

# THE OBSERVER

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## EOU student vaccine rate edges past 75%

School's employee vaccination rate climbs past 80%

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — With the vaccine deadline approaching, Eastern Oregon University's vaccination rate among on-campus students stands at just over 75%, while the staff vaccination rate is above 80%.

As of the university's latest update to its COVID-19 dashboard, on Friday, Oct. 15, 75.2% of the on-campus students had received a COVID-19 vaccine, while 23.8% of students filed exemptions. The statistic measures all students attending classes or engaging with the university in an on-campus setting.

This number reflects against a 56.3% vaccination rate in Union County as of Oct. 16. Across all employees at Eastern Oregon University, 80.1% have received the COVID-19 vaccine and 17.7% have filed exemptions.

Following the FDA approval of the Pfizer vaccine, the university's vaccine requirement went into effect with a 60-day window for getting the vaccine or filing an exemption. The requirement states that all students and employees who plan to work or engage with the university in person and on campus must have proof of vaccination or an exemption on file by Oct. 22.

Since the university's dashboard began tracking data in July, there have been 60 positive cases among on-campus and off-campus students and employees. Twenty-four of the cases were off-campus students, while 18 employees and 13 on-campus students have tested positive with the virus.

Throughout the 2020-21 academic year, the university experienced 157 positive cases, 93 of which were reported to be off-campus students. The 55 positive cases so far this year come from a batch of 157 total tests.

"Throughout the pandemic, we have tracked our trends and effectiveness through data. These

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Kyler Petersen, 14, cuts samples of reeds from a dried up pond in La Grande on Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2021, while attending the Discover After School program for middle school students.

## Learning in nature

After-school program puts middle school creativity, ingenuity on display

By **DICK MASON**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — This after-school classroom lacks walls but not inspired students who enjoy discovering the wonders of nature.

It is an unadorned pavilion on the south edge of La Grande on land owned by the Blue Mountains Conservancy. The pavilion, about 50 yards south of the currently dry Pete's Pond, is frequently the base of the new Discover After School program for La Grande Middle School students.

It is at this pavilion that students put their creativity and ingenuity on display while working on projects, many of them artistic, that incorporate elements of the outdoors. The projects students are involved in include painting mountain scenes, making nature looms composed of plants and feathers of Rio Grande turkeys that roost in nearby trees, digital photography, and adding plants to the Pete's Pond landscape.

"This is where students can learn a broad range of things through nature," said Carrie Caselton Lowe, a leader of the Discover After School program



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Treyton Miller works on a nature weave as part of an after-school program at Pete's Pond in La Grande on Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2021.

who is contracted with Art Center East, which is helping put on the program with the La Grande Parks Department, Cook Memorial Library the Greater Oregon Science, Technology, Engineering and Math program, also known as GO STEM.

The projects students are

taking on are all of their own choosing.

"We want them to engage in something they want to do," Caselton Lowe said.

Caselton Lowe is joined in running the Discover After School program by Meghan

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### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Discover After School program is funded by a geography grant from the Gray Family Foundation. Information on signing up for the Discover After School program can be obtained by going to the Art Center East website, [artcentereast.org](http://artcentereast.org).

## National group defends Oregon's new congressional map

By **DIRK VANDERHART**  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — A national Democratic group is pushing back against claims that Oregon's new congressional districts are gerrymandered in the party's favor and urging a judicial panel to okay the map passed by Oregon Democrats last month.

In a filing Monday, Oct. 18, on behalf of six Oregonians, the National Democratic Redistricting Com-

mittee insists the new maps meet all legal standards and were in fact the product of robust negotiation between Republicans and Democrats.

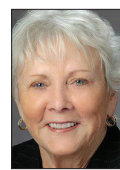
"This map represents compromise not only because of how it was enacted — with Republicans and Democrats negotiating throughout the process — but also because it is a competitive map that is reflective of the state," Kelly Burton, president of the NDRC, said in a



Burton

week, when former Secretary of State Bev Clarno and three other Republicans sued to challenge the congressional map Democrats muscled through in September.

That map includes four U.S. House districts that are



Clarno

either safe for Democrats or lean in the party's favor, one district that looks to be a Republican stronghold, and one seat that is theoretically a tossup. Clarno and other Republicans say the map was the product of Democrats scheming with special interest groups to secure dominance. They argue the map illogically anchors four districts in liberal Port-

land, inappropriately splits counties, and grants Oregon Democrats far more power in Congress than their share of the statewide vote.

"The result of this highly partisan process is a clear, egregious partisan gerrymander, as has been widely acknowledged both in Oregon and across the country," the Republican lawsuit said. "Democrats are projected to win five of the six of Oregon's

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### WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

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	52 Low		60/39
	A shower late		A few showers

### CONTACT US

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Email story ideas to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com).  
More contact info on Page A4.



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THURSDAY

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