

Building Student Power:

OSA's Student Vote Campaign



by Megan Driver,
OSA Board Chair

OSA single-handedly has made youth issues a real key part of any political conversations that are taking place.

— JoAnn Bowman

This statement by former Oregon legislator JoAnn Bowman sums up why students work each election cycle to turn out their peers to vote. We work to get students to the polls because we want to keep us out of debilitating debt; to see

students of color, low-income students, and rural students receiving the tools they need to access college; to see our institutions provided with funding to provide a quality education. In short, we run a student vote campaign because we want to build our power at the polls to win victories for students in the legislature. As we head into the 2007 legislative session, I am proud to say that students' work in the 2006 election has positioned us to again gain ground for students in the legislature.

During election season, we often hear the media and the public talk about "youth apathy", and during a mid-term election we hear this refrain even more. But with students paying more for and getting less from their college education, we realized just how crucial our vote was this election.

OSA joined with Oregon Student

Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG), Oregon Community College Student Association (OCCSA), and Building Votes—to form the Student Vote Coalition—one of the largest student-led vote mobilization efforts in the country. As part of the Student Vote Coalition, OSA worked to register students in the primary and fall elections, for a total of 22,294 registered students.



With the registration deadline behind us, our focus shifted to educating all those new voters in order to turn them out at the polls. We created and distributed over 17,000 voter guides that included the results of a survey OSA sent out to all legislative candidates on the statewide issues students prioritized for 2007. In addition, students organized 33 on-campus candidate and ballot measure forums to put student issues at the heart of the debates. Students also gave nearly 200 nonpartisan presentations in classes and to student groups on how the ballot measures would affect students (eight of the ten ballot measures this election affected students!). OSCC ran their first voter education campaign, coupling the ballot measure presentations with a presentation on the history of voting in Oregon communities of color and current voting trends. With students of color being disproportionately denied access to postsecondary education, OSCC worked to educate communities of color about the importance of voting to build power to win concrete change.

Students are often looked to for creativity and innovation, two tools we used in devising ways to get students to

Register Now!

6th Annual Oregon Students of Color Conference

by Brenda Sifuentes, OSA Staff

Imagine a room filled with students of color and allies from across the Northwest, learning amazing skills and about issues that affect communities of color as well as listening to keynote speakers that could change your life. If this sounds like something you want to be a part of, then make sure that on February 2-4, 2007 you are at the 6th annual Oregon Students of Color Conference that will be hosted by the Oregon Students of Color Coalition (OSCC) at Western Oregon University. This year the conference will also have a Queers of Color event to start off the conference. With an expected attendance of over 250 students, 40 workshops, and amazing keynote speakers, the conference is expected to be a huge success.

The objective of the conference is to ensure that there is a space for students to learn about issues pertaining to communities of color ranging from environmental

racism to queer communities of color, as well gain skills to create change on their campuses and statewide. "It's in this type of space that students of color have the ability to build a community and empower themselves on a statewide level," said OSCC member Lorena Landeros. Come be part of an historical moment and meet students of color and allies from across the Northwest that are organizing around these issues.

Register for the conference now online at www.osccjustice.org. For more information contact Brenda Sifuentes at (503) 286-0477 or brenda@orstudents.org.



Internationally respected Native American and environmental activist **Winona LaDuke** will be speaking during lunch on the Saturday of the OSCC Conference.

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turn in those ballots before Election Day. Each campus employed original tactics, from a giant ballot box in the quad at OSU, to last minute election office shuttles at UO and SOU, to a ballot fair at Lane CC, to ballot parties at PSU and WOU. People may say that youth don't care about mid-term elections, but our get-out-the-vote numbers surpassed those of 2004, with students making over 18,000 phone calls and knocking on over 7,000 student doors in the days before the election!

All of this hard work paid off. When all the numbers were counted, we had helped to increase the number of votes cast by 18 to 24-year-olds in Oregon by 12.6 percent since the last midterm election in 2002. The statistics also highlighted the high engagement levels of students specifically: in two very student-dense precincts surrounding UO, voter turnout increased 42 and 43 percent over 2002. In addition, we also saw two ballot measures that would have drastically cut funding for postsecondary education fail to pass. Students worked to ensure that the public knew of our success by garnering approximately 75 mentions in the media.

Budget Cuts

on the Ground:

OSA writes original research report on the impact of cuts on students and campuses

by Melissa Unger, OSA Staff

This legislative session, OSA will be releasing an original research report that highlights the state of public postsecondary education in Oregon. Over the past four months, students have filled out thousands of surveys on our university and community college campuses that document their access to faculty, student services, and financial aid. In addition, the surveys have given students an opportunity to explain why and how they ended up at the institutions of their choice. OSA is

OSERA & BRO Form Partnership to increase access to education for LGBTQ communities

by Tamara Henderson, OSA Staff

Basic Rights Oregon (BRO) and OSA affiliate the Oregon Student Equal Rights Alliance (OSERA) have developed a formal alliance to more effectively reach students who are active on LGBTQ campus issues and in their campus communities.

"[The partnership] most effectively reaches students who are active in their communities by utilizing collective organizational experience and knowledge to provide valuable trainings," said BRO youth organizer Jessica Lee.

Fall term began and ended with successes for OSERA members, in part, due to the exciting new partnership between OSERA and BRO.

It began with student vote efforts in full swing. For the first time ever, OSERA members were able to educate their peers on campus about the issues facing the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgendered and Queer (LGBTQ) communities in an effort to motivate their communities to have their voices heard in the 2006 election. "I think that one of the biggest messages we tried to push across is how much is at stake for LGBTQ students," Lee said of the voter education phase.

Students were able to again utilize this partnership to hold the first ever Gender and Sexual Diversity Track at the 2006 Northwest Student Leadership

Conference. This allowed for a broader base of students to be educated on the issues affecting their communities and prepare for the upcoming 2007 legislative session.

As we move into winter term, the benefits of this partnership will grow as OSERA and BRO plan to launch a collaborative legislative agenda. The two organizations will work together to lobby and advocate on behalf of LGBTQ students statewide to ensure access to education for all Oregonians.

"We expect this to be a landmark session," said Lee, "We can make history in Oregon."

In the spring, the two organizations will hold a statewide lobby day focused on youth and education at which youth of all ages along with supportive community members and school administrators will advocate for equality and access within our educational systems.

"This could be a kick off year for OSERA to see this being a bigger part of OSA and having the potential to grow into something...cohesive and powerful," said Lee of the partnership.



compiling these surveys to get a better idea of how the cuts and tuition increases in recent years have impacted students.

Throughout the state, OSA has interviewed staff and administrators on campuses about the impact of cuts to their departments and to the students that they work with. These interviews will give an in-depth view into the real effects that a small cut can have on an entire campus.

The results from the surveys and interviews will be compiled into the report

that will be released to the 2007 state legislature. The report will highlight how campuses have beat the odds, continuing to provide a quality education even when facing large cutbacks, but it will also show how the cuts have begun to negatively impact students and institutions. OSA will use the report to work with legislators to ensure that they begin to reinvest in providing access to a quality education for all Oregonians.

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less students in 2003-04 than the previous year.

These enrollment declines come after over a decade of disinvestment in postsecondary education that has left Oregon students paying more and getting less. With the state paying for less and less of the cost of education, students have picked up the tab with the 5th largest increase in tuition in the nation since 1991. Many students of color and low and middle-income students have been forced to choose between taking on often staggering levels of student loan debt (averaging at almost \$20,000 for a public university graduate) or opting out of college entirely.

Despite paying more than ever before, students who do make it to campus are offered less services from institutions facing funding crises in the wake of state disinvestment in postsecondary education. Students have less course availability and their professors' time is spread thin, leaving them with less access to services and forcing them to stay in school longer.

This legislative session, students are sending the message to legislators that reinvesting in postsecondary education is in our state's best interest.

"We can make Oregon stronger by reinvesting in access to a quality postsecondary education in Oregon," said State Affairs Director for the Associated Students of the University of Oregon Emily McLain. "College graduates contribute more in taxes, use less in state services, and are healthier, volunteer more, and vote in higher numbers."

Sean Robinson, Vice President of the Associated Students of Mount Hood Community College, noted that communities colleges play a crucial role in our state's future. "Community colleges educate and develop Oregon's workforce and serve as a point of access for students often shut out of a college education," he said.

OSA will be asking the legislature to make our state stronger by investing the funds allocated in the Governor's

Recommended Budget (GRB) to OUS and \$46 million above the GRB for community colleges to keep tuition increases low and provide our institutions with the funds necessary to provide a quality education to all Oregonians.

Shared Responsibility Model

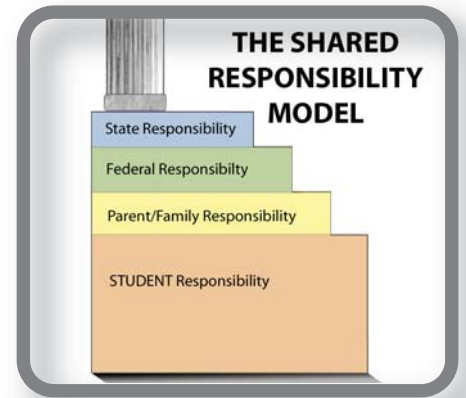
"Working your way through college' is a myth for me," said Brook Colley, Communications Director for the Associated Students of Southern Oregon University. "Even with my Oregon Opportunity Grant and three jobs, I still expect to be in debt when I graduate."

Brook is not alone: today, Oregon students at public universities and colleges would have to work about 48 and 39 hours per week, respectively, to work their way through college.

Last legislative session, the Oregon legislature worked to get grant aid to more students like Brook. They made an historical investment in the Oregon Opportunity Grant, ensuring that, for the first time since the millennium, all eligible students could receive the Grant. But in spite of this important investment, the Oregon Opportunity Grant still falls short of its goal of closing the affordability gap. The Grant only serves the very neediest of students and while tuition has skyrocketed, the Grant has remained at the flat rate of 11 percent of the cost of education.

In order to increase access to a postsecondary education for low and middle-income students, students worked with the Governor, universities, community colleges, and other interested parties to develop the Shared Responsibility Model (SRM), a long-term solution to need-based aid that will reinstate students' ability to work their way through college.

Under the Model, the student makes the initial investment in their education through reasonable work hours and borrowing, with families also contributing what they are able. If students and families fulfill the requirements that the state expects of them, the state will then step in—where the federal government doesn't—to fill the affordability gap.



OSA Board Co-Chair and Portland State University Student Body President Courtney Morse feels that the Model appeals to Oregonian values. "This is something Oregonians can get behind: offering the opportunity to achieve a college degree to students who work for it," she said. "With having an educated citizenry more important than ever to the future of our state, the Shared responsibility Model allows students and the state to ban together to make Oregon stronger."

Even more exciting is that the Model is affordable. By funding the SRM with funds allocated in the Governor's Recommended Budget, we will be able to fully implement this model by 2009, ensuring that all current eight graders will have the chance to work their way through college.

ASPIRE

The OSA and OSCC Boards have joined together to support ASPIRE, a program that gives high school students the tools to become contributing citizens after graduation through one-on-one volunteer mentoring. Mentors help students decide what kind of postsecondary education or training will help them meet their goals, guide them through the college choosing process, and assist them with financial aid and scholarships.

The program is especially important to those students underrepresented on our campuses, such as students of color,

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low-income students, first generation students, and rural students. Without ASPIRE, many of these students do not receive the tools they need to plan their own futures.

Currently funded through outside grants, ASPIRE has been able to serve 84 high schools. But in order to expand, the program will need state funds. OSA is excited that the Governor has funded ASPIRE with \$1.4 million in his Recommended Budget, representing the first time the program has been recognized by the state. While this is a first step, OSA will ask the legislature to fully expand the program to 295 high schools by funding the program at \$3.1 million.

To get a better idea of how the program impacts students, we interviewed Patrick Beisell, a graduate from Grant High School and current Portland State University student.

How did you get involved in the ASPIRE program?

My senior year in high school, my mother saw something in the school newsletter and suggested that I go check it out. I went and got set up with an ASPIRE mentor who made me want to go to college for the first time.

How did the ASPIRE mentor help you through the college application process?

My mentor asked me questions like: "Do you want to go out-of-state? What is affordable for you? What programs are you interested in?" At first it seemed that community college was going to be my only option because schools seemed too expensive but she made those options more attainable by helping me fill out the FASFA and spent hours and hours going through scholarships with me to help defray the cost.

If you could name one thing that was the most helpful about the ASPIRE program, what is it?

Probably that she just listened to me. High school counselors have too many students to meet and they just have to move them

through the system. With ASPIRE it is one-on-one and they only have about five other students to work with. They spend time with you, listening to what you want, and they make you want to go to college but also make you feel worthwhile.

Announcements

Feb 1-2 OUS Board Meeting @ OSU

Feb 2-4 OSCC Conference @ WOU

Feb 2 OSA/OSCC/OSERA Board Meetings

Feb 22 OSA RALLY & LOBBY DAY!

Mar 1-2 OUS Board Meeting in Salem

Mar 10 OSA/OSCC/OSERA Board Meetings @ OHSU

Mar 26-28 Spring Break Lobby

Southern Oregon University * Oregon University of Oregon * Western Oregon University * Eastern Oregon University * Lane Community College * Mount Hood Community College * Oregon Health & Science University * Oregon State University * Portland State University *

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REGISTER NOW!
6th Annual
OSCC Conference
Feb. 2-4 @ WOU
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