

Tests need revising

Colleges and universities need to revise their testing procedures for the benefit of minority students, a Ford Foundation commission announced in January. The commission's findings, reported in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (February 3), are more than a little applicable at the University.

The Commission on the Higher Education of Minorities called for institutions to adopt a "value added" system, in which students would be admitted and evaluated "on the basis of their potential for learning and growth rather than their relative standing on tests and grades."

The three year study found testing and grading methods in higher education "not only fail to contribute to the learning process, but also pose special obstacles to the development of minority students."

More just presenting special obstacles to minority students' educational development, some forms of testing at the University contain elements that are discriminatory. These tests, and specifically a test called The Cooperative English Test, are incomprehensible to many minority students.

The Cooperative English Test was selected by the University's School of Journalism in 1977 as a screening device for prospective journalism students. Passing this test, and a tortuous typing test on ancient manual typewriters, allows us journalism students to waive Journalism 250. The most compelling reason behind use of the test was its emphasis on the basic aspects of English. The test stresses grammar, punctuation, capitalization, vocabulary, and spelling. This, in the minds of the journalism school, outweighed the fact The Cooperative English Test was first published in 1951. It has not been extensively revised since. Not just a few of the words in the vocabulary section weren't common coin even then.

Examples of the questions become comical, and not even near the language indigenous to minority students. A group of three sentences requiring correct punctuation read:

"Boys who are blessed with good looks and pleasant manners often manage to get their own way" (sic), "Peter had no small success in wheedling his elders" (sic) and "I hope that I shant be battered and jarred to bits" (sic).

The first sentence is amusingly sexist, while the last two are strangely phrased with the words "wheedling" and "shant be battered."

Some of the words that require correct spelling are mystifying: "adjasent (sic), vaudeville, kimono, chautauqua, millinery."

The terms needing proper definition are certainly unfathomable:

"Jollification, gloaming, chorister, laundau, gallivant, shoat, euchre, cassava, and ormolu."

It's doubtful a fair number of minority students with an urban public school education could define more than two of those words. A shoat, we learn after having ransacked the Oxford English Dictionary, is a young pig. These words, curios even in 1951, are arcane thirty-one years later.

The Cooperative English Test should be a source of embarrassment to the journalism school. It fails as a test of a student's knowledge, but succeeds as a piece of antiquity.

Why is this test in use? That it asks questions on capitalization and simple grammar isn't reason enough to continue use in its present, copyright 1951, form.

The Cooperative English Test is a blatant example of the type of test that discriminates against minority students. This test points out the constant need at the University to examine the effectiveness of all forms of testing and grading. The University's CLEP program updates its tests every two years. This revision procedure is commendable if the test questions are examined for their potential to be understood and responded to by all students — minority and non-minority.

The Ford Commission findings indicate that testing and grading must be frequently revised to become more responsive to the particular requirements of minority students. While true of minority students, it is also true of non-minority students screened with archaic tests such as the journalism school's Cooperative English Test.



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letters

Hard to believe

In response to David Thomas' letter (Feb. 5), I say tough shit. I find it hard to believe that after four years here at the University, you've singled out the University post office and gays as being "continued plagues" to us all. Surely you can come up with more important issues on which to exercise your acute literary talent.

First, concerning your beef with the post office. Where do you think people should take their packages to mail them so as to stay out of your way, the fishbowl? If you're tired of seeing a line "every stinking time" you go to the post office to buy a stamp, go somewhere else, or better yet, buy yourself a book of stamps and save us all some trouble. Also, what kind of "strictly personal business" do you think occurs at the post office that's any different than your own?

Second, in regards to your "getting sick" when you open up the Emerald and see something about "gay pride," I feel you have an overactive gall bladder, all punning aside. You suggest that "groups like these" are a cause of increased fees. How naive, David. I think if you were to look into the matter you would find that a greater percentage of your dollars went to subsidizing athletics, another self-chosen minority group here on campus. Perhaps you believe they are more deserving of your money because they represent a less "unrighteous cause." I believe neither.

C'mon David, if you don't have anything more important to bitch about, let someone who does fill this space, don't waste our time. Moreover, if you think OSU has a better handle on these "problems" by having a separate "stamp only line" at their post office, and a no funding policy for the "gay (yech) groups," then perhaps that's precisely where you should be. You won't be missed here.

Mark Yarish
architecture

More common focus

The University Assembly voted last week to refuse to consider a motion of no confidence in the State Board of Higher Education and the outgoing Chancellor Lieuallen. A great statement both for free and open debate — and for a

willingness to address seriously the problems which confront this University. I am appalled.

Since coming to this University a decade ago, I believe there has been no more common focus of faculty complaint than the chancellor's office. But one was always told that there was no point in complaining publicly: the chancellor had been here a long time and still had many years to go. Now he is retiring. A search is underway for a successor. There is an opportunity at hand to state that we are sick and tired of a chancellor with no understanding of the functions and needs of universities, and wish instead one who can serve as an effective advocate of higher education in the state of Oregon. Yet the assembly chose silence — the same silence it has chosen during a decade of eroding support for Higher Education in Oregon.

Instead we have a Board which sees its function as voting on the means to affect cuts ordered by budget notes of the legislature, and proposed by the chancellor's office.

And what is the result of this state of affairs? Simple: public and legislative support for higher education evaporates. A decade ago, higher education represented about one-quarter of the state budget. The figure now is closer to 12 percent — a 50 percent decline. Oregon is a poor state, some will say — but does it even contribute as much of its income as others do? In state appropriations to higher education per \$1000 of personal income, Oregon ranked seventeenth in the nation in 1974-75. In 1981-82 we ranked 31st — and the decline continues as more cuts are on the way. Our library drops from a high of 37th to 84th in the rankings of the Association of Research Libraries. Our students' tuition rises to top among public institutions in the Pac-10. But dare we speak an ill word of the chancellor and State Board entrusted with the duty of providing quality education for the citizens of Oregon? No. We chose silence — a parliamentary device of a non-debatable motion. Even a poor dumb puppy will at least whimper as it rolls on its back before some insurmountable aggressor. But not the faculty and students of this university assembly — there the vote is to accept the demise of a once rather respectable university without even a whimper. Sad. Sad.

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