

Lariviere's Partnership deal shelved until 2012

Oregon governor, University president agree to work together on reform plan

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After nearly a year of negotiating with legislators and combating criticism from concerned students, University President Richard Lariviere announced last Wednesday he was putting his controversial New Partnership proposal on hold until 2012.

The plan, contained in two bills currently in Salem, would grant the University its own governance board and amend the Oregon's constitution so universities could use bond money from the state for funding — the first step in pursuing Lariviere's proposed \$1.6 billion public-private endowment.

Although the legislation was set to be decided on this year, ongoing negotiations with Governor John Kitzhaber convinced Lariviere to hold off until next February.

"We have been in conversation with the governor for several weeks about how to move forward," Lariviere said.

Both officials agreed they should shift their attention to the governor's plan to reform university governing boards around the state.

"Our proposal fits very well with his and vice versa," Lariviere said.

In light of this cohesion and the alignment he sees between the governor's proposed changes statewide and his plans for the University, Lariviere decided that holding off on the New Partnership and focusing on the governor's proposed higher education reform is best for both parties.

PROPOSAL

occupies 60 percent of the state's budget, which higher education does," Lariviere said.

If the governor's proposal was not on the table, Lariviere said he would have continued to advance the New Partnership through the Oregon State Legislature, but eventually would have needed the governor's support.

"The playing field was pretty uncertain," Lariviere said.

"Now we feel that we have a much clearer path laid out for us."

For now, the president plans to continue to outreach to political and community leaders and

"There's a surprising amount of interest nationwide," Lariviere said. "I'm much more concerned about what people think here."

Lariviere sent an exalting letter to the governor's office Tuesday with hopes that they could work together.

"I, too, am pleased that there is general alignment between our respective policy agendas," Lariviere wrote, "and I am optimistic that the first steps toward comprehensive reform can be taken this session."

In the letter, the president said the University is "fully supportive" of the Oregon Education Investment Board's creation and

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Kitzhaber's plan calls for the creation of the Oregon Education Investment Board, which would replace both the State Board of Higher Education — governing Oregon colleges and universities — and the state's Board of Education overseeing K-12.

focusing on the governor's proposal was "a political calculus," Lariviere said.

Lariviere also said focusing on the governor's proposal will give the University a better idea of how education reform moves through Oregon's legislation, and will work to educate the public on what his proposed changes would really mean if put

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The unified board would share a single budget.

The New Partnership will continue to move forward in the coming year, Lariviere said, and he hopes the governor's legislation will help in that process.

"This is a very encouraging boost for our proposal," Lariviere said. "The governor's support for an innovative idea like this is essential."

Postponing the plan and

into action.

"The more the public knows about this, the more support there is," Lariviere said.

Although Kitzhaber has yet to introduce an official bill into legislation, he has been discussing his ideas for months and has focused a considerable amount of his campaign's efforts on education.

"It only makes sense that there would be careful consideration on a policy that

to help see that this first critical step is adopted now."

The governor wrote a reply letter the same day, praising the president for understanding why the delay is necessary, and will ultimately be in the best interest of all parties.

"I share your commitment to seeing that the first steps in reform are adopted during the current legislative session," Kitzhaber told Lariviere.

"Thank you for recognizing this challenge and for agreeing to let the debate about the policies in (Senate Bill) 559 and (Senate Joint Resolution) 20 carry forward to the interim so that we

action on the issues of local governing boards and stable funding proposals in 2012."

Kitzhaber spokesperson Christine Miles said the governor supports the University's plan, but believes it is more appropriate to focus his current efforts in the short run and wait to appraise the New Partnership during the 2012 legislative session.

"He supports it; he believe(s) in it," Miles said.

"This year is really about delivering a better plan."