

VISION TO PRIVATIZE THE UO

Supporters of UO President Richard Lariviere vowed to continue to pursue his vision for the university after his firing this week. But what exactly was that “vision” for the state’s “flagship” public university?

Last year, Lariviere pushed two bills in the state Legislature that would have largely placed control of the public university into private hands.

Senate Joint Resolution 20 would have referred to a public vote an amendment to the state Constitution’s limits on deficit spending and debt to allow borrowing of up to \$1 billion to fund a UO endowment.

The \$1 billion would be repaid by state taxpayers with interest, which could double the total amount paid by citizens. The bill would also allow the state’s six other universities to also borrow up to \$1 billion each for a total of up to \$7 billion owed by taxpayers. “The State of Oregon shall pledge its full faith and credit and taxing power to pay the indebtedness,” SJR 20 states.

The bill requires matching funds from contributions and “other sources” (which apparently could include tuition) to get the taxpayer money.

The bill would allow the UO to put the public money into a fund and “have the endowment fund managed by agreement with a nonprofit foundation affiliated with the public university.”

The UO Foundation is a private, tax-free corporation not subject to state open meetings or public records law and not under the control of the people of Oregon or their elected representatives. State law (OAR 580-046-0025) specifies that university foundations “shall not be subject to control by the institution or an institution employee.”

Another bill pushed by Lariviere and the UO Foundation, SB 559, would have established the UO as an “independent public university, governed by University of Oregon Board of Directors.”

Under the constitutional amendment (SJR 20) and state law, the board would not have any control over most of the university’s money, which would be controlled by the private foundation corporation. SB 559 specifies that moneys held by the UO Foundation “may not be considered public or state funds for any purpose.”

The bill requires the new UO board to meet only four times a year and allows “meeting electronically,” similar to the rules for the Oregon University System board.

SB 559 specifies that the UO would include 14 voting members, only seven of whom would be directly appointed by an elected official, the governor. Five other members would be appointed by the UO board, one by the OUS state board and one by the private UO foundation corporation. — Alan Pittman

UO PRESIDENT LARIVIERE TERMINATED

The turmoil started when the news broke last week that Oregon’s state Board of Higher Education planned to terminate UO President Richard Lariviere. On Nov. 28, the Oregon University System (OUS) board voted unanimously to end Lariviere’s contract as of Dec. 28. The news made national headlines this week.

While the UO is known for its fervent support for its sports teams, it hasn’t always been known for getting riled up about its administration. But within hours of the Nov. 23 announcement of the planned termination, an emotional outpouring from the campus community ensued. It included a Facebook page with more than 2,000 “likes,” a petition signed by more than 6,000 supporters, a blog, an “I stand with the hat” graphic, faculty resolutions and the presentation of the game ball to Lariviere after the Civil War football game Nov. 26.

While the decision to end Lariviere’s contract came as a surprise to the campus community, according to public comments at the Nov. 28 OUS meeting, the board of directors says the decision was a long time in coming. According to statements by the board and Gov. John Kitzhaber, the conflict between the board and Lariviere during his two-and-a-half-year term as president stemmed from issues such as his decision to raise salaries for about for 1,300 administrators and professors at the cost of several million dollars during a time of state funding woes.

Kitzhaber issued a statement on the termination in which he said, Lariviere “disregarded my specific direction on holding tight and delaying discussion about retention and equity-pay increases until the next biennium.”

Also at issue was Lariviere’s “New Partnership” proposal, which would have the state back \$800 million worth of bonds for the UO, separately from Oregon’s six other public universities. The plan ambitiously called for the UO to raise an additional \$800 million in funds through private donations to match the borrowing and raise a \$1.6 billion endowment for the school.

The board said the situation with Lariviere had been deteriorating for more than a year and also cited concerns that the president did not appear at board meetings. The New Partnership and Lariviere’s pursuit of it through the Legislature didn’t benefit the university system as a whole, board members said.

Lariviere said in his statement to the OUS board, “The changes at the UO we are advocating are not for the UO, they are for the people of Oregon.”

At the tense and at times emotional two-hour public hearing, University Senate President Robert Kyr criticized the board for not consulting with the UO campus and its faculty in making the decision to fire Lariviere.

Board president Matt Donegan said Lariviere had been warned he needed to improve his working relationship with the OUS board. In June, the board took the step of giving Lariviere only a one-year contract for his position as president — he is still a tenured faculty member at the UO, even after being terminated as president. “It became clear to me that trust between Dr. Lariviere and this board was not being rebuilt, but actually eroded further,” Donegan said.

The situation with Lariviere had been “a long dysfunctional ride, he said, and he added “this is heart-breaking right here.”

— Camilla Mortensen



PHOTO BY TODD COOPER



Derek Lewis in a police mug shot

FLASHMOBS OCCUPY BIG SHOPPING DAY

Occupy Eugene protesters were busy little elves, umm Occupiers, over Thanksgiving weekend. The group sent carolers and a flashmob out to Valley River Center and Walmart to greet Black Friday shoppers with songs with lyrics such as “On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me — rampant corporate greed,” and chants of “Ain’t no power like the power of the people, ’cause the power of the people don’t stop.”

The Occupiers left the mall when asked and

headed over to the Springfield and Eugene Walmart stores where police arrested one protester, Derek James Lewis. According to a media release from Occupy Eugene, approved by the OE general assembly, the protesters were getting ready to leave the West 11th Walmart when Lewis was arrested. Katie Dee, an Occupy Eugene protester, says that it was not clear the protesters were being asked to leave, “but we were in the process of dispersing when one of us was arrested.” According to Dee, OE believes Lewis was singled out because he was holding a megaphone.

Later in the day on Black Friday, OE hosted “Buy Nothing Day” events and a coat exchange with the Lane branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (aka the

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