



The Association of Oregon Faculties

oregonfaculties.org / Spring 2017 Bulletin

From the Vice-President

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As you can see by reading the accompanying report from AOF's lobbyist, Chris Parta, this has been an odd legislative session so far. Many bills have been introduced, but the "big issues"—filling the massive budget shortfall, questions of added revenue and what to cut—are still very much to be decided. AOF was happy to see that the proposed budgets for higher education were not cut as badly as those of other state agencies, but it remains true that much of the progress we have made in Salem over the last two sessions will come to a halt unless more revenues are found. Likewise, the lack of sufficient funding will almost certainly result in higher tuition for our students and greater loan debt, an impact none of us want to see.

It is unhappily possible that Democrats may give on issues such as PERS in order to gain votes from Republicans for new revenues to fill the budget holes. Among the ideas still on the table are an upper limit of \$100,000 (*cont.*)

Legislative Report

The 2017 legislative session launched like a rocket on February 1st and has shown no signs of slowing down. As an example, contentious issues, like changes to PERS, received a hearing on the very first day of session and things have moved on from there. No less than 2,782 bills have been introduced up to this point, with more to come. Many in the building have commented that the 2017 session has felt more like a short session, with its frenetic pace. This appears to be due largely to the fact that the Legislature is dealing with multiple, wide-ranging, and contentious issues: a looming \$1.8 billion budget shortfall, a transportation package that has been put off for several sessions, discussions around raising new revenue with the failure of M97, and PERS changes. All of these have been colliding with each other, along with the usual policy and budget bills.

The first big bill deadline, the April 7th work session posting deadline, came and went on Friday the 7th. All bills in the policy committees that did not get forwarded to a committee agenda for a work session by April 18th are now dead. The good news is that this includes many bad bills that attacked

collective bargaining rights and/or proposed other negative changes to the higher education system.

SB 196, the part time/adjunct faculty health care coverage bill, which would allow adjunct faculty who work for multiple state institutions of higher education to combine their hours for the purpose of qualifying for health care benefits had a very strong hearing on March 28th with the committee room full of supporters. No less than 29 pieces of written testimony and a page-long list of folks who signed up to testify, were submitted to the committee. This bill has now been voted out of the Senate Education Committee and is on its way to the Ways and Means Comm.

Several bad PERS bills, including, SB 559, SB 560, and SB 913 have had hearings in the Senate Workforce committee. AOF has submitted testimony in opposition and as a member of the PERS Coalition, has been meeting with legislators to educate them about the negative effects these bills would have on faculty and other state workers. Two of these bills, SB 559 and SB 560, are still alive and had a work session on April 17th (*cont.*)



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From the Vice-President (cont.)

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in annual salary eligible for PERS calculations and changing the number of years of maximum salary averaged to compute pensions from three to five. While the \$100,000 limit may seem high, some faculty could surely hit the number if negotiations over the next several years go well. AOF is fighting all these changes, but will also fight for that number to be indexed for inflation should that particular proposal—the most popular at present—sneak through. Luckily, we have fairly strong allies in the PERS Coalition.

AOF has been active in submitting testimony to various committees even as Chris meets with legislators and joins with allies to formulate strategies. I will likely be testifying myself over the next two months on various bills, and AOF will continue to keep you informed through these newsletters on our progress. AOF has never been more visible in Salem than it is right now, but we need your support! Please join! Only with your active support can we continue to fight for higher education faculty in Oregon! Go to [http://oregonfaculties.org/today!](http://oregonfaculties.org/today/)
*Greg Monahan, retired
Eastern Oregon University*

Legislative Report — Continued

in order to be passed on to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means to keep them alive past the April 18th deadline. We are watching these bills, and the discussion around PERS and revenue very closely. It is likely some form of one of these bills may play a role in final discussions around new revenue as changes to PERS have been tagged by the Republican caucus as something they want in order to approve any new revenue. There currently is no “revenue package” bill or wider budget bill—that will not be proposed until later in the session. In the meantime, however, the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

has begun its hearing on higher education budgets. The university-related budget held a public hearing on April 17th and AOF’s own Greg Monahan was there to strongly advocate for adequate funding.

As we continue to move past the half-way point in the monumental 2017 session and approach the end of the academic year, AOF will continue to advocate effectively for you and the issues you care about in the Oregon Legislature.

*Chris Parta
Parta Oregon
AOF Lobbyist*

Campus Report

Christian Vukasovich, Oregon Tech

Oregon Tech is completing significant leadership changes that have been in motion throughout the 2016-17 year. The university is welcoming both a new President and Provost, as well as a number of other high level administrators. These changes provide fresh energy and direction for the university and faculty are generally (and cautiously) optimistic about future prospects. President Naganathan has expressed an interest in attracting and retaining nationally-recognized faculty, demonstrating an understanding of the central role which faculty play in education that hasn’t been acknowledged in some time.

The university just finished a study on faculty compensation carried out with the help of an outside consulting agency after many years of faculty requests. The results, presented in April, aligned (cont.)

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Membership is only \$90/year, payable by monthly payroll deduction or annual check.

For more information about AOF and how to join, please visit us at oregonfaculties.org.

Campus Report – Continued

with findings of previous studies conducted by faculty themselves. The Administration has agreed to take action based on the conclusions of the study. Beyond this particular analysis itself, the process provides a replicable method for revisiting future questions of compensation. The university looks forward to taking a fresh look at compensation for librarians in the near future.

The Administration and the Faculty Senate continue to work toward a new non-tenure track policy that supports hiring flexibility in new programs and in departments that hire faculty among professional practitioners outside of the usual academic circles. The policy is being crafted with the hope of attracting high quality instructors who may not want the service and research responsibilities associated with tenure track positions. Some faculty are concerned that this is part of a broader move to reduce the number of tenured faculty. Discussions about the policy continue to evolve.

Recent use of online student evaluations worry some faculty who question the timing of the surveys and ultimate utility of the data obtained. While some faculty have been experimenting with methods to attain better participation rates among students with varying degrees of success, many remain skeptical about the reliability of these instruments and of overreliance upon them in evaluating their teaching.

With new changes in university leadership, more reliable processes for determining appropriate compensation, and optimism about the role of shared governance, Oregon Tech faculty are hopeful about building upon progress made over this past year. In this dynamic legislative and budgetary environment, it is important that members of all Oregon university communities stay connected and collaborate to mutual benefit. AOF continues to play a vital role in enabling that collaboration.

The Association of Oregon Faculties (AOF, <http://oregonfaculties.org>) is an association that represents and protects the interests of Oregon's public university faculty and professional staff before the Oregon Legislature and various state agencies. Our primary goal is to increase the quality of our professional working environment.

AOF Board

Jacqueline Arante, Portland State University | arantej@pdx.edu

Alan Bakalinsky, President, Oregon State University | alan.bakalinsky@oregonstate.edu

Joe Lowndes, University of Oregon | jlowndes@uoregon.edu

Greg Monahan, Vice-President, Eastern Oregon University | gmonahan@eou.edu

DeAnna Timmermann, Eastern Oregon University | dtimmerm@eou.edu

Christian Vukasovich, Oregon Institute of Technology | Christian.Vukasovich@oit.edu

Kemble Yates, Secretary/Treasurer, Southern Oregon University | kyates@sou.edu