

Car accident



JOE WILSON/for the Itemizer-Observer
Emergency crews work fast to remove the driver from one of the cars involved in a crash near Kings Valley Highway and Highway 22 on Thursday afternoon.

WOU enrollment down 10 percent

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Enrollment at Western Oregon University is down 10 percent overall as of the four-week fall count.

The numbers can be a little deceiving, said Dave McDonald, associate provost.

While the university is down in full-time equivalent students and in overall headcount, there has been a change in the way students are counted, McDonald said.

Students who are enrolled in classes to further their education, such as teachers from Salem-Keizer, are not counted until they complete the class, he said.

"They roll over to winter term or the end of fall term," McDonald said. "They're there, but they aren't in the count."

He said roughly 400 students fall into that category, or about 100 FTE.

Incoming freshmen went up 8 percent, which McDonald said is a good move forward.



"That was a nice rebound," he said.

New transfer students were basically flat and international students were down 10 percent.

Graduate students were up 29 percent, McDonald said.

"It is down a little bit, absolutely," he said. "That large graduating class (in 2015) really pulled it down a bit. The good news is we had a great graduating class. The bad news is: we had a huge graduating class. When you have a huge graduating class, it puts incredible pressure on our incoming students to make up."

Enrollment numbers should stabilize because the Class of 2016 looks more like

a normal size for Western, McDonald said.

Retention between grades also is up by 1 percent, he said.

"Our short-term goal is 75 percent" retention rate, McDonald said, with a long-term goal of 85 percent.

Not all students who stop going to school at Western is a bad thing, he said.

"When someone starts at Western and goes to Oregon Health & Sciences University nursing program, it counts against our retention rate," McDonald said as an example. "We're going to celebrate that success of that student going to the nursing program, but our numbers take a hit from that."

Some of the ways WOU has worked to improve student retention is by hiring more people to support students from all walks of life, from veterans services to Wolf Connections.

"Those are all pieces that we're building into our process to give greater support to students," McDonald said.

Police will not request money

Scammers can pose as officers looking for help in sting

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Scams can be scary, and the latest IRS calling scam can get worse than threatening messages on your answering machine, said Ellen Klem, director of consumer outreach and education for the Office of the Attorney General.

"The tone has been really aggressive and frightening," Klem said.

Last year, the top complaint of the year reported to the Office of the AG was the IRS imposter scam, with 1,400 complaints, Klem said. The second-most complained about scam received 700.

"We're not alone, unfortunately," she said. "Across the country this is happening to lots of other people."

But the IRS scam, as well as its similar scams in different clothing, can get worse than just a robot leaving a message on the answering machine.

After making the threat, scammers may hang up and another will call back pretending to be from the local police or Department of Motor Vehicles, said Independence Sgt. Tino Banuelos. Often the caller ID will support their claims.

"If a person ever has a

doubt about whether the person on the other end of a phone call is, in fact, a police officer, they can request the officer's name and agency," Banuelos said. "I would not rely solely on the caller ID as even these numbers can be 'spoofed.'"

Klem said if someone falls initially for a scam, and then gets wise to the mistake, it can lead to a different tactic.

"The scammer comes for more money," Klem said. "You say, 'I'm wise to you; you're not getting any more money.'"

So they get a call from a police officer asking for help to catch the scammer, Klem said.

"They say, 'this is a bad scam,'" she explained. "We're looking for undercover people to help us. Can you wire some more money to that same person. Here's my badge number. I promise you'll get your money back."

Even if the caller ID looks right, local law enforcement would never request money to be sent to a scammer.

"Our officers would not call someone like this and definitely not try to get anyone to send money," Monmouth Sgt. Kim Dorn said. "This is not how law enforcement would set up a 'sting operation.'"

Furthermore, Dorn said the person should look up the agency on his or her own instead of asking the scammer for the return phone number, using Google, the phone book or 411.

Dallas Lt. Jerry Mott said if money was required for an investigation, officers would not seek for a citizen to pay it.

"If we needed something like that to happen, we would take over the account and fund it with investigative funds," he said. "A police officer should never request money from a person over the phone, email or social media."

Mott said sometimes people will receive a phone call from the Dallas City Animal Control to let them know they need to renew their dog licenses, but even then they will be asked to come to City Hall to pay or mail in the payment, never to pay by phone with a prepaid Visa card or otherwise.

The bottom line is: hang up.

"It is really hard though, especially if you've been raised to be polite when people come to the door and call on the phone," Klem said. "But that's your best line of defense. If you have to, write it on a sticky note and put it by your telephone. I think that's good advice."

Money for conservation

Itemizer-Observer staff report

POLK COUNTY — Agricultural producers will have a chance to receive financial payments through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) — the U.S. Department of Agriculture's largest conservation program.

The CSP is offering up to \$150 million nationwide to farmers, ranchers and private forestland owners who enroll acres into the program.

The CSP is a voluntary program that encourages producers who have already adopted conservation measures to pursue new or additional conservation activities to reach a greater level of land stewardship. CSP payments are awarded under five-year contracts based on the number

of acres enrolled.

The USDA's National Resources Conservation Service administers the payments.

In Oregon, CSP has up to \$18.8 million available in 2016. NRCS Oregon has allocated up to 355,530 acres for the general CSP sign-up and an additional 31,850 acres for signups in core sage grouse habitats.

CSP is open to individual producers, Native American Tribes and non-profit organizations/entities.

Applications are accepted throughout the year, but must be turned in by March 31 to be considered for enrollment in 2016.

For more information: www.or.nrcs.usda.gov.

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