

Marylhurst to close by year's end

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After a sudden vote near the end of spring term, Marylhurst University will close its doors by the end of 2018 and be returned to its former owners, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. The school cited a steady decline in enrollment for the past eight years and financial reasons, such as money lost from ailing student enrollment.

"While we have been questioned by some who feel the Board voted too early and questioned by others who feel the decision was made too late, the truth is that there is no good time to choose to close an institution," said Board of Trustee vice chair-elect and alumna Sue Hildick. "The decision was difficult and painful for all involved, even if we believe it was the right one," Hildick said. "There are no words to convey the profound sadness we feel for students, staff, faculty and alumni while our community deals with this situation, and our focus right now is on doing everything we can to help students transition."

This impacts not just Marylhurst students, but Clackamas Community College students as well.

The university will lay off 110 employees; the Office of Human Resources is to meet one-on-one with employees to help with the transition of being laid off. Severance packages have been accepted for "regular" employees. Three-hundred and sixty employees in total will lose their jobs.

"Of the 110 regular employees, all regular employees will eventually be laid off. Adjunct faculty aren't laid off because they aren't regular employees; they won't be re-hired (unless they're teaching

classes summer term)," Marylhurst media relations Kara Hansen wrote in an email.

Marylhurst currently has 743 students enrolled, a majority of which are part-time, according to the University's response by email. This is a drop from the 2013-14 1,409 student enrollment, a 54 percent drop.

"We are working to prepare individualized transfer plans for the estimated 324 students who are unable to complete their degrees by the end of summer 2018," Hansen wrote.

Michaela VanCorbach, a First year student that transferred from Chemeketa Community College, had an entire plan laid out for her with music therapy, helping even children affected with autism.

"I was in shock," said VanCorbach, expressing how she felt angry, confused and sad. "My heart sank," she added. "It felt as though all of the hard work I put in over the last few years, getting scholarships, moving, practicing my instruments and working was for nothing."

Though the sudden notice has affected many students, there has been a tsunami of help from other colleges and universities.

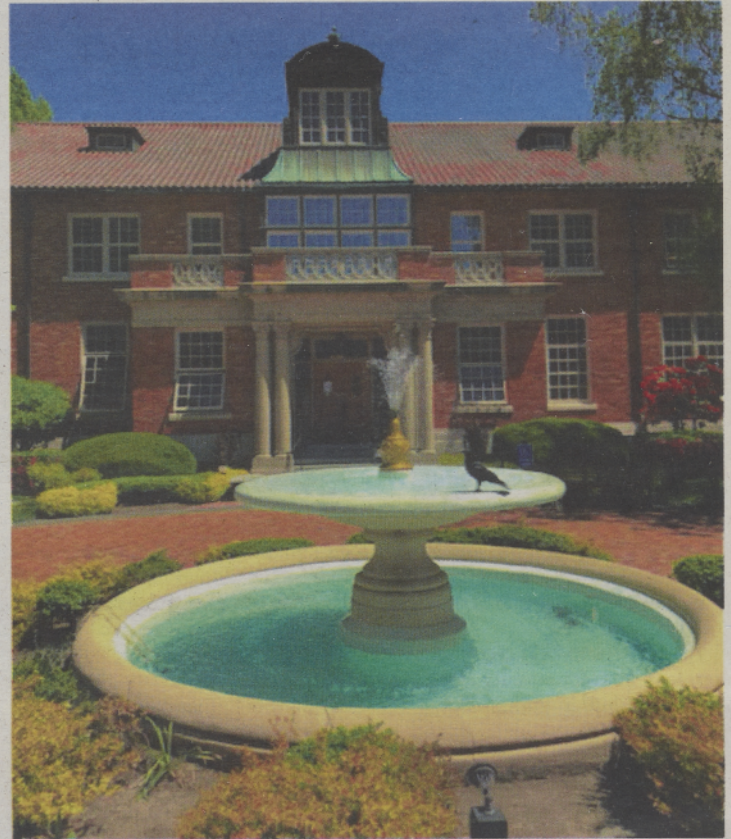
The many universities and colleges Marylhurst students are able to transfer to include Reed College, Prescott College, Portland State University, Linfield College, Lewis & Clark College. Marylhurst University held a transfer fair where about 200 students participated.

Only those who can finish their degree by the end of summer 2018 will be eligible to complete their degree from Marylhurst.

Of the CCC alumni currently attending Marylhurst, four or five of around ten students will finish their degree before the universities closure.



photos by Marea Bartram



After its establishment as St. Mary's College in 1893, Marylhurst University went on to become one of the oldest degree-granting colleges in Oregon. After its closure, the campus will be returned to the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary.

"Students who will not [finish] by then will be referred to a partner institution for completion," according to the Marylhurst student FAQs website. "All credits earned at Marylhurst are valid even after the University has closed. They are considered regionally accredited, and will be considered for transfer by any other regionally accredited institution."

According to the website's FAQ page for students regarding the closure, one of the questions is about scholarships, with the last part asking "What if I transfer elsewhere?" While Marylhurst explains that the scholarships will be valid until the end of summer 2018, it does not answer the latter, only that "each student has a unique situation and the university will be providing financial and academic counseling to all impacted students on an individual basis."

Marylhurst will be working with local

colleges and universities to help students transfer over.

"We were both planning on going there for an English degree with an emphasis on creative writing," said Nathan Bas, a CCC student who was planning on transferring to Marylhurst. "There's not a lot of schools out there, especially nearby, that have good creative writing programs that we could get into."

For those at CCC, this was the best option. For CCC student, Writer Laureate and English major Sara Sklenicka, this was her choice. She said that "there's a few other colleges CCC has an English track for and Marylhurst was one of them." With plans to go only to Marylhurst due to its reputation, Sklenicka had worked her credits specifically for this university.

"So, now I have a bunch of credits designed specifically to go to Marylhurst," Sklenicka said. "Because [Bas and I] found