

CITY HOME REPAIR PROGRAM DRAINED OF FUNDING

Eugene City Council reallocated \$150,000 to the city's Emergency and Minor Home Repairs (EMHR) program, which assists low-income homeowners and tenants with emergency and accessibility-related home repairs. The program experienced a higher demand than usual for repair assistance this winter, according to City Grants Manager Michael Wisth, and had exhausted its funding for fiscal year 2014. Funds were taken from the city's microenterprise development program.

"Seasonally, when you get extended circumstances, the phone rings more often," City Home Purchase and Rehabilitation Specialist Bob Briscoe says. "A lot of people call because they woke up that morning and didn't have water. They didn't have water because their pipes are frozen, and maybe some of those turned out to be pipes that broke." Eugene weathered an ice storm in early February, only months after an extended spell of below freezing temperatures in December.



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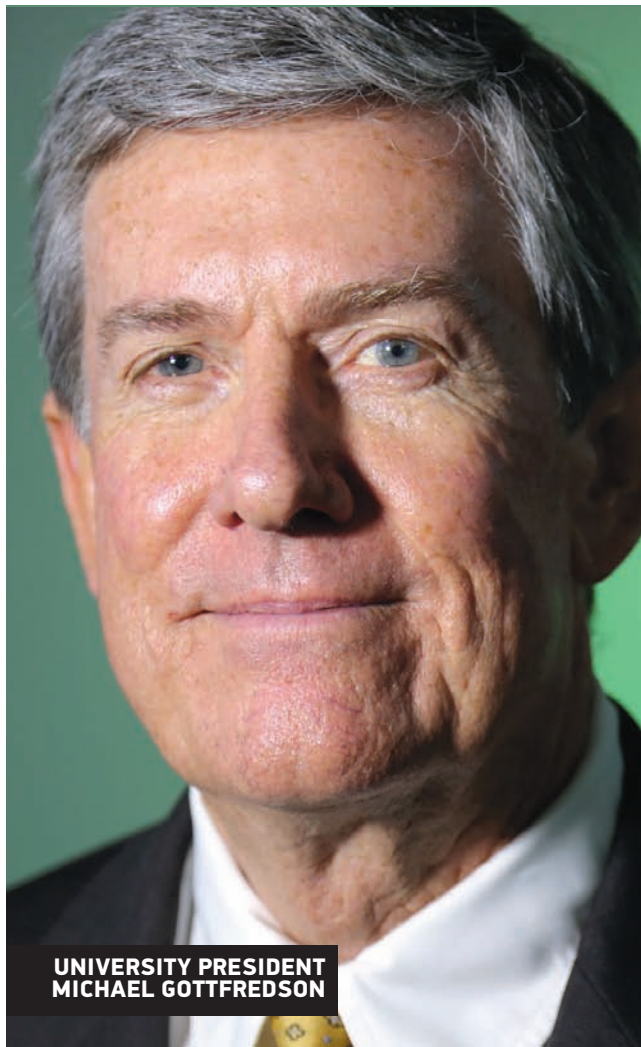
— CLAIRE SYRETT, CITY COUNCILOR

The program provides homeowners and tenants whose income is 50 percent or less of the local area median income with grants and no-interest loans of up to \$5,000. Wisth says repairs commonly funded by the EMHR program include wheelchair ramp construction, hazardous electrical system upgrades, leaky roof replacement and blocked sewage line repair. Briscoe says the majority of recipients are seniors, disabled or both.

The \$150,000 has been reprogrammed from unused funds previously allocated for microenterprise assistance and property acquisition for housing development, which, along with the EMHR, are funded through the Community Development Block Grant — a federally funded Housing and Urban Development grant. Wisth says funds from microenterprise development became available following the closing of eDev, a long-time provider of microenterprise training and consultation.

Four city councilors, including Claire Syrett, expressed concern about removing funding from microenterprise assistance.

"I'm worried about the opportunities that we're missing out on right now as our economy is just really starting to come back in some coherent way — that we're maybe shutting some people out," Syrett says. — Missy Corr



UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT
MICHAEL GOTTFREDSON

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

GOTTFREDSON YET TO SIGN OFF ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Students, faculty and staff at the University of Oregon have the right to conduct controversial scholarship and teaching or hold contentious public positions, according to the University Senate, a body made up of faculty, students and staff that is a partner in the shared governance of the UO.

In early April the senate body unanimously passed an Academic Freedom Policy. Professor Michael Dreiling, the president of the UO's newly formed union, United Academics, says that this policy would help to unlock "the greatest potential" that the UO has to offer.

"[The policy] will have national significance. It will build and boost morale around faculty, students and staff at the University of Oregon," Dreiling says.

University President Michael Gottfredson, whose team is now reviewing the language, has yet to sign the policy into effect. A statement released to *EW* by UO's director of communications, Julie Brown, says, "The UO has a long, proud history of protecting academic freedom and freedom of speech, and President Gottfredson wants to ensure the policy meets his goal of ensuring the strongest protections for academic freedom possible."

The senate policy came about after months of negotiation about a statement on academic freedom in the faculty union contract. The proposed policy goes beyond what is in the contract. It gives free-speech protections that "shall be exercised without fear of institutional reprisal" not only to faculty members but also to students and non-faculty employees in the areas of research, teaching, shared governance and public service.

Under the UO Constitution, the president has 60 days from the time the policy was passed to make a decision, whether that means signing, vetoing or amending the policy. If the president fails to do so, come fall of next year, faculty assembly will meet to discuss the issue.

"[If the policy isn't signed] it would raise a lot of questions about the administration's commitment about shared governance," Dreiling says.

The purpose of this policy is to prevent any changes during the transition of the Institutional Board. "We're not going out on a limb with this," Dreiling says.

President Gottfredson has until June 9 to decide what to do with the policy. — Kevin Sullivan

'It would raise a lot of questions about the administration's commitment about shared governance.'

— MICHAEL DREILING,
PROFESSOR



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