

COLLEGE: Laura Zepeda has learned much outside the classroom

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the Dakota Access Pipeline. Even after she returned to Seattle, the pipeline has remained central to many of Hoffman’s political activities. Hoffman joined Got Green, a Seattle environmental group with a focus on people of color, and went with them to a Seattle Affordable Housing, Neighborhoods and Finance Committee. The committee was considering divesting from Wells Fargo, a financial backer of the pipeline. According to the *Seattle Times*, the committee voted unanimously to send the divestment proposal to the full city council. The council will consider that recommendation on Monday. Hoffman said she wasn’t surprised that Trump signed an executive order green lighting the pipeline, but she is going to stay active in opposing it. Hoffman said she has been invited to speak at a panel to discuss her visit to Standing Rock and also participated in the recent women’s march in Seattle, which attracted an estimated 120,000 people. Though Hermiston High School grad Laura Dewey is still in her hometown, she has found a lot has changed since graduation — especially the

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— Laura Dewey, Hermiston High School grad

way she looks at the world. The Blue Mountain Community College student plans to become a veterinary technician, and later a veterinarian. She has found that being around her peers, new teachers, and people from different backgrounds has helped her broaden her own way of thinking. Dewey said discussions in her writing class have extended from November’s controversial election to other issues in the news, such as global warming and the energy industry. Dewey said as they’ve discussed various topics, she’s learned how to be more discerning as a news consumer. “(Our teacher) tries to get us to think about things in a different way,” Dewey said. “With the election, and the world in general, he told us we should have opinions, but come to a consensus to try different things — see what works and what doesn’t. I agree with that.” She said she’s also begun to look more closely at her own views. “I question myself more,” she said. “Not only with

political stuff, but with core beliefs. I was raised Christian — so I’m examining that from a different angle than I usually did.” College has also been a learning experience for Laura Zepeda, in more ways than one. The Hermiston High School grad, who is now a freshman at Oregon State University’s College of Science, has found that much of what she has learned plenty outside the classroom. From joining clubs to getting involved with her residence hall council, one of the biggest changes Zepeda said she noticed is an increased consciousness about identity. “People sometimes want you to call them by different names or different pronouns,” Zepeda said. Zepeda said she learned more about identity and cultural issues when she attended a workshop on micro-aggressions, which are comments — whether intentional or not — that communicate racial slights or insults. “In a small town, there’s

not as much awareness,” she said. “Here, some people get kind of offended if you identify them incorrectly. You just have to be aware.” Zepeda said she’s noticed a wider variety of people at her college, a contrast to what she’s used to. “In our small community, there were mostly white and Hispanic people,” she said. “In Corvallis, there’s people from all over the place.” While she said moving to campus was at first a bit of a culture shock, she has enjoyed getting to experience something new. For Kodie Arnold, the biggest change has been learning to live independently. Arnold is living at the Washington School for the Blind in Vancouver, Washington as she takes classes at the Oregon Commission for the Blind in Portland. Her classes include cooking, technology and mobility — learning to get around with her cane. Arnold has also been taking classes to help with career and job-interview skills. Despite living in a bigger city, Arnold said she didn’t really encounter anyone in her classes that discussed the recent election or subsequent events very much. “Honestly, I don’t really

care about politics,” she said. “It didn’t really impact any of my classes.” Other students also saw limited political impact on their campuses. Pendleton High School alum Ryan Lacey said Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida has a fairly conservative campus culture that doesn’t foster demonstrations or protests. The school has a long history of churning out military cadets. The freshman did say he is concerned by a few of Trump’s actions, including his hiring freeze on most federal agencies and the gag order placed on the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency. Heppner High School grad Patrick Collins hasn’t seen any civil unrest during his freshman year at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande and wasn’t aware that there had been a women’s march there, adding that he must be “out of the loop.” Collins said he hasn’t liked some of the news he has read on Facebook about “riots” in reaction to the Trump presidency. “Whether you support the president or not, if he succeeds, we succeed,” Collins said.

PERS: 2008 market crash deepened Oregon’s pension hole

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credited 13.63 percent to members. Those accounts zoomed to the point that in 2000 the average career employee was leaving the government with 106 percent of salary. “The actuary finally realized, we created a monster,” said Steve Rodeman, who is now the executive director of the pension system. “This monster grew all the way until 2003.” That’s when legislators clamped down on PERS. They put the brakes on using investment returns to spike pensions. New hires got a different, less generous plan, but the Oregon Supreme Court struck down attempts to cut existing benefits. The 2008 market crash deepened Oregon’s pension hole. Five years later, the court struck down legislation to reduce cost of living raises for retirees. Now lawmakers can only consider cutting benefits that workers earn in the future. That means cuts would tend to fall on workers who already have slimmer pensions. Public employee unions urge lawmakers to just accept the high rates and focus on the state’s overall need to get more revenue. “They didn’t create this problem, and the facts remain that they shouldn’t be blamed for this problem,” said Bob Livingston, president of the Oregon State Firefighters Council and a spokesman for public employee and retiree groups that have fought benefit changes in the courts. Because the PERS increases are spread so widely throughout Oregon government, no single leader is forced to worry about the full bill. Instead, it competes for attention with all sorts of other problems. For example, Gov. Kate Brown said PERS is not nearly as much to blame as health care for the state’s budget deficit. But the governor and legislative leaders are under pressure not to shake off PERS. Katie Durant just left the chairmanship of the Oregon Investment Council with a blunt warning. “I don’t think the unfunded liability is \$22 billion,” she said. “I think it is a lot higher.” Durant said the state should be making even bigger payments right now to pay down this debt. Instead, it’s stretching them out, which she likens to paying the minimum on your credit card. “I just worry that if we don’t fix our roof, we’re going to create damage to the structure of our state,” Durant said. “Maybe it’s through bond ratings and maybe it’s through children that aren’t properly educated.”

LATINO: Good Shepherd offers a combination of translation services

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“well or very well.” Another 31 percent speak only or mostly English at home, leaving 19 percent who speak only Spanish at home. Sipe said Umatilla is working on programs that acknowledge that sometimes just providing a translator isn’t enough. When Umatilla families go on college visits through the Gear-Up program, for example, Sipe said a translator is provided but the visits seem “primarily geared toward Caucasian families.” As a result, the district is working with Washington State University on a college visit specifically for Hispanic families. The district is also working on recruiting more Latino teachers as role models for their students, and in high school classes such as civics students talk about equity and ways to remove barriers to equality in their community. The Latinos in Oregon report states that about 41 percent of Oregon’s Latino population does not have a high school diploma, and another 24 percent only have a high school diploma without any college experience. As such, many of Oregon’s Latino residents are drawn to jobs in agriculture. Obdulia Munoz, who works for the Migrant Education Program in Eastern Oregon, said the federal program’s services are offered to any student who moves frequently because they or their parents work in an agriculture-related job. Some of the students served are white, but many are Latino. She said the program works to help encourage parent involvement in the child’s education and encourage the child to stay in school. “We see a lot who don’t finish, because they need to help their families, so they start working, and once they start working they usually don’t come back to school,” Munoz said.

City purpose In 2012 the city of Hermiston decided to address the needs of its growing population by creating a Hispanic Advisory Committee that provides information to Latino residents and also represents those residents’ concerns to the city. Clara Beas Fitzgerald started out on the committee and is now a Hermiston city councilor. She also works in Boardman for the Morrow County School District, and said she is proud of both communities for their efforts to be more inclusive to their Latino residents. According to the Latinos in Oregon report, nearly two thirds of the state’s Latinos were born in the United States. About 85 percent of Oregon’s Latinos identify as Mexican. Beas Fitzgerald said even though a majority of Latinos in Eastern Oregon are of Mexican descent, people should be careful not to assume they are all from Mexico. They might have been born and raised in the United States, or their family might be from a Latin American country with customs that are different than Mexico’s. “Boardman is having people from Guatemala, a little influx of people coming into the community,” she said. Beas Fitzgerald said Oregon’s non-Latino commu-



Martha Ortega, Claudia Ortega, 10, Guadalupe Talavera and Daphne Castro, 17, make homemade granola to be used in a parfait recipe in December 2016 during a Cooking Matters for Families cooking class in Umatilla.

nity can help Latino residents by not making assumptions and also by keeping in mind they may have been raised with different cultural norms. “Some people don’t know the culture here,” she said. “We have certain rules and expectations that are hidden, that they just don’t know ... be tolerant because the ways people coming from other countries act aren’t necessarily disrespectful or rude in their culture.” Beas Fitzgerald said sometimes the Latino community can be distrustful of the establishment, so misinformation can travel fast. She’s doing her part to address that by providing accurate information about city services, business, education and more through the La Voz de Puebla show on the Spanish-language radio station La Ley. She said lately she has been seeing many more state and federal officials like Sen. Jeff Merkley reach out for information about the needs of Eastern Oregon’s Latino community, a sign they’re noticing the growth trends. Inspired by the success of Hermiston’s Hispanic Advisory Committee, in January the Milton-Freewater city council made creating a similar committee one of its goals in its five-year plan. City manager Linda Hall said the city already has some Hispanic community members who have attended city council meetings and spoken up during the public comment section. Hall said growth of Milton-Freewater’s Latino population has been slow and steady, and much of it has come not from immigration but from families that used

to come for temporary work but have since settled in the community and started raising children and grandchildren there. “If you speak to our Hispanic youth, they’re second or third generation,” she said. The city holds a Cinco de Mayo celebration every year, provides fliers and library books in Spanish, works on projects with the school district’s Heritage Club and offers a financial incentive for employees that speak Spanish. **Business** Nick Bejarano, communications director for Good Shepherd Health Care System, said the hospital has seen an increase in Latino patients over the years. In response, the hospital and clinics offer a combination of translation services for patients over the phone, in person or via video conference on a laptop or tablet. They also offer educational classes on topics like nutrition in Spanish. “Many of our employees do speak Spanish too,” he said. The Latinos in Oregon report shows 29 percent of Latinos in Oregon are uninsured, compared to 13 percent of white residents. Bejarano said Good Shepherd provides information in English and Spanish on payment plans with lower rates based on need. “We make our services available to everyone,” he said. “If we realize there is a barrier, such as a language barrier, we do everything we can to help overcome that.”

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Thank you CTUIR Tribal Members for your vote on February 7, 2017

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