

UO agrees to wait until next year to push for more autonomy

The governor convinces the school that his plan to shift education oversight should take legislative priority

By **BILL GRAVES**
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The University of Oregon will wait until the 2012 Legislature to push bills for its own governance board and authority to use state bond money to operate, UO President Richard Lariviere said Wednesday.

The university had lobbied aggressively to move the bills through the Leg-

islature, but after meeting with Gov. John Kitzhaber, Lariviere and the UO Foundation agreed to pull back until next year.

In a letter to Lariviere, Kitzhaber said his priority was to establish the Oregon Education Investment Board, which would replace the state boards of education and higher education and oversee all levels of public education from preschool through graduate school. Lariviere said he and the governor agreed it would be difficult for the Legislature to deal with the UO bills and handle such a big shift in how the state governs education.

"The governor's own plan for the Oregon Education Investment Board is



Lariviere
Lauds plan for investment board

an independent public university with its own board.

Senate Joint Resolution 20 would have asked voters in 2012 to decide whether to amend the Oregon Consti-

in perfect alignment with ours," Lariviere said. "I am actually very optimistic. For the first time in a long time, I can see how this might play out in the political process."

One UO proposal, Senate Bill 559, would have established the UO as

tution so universities could use bond money to partially fund their endowments. Lariviere proposed a \$1.6 billion endowment financed evenly by state bonds and private donations to run his university.

The State Board of Higher Education opposed the UO plan. The board is pushing its own bill to change the state agency status of the seven universities to a more autonomous system with more control over how it raises and spends money.

State board leaders said they were glad UO will wait. That will give them time to decide whether it makes sense to give some or all of the universities their own governing boards, said Jim

Francesconi, board vice president.

"Let's work with the UO starting now to have some healing happen in a way that supports all the universities, including the UO," he said.

The UO pullout also allows the Legislature to focus on the state board's proposal to give the system more independence, board President Paul Kelly said.

There's a good chance the Legislature will create a higher education work group during the interim and consider Lariviere's proposals before the 2012 session, said Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton.

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