

## Teacher certification should be overhauled

The quality of education is directly related to the quality of instructors. That is why we support five new House bills that would mandate tougher requirements for teacher certification.

The bills were based on teacher certification recommendations submitted last September by a citizen's advisory committee. Its report was a damning indictment addressing the inadequate teacher certification process currently used by the state.

The bills address the problems in elementary and secondary education, one of which is an overabundance of under-qualified teachers. The bills would mandate "the elimination of the undergraduate in education, an admissions cap for state schools of education, a new system for teacher licensing and creation of a Masters In Teaching degree to replace the current education degree," as reported in the Feb. 24 issue of the Emerald.

Few disagree that these changes are needed. American College Test scores from 1985 show would-be teachers ranking an average of 60 points lower compared to graduates from other fields. This is unsettling news; the best and the brightest should be teaching Oregon's students, not the less creative and least intelligent.

The bills would go a long way to fixing this dilemma. Currently, the state's Teacher Standards and Practices Commission only requires 36 undergraduate hours of study for elementary and secondary teachers. Furthermore, prospective instructors are not required to major in the areas where they may be teaching.

If the bills are passed, the undergraduate degree would be eliminated — which is good, because it is essentially useless as a teaching degree.

For example, currently, a liberal arts major may have more courses in a certain subject area than the teacher who is qualified to instruct in that field. With passage of the five bills, this discrepancy would be nullified, instead requiring all prospective teachers to complete a nine-month Masters in Technology program, which entails taking 60 hours of graduate work.

Moreover, teachers would be more specially trained, thus having a firmer command of the subject they would be teaching. No longer would pupils be subjected to civics instruction as taught by a wood shop teacher.

Critics of the bills cite that the financial burden of improving educational standards for teachers falls on aspiring teachers by way of increased costs in their education. This argument misses the point, however. What's at issue is improving the quality of instructors. And this would be the case if the bills are passed because only the more dedicated would enter the teaching profession.

True, the bills would make it tougher to become a teacher, and certainly fewer would enter this field. But the supply of teachers currently outstrips demand. The bills would help reconcile this phenomenon.

We also are concerned about teacher salaries. It is our hope that as the quality of instructors would increase, so would their salaries. This only would be fair, as society should pay people what they're worth. The overriding concern at the moment, however, remains a need for quality teachers. The issue of teachers' pay has been, and undoubtedly always will be, a concern for those in the education field. But this should not impede efforts to improve the quality of education in this state.



## Letters

### Speaking up

I want to express my concern for the lack of assistive listening devices in classrooms for the hearing impaired student. I, being a student with a hearing impairment, have found the past four years of higher education to be more than a struggle to gather information given in lectures.

Although notetakers are available to assist hearing impaired students, they rarely, if at all, substitute for a professor's lecture. While notetakers are of tremendous value, being able to hear the lecture would undoubtedly be a much more efficient means of gathering information.

What many people may fail to realize is that most learning takes place through verbal communication. When communication is impeded by a hearing deficit, much information is lost. It is not only the problem of the hearing impaired individual but also that of the sender of the message. Communication is reciprocal; it takes two to communicate.

Although progress has been made to assist handicapped students into the mainstream of society, I feel that hearing impaired individuals' needs are often the last to be assisted.

For those professors who do not want to appear mute to a select group of individuals who are eager to learn, speak out and

be heard by expressing your concern to the administration. We desperately need assistive listening devices in the classrooms.

Rebecca De Lore  
Psychology

### Down under

As a visitor to your country (from Australia), I do not wish to appear presumptuous by entering a local political debate.

However, I must express surprise that you question the benefits of making the wearing of seat belts compulsory, and therefore widespread (ODE Editorial, Feb. 19). It is relatively easy to establish their benefits. Reduced injuries from vehicle accidents, and thus reduced public health cost do result from such legislation, as can be determined simply by studying the results of the introduction of similar legislation in comparable countries.

For example, compulsory seat belt legislation was enacted in South Australia (along with compulsory safety helmets for motor-bike riders) approximately 10 years ago. I do not have before me the relevant statistics but I am sure they would show a significant reduction in the incidence of serious motor accident injuries.

If such or similar inquiries have been made by the Oregon authorities, I assume from your editorial that the results have not been released.

Australia also prides itself on its history of protection of individual liberties; those liberties receive at least the same degree of protection generally as in America. Yet the Australian experience is that compulsory seat belt legislation is not an unwarranted or obnoxious interference with such liberties, simply because the

significant public resources savings justify the slight cost of choice involved.

Perhaps the answers to questions such as your editorial attempts to deal with sometimes lie beyond the shores of this great country, maybe even down under!

Brian Baillie  
Eugene

### Abused power

I am writing in response to the Oregon Daily Emerald's coverage of the ASUO Health Insurance program, and specifically to the Emerald's unfair and unethical coverage of ASUO programs and executive staff.

Inherent in the Emerald's position as a student-funded newspaper is the responsibility of fair, ethical, and accurate coverage of news. Thus far, in its coverage of the ASUO Health Insurance program, the Emerald staff has been extremely unfair, and less accurate in terms of pertinent facts.

In its editorial of February 11, the Emerald referred to the ASUO Health Insurance program as being "plagued by disorganization and mismanagement, peaking in the UO Students for Equity Insurance's demand for resignation."

The Emerald staff chose not to mention that the group calling for resignations was only a five-member group, four of whom having had virtually no understanding of the ASUO Health Insurance program. By supporting this five-member group, the Emerald attempted to give legitimacy to a group whose complaints were far less serious than portrayed by Emerald writers.

Our student newspaper is also one whose ethics allow it to alter the contents of a students' letter to the editor (ODE, Feb. 11) so as to defame an ASUO executive. This misuse of journalistic power was unprovoked and extremely unethical in form.

In the future, I hope for more accurate, objective, and ethical coverage of student government programs and staff.

Tim Corrigan  
ODE Board of Directors  
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