

Even with changes, conduct bill flawed

After a small chorus of voices expressed concern over a proposed student conduct code amendment regulating cases of academic dishonesty and mental instability earlier this week (ODE, "Mental evaluation must be independent," May 24), the reaction was swift.

The proposal's language has now been changed to explicitly deal with those concerns. This is good, but are we entirely happy with the bill now? Well, no.

Under the proposal (in both its original form and the amended version), students charged with any conduct code violation 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.

We had two problems with this proposal. First, students and their rights wouldn't be adequately served if limited to one team of counselors. Under the new bill, students are expressly allowed to submit statements from outside psychiatrists. The new language does fix our original concern, but we still have a problem that students are *required* to visit the University's health center.

The reasoning behind the requirement is that, with the large number of psychiatrists out there, it would be too easy for students to find a "quack" to sign whatever the student desired. Supposedly, the ethics of health center counselors would prevent this from happening to students. We think it is naive to automatically assume there is a higher standard at the health center.

This is not an indictment of the health center. The psychiatric community, both here and as a whole, is well-regulated enough so that respectable counselors can be separated from shady ones. But to ease students' consciences, if nothing else, the evaluation should be entirely separate from the University.

Our other concern was that such a code process required the student to make the decision that he or she was mentally ill — literally a case of "Physician, heal thyself!" This concern has been addressed, but again, less than satisfactorily.

Students facing code charges meet with the conduct code coordinator, who informs the students of his or her rights, including the requirement to seek a statement if he or she wants to claim mental instability. So the student's decision to seek a statement is not one that comes out of left field; he or she is guided in the process. But it is still the *student* that must make the decision, and again, we point out that if the student truly is ill, then he or she shouldn't be the one making that decision.



If you must vacation, be careful at least

It's time once again for the Emerald's holiday admonition to be careful while driving out there this Memorial Day weekend.

Wanting the juicy, hard-hitting facts that would shake people into exercising proper caution on the highways and to see if anyone actually heeds these announcements, we called the Lane County Public Safety Department for last year's driving fatality statistics, but there was nobody there for us to talk to when we called at 4:30 p.m. Thursday. They had all gone home. Clearly, they are more excited about Memorial Day than we are.

We're having a hard time getting enthusiastic about the three-day weekend, what with term papers due next week and finals just around the corner. Remember, next week is Dead Week, even if it is shorter by a day.

All in all, we decided you'd probably be better off staying home this weekend.

The weather isn't going to be that great. The rain is going to stay until Monday, and the temperature may eventually rise to the oh-so-balmy 70s by then.

You won't run into highway construc-

tion crews this weekend, because the state's construction contracts prohibit work that interferes with holiday traffic. But you are likely to run into long lines of campers in the mountains and boaters on the coast, overbooked hotels and motels, and the ubiquitous stupid drunk driver. Does this sound like fun?

Also, the price of gasoline has risen astronomically since that darn Valdez oil spill, so why bother driving anywhere? After a year of stable gas prices, the latest figures from the American Automobile Association have identified a price increase at the pumps of 17 cents a gallon over the last nine weeks.

Ouch! That's the steepest price increase in nine years. Around here, the average price of a gallon of gas was about \$1.06; this year you can expect to pork out \$1.27 a gallon. That's a 20 percent increase. Wouldn't you rather stay home and play Pictionary? Or maybe actually try studying?

We realize that this whining isn't likely to deter too many people from getting out of town, so here, at last, is our warning:

If you do decide to go out, please be careful. And also be smart — don't drink and drive yourself. Have fun.

Letters

Justice

Now that the Palestinians have called for exact retribution against those who have systematically killed and tortured them for years (the current uprising being only the latest episode), "sound advice" for "cooler heads to prevail" is suddenly echoing in the U.S. media (ODE, May 22).

Everyone is entitled to self-defense but the Palestinians can only die for the world to offer sympathy. How heavy a price do the Palestinians have to pay before it is deemed necessary that Zionist brutality should stop?

It is a fact that without direct U.S. money (\$4 billion a year) the Israelis would not be able to continue their latest inhumane and ruthless practices. The issue is clear. The Palestinians have been wronged and wronged again. So instead of simply passing advice, maybe the editor should encourage his fellow students to exercise their democratic right by writing their senators to check the money flow (their taxes) that is financing the latest Zionist

atrocities. Only by redressing wrongs can violence be halted.

The Palestinians are not asking for sympathy; what they want is justice. And as long as the world only remains interested in aiding the arm that is oppressing them they then reserve the right to defend themselves by whichever means necessary.

Ali Atoui
TCF

Safe channels

I read with disgust a letter supporting the defamation of our campus from Teresa Reeves and Laurel Sharp and (ODE, May 23). In response to the narrow-minded views presented in the letter, I ask these writers to consider whether others' opinions (including anti-gay beliefs) are equally deserving of a space on University buildings, or would they feel that anti-gay sentiments expressed with spray paint were eyesores and acts of vandalism?

A serious contradiction is ex-

posed among those in the gay and lesbian community who feel the need to commit illegal acts in order to let the rest of us "know you exist." It is possible and healthy for people with different sexual preferences to exist without beating each other over the head. If acceptance and equality are truly your goals, I suggest you begin by considering yourselves equals who are not above the laws respected and upheld by the rest of society. These acts of vandalism are promoting the message that you don't want equal rights; what you really want are special rights which permit you to act as you please, regardless of rules others must abide by.

Thus, far from fostering a positive image, far from gaining acceptance, support and respect through positive and beneficial activities, the vandals only succeeded in belittling their cause and alienating people in the mainstream community whose acceptance they say they most want. Any cause which cannot find or create more productive "safe channels" for expression than vandalism doesn't appear to be a

cause very deserving of support.

Melissa Lundstedt
Eugene

Gonzo image

I heartily agree with the article you printed stating the need for increased awareness of trail etiquette among mountain bike riders (ODE, May 1). The possibilities of trail damage owing to poor technique are tremendous. Most of us try to be conscientious in our riding, realizing that there are other people who wish to enjoy the trails. We're working on improving our image as our trail consciousness increases. Ninety percent of us are interested in a compromise between ourselves and hikers.

Knowing these things, it bothers me that you would accompany your article with a

picture of a mountain biker who is apparently of the 10 percent who don't really care about the future of mountain biking. Screaming, bone-head, kick-out-the-back-wheel-at-15-miles-an-hour-while-off-of-the-marked-trail tactics are the realm of a small group of shortsighted riders, and they are making trouble for all of us. I don't do this. My friends don't do this. If I see anyone doing this I attempt to educate them in as friendly a means as possible.

Used properly, a mountain bike creates little trail damage. Used improperly, it can gouge six inch furrows into a fragile trail. We don't want the "gonzo" image to spread any further than it has. Please don't judge us all by the actions of a minority.

Steve Close
English literature

Letters Policy

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