beverage said projects she wants to continue working on include the Baum Industrial Park. She noted that paving at the site was completed this spring and three local businesses have purchased lots and are constructing buildings there, where they will move their operations to. Their operations will be bigger at the new site and the companies will employ more people than they do now, Beverage said.

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People puzzled by peculiar texts

By Tali Arbel
The Associated Press

PORTLAND — If you woke up Thursday to a weird text that seemed totally out of place, you aren't alone. A mysterious wave of missives swept America's phones overnight, delivering largely unintelligible messages from friends, family and the occasional ex.

Friends who hadn't talked to each other in months were jolted into chatting. Others briefly panicked.

The best explanation seems to be

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The Associated Press file photo

A mysterious wave of texts swept America's phones overnight Wednesday, delivering unintelligible messages that left many people mildly confused when they woke up on Thursday.

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WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Friday 33 Low Partly cloudy	Saturday 62/41 Partly sunny	Sunday 59/31 Mostly cloudy
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