

EOU

Continued from Page A1

Exemption rates

A report by Oregon Public Broadcasting indicates that the student exemption rates at EOU and Oregon Institute of Technology, where the rate is about 22%, are roughly double what’s found at the state’s other public universities. Seydel said the reason is many of the students EOU recruits are from Eastern Oregon, Southeastern Washington and Western Idaho and these areas have a higher number of people who do not want to be vaccinated. “Our recruits reflect this,” Seydel said.

The vice president for university advancement noted that Eastern and all public universities in Oregon have high on-campus vaccination rates compared to their surrounding communities. “Public universities are a safe place to be,” he said.

All of Oregon’s public universities are testing students and employees weekly, except EOU, Portland State University and Western Oregon University, according to OPB.

Seydel said it would not be feasible to test students and staff every week. He noted all students who suspect they have COVID-19 can get tested at EOU’s student health center. He also pointed out that free testing is provided in the community.

Many students now coming in to get tested at the student health center do not test positive for COVID-19.

“A lot of students have colds,” said Seydel, who said that this is not unusual for this time of year.

Spreading the word

EOU has more experience, Seydel said, than any other public univer-



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Dr. Lau Vargas studies in the campus library at Eastern Oregon University on Thursday, Oct. 28, 2021. The university is requiring all students, faculty and staff to wear masks indoors and to either be vaccinated against COVID-19 or have an approved exemption.

sity in the state with providing on-campus instruction during the pandemic. He noted that in the fall of 2020 Eastern was Oregon’s first public university to offer on-campus classes since the pandemic started. The operations plan EOU used then, before a vaccine was available, is similar to the one now in place.

“We have had the same protocol for more than a year and it has been successful,” he said, adding all students were tested for COVID-19 at the start of the 2021-22 academic year. Dixie Lund, a member of EOU’s board of trustees, is impressed with how EOU got the word out about its forthcoming vaccination rule well in advance of Oct. 23.

“A lot of preliminary work was done. Nobody could say, ‘I didn’t know,’” she said.

Lund, who served two stints as interim president of Eastern, said that any potential objection to the vaccination rule dropped off after people learned exemptions were available.

Eastern is continuing to require all students and staff to wear masks. Lund

realizes this rule is hard on students and staff.

“I sympathize with students. Masks make it hard to stay focused on a lecture because communication is not as clear,” she said.

Lund also noted the challenge masks pose to faculty because they interfere with delivering information. Still, she said, masks are essential.

“They help keep the virus controlled,” she said.

Nicole Howard, an EOU history professor, praised the university for keeping its COVID-19 plan current. Howard noted that Eastern recently provided new information to staff and students to help them with contact tracing.

“I appreciate how the plan is being updated and adjusted to ensure that it works on the ground,” she said.

EOU men’s and women’s track and field coach Ben Welch said the student-athletes he works with support Eastern’s new vaccination rule.

“It has been well embraced,” he said. “People want to get back to normal as much as possible.”

SHEAHAN

Continued from Page A1

they put a well in, it would support multiple villages. Once they get a well in, they have a clean water source. Having that clean water source is life changing for the villages.

“It was cool to go over and see how World Vision is working (in) those villages. ... After that trip, I decided I was going to run a marathon a year to raise funds for clean water. It was amazing what it did for those villages.”

Through the years, various churches in the county have helped support World Vision through Sheahan running in the marathon, especially her home congregation at Enterprise Christian Church. To date, she said, more than \$27,000 has gone to the organization, including \$5,000 this year.

Support for the organization has come in various ways, including sponsoring a single child or contributing funding to give clean water to people half a world away.

“For \$50, it allows one person to get clean water,” she said. “Each of those amounts leads to clean water for at least one person. This year, it was 100 people. I just asked people to give money to World Vision, and then I sent the money into World Vision, they get it to Africa where they are putting in wells.”

Sheahan has ample experience running marathons and knows how to maintain herself during the grueling 26 miles. But with the Boston Marathon this fall, she put in an additional request of those supporting her in the race: prayer.

“I asked the congregation at Enterprise Christian Church to have people sign up to



MarathonFoto/Contributed Photo

Enterprise’s Emily Sheahan poses for a photo after completing her seventh Boston Marathon on Oct. 11, 2021. Sheahan has raised more than \$27,000 for charity running marathons over the last decade.

pray for me for each mile of the marathon,” she said. “They prayed for me while I ran, which was amazing because I actually felt stronger than during any other Boston Marathon. The heat didn’t affect me, and it had to be the power of prayer.”

Sheahan intends to continue running — and supporting the charity — as long as she can.

“I figure as long as I can run and continue to do marathons I want to keep going and keep raising funds for World Vision,” she said. “It helps when there is something more than just yourself you are running for.”

JOBLESS

Continued from Page A1

downtown. Restaurants such as Mamacita’s International Grill, La Grande, have had to close down temporarily or reduce hours due to staffing shortages, while others such as local bistro and eatery Wine Down have closed permanently.

The total increase across Northeastern Oregon counties was approximately 1,450 jobs over the year ending in September. Of those jobs added, 700 were in the private sector.

Across the state, unemployment rates fell to 4.7%, down from its high of 13.2% in April 2020 when government-mandated shutdowns halted economies across the United States. The unemployment rate sits slightly higher than its pre-pandemic level of 3.5%, flirting with the idea of a full recovery as COVID-19 infections fall across the state, and vaccination rates rise to 80%, according to the Oregon Health



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

A now hiring sign hangs in the window of Sub Shop 21 in La Grande on Thursday, Oct. 28, 2021. Hiring signs have largely vanished from shop windows in La Grande as unemployment rates drop to their lowest level since the pandemic began.

Authority.

Unemployment claims in Eastern Oregon fell dramatically over the year, tumbling from 1,918 unemployment claims in September 2020 to just 794 in September 2021, a nearly 60% drop in claims numbers. Those numbers had been continually dropping since January 2021.

WEAR A MASK!



Protect Your Friends

©2020 Maggie Rudy. Download and print this FREE poster at maggierudy.com

- **Masks protect others against Covid-19.** Masks protect against the wearer spreading it to another person. “People should be free from other people’s germs where possible, and that is why masks and social distancing are advised.” ** Ask your doctor about wearing a mask!
- **Wear a mask even if you feel well.** People can feel well when they still have the virus and many people with the virus don’t have symptoms. They can spread the virus to others through talking, sneezing, coughing and raising their voice through singing or shouting. *
- **Cloth masks can also protect others.** They reduce the amount of respiratory droplets sent into the air, thus reducing the chance of that virus going through the air to others. *
- **Masks provide enough oxygen.** You will not suffer from hypoxia or too much carbon dioxide while wearing a mask. Both oxygen and carbon dioxide can diffuse freely through the mask when you breath – even cloth masks *

* “Debunked myths about face masks” Kimberly Frodl, MD, see this Mayo Clinic article at: <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/debunked-myths-about-face-masks>

** “Wear a Mask, But Act as if it Doesn’t Work,” Harriet Hall, MD, see article at: https://www.skeptic.com/reading_room/wear-a-face-mask-but-act-as-if-it-does-not-work-covid-19-coronavirus-pandemic/?gclid=CjwKCAjwn8SLBhAyaEiwAHNTJbXsq03nA_nU_ictDr_mkdy-frvnoneYLeEhMJVvD7lhWB_AHCEj61RoC_K8QAvD_BwE

Paid for by: Union County Health and Safety Committee

Make Time.
Get your
Mammogram.



- You are worth the hour it will take.
- You know early detection is the best defense.
- Our care team will ensure your comfort.
- Convenient times are available.
- Ask us about financial assistance.
- Contact your healthcare provider to schedule.



grh.org/BreastCancer