

# College Republicans face critics; provides forum for conservatives

By Steve Lundgren  
Of the Emerald

The Grand Old Party has its hand on the tiller of the nation, but at the University it is riding a squall in a rowboat.

Politically conservative people are a distinct minority on a liberal-minded campus, said College Republican Chairman Doug Fountain. The goal of the CR's is to provide an alternative to what he sees as an abundance of liberal organizations, he said.

"The average student comes here and sees OSPIRG, the Student Campaign for Disarmament, etc. There's not a conservative alternative," Fountain said. "It's easier to become involved in the liberal ideology simply because that's the dominant ideology."

While the club is a political group directly affiliated with the national Republican Party, its purpose on campus is primarily to educate and to provide a forum for Republican students, Fountain said.

Since the club's founding in 1981, it hasn't concentrated on gaining positions in the ASUO, Fountain said. It has never had a member elected ASUO president, and Fountain doubts the club will ever capture that seat because of what he sees as the deep-rooted liberalism on campus.

While members have held and continue to hold positions on the Student Senate and the Incidental Fee Committee, these people are individuals who took the initiative to run and were not part of an organized campaign, Fountain said.

Although the club does run candidates in student elections, its main purpose will be to support Republican candidates in local, state and national elections, spreading the conservative ideology on campus; a goal Fountain is personally content with.

To stimulate debate and attract students to the Republican party, the club's tactics have been limited to distributing leaflets and posters, manning booths at registration and other

functions and occasionally sponsoring lectures and debates.

The most recent CR-sponsored event was in early February when Oregon Attorney General Dave Frohnmayr spoke about the use and distribution of incidental fees at Oregon colleges. In the past the club has sponsored about three such events a year. In the future it wants to have at least two or three more speakers and wants to organize a "big-time" debate between ideological "strongarms."

Despite the club's seemingly innocuous official position as an educator, it has drawn some fire from individuals who disagree with its philosophy. People occasionally draw swastikas on the club's office door, and sometimes hecklers accost members at booths.

On one occasion a person stood face-to-face with Fountain and shouted, "Why are you for murder?" This kind of response is sometimes intimidating to members and potential members, Fountain said.

"We're not fascists, we're not radically closed-minded individuals," he said.

At a recent club meeting, secretary Tim Cushing warned new members about this response. When he first became involved in the group, he was hesitant to say too loudly that he was a CR for fear of criticism, he said.

But he believes that if one is firm and up front about this affiliation, most people will respect that, he said.

Fountain believes it is a small minority that is so adamantly opposed to the CR's philosophy or presence on campus that it will resort to heckling, he said. He believes most students are either politically apathetic or willing to listen to the CR's views regardless of their personal political philosophy, he said.

However, the club does draw criticism of a more subtle nature.

Randy MacDonald, Student

Senate chairman, believes the CR's approach to student government has been counter-productive, he said.

"The College Republicans have been loathe to approach the ASUO in an effort to work cooperatively, preferring to use a confrontational approach," MacDonald said.

Fountain believes that MacDonald has a valid point. Because of ideological differences there is bound to be a natural conflict; however, many of the conflicts have been due to personal differences between members and people in the ASUO, Fountain said. The club as a body has been trying to figure out ways to work with the ASUO, but this move has been hampered by long-standing attitudes on both sides, he said.

One of the club's main goals this year is to establish credibility among the student body. It will attempt to do this by presenting a "reasonable and logical (political) alternative on campus," Fountain said.

"We will stand up and make a lot of noise about things we don't like, granted," Fountain said. "But we want to present our side in a way people will respect."

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