

Virtual teaching platforms benefit fledgling educators

East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — Teacher candidates in Eastern Oregon University’s Master of Arts in Teaching program can practice leading a classroom without actually being in one.

An innovative practicum software called Mursion allows soon-to-be-teachers to carry out lesson plans with a simulated class. A teacher avatar acts out lectures and interacts with virtual students.

A second platform, GoReact, allows EOU professors observing a practice lesson to pause the simulation to provide feedback. Candidates can also rewind the recording to watch playbacks on the spot, without disrupting a real classroom of students.

“This has become vital because of COVID-19, but it’s also something we were planning on trying regardless,” said Associate Professor of Education Rae Ette Newman. “It’s pretty exciting for teacher candidates. Even though the classroom looks a lot different, they are being offered opportunities to hone their skills.”

Even with all its capabilities, the simulated practicum is just one tool in EOU’s instructional tool kit. Kristin Johnson, an academic adviser for graduate students in the College of Education, said candidates are still paired with experienced classroom teachers who they apprentice with throughout the entire year.



The Observer, File

Teacher candidates in Eastern Oregon University’s Master of Arts in Teaching program can practice leading a classroom without actually being in one.

The MAT program also stands out for its hybrid format and speedy completion time.

“One of the most distinct aspects is that it only takes 10 months to earn both a teaching license and a master’s degree. That’s really unusual to earn both in under a year,” Johnson said.

Most classes are taught online, but students gather with their cohorts on campus six times

throughout the program.

“This program works really well for people who already have a bachelor’s degree,” Johnson said. “Anybody who wants to become a teacher, but didn’t go through a licensure program as an undergraduate, could decide to become a teacher in either elementary or secondary schools.”

The cohorts are split by which level — elementary or second-

ary — the candidates are looking to teach. These small groups form tight bonds with instructors and one another.

“We build strong relationships that extend beyond graduation to support working teachers,” Newman said. “Because we are in a cohort, the candidates also build a support network for their careers.”

Many teacher candidates have already established one career and

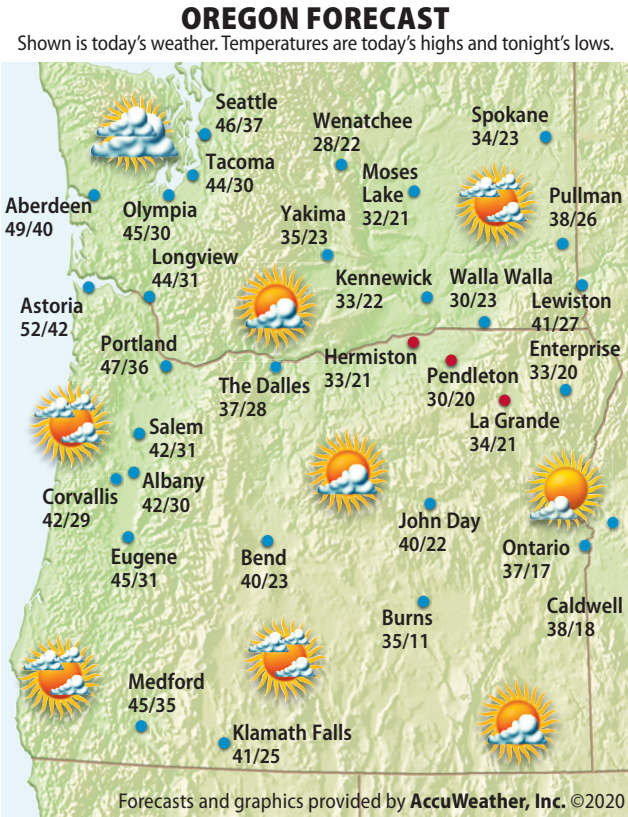
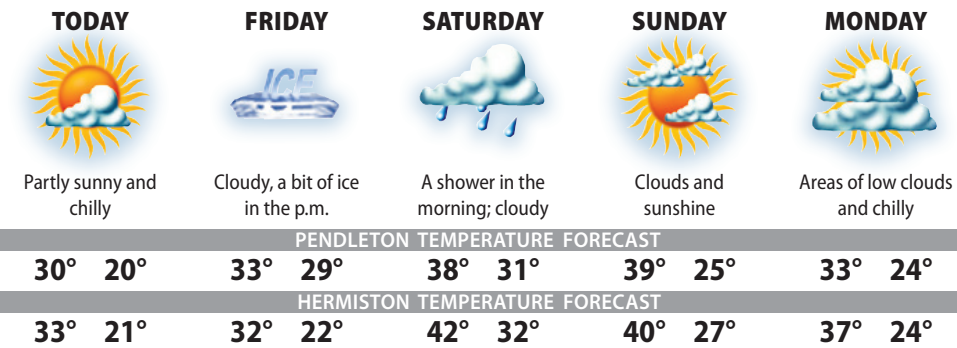
are embarking on a new one in education. Others have worked in K-12 schools as paraprofessionals, volunteers, or substitute teachers with a restricted teaching license and are looking to earn a higher salary and work in their own classroom. Some have just finished their undergraduate degree, and launch straight into the MAT program to gain experience.

Newman estimated more than 95% of graduates are hired right after completing their licensure. The pandemic has limited some of the facets of the program, but accommodations are in place so candidates can still meet program requirements.

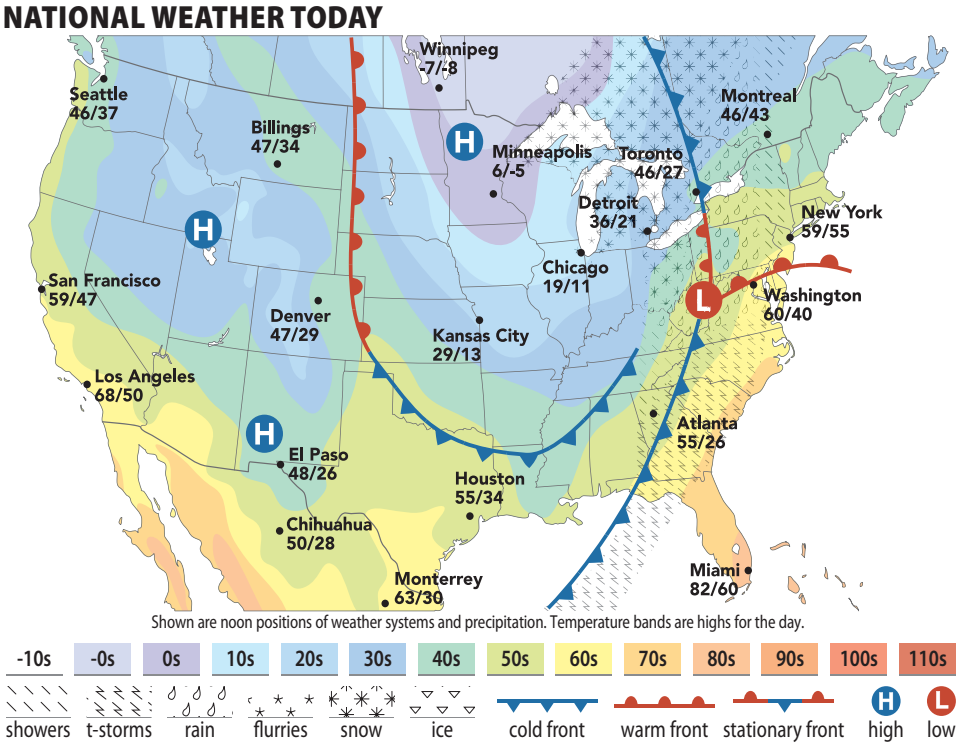
EOU also coordinates an advisory council to assess the program’s curriculum and ensure it aligns with the needs of schools districts across the region. Every district with an EOU alumnus teaching in it is invited to join the council as a partner. The partnerships also help fill teacher shortages in Oregon.

“We like to build those relationships and keep them going,” Newman said. “They look at our program reports for accreditation and talk about field experiences. We provide training for school districts. The advisory council emphasized the need to increase the number of qualified Special Educators, and so we’re now developing an undergraduate program that combines preliminary licensure with a Special Education endorsement.”

Forecast for Pendleton Area



NATIONAL EXTREMES
Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 88° in Weslaco, Texas Low -12° in West Yellowstone, Mont.



Baker City man faces federal criminal charges for misusing COVID-19 aid

Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Jeremy Clawson, 31, of Baker City, has been charged with theft of government property for allegedly receiving a federal COVID-19 loan on behalf of a fictitious company and then using the money for personal purposes, including buying a \$49,000 car, according to the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Portland.

Clawson took advantage of economic relief programs administered by the Small Business Administration through Economic Injury Disaster Loans and the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), as authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, according to a press release from the U.S. Attorney Billy Williams.

According to court documents, on Aug. 11, 2020, the proceeds of an SBA EIDL totaling \$145,200 were deposited into an Umpqua Bank account owned by Clawson and his girlfriend. Shortly after receiving the deposit, Clawson began making multiple large cash withdrawals at the drive-thru window of the Umpqua Bank in Baker City. On Aug. 17, 2020, Clawson withdrew \$49,905 in the form of

a cashier’s check to purchase a 2016 Dodge Challenger. Umpqua Bank investigators detected the unusual activity and reported it to the SBA.

SBA loan documents showed that the loan was made for the benefit of Halperin Manufacturing Company in San Diego, California. Though there is no record of any such company, the loan application listed the company’s owner and claimed it employed 350 people. Investigators contacted the person listed as the owner, but that person denied owning or being affiliated with any such company. The purported owner further stated that the company’s supposed address in San Diego was that individual’s personal residence and not a commercial property with 350 employees.

In early September 2020, investigators learned that, in late August, Clawson had been arrested by the Baker City Police Department for driving under the influence, reckless driving, driving with a suspended license, and attempting to elude police. Clawson was driving the 2016 Dodge Challenger at the time of his arrest. Clawson later told authorities that he had received a large inheritance from his father,

including \$30,000 in cash he had on his person during a subsequent arrest.

On Sept. 11, 2020, investigators interviewed Clawson at the Baker County Jail where he was incarcerated on an unrelated charge. Clawson claimed to have received the \$145,200 from a woman with whom he had an online dating relationship. He further claimed that he didn’t know what to do with the money and, after he stopped communicating with the woman, began spending the money himself. Clawson admitted to using the SBA money to purchase the Dodge Challenger and several other vehicles.

The United States District Court issued a warrant for Clawson’s arrest, but he is currently serving a criminal sentence at the Snake River Correctional Institution following his convictions for felony driving under the influence and attempting to elude the police stemming from his August 2020 arrest. Federal agents also seized the Dodge Challenger and approximately \$50,000 in cash derived from the fraudulent EIDL pursuant to seizure warrants issued by the federal court and voluntary abandonment of funds in third parties’ possession.

IN BRIEF

ODFW believes there are eight wolves around Grant County

JOHN DAY — The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife identified a new area of known wolf activity in the Murderers Creek Wildlife Unit.

Ryan Torland, an ODFW district wildlife biologist, said the area in southern Grant County east of Seneca has seen at least two different wolves over the past three years.

One was black, he said, and it appears to have moved on about a year or two ago. He said a gray wolf started to show up

roughly a year ago. Torland said this was throughout the winter, and then disappeared in the spring.

He said the gray wolf started to show up more consistently from late July to early August this year. In late November, he said ODFW issued an “area of known wolf activity” for the gray wolf.

Torland said ODFW identified a pack of wolves in the Desolation Unit in March.

He said there are a pair of wolves in the Northside Unit. He said ODFW is not aware of the pair successfully raising a pup.

— EO Media Group

CORRECTIONS: The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton 541-276-2211
333 E. Main St., Hermiston 541-567-6211
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed major holidays

EastOregonian.com

In the App Store:

EO

EAST OREGONIAN

East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. **Postmaster:** send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801.
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Circulation Dept.

For mail delivery, online access, vacation stops or delivery concerns call 800-781-3214

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	Local home delivery	Savings (cover price)
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Single copy price:

\$1.50 Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

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