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Ducks go to overtime

Published: Sunday, October 17, 2010, 3:44 PM

By **The Oregonian Editorial Board**

University of Oregon President Richard Lariviere is asking the Legislature to allow him to run the university as he sees fit, freed from the stifling edicts applied to the rest of state government. It looks now like Lariviere chose not to wait for an answer.

When Gov. Ted Kulongoski ordered state agencies -- including the university system -- to require their workers to take furlough days, Lariviere apparently approved a plan to allow as many as 1,000 UO employees to offset the lost furlough hours with overtime hours, according to documents obtained by **Willamette Week**.

Put plainly, while workers across state government and the rest of the university system took pay cuts due to furloughs, the UO staff who belong to the Service Employees International Union got paid the same amount, even as they worked fewer hours because of higher overtime pay.

That's not fair, either to the rest of state workers or to Oregon taxpayers. As Kulongoski's chief of staff, Tim Nesbitt, wrote, "The private sector is shedding jobs, households are cutting back and tax burdens can feel heavier to bear. That is why the principle of self-sacrifice has an importance beyond its contribution to any agency's budget saving and why, in times like these, policies that appear to evade our commitment to shared sacrifice for any group of employees can be damaging to all of us."

If the UO was largely independent from the rest of state government, perhaps the president could defend a decision to use tuition or other resources to avoid reducing employee pay. But as it stands, the UO is no more independent than the Department of Corrections or any other state agency.

We've been impressed with Lariviere's bold vision and aggressive leadership at the UO. But this was a misstep, one he may come to regret when the Legislature finally takes up the question of the independence he seeks.

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