

2% of EOU students living on campus test positive for COVID-19

By PHIL WRIGHT
La Grande Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University reported COVID-19 testing of more than 1,200 students resulted in a positive rate of just 2%.

EOU in a press release reported students' compliance with health and safety protocols allowed the university to keep case counts at a minimum while continuing operations, including providing a significant number of in-person classes and services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to the start of winter term, EOU tested all students living in on-campus residence halls for COVID-19 once during winter break, then a second time upon returning to campus. Student-athletes complete regular COVID-19 tests to continue participation in practices.

EOU conducted more than 1,200 tests in January of students living on campus, according to the press release, which resulted in that 2% positivity rate.

Dally Evans, of Lakeview, is a freshman living on campus at Eastern. The elementary education major credited the university for steps to control the spread of coronavirus.

"I think EOU is doing a



Marcy Barlett cleans the common room at one of the residence halls on the Eastern Oregon University campus in La Grande on Monday, Feb. 8, 2021. EOU reported it continues to take measures to control the spread of COVID-19, including implementing social distancing measures and the creation of a COVID-19 case management team.

Alex Wittwer/La Grande Observer

great job with it," Evans said.

When students started the school year in the fall, she said, they had to quarantine for three days, "then we did a mass testing on the football field." After that, she said, came a few more days of quarantining, and before winter break the university provided students with testing kits to take home and mail in.

Heather Wiggins, director of EOU's Student Health Center, also is a family nurse

practitioner and a faculty member at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland. She said large-scale testing provides important information to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

"At least 40% of the spread of COVID is through asymptomatic or presymptomatic individuals, who either are already ill and do not have any symptoms or have not yet developed symptoms," Wiggins said in the press release.

"Frequent large-scale testing is one measure that can help reduce the risk of an outbreak spreading quickly. ... This type of testing is especially important when students are returning to campus from many different areas after winter break, and may have been unknowingly exposed, or are already infectious but are not showing any symptoms."

Carrie Brogoitti, COVID-19 incident commander at Union County's public health

authority, the Center for Human Development Inc., said the organization has a longstanding, positive relationship with EOU that has helped mitigate the spread of COVID-19 locally.

"Of all the places in our community where there could be risk of spread or potential outbreaks, EOU has done a tremendous job of being proactive," Brogoitti said in the release. "They have great plans in place and have been swift to act in isolating and quarantining COVID-19 cases to limit or stop the spread in our community. They have really taken it seriously and have worked really hard to limit the risk to their students and the community."

She said EOU helped inform and coordinate many aspects of the pandemic response, and the university's presence in La Grande is not a primary reason for the county's "extreme risk" status.

"Over the last year we have seen COVID-19 activity and outbreaks touch almost every area of our community. In many of these instances, to the best of our knowledge, this activity has been community spread," Brogoitti said. "EOU has coordinated their testing events with public health and these testing events have

led to identification of cases, quick treatment, and immediate isolation to prevent spread."

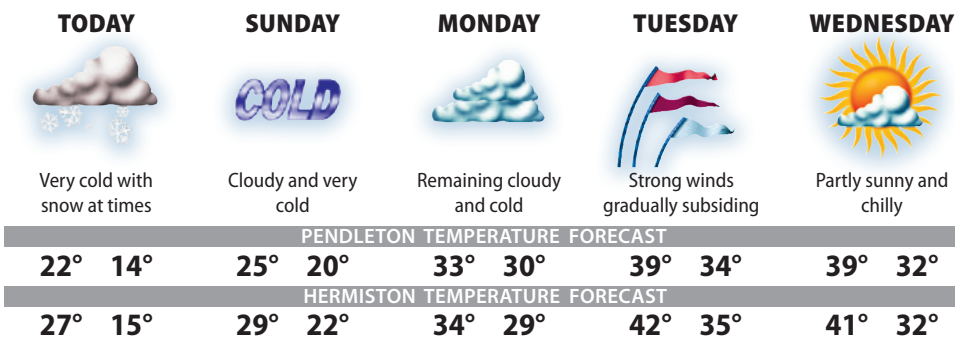
EOU's systems contained a minor outbreak in mid-January after students who had tested negative began experiencing symptoms, EOU reported. Contact tracing found no employees or shared spaces were exposed. EOU assigned each affected student a caseworker to provide wrap-around services. And a newly hired COVID-19 response nurse provided direct care and consultation for the students.

Wiggins said Easter's COVID-19 case management team is there to ensure students have the support they need.

"The response nurse is on the team along with representatives from student affairs, residence life, the student health center and the athletic department. This team meets routinely to help provide support to all students who are in isolation or quarantine," she said.

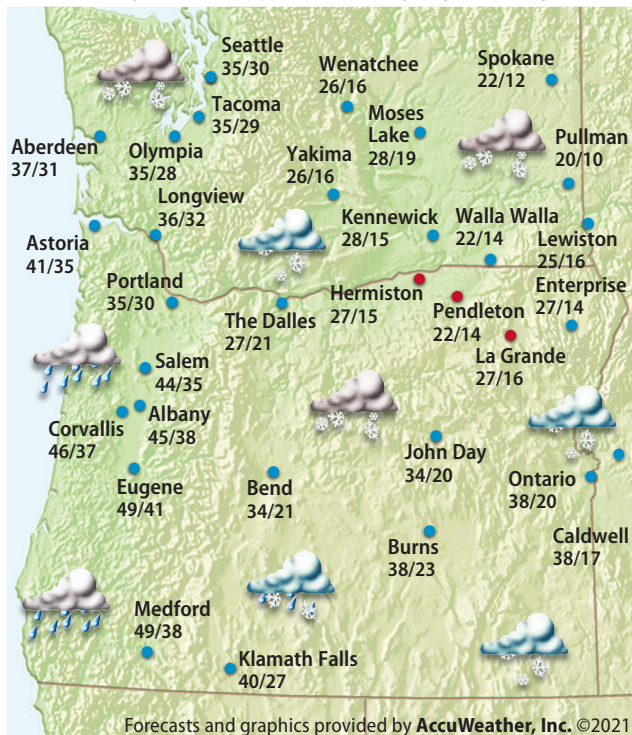
Faculty also provided remote-access resources for students since the pandemic began in spring 2020. Adapting in-class curriculum to suit remote and hybrid courses also allows students to self-isolate or quarantine if they are ill or potentially exposed to the virus.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



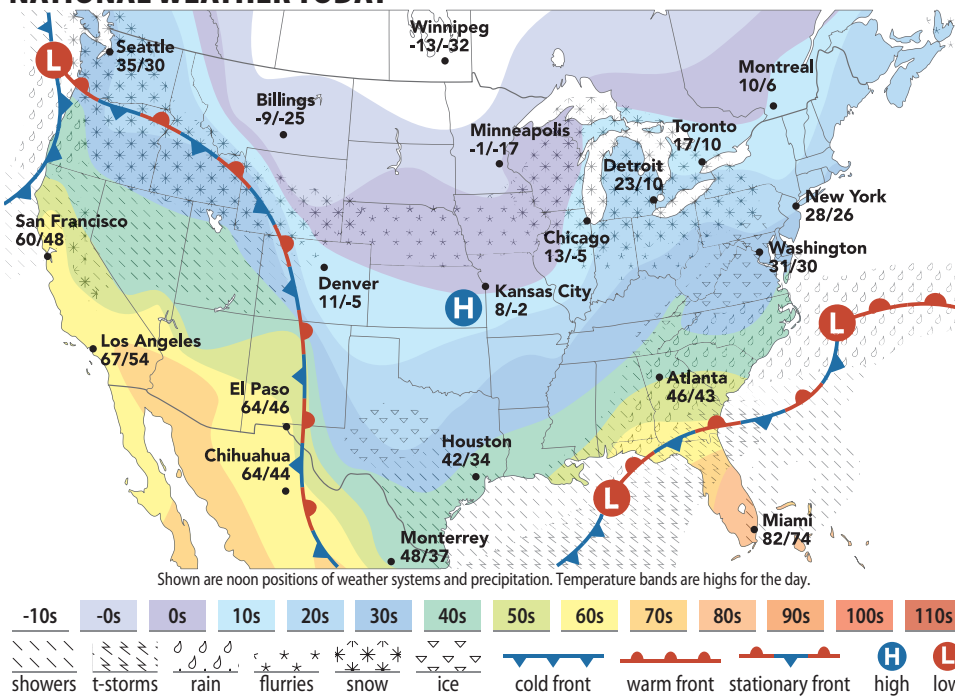
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	19°	13°	
Normals	46°	29°	
Records	68° (1977)	-10° (1929)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.46"		
Month to date	0.60"		
Normal month to date	0.52"		
Year to date	1.51"		
Last year to date	3.45"		
Normal year to date	1.90"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	21°	18°	
Normals	47°	29°	
Records	68° (2011)	-15° (1929)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace		
Month to date	0.12"		
Normal month to date	0.42"		
Year to date	0.71"		
Last year to date	0.31"		
Normal year to date	1.70"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	Sun.		
Boardman	N 6-12	NE 4-8	
Pendleton	NW 6-12	NE 4-8	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	7:00 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	5:19 p.m.		
Moonrise today	8:22 a.m.		
Moonset today	7:33 p.m.		
First	Full	Last	New
Feb 19	Feb 27	Mar 5	Mar 13

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 88° in Immokalee, Fla. Low -41° in Moore, Mont.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



New police station will be on the May ballot for M-F voters

By SHEILA HAGAR
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

MILTON-FREEWATER — Voters in Milton-Freewater will have the opportunity to consider approving a new city police station in May.

Milton-Freewater City Council members voted unanimously on Monday, Feb. 8, to put a \$7.7 million general obligation bond on the upcoming ballot.

If approved, the money will come from property taxes, about \$7.25 a month per \$100,000 of assessed property value, officials said.

The story of why Milton-Freewater could use a new station goes back about 100 years.

That's how long the city's police department has operated in the basement of Milton-Freewater City Hall on South Main Street, once the town of Milton bought the former Columbia College in 1929.

The basement has been called a "rabbit warren" of boxy, shotgun-style rooms with little to no natural light in much of the station. The addition of security measures and

technology has reduced usable square footage even more.

The same could be said of the station's heating and cooling, although that recently failed, leaving the basement without heat for the cold snap predicted this week, City Manager Linda Hall told council members.

For more than 20 years, officials have pondered building a station on a 16,500-square-foot, city-owned lot across Columbia Street, which runs behind Main Street facing city hall.

In October 2020, the city hired Portland-based FFA Architecture & Interiors to do an early concept design.

FFA staff members John Pete and Ian Gelbrich presented working blueprints, based on staff and space needs, plus the surrounding neighborhood and countryside on Feb. 8.

The proposed station would be about 7,200 square feet and would house Milton-Freewater Police patrol officers and 911 dispatchers. The building would include conference and report-taking rooms, two holding cells, offices, evidence rooms, a public lobby, a break

room, interview spaces and training areas.

It will also be seismically sound, set up for modern technology, accessible to those using mobility devices, and provide privacy and safety for residents to attend to police business.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a jump in building material prices, it similarly caused a project slowdown, meaning labor costs are currently lower, Pete said, noting the bond amount is adjusted for a possible 4% cost escalation.

Public safety buildings cost more than equally sized construction due to the need for them to be seismically sound, house back-up generators and create secure spaces, he told council members.

The single-story station's roof is designed to blend with nearby residences and echo the foothills of the Blue Mountains, the FFA architects said.

As well, the preliminary design mimics the open front of the public library, adjacent to Milton-Freewater City Hall. That station's exterior brick and metal cladding would pay homage to its city hall sibling.

IN BRIEF

Proposed Oregon bill aims to limit bans on homeless camping

PORTLAND — Cities and counties in Oregon aiming to ban homeless people from sitting, sleeping and camping on public property may soon face a barrier under a proposed bill introduced by state lawmakers earlier this month.

House Bill 3115 would require local governments to be "objectively reasonable" when regulating sitting, lying, sleeping or keeping warm and dry on public property.

If passed, the measure would largely force cities statewide to comply with the well known "camping lawsuit" in Boise, Idaho, where a federal judge ruled that prosecuting people for sleeping on the streets, when there are no shelter beds available, is unconstitutional and cruel and unusual punishment.

"We have a lot of folks continuing to live in public spaces, and that ruling in the court said

that you can't penalize people for experiencing homelessness if there isn't enough shelter," Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek, who is the sponsor of the bill, said.

Twelve years ago, a group of homeless people sued the city of Boise for ticketing them for sleeping outside, despite there being a shortage of shelter beds in the area. In 2018, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that cities cannot prosecute people for sleeping on the streets if there is nowhere else for them to go.

A \$1.8 million settlement was reached on Feb. 8 in the Robert Martin v. City of Boise case; this includes \$1.3 million to create overnight shelters or rehabilitate existing shelter spaces, \$435,000 for the plaintiffs' attorneys, and \$5,000 in damages to the plaintiffs.

The 9th Circuit is the largest court of appeals, meaning the ruling affects Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington.

— Associated Press

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