

# THE OBSERVER

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## Statewide approach to substance abuse has local effects

Law enforcement adjusts approach to substance abuse following the passing of Ballot Measure 110

*Editor's Note: This is the second part of a multi-story series addressing the trends related to opioid overdoses in Union County and across the nation. The series will include perspectives from law enforcement, the court system, medical professionals and more.*

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**

The Observer

LA GRANDE — As opioid overdose numbers continue to increase nationwide, local law enforcement is adjusting to a new statewide approach to substance abuse.

The Union County law enforcement center is on pace for over 100 drug-related overdose calls this year, a record-setting trend that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is reporting across the nation. While opinions remained mixed on the effectiveness and execution of Ballot Measure 110's decriminalization of personal possession of drugs, local law enforcement are left looking for answers as to how to address the trend.



Bell

"The state of Oregon with Ballot Measure 110 made a clear decision to take a different approach to substance abuse and addiction," La Grande Police Chief Gary Bell said.



Hays

Ballot Measure 110 was voted upon in November of 2020, passing by a statewide approval rate of 58.5%. In Union County, 5,708 voters favored the measure and 8,650 voted against it. The measure reduced the penalty for possession of controlled substances and reduced penalties for possession of larger amounts. Ballot Measure 110 places an emphasis on approaching substance abuse as a public health issue — the idea is to encourage addiction services instead of placing substance addicts behind bars for court-ordered treatment.

On the flip side, law enforcement locally has noted even the slightest amount of drug use can result in life-ending consequences.

"With the decriminalization that came from Ballot Measure 110, you can have less than 40 counterfeit opioid pills in your possession," Bell said. "My agency within the last year saw an instance where one half of one of those pills killed someone. You can have 39 of those in your possession and it could result in a citation for \$100."

See, **Opioids/Page A6**



Dick Mason/The Observer

Elgin School District students Anna Buckley, left, and Dakota Anderson work on loom projects at Elgin High School on Monday, May 16, 2022.

## Dream weavers

Art returns to the classroom in Elgin School District

By **DICK MASON** • The Observer

ELGIN — A dream is becoming a reality for Elgin School District Superintendent Dianne Greif.

The superintendent has long wanted to revive art in the Elgin School District, and today the pulse of art education in the school district is stronger

than it has been in years. The school district, which has not had any art teachers for years, now has two — Amanda Welch, a full-time art teacher at Stella Mayfield Elementary School, and Beth Wasley, a half-time art teacher at Elgin High School. They

were added with money from the district's general fund.

"This is a dream come true for me in that we have been able to add something kids need and kids want," Greif said.

The educators are helping lead an art renaissance in the school district, where all elementary school students receive art instruction at least once a week and art classes are taught daily at the high school.

At Stella Mayfield, Welch strives to tie in her lessons with what students are being taught at the moment. For example, if students are studying the life cycle of frogs, Welch would teach students about drawing animals, Greif said.

A similar thing is occurring at the high school where students are sometimes doing art projects that tie in with what they are studying in other classes. For example, earlier this school year a student whose literature class was

See, **Art/Page A6**

Dick Mason/The Observer  
Elgin School District students, from left, Dania Sather, Abigail Saffell and Amber George work on art projects at Elgin High School on Monday, May 16, 2022.



## Eastern, other state universities approve tuition hike

4.9% undergrad increase is just below what would require state approval

By **MEERAH POWELL**

Oregon Public Broadcasting

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University's Board of Trustees Thursday, May 19, approved a 4.9% tuition increase for undergraduate students for the upcoming academic year.

EOU is the last public university in Oregon to decide on tuition this year. It follows in the footsteps of the six other univer-

sities that have all recommended increases.

However, even with the tuition increase, and an estimated boost in enrollment, Eastern officials are still anticipating a budget deficit of at least \$2 million.

EOU Vice President of Finance Lara Moore said the university made certain decisions it knew would contribute to that operating deficit — including freezing its tuition rates for most undergraduate students last year.

"Our tuition proposal recognizes that," Moore said. "It recognizes that we are in an operating deficit. It recognizes the inflationary pressures that we are

under as an institution, because we do want to maintain our financial stability."

Moore stressed that even with the tuition increase, affordability is an important principle to the university.

According to EOU board documents, Eastern is still Oregon's cheapest public university by credit hour for in-state students even with this increase.

Undergraduate in-state students are paying a little over \$7,800 in tuition this school year if they're taking 15 credits per term in a regular three-term year. They'll pay roughly \$380 more starting next school year — or

about \$8,200 in annual tuition. Students from Washington and Idaho can also get in-state tuition at Eastern.

Undergraduate out-of-state students are currently paying about \$20,500 annually, based on that same 15-credit load. They will see an annual increase of about \$1,000 — up to \$21,500 in annual tuition.

Tuition prices also vary for students in the Western Undergraduate Exchange Program, or WUE — students who come from a number of states near Oregon, like California and Nevada. Rates also

See, **Tuition/Page A6**



**INDEX**

Classified .....B2	Horoscope.....B3	Opinion.....A4
Comics.....B5	Local.....A2	Outdoors.....B1
Crossword ....B2	Lottery.....A2	Sports.....A7
Dear Abby....B6	Obituaries....A5	Sudoku.....B5

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

	<b>Tonight</b> 37 LOW Partly cloudy		<b>Sunday</b> 64/41 A shower
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