



Joint News Release March 21, 2006



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OSU and WOU Receive \$2.6 million in FEMA Earthquake Safety Grants *Funding will be used to protect two buildings from catastrophic earthquake damage*

Portland, March 21— Thanks to a \$2.6 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), two public campuses – Oregon State University and Western Oregon University – will be safer for students and community members. The grant to the Oregon University System (OUS) and the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) will be used to complete earthquake readiness upgrades of \$1.6 million on the Nash Building at OSU, and \$1 million on the Humanities & Social Sciences Building at WOU.

Called an Earthquake Building Rehabilitation grant, the FEMA funding provides 75% of the total project costs of \$2.6 million to complete the seismic readiness work on the two buildings. OUS will provide \$660,000, or 25% of the total, the match required by FEMA to receive the grant. This is the second such grant received from FEMA. In 2004, DOGAMI and OUS received a \$3.8 million FEMA grant to seismically upgrade two buildings at Portland State University, and a building at Oregon Institute of Technology.

Bob Simonton, director of capital construction for OUS, said, “Over the last few years, the OUS has worked very hard to determine the relative safety of all of the buildings on our 7 campuses in preparation of future earthquakes. The FEMA investments, and the investments made by the 2005 Legislature for capital repairs, are enabling us to fix the most at-risk buildings on our campuses, those with the greatest likelihood of structural damage and human safety risk during an earthquake.”

OUS campuses make up half of all state-owned facilities in Oregon and have a decade-plus deferred maintenance backlog of over a half billion dollars. The Oregon Legislature last year approved a budget of \$410 million for capital repair, maintenance and new construction, the largest appropriation ever provided. In 2001 and 2002, the Oregon Legislature and citizens voted to establish a new law that requires schools and universities to be safe from earthquakes by 2032, and to amend the constitution to provide funds for rehabilitation of high-risk buildings.

OSU's Nash Building, designed in 1968 before stronger building codes were in place in the state, includes classrooms, large labs, and offices. OSU will be issuing a request for quotes in April to complete the building rehabilitation. The Humanities & Social Sciences Building at WOU was built in 1964 to provide classroom and office space after the 1962 Columbus Day storm caused catastrophic damage to historic Campbell Hall, limiting use of that building. WOU has already retained services of an architectural and an engineering firm to complete the upgrades on the HSS Building.

“Geologists’ understanding of the earthquake and tsunami hazards for western Oregon has changed dramatically over the past 20 years,” said Yumei Wang, geotechnical engineer with

DOGAMI, and principal investigator of the FEMA grant. “Since the early 1990s scientists and engineers have accepted vast and diverse geological evidence that the Cascadia Fault poses an enormous risk for western Oregon, including the Willamette Valley. Subduction zone earthquakes, of a magnitude 8 to 9, have struck along the Oregon coast every few hundred years, with the last one being on January 26, 1700. In the wake of the devastation from Hurricane Katrina and the Indian Ocean tsunami it’s obvious how critically important it is to be well prepared for these types of catastrophic events,” noted Wang.

Earlier this month, Governor Kulongoski proclaimed April as official Earthquake and Tsunami Awareness Month. The proclamation highlighted Oregon’s more recent history with earthquakes in 1993 and the 1964 Alaskan tsunami which affected the Oregon coast, and the risk associated with the Cascadia Subduction Zone. Oregon laws enacted in 1995 and 2001 require that all schools, state and local agencies, and large private employers have better readiness and preparation for natural disasters, including instruction and drilling of students and employees on emergency procedures. Both the Governor and the Legislature have new task forces to look at readiness for a Cascadia event and other related natural disasters.

Building photos available by calling Di Saunders at 503-725-5714.

Oregon University System comprises seven distinguished public universities, reaching more than one million people each year through on-campus classes, statewide public services and lifelong learning. For additional information, go to www.ous.edu

The Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries is an independent agency of the State, and has a broad responsibility in developing a geologic understanding of and state policy related to natural hazards, and making this information available to the public to help reduce the risks from earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, floods and volcanic eruptions. For additional information, go to www.OregonGeology.com

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