

HIGHER EDUCATION

Ratified bills look to empower education

Senate passes SB 242, 909 and 405, bills to make great impact

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Oregon passed some key bills that will change the face of education in Oregon during the 2011 legislative session. Such bills as Senate Bills 242 and 909 provide new approaches to aspects of funding and planning, while the creation and extension of a number of specific task forces and smaller bills go into changes on a smaller scale.

Senate Bill 242 changes the Oregon University System to not qualify as a state agency. It also combines the Oregon Students Assistance Commission and Office of Degree Authorization by creating the Higher Education Coordinating Committee.

"This will empower the new commission to set degree requirements and administer scholarships for all of the universities," University senior Zoe Walmer said.

Walmer was an intern in Rep. Chris Garrett's (D-Lake Oswego) office this past year, and did research concerning

various bills, including SB 242.

"One of the most interesting things is there's this really strange funding thing that the universities request their budget based on student enrollment," Walmer said. "If there are more students, they have to request to use the rest of the funds paid to the university, to pay for the university."

As a part of SB 242, this has been changed so that can no longer happen.

"With our tuition going up so much every year, we need to hold onto everything we get to keep the money for our campus on our campus, and I think that's going to make a big difference for us," Walmer said.

SB 242 also conflicted with University President Richard Lariviere's New Partnership plan, which was postponed until the next legislative session after an agreement was made between Lariviere and Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber.

Senate Bill 909 is the creation of the Oregon Education Investment Board and the Early Learning Council. These two programs focus on education from early childhood to higher education, and a continuity

between them.

Both of these programs will create big changes in how the OUS funds itself, as well as the

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layout for public education programs all over the state.

"I like that we're moving toward a much more integrated model," Walmer said. "It's really trying to figure out the best way to educate young people in this state from the time they're born to the time they graduate college and I think that's a better way to think about it."

One of the other more controversial bills that passed through legislation this session was Senate Bill 405, which allows a campus police force to be created. From now on, Department of Public Safety officers will be split into police officers and security officers. Security officers will be paid the same as they currently are as a part

of DPS, but the police officers will receive a raise. This creates about \$3,000 extra in the budget after the transition.

"I actually think the campus policing initiative is good because we have had such bad relations with the Eugene Police Department," Walmer said. "The only way to get them off our campus is to have our own police force. I think we're going to have much better luck with a UO police force than the Eugene police force."

All bills have officially been signed and are now in effect.

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