



# Public and Government Affairs Update



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August 11, 2011

Issue No. 64

## STATE RELATIONS

### **Governor signs SB 242; SB 909 implementation underway**

On Wednesday, July 20, Governor Kitzhaber signed SB 242 into law. A host of legislators, business leaders, and education advocates joined the Governor at the Rock Creek campus of Portland Community College for bill signings for SB 242 and other education reform bills. SB 242 grants the Oregon University System (OUS) increased autonomy and flexibility by removing OUS from state agency status and allowing for a number of improved operational freedoms.

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## COMMUNITY RELATIONS

### **Summer is busy for road construction near campus**

The City of Eugene and Lane Transit District (LTD) have continued to work on several construction projects on the west side of the University of Oregon campus. The projects aim to maintain and upgrade transportation infrastructure near the university and will continue through September 23. The work includes: the installation of a new sidewalk between the transit platforms and the UO campus;

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## FEDERAL RELATIONS

### **Debt ceiling deal excludes Pell grant from cuts**

The U.S. Congress and President Barack Obama reached a deal on July 31 to raise the federal debt limit and avoid default. The Budget Control Act of 2011 includes \$1 trillion in spending cuts and establishes a super committee to find an additional \$1.5 trillion in savings. The debt limit will increase by up to \$2.5 trillion if Congress approves those additional cuts, meaning the issue will not come up again until 2013.

The bill caps annual appropriations funding for 10 years and enforces the caps through "sequestration." The caps are divided between security and non-security programs. The sequestration rule will require federal agencies

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*For more information about this newsletter, please contact Jared Mason-Gere at (541) 346-5381 or [jaredm@uoregon.edu](mailto:jaredm@uoregon.edu). If you are interested in inviting government officials to a UO event, please contact us first at 346-5020 or [gcr@uoregon.edu](mailto:gcr@uoregon.edu). We can help!*

## PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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FEDERAL RELATIONS

**Letter circulated opposing cuts to NSF peer review of social science research**

On July 11, The University of Oregon joined 140 other organizations and universities in signing a letter spearheaded by the American Association for the Advancement of Science to congressional appropriators.

The letter highlights the importance of using the scientific peer review system as the foundation for awarding research grants based on merit. The letter particularly opposes any effort to strip funding for certain research projects from the NSF budget. Several times in the past decade the US House of Representatives has debated amendments to the National Science Foundation or National Institutes of Health budgets that target for elimination a handful of peer-reviewed and funded research projects.

The letter specifically opposes cuts to the NSF’s Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE), arguing that interdisciplinary research—integrating the physical and biological sciences with insights from social and behavioral fields—has become increasingly essential to scientific progress and innovation. The letter was sent to appropriators as the committee prepared to debate the Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations bill for fiscal year 2012.

FEDERAL RELATIONS

**US Senator Merkley visits campus**

US Senator Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) visited the UO campus on Thursday August 4. His visit included a briefing on the community’s plans for TrackTown12 and a tour of Hayward Field, the site of the 2012 US Olympic Trials. State Senator Chris Edwards (D-Eugene) and State Representa-



tive Nancy Nathanson (D-Eugene) joined the meeting and tour with Merkley that also included university leadership and former University of Oregon athletes now training for the World Track and Field Championship.

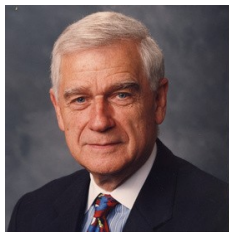




FEDERAL RELATIONS

**Mark Hatfield, Oregon Statesman, higher education champion dies**

Former Oregon Senator and Governor Mark Hatfield died Sunday, August 7, at the age of 89. He was governor of Oregon from 1959-1967 before serving five terms in the U.S. Senate starting in 1967 and ending with his retirement in January 1997.



Senator Hatfield was known as a champion for higher education throughout his career. As a longtime member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, twice as chair-

man, Senator Hatfield directed billions of dollars to the state of Oregon, including funds for the University of Oregon’s construction of the \$45.6 million science complex that includes Willamette Hall. The facilities opened in 1989, greatly increasing the university’s research capacity and ability to secure federal research grants.

Hatfield advocated for medical research throughout his career and made funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) a top priority. Under his leadership, NIH funding grew to \$2.5 billion.

Hatfield was the recipient of the University of Oregon’s highest honors including the Pioneer Award (1982) and the UO Distinguished Service Award (1988). He was awarded an honorary degree in 1997.

FEDERAL RELATIONS

**Watzek house designated historic landmark**

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar designated the Watzek House a National Historic Landmark. The 1937 historic house was built for lumber baron Aubrey Watzek and features extensive use of native wood and other local materials.

The house is located in Portland, Oregon and was designed by John Yeon (1910-94), an Oregon native and pioneer in modern architecture design and landscape conservation.

It was donated to the University of Oregon by Richard Louis Brown, who previously lived in the house, for use of the UO’s School of Architecture and Allied Arts. It has been on the National Register of Historic Places register since 1974.

The house is only the 17th site in Oregon to receive this national honor. Of these, only seven are buildings. Others are Native American sites, historic districts, highways or dams. Other sites include Pioneer Courthouse (Portland); Timberline Lodge (Mount Hood); and Deady and Villard Halls (University of Oregon).

Governor Ted Kulongoski and the Oregon congressional delegation advocated for the site to be designated as a historic landmark in letters submitted with the application last year.



FEDERAL RELATIONS

**UO supports restoration of Title VI funding**

UO President Richard Lariviere joined 85 university presidents to sign a letter to the US House Appropriations Committee in July calling for support of Title VI and Fulbright-Hays funding for international education and foreign language studies programs. The letter argued that investment in these programs will ensure that the US has a more adequate supply of students and workers with knowledge of the world that will prepare them for 21<sup>st</sup> century global challenges. Full text of the letter can be found [HERE](#).

Title VI programs are of special concern to the University of Oregon because of the high rate of faculty and student participation in Fulbright programs as well as the research and education activity that occur with Title VI recipients like the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) and the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies (CAPS)

**Higher Ed Reform**

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Efforts are underway to implement the Governor’s reform bill, SB 909. The bill will create the Oregon Education Investment Board, charged with providing guidance to public education in Oregon, from early education through the university level. Currently, the Governor’s office is reviewing interest forms for the Board, and has assembled sub-committees to pursue board formation. For more information on education reforms enacted by the Governor and the Legislature in 2011, visit the Governor’s education web page, [HERE](#).

**Construction**

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the restoration of the east half of Kincaid Street from East 13th Avenue to about 100 feet north of East 12th Avenue, the installation of new pedestrian crossings at the intersection of Kincaid Street and East 12th Avenue, the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of East 11th Avenue and Kincaid Street.

In addition, LTD will install new bus loading platforms, shelters, and lighting along the east curb of Kincaid Street at its station.



The City of Eugene, LTD, and their contractors will strive to

minimize construction impacts on the traveling public and on businesses and residents within the project area.

Work continues Monday–Friday, 7:00 a.m. –5:00 p.m. Traffic will flow in one northbound lane on Kincaid Street during construction. On-street parking along the west side of Kincaid Street between East 13th Avenue and East 11th Avenue will be unavailable during construction. Detour signage will guide pedestrians and bicyclists around the construction zones. LTD and the City will maintain access to property and to businesses for employees, customers and deliveries.



## **Debt ceiling**

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to implement across-the-board spending cuts should Congress and the president enact a bill that spends more than the caps allow. Those automatic cuts will disproportionately affect discretionary spending if the super committee's recommendations are set aside.

The 11th-hour deal to approve the Budget Control Act of 2011, which raises the U.S. borrowing limit to avoid a debt default, had winners and losers when it came to financial aid for higher education. The bill maintains the maximum award of \$5,500 and exempts Pell grants from any cuts from sequestration. It helps fund the existing Pell grant deficit, providing the program further budget relief.

However, the bill will make subsidized student loans less generous to graduate students. Beginning July 1, 2012, interest subsidies on federal Stafford loans for graduate and professional students will be eliminated, which means interest (currently at 6.8 percent) will accrue on those loans while students are still in school. Until then, the government will continue to pay the interest on as much as \$8,500 annually in federal Stafford loans for graduate and professional students while they are enrolled and for six months afterward.

The agreement also bars the US Department of Education from running certain programs that encourage borrowers to repay their loans, which would save the government more than \$21 billion over 10 years, according to CBO estimates.

Borrowers who pay on-time will no longer get rebates off certain fees, effectively paying more on up front costs, but borrowers who pay through electronic debiting will still be given interest rate reductions.

Oregon's Congressional delegation split in voting for final passage of the debt ceiling bill, with Greg Walden (R-OR), David Wu (D-OR), and Kurt Schrader (D-OR) voting for the measure. Oregon Democrats Peter DeFazio and Earl Blumenauer voted no. Oregon's senators also split their votes. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) voted for the plan and Jeff Merkely (D-OR) opposed it.

The higher education landscape will remain unsettled as the special committee considers ways to save another \$1.5 trillion.

As the Pell Grant Program has grown, along with concerns about the debt, other financial aid programs have been sacrificed to keep the maximum grant at \$5,550. Discretionary cuts could further impact Perkins Loans and the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, as well as TRIO programs that help low-income students prepare for college.

Meanwhile, Congress must act on the FY 2012 budget request by September 30 or again keep the federal government operating through the use of continuing budget resolutions, a regular practice in recent years that contributes to an uncertain budgetary climate.