

Cheating sanctions require consistency

While most won't admit it, the facts are that just about every University student cheats at some point during his or her academic career, whether it be a furtive glance at a neighbor's test or the full-scale crib sheet tucked under the desk.

And as many ways as there are to cheat, there are also, at present, as many ways to punish those who get caught. A recent proposal submitted by the ASUO Office of Student Advocacy points out the need for consistency in handling academic dishonesty cases, and it is a proposal that should be implemented.

Presently, there is a wide diversity of styles in the way educators handle cheating cases. In similar cases, one professor may fail the student, another may grant an incomplete and allow the student to make up the work, and a third professor might average the course work all together without the dishonest work. Such inconsistencies in punishment are unfair to students.

Under the OSA proposal, the instructor may not impose any academic sanction until the disciplinary charge is resolved by the student conduct coordinator. The student stays in class and continues to do the work. If the student is found guilty of cheating by the conduct coordinator, the student's grade is adjusted up to and including a failing grade.

In adjusting the grade, the faculty member assigns zero credit to the student's dishonest work, and includes that work in the student's sum total when figuring out the grade. For most major cases, such as cheating on a midterm or final, that would still mean failing a class.

If there are any drawbacks to the OSA proposal, one would be that such a strict procedure may not be a good disincentive in all cases. Students, knowing that not much is at risk, might be willing to sneak a peek on the ubiquitous weekly 10-point quiz.

Another drawback: The new rule might also not allow for extenuating circumstances, those unavoidable incidents in life that we occasionally use to justify not studying for exams. There is arguably, less to lose here through adopting the proposal. If the matter is serious enough, the student should have discussed it with the professor before the test.

Despite these two problems, it still seems that a greater justice — and a more fair, more equitable one — will be served by adopting the OSA recommendations and the standard of punishment it contains. Yes, students should learn that cheating isn't right, no matter where or when. But they should also expect to be treated fairly in the administration of that lesson.



Mental evaluation must be independent

One fundamental tenet of proper law is the right to independent counsel — the right to seek legal help or documentation from reliable sources outside the state. A new proposal to amend the University's conduct code would disturb that tenet.

The proposal from the office of the vice president for the administration deals with cases concerning academic dishonesty and mental instability. Under the changed rule, students charged with any violation of the conduct code would be required to submit a written document from a University Student Health Center psychiatrist if they are to claim mental instability during the hearings process.

In a sparsely attended public hearing held last Wednesday, some important concerns about this change were voiced.

While it is clear that some form of examination and documentation is necessary in these types of cases, it is also equally clear that students' rights would not be adequately served if psychological evaluations are limited to the University's team of counselors.

The evaluation must come from a source not affiliated in any way with the University.

And as the field of psychology is populated enough by reliable therapists, there is no reason why the student couldn't submit to testing by an outside counselor. In the outside legal world, people are allowed evaluation independent of the state; so it should be here.

There is also the concern about requiring the student to see a doctor "before the fact." That is, by requiring a student to visit a psychiatrist and secure a mental instability certification before the hearing, the student would have to make the realization that he or she is instable. It seems to us that in most cases, the student simply cannot make that decision.

This situation catches students in the classic catch-22: if a person is instable, he or she wouldn't realize it and can't use that as a defense, where the person who only thinks they might be instable and seeks help is actually demonstrating the good sense we would expect out of a perfectly functional human being.

The determination that a student is sick must be made by non-University-affiliated personnel, and the determination shouldn't be limited to certain window of time.

Letters

Credit

Being a senior senior at the University is both a grind and a million laughs.

I was born in the days of Calvin Coolidge; most of my fellow students were born during the Nixon years.

A few of the "middle-aged" students arrived on this earth during the first or second term of Dwight David Eisenhower.

Tuition is free to seniors over 65, but you don't get any credit added onto your transcript unless you pay tuition.

I'm studying political science at the University: U.S. Foreign Policy, involving writing a 15-page term paper on "Could a New United States Foreign Policy Help Bring Peace and Justice to Nicaragua?"

As a professional writer with 40 years experience, I could expect to be paid up to \$3,000 for this paper. But, my fellow students (and I, if I want transcript credit) are expected to pay the University \$10,000 in tuition for letting us spend about 40

hours apiece to write this paper. It's a lot of work, but fun, including 40 pages of reading daily, and two written examinations. Next month I'll do 11 weeks work in five days at the University.

Even without tuition education is expensive. Seniors should get full transcript credit, just as Nixon-era students do!

J.J. Albi
Eugene

Give a hoot

I do not see how intelligent college students can have such difficulty defining a word for a common object. This entity is fathered at conception and is mothered before birth, whence the phrase "prenatal care."

If we do not care for the phrase "killing a preborn," we can use "terminating a pregnancy." These are synonymous. In fact, another circle will speak precisely of "termi-

nating with extreme prejudice" an agent they want to disown, when they mean to kill him.

If the man who wished he had not fathered it and the woman who does not wish to mother it want to name it fetus, well, it is their prerogative to name it whatever they choose. And if fetus is getting to be a common name, so much the better.

Just remember you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. And as for tying environmental issues in with this concern for life, a lot of people just don't give a hoot.

Earl Gosnell
Eugene

Firebrand

In regard to Bert Tryba's letter "Beware agenda" (ODE, May 15), there is nothing more hypocritical than the pot calling the kettle black. I don't mind Tryba believing what he does, but you think he would

be consistent.

"Emotional buttons" and "... exploits emotion, shunning reason?" Mr. Tryba, you are a repeat offender of such acts you charge against Jon Wollander. And in the same letter even, as evidenced by your last paragraph about "Christian zealots" who are "undermining our Constitutional liberties."

For someone who is as logical and reasonable as yourself, Mr. Tryba, you sure come across as quite the emotional firebrand.

Rob Hartsock
Leisure studies

Clean house

I am writing in response to Craig Namba's article that defended the Greek system (ODE, May 17). He stated, "I agree that there are things that individual Greeks have done that are reprehensible ... but to blame the entire system is a cop-out."

Well Craig, that's not how I see it. You see, the Greek system can expel or at least punish those members in the system that act in a "reprehensible" fashion. But the Greek system refuses to do so; thus I feel that the system is responsible for the actions of its members. If a person becomes affiliated with an organization, that organization is at least partially responsible for that individual, and vice versa.

Namba went on to state that people should not criticize Greeks because "stirring up bad feelings doesn't accomplish anything." Well Craig, it seems that somebody needs to do something because I don't see the Greeks volunteering to mend their ways. In other words Craig, clean your own house or someone will do it for you.

And Craig, the logic (or quasi-logic) in your closing statement was weak.

Gerrit Koepping
Journalism

Wednesday, May 24, 1989