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'City of Roses'



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Portland State University student Alyssa Pagan gives a voice to a generation of students who are accumulating heavy debt burdens to go school. She expects much of her future income and savings will go back to repaying her loans after graduation, putting the "American Dream" out of her reach.

Giving voice to the pitfalls of high tuition

BY OLIVIA OLIVIA
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A group of Portland students are giving a voice to a generation of students who are accumulating heavy debt burdens to go to school.

Student debt in the United States recently passed the \$1.2 trillion mark, \$1 trillion of which is tied up in federal student loans. This figure does not tell the full story, however, as the future obligations will divert money from retirement savings, paying back loans from parents, other sources, or credit card debt.

The Portland Strike Debt campaign started about two years ago and recently held an assembly and demonstration at Portland State University. The group has focused on

Sucked into Debt

other forms of debt in the past, such as medical debt, mortgages, and consumer debt, but this particular rally brought together college staff, faculty, and students to unite to demand relief from excessive student loans.

Advocates for the issue took to the microphone to share their stories of being sucked into extreme debt.

Reed College student Daniel Hong spoke out about how some people experience having more financial aid offered during the first year of school and then less support in future years.

"It's a bait and switch," said Hong, who is studying

political science. "At first they offer you more than you expect, and then in June of your next year, right before you're getting ready to go back to school, they finally show you your next financial aid package, and it often shrinks."

Hong has been volunteering with Strike Debt Portland throughout his Reed career and thinks that it's important to bring students together across different experiences.

He believes that when the national for-profit Corinthian Colleges chain went bankrupt earlier this year amidst a criminal investigation that it was misrepresenting job placements for graduates and was ordered to forgive some loans, it allowed students to collectively contest their college debt for seemingly the first time in American history.

It was an important step to getting students at community colleges, private schools, and public universities to unite on what their rights should be, he said.

"Right now tuition rises every single year," added Hong, "and students have literally no say in the matter, we just have to accept it or leave. I am sick and tired of watching students have to leave this beautiful educational community I'm a part of for nothing more than financial

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