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HIGHER EDUCATION

State board to tighten Lariviere's contract

In light of New Partnership, officials alter University president's abilities

DEBORAH BLOOM
NEWS REPORTER

State higher education officials are cracking the whip on University president Richard Lariviere after his rogue yearlong pursuit to change the University's governance system.

In a telephone conference last week, members of the State Board of Higher Education voted to renew Lariviere's contract for one year — a deviation from the standard two or three years generally granted to university presidents — and with several conditions that reflect growing tension between board members and the president.

The conditions require Lariviere to be more compliant with the board by regularly attending and participating in meetings, supporting any legislative proposal adopted by the board, and refraining from his push to pass the New Partnership plan without board approval.

Lariviere's New Partnership plan, released in May 2010, proposed sweeping changes to how the University is funded and regulated. The plan would grant the University greater financial autonomy by establishing a \$1.6 billion public-private endowment fund and its own independent governing board to mitigate the effects of dwindling monetary support from the state.

"A shift away from the centralized structure of the State Board of Higher Education will offer each of our universities the autonomy to determine its best course forward," Lariviere wrote in an Oregon Quarterly article advocating for

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the proposal. "Public higher education will no longer be driven by the state's economic circumstances."

State board officials were opposed to Lariviere's efforts to break away the University with the rest of the Oregon University System, emphasizing the importance of higher education reform for all seven OUS campuses as a whole.

"Legislators have not been happy in past years when there have been multiple and competing voices from the campuses pushing legislation," said spokesperson Diane Saunders. "They want a system-wide approach and expect legislative proposals to go through a vetting process with the Board before going out with them to the Capitol."

The board saw the New Partnership as a direct conflict with the OUS's own push for Senate Bill 242, which would free Oregon's public universities from several state agency regulations.

While Saunders described Lariviere's proposal as "innovative," going to the legislature with a new plan without the board's approval, and "with only a UO-centric proposal and not one for all the state campuses, is not workable," she said.

After meeting with Gov. John Kitzhaber in March, Lariviere agreed to shelve the New Partnership proposal until 2012 and support the governor's own push for higher education reform in the meantime.

The president's office gave no comment on the new contract. Lariviere's spokesman, Phil Weiler, said that to do so would be in bad form. "From the president's

perspective, it's an issue an employer and an employee and remain unchanged. His contract will be finalized next month.
The president's annual compensation of \$540,000 will

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DIANE SAUNDERS
OREGON UNIVERSITY SYSTEM SPOKESPERSON

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