

Wasting their collective time

One must observe the ASUO Senate with increasing amazement.

How can a body of (supposedly) intelligent, capable and mature University students justify wasting their collective time on such incredible pseudo-political bickerings?

There is work to be done on this campus—important work aimed at improving the quality of education and the academic environment. But to listen to the ASUO's sandbox politicians one would think the overriding concern of the group is the election of a senate president and the "stacking" of senate committees.

What purpose such goings on serve eludes us. One thing is for certain, the interests of the student body are not served.

To be sure the power of the senate is limited. Most visible of its functions is the allocation of student incidental fees, about \$900,000 annually. But much of that money is already allocated through guidelines established by the State Board of Higher

Education and President Robert Clark. The remainder can be divided up by the Senate, but only so long as it follows unofficial but strictly observed precedents. In many ways the task is an empty charade.

Significantly, before the current Oregon legislative session ends even the power to allocate may be revoked, or strictly limited.

Outside of money, there is little the senate can deal with. Occasional moral pronouncements on war, peace, day care and equal rights serve to break the monotony, but accomplish little else.

Given even these restrictions, a handful of senators do manage to accomplish something.

The rest, apparently so taken with themselves and their titles enjoy playing games during regular senate meetings. Who knows what they do the rest of the time.

Veteran ASUO senate watchers, and there are a few, admit the situation has

always been thus. A generally powerless body unable to derive satisfaction from real work must sublimate with make-believe.

Clearly, if the senate is to evolve into a meaningful campus institution it will have to gain respectable power to effect change in the quality of education at the university. That is the issue that counts for students.

The monopoly on educational innovation currently held by the faculty and administration must be broken. But the senate has not pressured for that kind of change, more concerned as it is with its own internal squabbles.

The legislature may soon consider a higher education governance bill which would open the door to equal student-faculty control of state system schools. That bill may well open for the senate doors it has been unwilling to try on its own. It brings to mind the possibility of a joint student-faculty senate and that isn't a bad idea.

A real grievance problem

By TIM TRAVIS

Editor's Note: Tim Travis is an ASUO executive assistant.

Although I hold an appointed position in the ASUO, and am therefore an "official" of student government, I retain my right to freedom of expression. It would be a mistake for anyone to assume that the opinions I express are necessarily those of the ASUO or anyone else in it.

There is a real problem on this campus with grievance procedures. Academic and administrative grievances are so much a part of a student's life here that most of us quickly adjust to them. Unfortunately, we also adjust quickly to the idea that nothing can be done about our grievances.

For most grievances there simply is no procedure, other than taking the matter up again with the person or agency against whom the student has a complaint. Since this is usually not a very satisfactory course of action most students choose to forget about their grievances.

Those few grievance channels that do exist are not made very widely known. These existing channels are so fraught with procedural complication and so biased toward the interests of faculty and administration that most students do not consider them to be of any value.

Knowing, too, that both the faculty and administration will "bat last", most students would rather not have their grievances brought out into the open. Most students would, understandably, rather suffer in silence than see their grades suffer, their chances for a letter of recommendation destroyed, or their financial aid cancelled.

And while it may be possible to argue that "nothing like that would happen", most students seem to think that if they rock the boat they will pay dues.

A recent situation illustrates this clearly, and shows the inability of the University to deal with grievances of students in a satisfactory manner.

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Near the end of last term we in ASUO received some complaints about the way a certain tenured faculty member was conducting his class. We asked some other class members and they agreed substantially with the complaints we heard. So, we took the matter over to President Clark. He advised us that the students should take their complaint to the Academic Grievance Committee, where it would be heard, investigated and proper action would be taken.

Although we knew that this Committee had never before met or done any business we were confident that the situation would be resolved fairly. A short time after our meeting with President Clark we were advised not to say anything about this matter to the press, as we would likely be sued. That is where matters stood at the end of last term.

Over Christmas vacation the students lost interest in pursuing their complaint. Although they give various reasons for

changing their minds, these generally come down to fear of reprisal. They are afraid that if they complain about this instructor his colleagues will destroy their academic careers through the grading and letter of recommendation system. It is not difficult to understand their fear, or to sympathize with them.

So the matter must be closed. The problem is not resolved, but the matter is closed. There is a real problem on this campus with grievance procedures.



'A SHIELD! A CHAIR! A GARBAGE CAN LID! ANYTHING!'