



Health/Education

\$21 Million National Initiative finds home at PSU

CONTRIBUTED STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

It was announced today that Portland State University's Graduate School of Social Work has been designated as the site for the Youth Intervention Networks Program Initiative, a \$21 million dollar, five-year Initiative established by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The national Initiative was established to change the way that substance abuse services are conceptualized and made available to youth within the juvenile justice system. The project includes the selection of 10 communities, around the country, to receive up to \$250,000 for each of the five years of the project, to build internal and local capacity to better serve substance-abusing juvenile offenders and their families. The project will also provide specialized substance abuse treatment development, judicial leadership opportunities regarding juvenile substance abuse treatment, and developing their leadership capacity potential in the integrated networks.

The project co-director Dr. Laura Nissen said, "This is a groundbreaking opportunity to invite a new level of vision and systems collaboration on behalf of a population neglected for too long - the substance-abusing juvenile offender. We expect to see a new generation of partnerships between communities and youth-related professionals to help these youth and their families succeed."

The Youth Intervention Networks Program will open its doors at PSU on May 1, 2000. The program is co-directed by Nissen and Judge Don Owen Costello. Prior to joining the Initiative and PSU, Nissen was the director of the Center for High Risk Youth Studies at the Metropolitan



From Left to Right: Judge Don Owen Costello, Provost Mary Kay Tetreault, Dr. Laura Nissen, Dean James Ward.

State College of Denver and co-founder of the Institute for Strengths in Juvenile Justice. Her work has specialized in assisting youth serving agencies to increase their capacity to provide strength-based services to youth and their families across interdisciplinary systems. With over 15 years of judicial experience, Costello currently serves as Chief Judge of the Coquille Indian Tribal Court, and Acting Judge of the Tribal Court of the Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde. He stated that the Youth Intervention Initiative will give juvenile court judges the endorsement of the scholarly community and the foundation, and strengthen their efforts "to fashion resolutions with youth and their families which acknowledge their strengths, rather than punishing them for their shortcomings." "It is truly an honor that the Graduate

School of Social Work at PSU has been designated as the site for the Youth Intervention Networks Program Initiative. In addition to serving as the 'hub' for national activity in the areas of juvenile justice and substance abuse, we are in a unique position to provide national leadership by developing and testing curriculum for educational specialization, serving as a center for practice development and training, and developing research opportunities for faculty and doctoral students," said James Ward, dean, PSU's Graduate School of Social Work. PSU's Graduate School of Social Work offers the only accredited graduate school of social work education programs in the state of Oregon. The Regional Research Institute for Human Services (RRI) is the school's main research facility. Since 1972, the RRI has undertaken

more than 100 research projects, many of them national in scope, and has received more than \$27 million dollars in grants and contracts. Sponsored projects have covered fields such as child welfare, child care, juvenile justice, employment, homelessness, mental health, alcohol and drug services, vocational rehabilitation, the family and aging services. Portland State University, a nationally acclaimed leader in community-based learning, is located along the tree-lined South Park Blocks of downtown Portland. The University's position in the heart of Oregon's economic and cultural center enables PSU students and faculty to apply scholarly theory to the real-world problems of business and community organizations. Portland State offers over 100 undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees.

\$16 million community college request put on hold until June

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The Oregon Legislature's Emergency Board (E-Board) voted to defer until June action on a \$16.4 million request by community colleges. The money is needed by Oregon's 17 community colleges to meet increased demand for courses brought on my higher-than-expected enrollment growth statewide.

Community college enrollment has grown by 4 percent this year, twice as much as predicted. Statewide, enrollment growth is equivalent to 3,500 new full-time students. The actual number of individuals is much higher than 3,500 because so many community college students attend class on a part-time basis.

"The 3,500 figure only represents the students that have been enrolled," said Vickie Chamberlain, executive director of the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA).

"We know that at least that many people were put on waiting lists or simply turned away from community college this year because of a lack of resources," Chamberlain said the colleges asked the E-Board for an emergency allocation that would provide for the new students that have already enrolled.

"Since the E-Board is putting the request off, the need will only grow. Meanwhile colleges are really struggling financially as they try to keep their doors open to students," she said.

Most colleges will react to the deferred funding request by continuing to do what they have been doing: spending down budget reserves, cutting course offerings, capping enrollment and increasing tuition. "This is a bad situation for the students," Chamberlain said. "Thousands are finding the door to community college slamming shut on them. And the ones that do get in are finding that the tuition just keeps going up. We are getting closer all the time to the point where we will no longer be able to keep community college affordable and accessible."

Chamberlain said that all community college presidents and college board members are working hard to make their case to the legislators. She said she is optimistic that the E-Board will provide "some relief" but not likely fund the entire request in June.

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