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Pi

October 23, 2004

UO selected to conduct 'exit' poll

By Greg Bolt 
The Register-Guard

Researchers at the University of Oregon have been tapped to call voters and conduct a kind of vote-by-mail exit poll for the national media organizations.

The UO's Oregon Survey Research Laboratory will call about 900 voters from now to Nov. 2 to find out how they voted. A national polling organization that replaced the defunct Voter News Service will analyze the numbers and predict the outcomes of national races, passing the information on to the media.

Among the outlets that contracted to use the data are The Associated Press, the three major broadcast networks, Fox News and CNN.

Joel Bloom, an adjunct political science professor and research associate at the survey lab, said traditional exit polling can't be done in Oregon because of vote by mail.

"We can't go to polling places so we can't have exit polls," he said. "There aren't any polling places in Oregon, and most voters will have cast their votes well in advance of Election Day."

To get the data, the survey lab instead will call voters. They will ask the same sets of questions that will be used in the traditional exit polls that will be carried out in other states on Election Day.

Voters also will be asked about a couple of key state measures. Bloom said the contract with the polling group prevents him from naming the measures.

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Plans are to call 700 people listed on voter registration rolls along with 200 randomly dialed numbers. The random numbers will help make up for the voters who registered too late to show up on the lists and those who do not put their phone numbers on their registration forms.

The polling is being done as a joint project of **Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International**, two national polling powerhouses.

Voter News Service previously provided exit polling data but disbanded following the 2002 election. The consortium suffered a major failure of a new computer system for tabulating exit poll data, leading to fiascoes in both the 2000 presidential race and key Senate races in 2002.

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