Congress and Legislature considering in-state tuition requirement for all veterans

At both the state and federal levels, lawmakers are looking at legislation that would require in-state tuition rates for military veterans attending all public universities. Currently, there are 19 states that provide some sort of tuition break for out-of-state student veterans, and Oregon is exploring whether or not to join them.

In the Oregon Legislature, HB 2158 and SB 820 direct public universities and community colleges to charge nonresident veterans who are undergraduates tuition and fees no greater than the resident rate if they were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions. SB 820 passed out of the Senate Committee on Education and Workforce Development without recommendation, and is currently awaiting action in the Senate Rules Committee.

In Congress, H.R. 357 - the GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act – is a bill that requires all public institutions of higher education to offer in-state tuition rates to any veteran in the country. Under this bill, any university that chooses not to do so will be denied eligibility to participate in the various versions of the GI Bill.

H.R. 357 was marked up in the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity on April 25 and the bill now awaits full committee consideration. The committee has indicated that this bill is on the fast track for passage in the House of Representatives.

Colleges and universities nationwide are concerned about these proposals because of the impact they will have on their budgets. Institutions are working with lawmakers in Congress and the Legislature to ensure veterans are supported and able to continue their academic journeys without placing undue financial hardship on other students.
Oregon Universities’ Research Proposals –
A Partnership for Innovation and Competitiveness

Oregon’s research universities, Oregon Inc., and Oregon-based companies are working together in a “Partnership for Innovation and Competitiveness” to position Oregon to more effectively use scientific and technological discovery to grow new businesses, preserve the competitiveness of our existing manufacturing base and participate in the shaping of entirely new industries.

The coordinated proposal under consideration by the Legislature consists of three initiatives:

• **Research Collaboratory:** Construct a high-speed computing network in Oregon, modeled after those in Washington and Ohio, to allow university researchers and their private sector partners to address society’s largest and most complex problems. This network should help attract additional grants and launch new start-ups.

• **Accelerator & Innovation Network:** Build the Oregon Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network (OREGON RAIN) in the South Willamette Valley, in order to coordinate and leverage the research activities of UO, OSU, and the three Signature Research Centers and advance the formation, growth and retention of technology-based companies outside of Metro Portland. RAIN will also take advantage of the Regional Solution Centers, planned new IT infrastructure and previous municipal investments.

• **Metals Initiative:** Expand the Oregon Metals Initiative to provide better linkages between regional industry and university researchers, while also supporting the development of highly instrumented, computationally enhanced manufacturing. These steps will also strengthen a $60M bid for federal funds to establish an Oregon-based node in the new National Manufacturing Institute Network.

The Research Vice Presidents from Oregon’s research universities selected these projects because they collectively offer the fastest path to the creation of high wage, technology-related jobs in Oregon, harness the collective power of our public universities, and have the greatest potential to leverage external dollars for Oregon.

This package of research proposals was supported in the Governor’s budget and currently awaits consideration in the Legislature.
Oregon law requires counties to prepare and update coordinated population forecasts for cities within the county. Only half of Oregon counties have been able to keep up with this ongoing requirement, making it difficult for cities to plan for their future. Population forecasting also has been the subject of frequent legal challenges, requiring even more resources from counties and slowing the overall process of planning for future growth.

HB 2253 would replace the current system with a new, simplified way to forecast population growth, one that will greatly reduce costs for local governments and assure that cities and counties are using the best available population forecast data. HB 2253 places the responsibility for preparing population forecasts with the Population Research Center (PRC) at Portland State University. Under this proposal, the PRC will issue a forecast for each city and county every four years.

The PRC has broad expertise in this area. Along with its extensive stakeholder group, the PRC has been closely involved in the design of this legislation in order to design an efficient system for issuing forecasts on a continuing basis to all cities in the state.

Dr. Jason Jurjevich is the Acting Director of the Population Research Center and has been meeting with legislators about this proposed legislation, which was voted out of the House Land Use Committee to the Joint Ways and Means Committee without any opposition.

The PRC is an interdisciplinary public service, research, and training unit for population-related data and research for the State of Oregon. The mission of PRC is to provide population data, information, and research analysis for Oregon and its communities. Staff from the Center is currently involved in work with a variety of demographic programs, including the Oregon State Data Center, the Oregon Population Estimates Program, and a variety of commissioned population projects.

For more information about PSU’s Population Research Center go to: http://www.pdx.edu/prc/home.

HB 2253 - Population Forecasting for Oregon

Oregon’s population is projected to increase from roughly 3.8M currently to 4.2M in 2020.

2013 Legislative Updates

For ongoing legislative updates, visit our Government Relations webpage.

Operating and Capital Budgets

SB 5535 UPDATE: On April 23, the Ways and Means Committee held an evening hearing at Portland Community College’s Cascade Campus in North Portland. This hearing was a part of a series of traveling budget hearings that are held statewide by the Joint Ways and Means Committee about the proposed budget. Two PSU students, Nick Rothstein and Nick Bull, testified in front of the committee along with current employee and former PSU student athlete Tygue Howland (pictured to the right). Additional PSU student athletes were present to show their support.

SB 5506 UPDATE: The School of Business renovation and expansion is currently included in the capital construction budget. PSU representatives have been meeting with legislators in Salem to discuss the addition of the Stott Education Center to the current capital construction budget. A hearing on these projects is scheduled for May 10.
Oregon Opportunity Grant

SB 5535/HB 5032 UPDATE: Since the initial hearings held in mid-March, the Ways and Means subcommittee has not held a hearing focused solely on funding of the Oregon Student Assistance Commission and the Opportunity Grant. At budget hearings around the state a number of individuals have requested additional funding for the Oregon Opportunity Grant. The Co-Chairs decreased the amount for the Opportunity Grant in their budget. Students are currently advocating for a restoration to the level the Governor recommended (see below).

PSU graduates more Oregonians than any other Oregon public university and has the largest number of students who rely on Oregon Opportunity Grants. PSU’s 2012 Spring Commencement, pictured above, was the largest graduating class in Oregon university history.

Oregon Student Lobby Day

On Thursday, April 25, the Oregon Student Association (OSA) and Oregon Community College Student Association (OCCSA) held their lobby day at the Oregon State Capitol, which included meetings with state legislators and a rally on the Capitol steps. PSU students participated in this event. The rally and lobby day mainly focused on the proposed budget for higher education. The students asked for $510 million for community colleges and $850 million for the universities. They also asked about increasing the Oregon Opportunity Grant to $115 million.

Each of these funding requests is an increase in the current proposed budget. The current proposal in the Governor’s Recommended Budget and the Co-Chairs’ Budget is $737 million for state universities. The students’ budget request would increase funding to state universities by $113 million, to $850 million. The request of $510 million for community colleges represents an $82 million increase from current proposed funding levels of $428 million. The Co-Chairs’ budget recommended funding of the Oregon Opportunity Grant at $108 million, which is a decrease of $7 million from the Governor’s recommendation of $115 million. The students have asked for this funding to be restored to $115.
ASPSU Hosts “The Dream Is Now” Screening

Immigration reform is gaining momentum in Congress and is a top priority for the Obama administration. The so-called Senate “Gang of 8” released an 884-page immigration reform bill on April 17, 2013. With the national conversation growing, filmmaker Davis Guggenheim (Waiting for ‘Superman’, An Inconvenient Truth) has released his newest documentary The Dream is Now.

The Dream is Now is a 30-minute documentary that “gives voice to and puts a human face on the undocumented children of immigrants who are desperate to earn their citizenship and give back to the only country they’ve ever called ‘home.’” The film also goes beyond the personal. It places these stories in a larger context and explores the consequences of continuing our current policies and maintaining the status quo – consequences not just for these young people today, but for our country’s future.

Both moving and thought-provoking, The Dream is Now brings this pressing issue to America’s attention, where we can all debate, discuss, and decide for ourselves what is right, what is fair and what is best for our nation.

On April 19, PSU held a screening of the film and an open discussion in the Smith Student Union, an event co-hosted by ASPSU and Diversity and Multicultural Student Services. Over fifty students attended the event, and discussed the issues it raised among themselves, as well as asked questions to attorneys familiar with the bills being discussed in Washington.

ASPSU Multicultural Affairs Director Yesenia Silvia-Hernandez, event organizer, said the screening helped students “see what is happening in their community, and connect with the struggle and hard work undocumented students have to go through to receive a higher education.”

STATE RELATIONS

SB 270A UPDATE - Creates institutional boards for PSU and UO. OSU may also elect to have its own board. SB 270A recently passed out of the Senate Education Committee and is now in the Joint Ways and Means Committee. The bill reflects the recommendations of the interim taskforce on university governance by creating institutional boards with broad governing authorities. Board composition was a major topic of conversation during the interim taskforce and continued to be a focal point in the Senate Education Committee. The bill currently calls for one voting student, one non-voting faculty, and no designated seat for labor.

HB 3120A UPDATE - This bill redesigns the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to become the coordinating board for student access programs, the office of degree authorization, community colleges and workforce development, and public universities. It passed from the House Higher Education Committee to the Joint Ways and Means Committee on a party line vote with Democrats supporting the bill. This bill was the product of a workgroup convened by the Chair of the House Higher Education Committee. The makeup of the HECC seems to be the most controversial part of the bill. Currently the bill creates a 15-member HECC with two students, two faculty members, one staff person, and ten members of the public. Other community college and university employees, including presidents, would be prohibited from serving on the HECC.

FEDERAL RELATIONS

University Governance

SB 270A UPDATE - Creates institutional boards for PSU and UO. OSU may also elect to have its own board. SB 270A recently passed out of the Senate Education Committee and is now in the Joint Ways and Means Committee. The bill reflects the recommendations of the interim taskforce on university governance by creating institutional boards with broad governing authorities. Board composition was a major topic of conversation during the interim taskforce and continued to be a focal point in the Senate Education Committee. The bill currently calls for one voting student, one non-voting faculty, and no designated seat for labor.

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PSU’s Center for Women, Politics & Policy on the Hill

Sunny Petit, Executive Director of PSU’s Center for Women, Politics & Policy (CWPP), recently attended the Conference on Girls’ Leadership and Civic Education at the White House. The Conference, co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, brought together scholars, public officials, youth-serving leaders, educators and business leaders to address questions and concerns related to civic engagement, gender and public leadership.

Dr. Jill Biden kicked off the conference and was later joined by Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME). The high level panels focused on the importance of early intervention to introduce young girls and boys to images and ideas of public leadership that are both accessible and diverse.

PSU’s CWPP belongs to a network of centers that focus on programs to educate college women about the political process and teach them to become effective leaders. Along with this focus, the CWPP’s mission is to increase women’s leadership in public policy through targeted teaching and community service programs. The Center works toward this goal by promoting scholarship that examines the presence and role of women in politics and public policy and by providing diverse and inclusive service programs that develop the next generation of women leaders who will serve the city, state, region, and nation.