

Optional drug testing a step backwards

The Athletic Department's decision to begin voluntary drug testing of University athletes is a loss to the rights of student-athletes and a violation of trust for all involved.

Cloaked in anonymity behind Associate Athletic Director Chris Voelz, an undisclosed number of student-athletes are reported to have come forward, asking "what can we do if we want to be tested" for drug use, in an attempt to set an example for others to follow. Still others, Voelz claimed "didn't like the bad rap the press put on athletes because some use drugs" and wanted to correct the image.

The Athletic Department responded by implementing a voluntary drug-testing policy Oct. 30 that would rely on athlete and team peer pressure to persuade the more than 350 student-athletes to consent. Coaches are forbidden from attempting to influence player consent in drug testing.

The result pits the individual athlete against team goals, which often override individual concerns for the betterment of the team. The result — if voluntary consent proves successful — also circumvents the suspended Athletic Department mandatory drug testing program.

Part of protocol for specimen collection in drug testing requires the removal of all clothing from the student-athlete's waist to ankles and the raising of all abdominal clothing to at least the chest. The athlete also is asked to urinate in the direct presence of an observer, who under no circumstances is to take his or her eyes off the process.

Although the intentions of the anonymous student-athletes may be to increase the likelihood of drug-free athletics, it does not outweigh the humiliating process of drug testing and warrant the enactment of large-scale, voluntary Athletic Department drug testing.

Any form of testing detracts from the idea of the coaches' trust in his or her team and the athlete's promise to abstain from drugs, and it discounts the athletes' team-first attitude to deter from drug use.

Those already committed to drug testing should accommodate their *individual* drug-testing needs on their own.

While it is legally acceptable to have voluntary drug testing, it is important to remember the Oregon attorney general currently is reviewing the constitutionality of mandatory drug testing. If student-athletes, whether through peer pressure or team spirit, are persuaded to consent against their will, the policy no longer remains voluntary.

Ginsburg withdrawal result of idealism

President Reagan's new nominee to the Supreme Court, Douglas Ginsburg, withdrew himself from consideration Saturday after he admitted to smoking marijuana as a law school professor eight years ago.

Although Ginsburg may not have been the best choice for a Supreme Court justice, he should not have bowed out. He should have gone through the confirmation process and been judged on his capabilities as a legal interpreter.

Ginsburg's withdrawal is a direct response to the Reagan's anti-drug campaign. He should not have given up so easily. If he had not withdrawn, he would have forced the Senate and the White House to review his actions as a judge and not judge his personal life.



Commentary

To preserve quality, keep Olum

As students, we are puzzled by the State Board of Higher Education's forced early retirement of University President Dr. Paul Olum. In its issued statement, the board praised him as a president, yet gave no reason for the early dismissal.

Commentary by
Steve Nelson

Taking into account Dr. Olum's forthright advocacy on behalf of the University, we are left with only ugly rumors to fill in the gaps. Is he being released because the leadership of higher education fears him, or because the board has found a replacement who would not challenge it?

We may never know what the reasons are. Even if the Executive Committee's process should eventually be shown to be legal, it was certainly not well planned or orchestrated with the best interests of higher education. We are left with no alternative but to question the

intentions of the State System leadership.

The loss of our president could be compounded if faculty leave, losing confidence in the leadership of higher education. After five years of constant disappointments in pay and working conditions, this decision by the board could be the final insult. Students fear the board's hasty decision. Once more we are forced to bear the brunt of an action over which we had absolutely no control.

Dr. Olum's retirement is a fact the University will have to face eventually, but the date proposed by the board fails to consider the fate of existing projects. The University will be left with at least four serious projects endangered by his loss. By far the most important of these projects is the 1990 conversion from a quarter to a semester system. The board's sudden decision to convert has made coordinating a smooth transition extremely difficult for all of the schools in the in the state system. Without experienced leadership, University students should be extremely concerned.

Desperately needed acquisitions and physical improvements to the University Library, which were to be funded through the capital campaign, could be seriously jeopardized. Proposed scholarships, endowed chairs and visiting scholars will be serious-

ly curtailed with a shortening of the campaign.

With the board's announcement the entire provost search process has been halted. No provost worth having will take the job with the president leaving in a year. This new person to the University would have to act as president after Dr. Olum's departure, then try to nurture the new president when one is appointed, even though the provost would have little experience on our campus. This assumes, of course, the new president even likes and keeps the new provost. At best, the University would have two inexperienced people leading the University.

Finally, a controversial project begun few years ago, the Riverfront Research Park, could become a powder keg. Dr. Olum has been the binding force in this project, using his creativity and skills as a mediator to mold contrary ideas into workable form. As students who have come to accept the research park as a reality, the thought of Dr. Olum leaving is frightening.

I feel a sense of personal loss. No institution in the state, perhaps the country, is as open and caring for students and their rights. Personally, I find him to be a rare authority figure who does not get defensive in the face of sharp differences of opinion and who fosters discussion from all sides of an issue or decision. He encourages students always to speak their minds and empower themselves.

When the person who personifies higher education for students is removed by the system for the very qualities he has taught us — questioning authority and standing up for our beliefs — we lose confidence and respect for higher education as a whole. To preserve the quality of our institution during the next five years, I believe the board must reverse this decision.

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Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

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