

WEATHER

Partly cloudy

Highs in the upper 50s
Lows in the mid 40s

Scuba students sink to new low

See page 6

Associate AD takes job at UM

See page 9

Washington State University

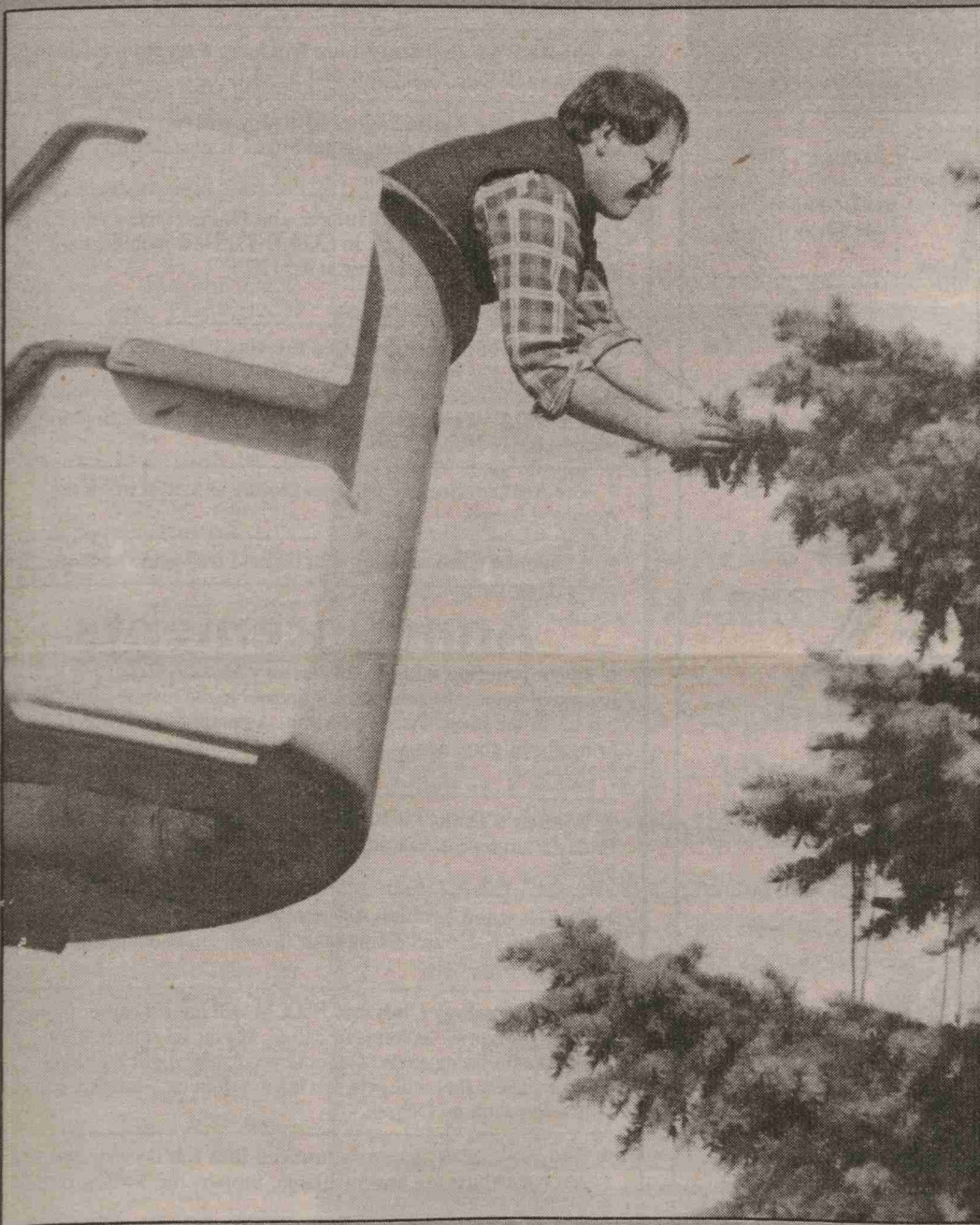
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The lights come down



The Evergreen/C. Todd Pickett

Dan McBaine, journeyman electrician for Physical Plant, removes Christmas lights from the fir tree in front of Holland Library yesterday afternoon.

State deflates WHETS funding

by Roger Nyhus
Staff Writer

The legislative funding picture for WSU's branch campus interactive classroom system just went from bad to incredibly dismal.

Or did it?

Senate and House budget experts released their supplemental operating budgets this week, leaving the \$6 million WHETS request up a creek without any financial support.

WSU officials call the Washington Higher Education Telecommunication System their No. 1 legislative priority. But some lawmakers call it confusing and expensive.

The Senate budget, released on Monday, earmarked no appropriation for the system. WHETS had no better luck in the House budget, which rolled off the press Tuesday.

"That isn't a good sign," said long-time WSU advocate Rep. Eugene Prince, R-Thornton.

Fellow lawmaker Rep. Darwin Nealey, R-LaCrosse, said WHETS funding looks bleak in a Legislature obsessed with sexual predators, prisons and other big-money items.

"The fact that it's not in either budget is discouraging," Nealey

said Wednesday. "The budget is one tough thing."

In a state with a \$725 million budget surplus, \$6 million might seem like a drop in the legislative bucket.

Not true, lawmakers say.

Rep. Helen Sommers, a Seattle Democrat, said WSU asked for too much money.

"(The request) includes things we didn't need to do now," such as building additional WHETS classrooms, said Sommers, vice chair of the House Appropriations Committee.

Big-city lawmakers also questioned the economics and necessity of the system.

"The metropolitan areas don't see the need for it," Prince said Wednesday.

Urban lawmakers are more concerned about the University of Washington's new branch campuses than Washington State's mostly rural system, which relies heavily on microwave-powered WHETS, he said.

"I guess there's lack of belief that it is an economical system, which I think it is," Prince said from his Olympia office.

WHETS officials did not return several telephone calls Wednesday.

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AIDS no longer an urban issue

by Tina Attaway
Staff Writer

AIDS is working its way into rural communities, and many of the outlying-area medical practitioners must prepare to face the virus that has killed nearly 900 people in Washington state.

AIDS, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, is a viral disease that affects the immune system making the infected person susceptible to various diseases.

About 73 percent of the state's 1,636 reported AIDS cases are from King County, but that percentage is dropping because cases are increasing in other counties, said Michael Smyser, epidemiologist at the state's Office on HIV/AIDS and Infectious Diseases.

"Other areas in the state are taking (that percentage) up. AIDS is becoming more evenly distributed across the state," Smyser said. "More and more cases are being reported from rural areas."

Currently, there are 61 reported cases of AIDS in Eastern Washington, and 52 of those cases are from Spokane County.

A four-fold increase in the region's number of AIDS cases is predicted within the next two years, said Jan Howard, program coordinator for the Eastern Washington Area Health Education Center in Spokane.

Rural medical professionals and counselors must work to educate community members and seek up-to-date AIDS information, Howard said.

Many practitioners in small communities have little experience in working with AIDS patients and may be less prepared than their urban counterparts, she said.

"The people in Eastern Washington don't necessarily work with large numbers of the (AIDS) population to get the history behind them," Howard said.

Rural practitioners also face

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ASWSU OKs racial justice money

by Theresa Judd
Staff Writer

After two attempts, the ASWSU Senate passed a bill 10-7 Wednesday night giving the YWCA Racial Justice Committee \$3,301 to sponsor a regional conference April 6-7.

The bill was originally passed Jan. 31 when ASWSU Vice President La Vonne Pruitt voted in favor of the bill during a tie.

ASWSU President Todd Bowers then vetoed the bill on Feb. 6 because he said the committee had not provided enough information about other sources of funding.

The money generated from the bill will be used to pay for transportation expenses for speakers as well as publicity expenses and video rental equipment.

ASWSU officials were reluctant to release the names of the senators who voted against the bill when contacted by *The Evergreen*.

"(The paper) should have got that information at the meeting, it's not our job to give you that information after the meeting," said Senator Whitney Webber, who called *The Evergreen* to complain

that a reporter called senators at home to verify information.

Feelings about the bill were mixed during the discussion before the vote.

Webber, who voted against the bill two times told the Senate she was insulted that the bill was presented again.

"I'm upset this came up again for all the senators who voted against it," Webber said. "It makes those of us who voted against the bill look like racists, and we're not."

Senator Ted Sprague told the Senate that the bill was important because WSU students need information about racial justice.

"Most of us don't realize how much of a racist campus we live on. If we have people leaving this campus because of racism, well, we have to wake up and realize this," he said.

Kelly Willson, Co-chair of Racial Committee said she is pleased with the bill's passing.

"Now we're going to be able to put on the kind of conference we wanted to, it's good to know we'll be able to pay for transportation," she said.

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