

# Jobless rate falls to pandemic low

Eastern Oregon unemployment rates drop for fifth consecutive month

By ALEX WITTWER  
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon is back on track to recovering jobs lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to state economists.

Regional economists Christopher Rich and Dallas Fridley at the Oregon Employment Department reported unemployment rates have dipped to the lowest level since the pandemic began in the spring of 2020.

Union and Wallowa counties saw a 1.5% and 1.6% decrease in unemployment from September 2020 to September 2021, respectively, closing out with 5.3% and 5.4% total unemployment rates. Baker County saw a 2.2% drop during the same period, from 7.1% to 4.9%, the largest drop of the Northeastern Oregon counties. Grant County saw a 1.5% decrease, down to 6.6%.

Morrow County recorded one of the lowest year-end decreases with just 0.9%, down to a 4.4% unemployment rate since September 2021. Morrow County’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate ranked sixth out of 36 Oregon counties, tied with Clackamas and Yamhill counties.

Umatilla County with an unemployment rate of 5% placed 14th in September among Oregon’s 36 counties, tied with Jackson County. During the year, Umatilla County’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell by 1.2 percentage points since September 2020. Umatilla County led job growth primarily through public sector employment, adding 470 government jobs during the year.

Union County is largely back on track, according to economists, but not fully recovered from the 1,400 jobs lost at the start of the pandemic. Leisure and hospitality regained 87% of jobs lost, but remained roughly 60 shy of full recovery.

Evidence of those statistics can be found in persistent help wanted signs at fast food chains such as McDonald’s and Dairy Queen, while job advertisements have largely disappeared from the windows of local restaurants

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Hanna Saunders, a freshman accounting student at Eastern Oregon University, studies in EOU’s library on Thursday, Oct. 28, 2021. The school’s website reports 88% of on-campus students have complied with its rule that they either receive a COVID-19 vaccination or an approved exemption.

# Following the rules

Staff and student compliance rate is strong for new COVID-19 rule at EOU

By DICK MASON  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University’s new COVID-19 vaccination rule is not having an impact on the employment status of its on-campus staff and is unlikely to in the future, according to statistics from the school.

The rule took effect Saturday, Oct. 23, and all of Eastern’s on-campus staff is complying with it, according to Tim Seydel, EOU’s vice president for university advancement. The new rule requires all of EOU’s on-campus staff to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 or to have an approved religious, philosophical or medical exemption.

Eastern’s website indicates that, as of Oct. 14, 80.1% of its on-campus employees are vaccinated and 17.7% of the others have received religious or medical exemptions. Seydel said that of Eastern’s 450 on-campus employees only three have not met the requirements of the new rule, including one who is a new employee. Each of the three are now in the process of coming into compliance with the mandate.

“Among employees, we have had a 100% response rate,” Seydel said. “All employees have a vaccination or exemption on file, or are in process.”

He said that Eastern officials are happy with the staff’s buy in.

“We are very pleased with the respon-



An Eastern Oregon University student walks across the campus quad on Thursday, Oct. 28, 2021. The vaccine exemption rate for students and faculty at Eastern is roughly double what’s found at Oregon’s other public universities. Approximately 24% of students and 18% of employees at EOU have vaccination exemptions, as compared to the average of 10% at other public universities in Oregon, according to OPB.

siveness to ensure we maintain a safe and healthy campus,” Seydel said.

The compliance rate for on-campus students is now about 88% in terms of how many have submitted vaccination or exemption forms as of Oct. 23. A total of 76.7% of these have been vaccinated and 23.3% have submitted exemption forms according to EOU’s website. Eastern data indicates that 131 on-campus students have not submitted COVID-19 forms. The 131 represent about 12% of EOU’s on-campus students.

Seydel said that any of the 131 who do not comply with the new rule will not be allowed to register for winter term classes.

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# Doctor keeps running to help people in need

Emily Sheahan supports causes by running marathons

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Running marathons has become an annual tradition for Emily Sheahan.

It also has become a way to help those in need halfway around the world.

Sheahan, an Enterprise resident who is a family physician with Wallowa Memorial Medical Clinic, recently took part in her seventh Boston Marathon — and 11th race overall — when she ran the 26.2-mile event on Oct. 11.

The race is traditionally held in April, but last year it was run virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic and this year was pushed back to October due to the lingering coronavirus.

Sheahan ran the marathon in a time of 3 hours, 38 minutes, 6 seconds, though the cause — why she ran in the first place a decade ago — matters more.

“I did my first marathon in 2011, and that year my sister, she lives in Colorado, was in a run group that raised funds for clean water with World Vision,” Sheahan said. “She invited me to run a marathon in Colorado. I ran for World Vision to raise funds. Since

then, I (have run) a marathon every year for World Vision.”

Following one of those marathons, run in Zimbabwe in 2012, she and 10 others who ran to support World Vision got to see the result of World Vision’s efforts in southern Africa. It solidified for Sheahan the need to support the charitable organization.

“They took us to villages in Zambia where we were able to witness what World

Vision is doing,” she said. “They partner, they help teach them hygiene ... (and how to) garden and grow crops.”

World Vision also helps provide access to clean water.

“It’s better sanitation to keep them healthier. They also have small loans so they can start small businesses,” she said. “They try to choose villages where, if

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WEATHER

Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight

32 LOW

Mainly clear

Sunday

54/33

Mostly sunny

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