

Office dispatches aid, offers appear "firm"

The first wave of financial aid offers went in the mail Tuesday, with three more batches following today through Friday.

According to Ed Vignoul, financial aid director, students can feel "pretty comfortable" about the offers.

"They're as firm as they possibly can be at this time," Vignoul says.

He says he would like to warn students that their acceptance of the offers is due 30 days from the date on the letter. Students responding after that date will be cut off from their aid, and there will be no reinstating, Vignoul says.

"If they don't turn it in, they're going to lose it," he says.

Offers are being mailed to 3,600 of the 4,644 students who completed the application process by March 1. Of the remaining students, about 600 didn't qualify for aid and 315 were eligible for between \$300 and \$1,500.

The financial aid office considered only students who needed more than \$1,500 and who completed the application process by March 1, Vignoul says.

Overall, financial aid was able to help more eligible students than last year by "changing policies a little," he says. The majority of students eligible for more than \$1,500 will receive the full amount to which they are entitled, he says.

SPA found not guilty of election violations

By Rich Burr
Of the Emerald

The ASUO Constitution Committee Tuesday found the Students for a Progressive Agenda not guilty on all three charges considered by the ASUO elections court.

The committee — reversing an Elections Court verdict — ruled unanimously that because Jeffrey Houston, former ASUO presidential candidate and respondent in the case, did not file a respondent's brief or appear at the hearing, the entire matter is moot.

"This ruling of mootness saves the Student Body from a poorly reasoned opinion and a dangerous precedent," said the

committee's opinion.

"If it's moot, it can have no precedential value," added committee chairer Karsten Rasmussen.

The Elections Court previously found the SPA guilty and ruled that all SPA candidates be removed and barred from office. The court also ruled that Kevin Kouns, SPA presidential candidate, and Ken Packman, SPA vice presidential candidate, do 25 hours worth of "community service" for their campaign violations.

The Elections Court found the SPA guilty of poster violations, use of ASUO-funded materials, and attempted intimidation of Houston. Incidental Fee Committee members Jeff Nudelman, Mary Alice Holmes, Diane Ritterband-Mason and EMU Board member Mary Hotchkiss would have been removed from office if the court's ruling had stood.

The SPA wanted the committee to make a decision on the merits of the case, not on the non-appearance of Houston, said Janie Burcart, representative for Kouns and Packman.

"We would just have assumed that he had showed up," Burcart said.

In the opinion, the committee

addressed several of the court's findings. The elections court failed to address many of the central issues in the case in its decision, the committee said.

"The Elections Court decision, in sum, lacks both logic and fairness," read the opinion.

Denial of accession to office is a possible sanction the court may levy, but removal of officials already in office has "doubtful constitutionality," the committee said. The court also failed to give "sufficient weight" to the SPA's willingness to comply with Elections Director Gus Palmitezza's interpretations of the elections rules, the opinion ruled.

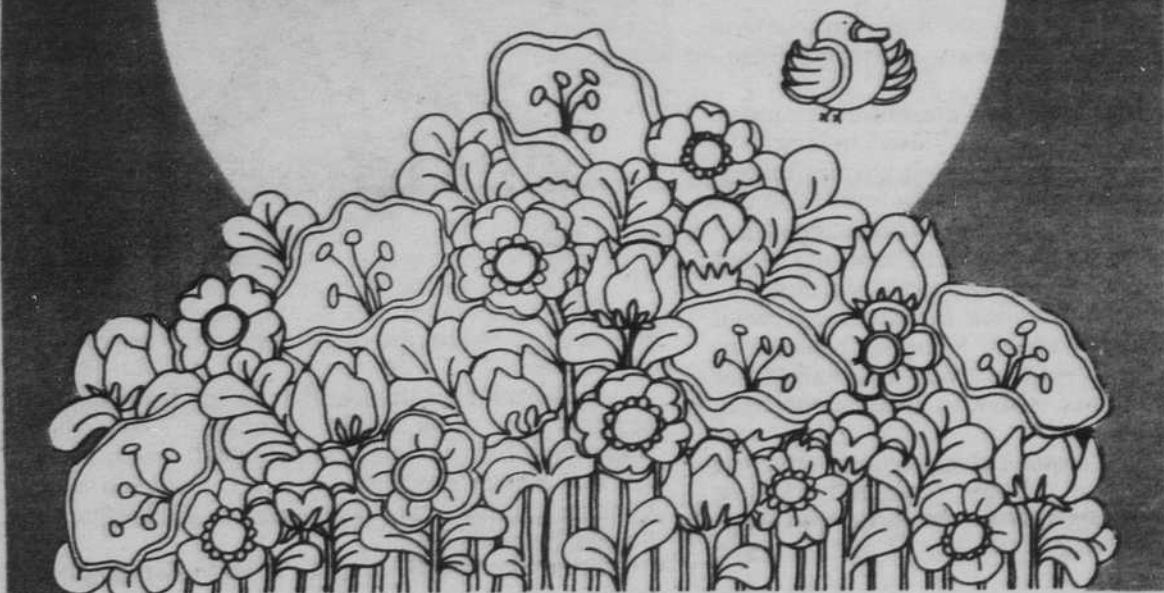
The committee's opinion also declared that the court's punishment did not fit the crime, the opinion relied on evidence not in the record, and the court failed to consider Houston's credibility as a witness — considering he was a former candidate.

"The Court said 'the SPA conducted a concerted effort to violate these (elections) rules,'" the opinion read. "This charge is utterly without foundation in the record."

Houston was unavailable for comment.

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