

opinion

Enticing campaign, excellent idea

If you want to create a better product, a good rule of thumb is to use better ingredients. The Chancellor of the State System of Higher Education has this in mind in his recent "Campaign for Excellence" — a program to entice quality Oregon high school students to the state universities and promote high school preparatory standards.

It is not the function of a university to prepare people for college. A good foundation in reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematics, reasoning, and studying, to name the skills suggested by the College Board, should be learned in high school.

Chancellor Bud Davis' program assumes, and rightly so, that Oregon high schools are not living up to their task. The SAT score decline, recently halted for the first time in 19 years, is one sign of a lack of preparedness high school students have in math and verbal skills — or at least standardized testing skills.

The "Campaign for Excellence" calls for a program of 50 \$1,000 scholarships from the three major state universities and lesser scholarships from the other state system schools. The scholarships, based entirely on merit, would be awarded to promising Oregon high school students who are enticed to out of state schools.

The campaign also calls for new course requirements, improved teacher training, a return to a stronger general education in college, and increased communications between the state system schools and high schools, community colleges and private colleges in the state.

The program has its ulterior motives. The state system does not have the funds for remedial courses. The ability of the universities to attract quality faculty, grants, and high-tech company support is directly related to the quality of students, particularly graduate students, that they can recruit.

But, the main goal of the campaign is to obtain a better quality student here — for the student's sake as well as the system's. A large percentage of the freshman class drop out — many because of their lack of preparation for college. Another percentage of students spend the first year or two learning the skills they need to start their major. What the University could offer is lost in an anti-intellectual climate of survival strategies to pass mid-terms.

Let the high schools teach trigonometry, basic writing, and general science. Higher education systems nationally as well as in the state are looking into reforming high schools and teacher preparation programs to do just that.

Let the community colleges teach the applied trades and other skills.

Let the colleges get on with research and professional study with Oregon students who are at Oregon universities for this purpose.

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"YOU WANNA CONTRIBUTE TO THE JOHN DELOREAN BAIL FUND?"

letters

Laughable

Chancellor Bud Davis' proposal to raise admission standards at the state universities to improve the quality of our education is as laughable as was Roy Lieuellen's second tuition increase designed to offset the loss of revenue caused by the decrease in enrollment caused by the first tuition increase.

You'll remember that the second tuition increase was followed by a further decrease in enrollment. Which clearly demonstrates the negative correlation (as one goes up the other goes down) between tuition and enrollment.

Back to Bud's proposal. In the first place, the student has nothing to do with the quality of education at any institution. The locus of quality control lies instead with those who control the material being taught.

In the second place, the best way to approach any problem is to deal with it directly, not to shift responsibility elsewhere.

Perhaps a five-year program can be designed for those

students deemed undeserving under the new plan. 12-hour terms, instead of 15, could be taken the first year, easing the student into college. A year of that second year of algebra, a year of English, and a year of reading and study skills could be designed to teach the weaker-as-perceived-by-those-in-the-know students these necessary skills at a manageable pace, instead of flashing over the material and expecting it to be crammed in somewhere.

This five-year program will get students here and paying tuition and fees. It will also make available more Graduate Teaching Fellow positions. In short, it will generate students, funds, and jobs.

Raising admissions standards and cutting "off the bottom" will certainly accomplish one thing: a further decrease in enrollment. Which will certainly accomplish something else: a further increase in tuition (remember the correlation?).

Bud Davis' successor should be a businessman instead of an education-bureaucrat. Because every businessman knows you have to tailor your product to the needs of the consumer.

Rod Schaffer
psychology, general science

At least when immigration was taking place during the 19th century there were no policies to coerce people already here to stop raising families. Now government maintains both economic and social incentives to encourage movement into America while trying to discourage Americans from raising families.

Why should Americans give up the opportunities to raise families? If we have room for immigrants and their posterity, we certainly have enough room for American children.

Mark Pinkston
senior, economics

Fascinating

For over a year we've read Cort Fernald's editorials. Frankly, they're fascinating. So far we've learned of his abilities and agonies as a jogger, his "eclectic" tastes in music, his intriguing contradictions, and his unusual fate to be stalked by a mystery-woman (obviously a figure from his shrouded past).

His last column was the first to prompt a reply. Not only was it self-serving and preachy, like so much of the Clash's recent music, but as a vehicle for changing opinion, endorsing ideas or encouraging intelligent discussion, it was so full of those "fascinating" contradictions that it was a waste of space.

We've heard from him before about other people's "ironic" tastes in music (last springs D.O.A. review), but he has never before used the term "self-styled social register" in reference to someone listening to what music they please. The term obviously can be applied to him for being insulted that anyone else should enjoy his favorite groups. How can he "feel betrayed" at a group's spreading appeal when he turns around and praises them for being "the almost inevitable future of rock music?"

We don't question Cort Fernald's position as an authority on running or punk rock. Certainly he listens to Oingo Boingo more than we do. However, we question the need to publish such facile and uninteresting information.

Kurt Lango
education
Paul Throne
political science

letters

White egos

I am very much disturbed by Debbie Howlett's article in the Friday, Oct. 15 edition of the Emerald which states the fact in bold print: "Whites average a score of 925 (SAT scores) while blacks averaged a score of 694."

This is my first term here at the University and I'm not accustomed to such open racial

discrimination. Granted, it is a fact that whites score higher than blacks on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, but is it necessary to center the article around the point difference between blacks and whites? Your article, although tastefully written, was filled with prejudice and implied white supremacy.

As a black student at the University, I would like to help close racial gaps on campus

between minorities and white students. Articles like this one only encourages segregation and hostile feelings between blacks and whites.

In the future, I suggest you not focus your articles around such flagrantly discriminatory statements that belittle blacks and inflate the egos of white students at the University.

Ron Blair
freshman, theatre

Immigration

The government, using the educational system, has been active in promoting the population curtailment objective. But in view of its policy of allowing (encouraging would better describe it) enormous immigration into this country the hypocrisy of its "zero population" admonitions becomes quite apparent.

One can see how unfair this policy has been when they realize that the massive drive instigated to reduce American birthrates began, almost simultaneously, with Congress dramatically increasing the quotas for legal immigration. If this hadn't occurred the population of America wouldn't be increasing at all, it would actually be decreasing slightly. The decrease would be due to the fact that America now has one of the lowest birthrates in the world: it's actually below the level necessary for replacement!

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