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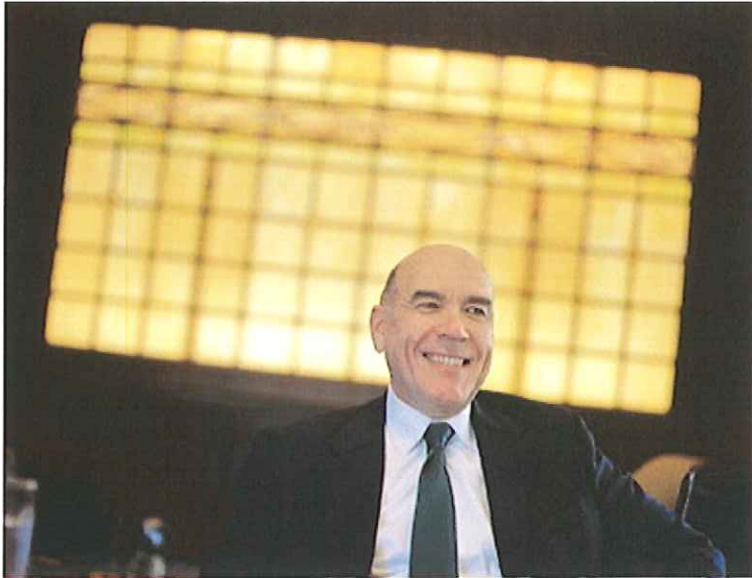
Everything Oregon

Oregon State Board of Higher Education opposes University of Oregon's quest for more autonomy

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By **Bill Graves**, The Oregonian



Thomas Boyd/The Oregonian

University of Oregon President Richard Lariviere argues the university must find new ways to raise money as state support declines and tuition keeps climbing 7.5 percent a year.

The **State Board of Higher Education** will not support the **University of Oregon's plan** to ask the Legislature for more autonomy and a separate governing board.

The board does not want the UO going to the Legislature next month to make a pitch for more autonomy at the same time the board will be seeking more independence for all seven universities in the state system, said Paul Kelly, board president.

"We see their position as what is good for the UO with very little consideration for the impact on others in the system," Kelly said.

"We have to oppose the UO proposal

because they are pushing it right now in the face of the board's proposal."

But the **UO Foundation**, a private organization independent of the university as well as the state board's authority, still will press for the introduction of the UO's reform plan in the Legislature, said Paul Weinholt, the foundation's president and chief executive officer.

"We want to continue the discussion because we don't feel like our proposal in any way conflicts with the OUS (**Oregon University System**) proposal," he said. "The OUS proposal includes the concept of having independent governing boards at a future date."

Kelly said the state board does not necessarily oppose the idea of giving the UO its own governing board, but it does not want to take up that issue until it first wins legislative support for the state board's reform plan.

A bill will be introduced in the House on behalf of the state board early next year that proposes to free the universities from their state-agency status. It also would give the board authority to establish independent governing boards for one or more universities.

The change in status would give universities the kind of independence community colleges enjoy with control over tuition, personnel, health benefits, purchasing, bonding and other operations. They also would have more options for raising money. University leaders say such changes could save several million dollars over the next two years.

The board has been publicly silent on **UO President Richard Lariviere's** restructuring plan since he revealed it last May. But the chancellor's office released a question-and-answer document this week that explicitly states the board "does not support separate enactment of the UO proposal."

A task force on higher education will propose its own plan, said Sen. Mark Hass, who co-chairs the task force with Tobias Read, both Democrats from Beaverton. The plan includes some features of the state board's proposal and calls for a governor-appointed coordinating commission that would oversee state universities and community colleges.

The Senate Education Committee will immediately consider the task force plan in a bill when the Legislature goes into session next month, Hass said.

So legislators next session likely will see three higher education restructuring bills that present the separate plans pushed by the UO Foundation, the state board and the legislative task force on higher education.

Lariviere also will be asking the Legislature to finance about \$800 million worth of bonds that the UO will match. He wants to put the \$1.6 billion into the university's endowment fund and use the interest to operate the university. The state board has taken no position on the president's bond plan, Kelly said.

Without a new way to raise money, Lariviere said in October, tuition at the UO will keep climbing at 7.5 percent per year, as it has for the past 38 years, hitting an annual price of \$17,000 by 2020.

-- **Bill Graves**

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