

## Health center needs fee to remain open

Rising health care fees are not a local problem. On the national level, skyrocketing medical costs are forcing lawmakers to take a careful and critical look at our current health care system.

University students can see the problems in America's health care community right in their own backyards. Starting next fall, the University's Student Health Center will institute a \$5 fee for each student's initial semester visit.

While the temptation is to meet the new fee with a chorus of "Oh no, not *another* increase," the proverbial "Big Picture" must be taken into account. The \$5 fee was not planned: It is a needed increase to keep the Health Center operating.

Staff salary increases are part of the reason for the new fee, but the main reason is to cover the \$100,000 hole the Health Center put itself in when thousands of students needed measles vaccinations. When the epidemic hit the University earlier this year, administrators decided to give discounted and free measles shots. At a cost of \$17-18 apiece, the health center inoculated 6,000 students.

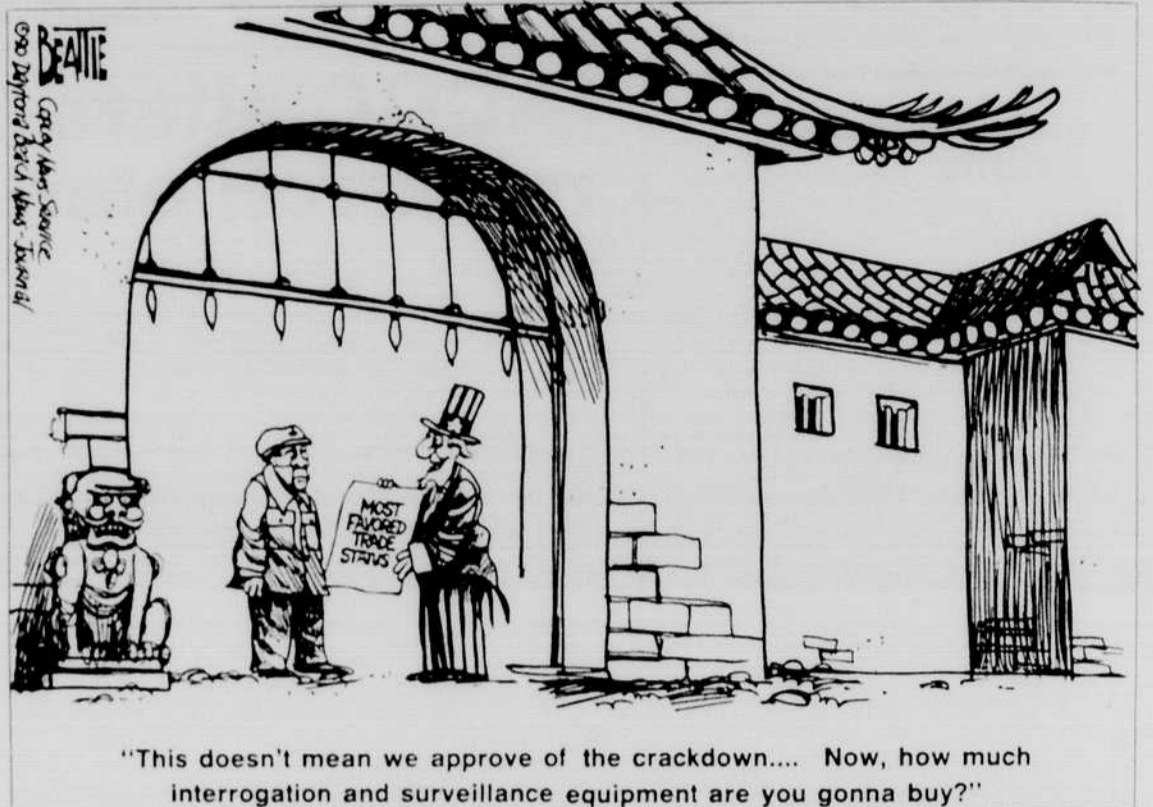
It's impossible to criticize the Health Center for trying to prevent a full-fledged medical epidemic at the University. By giving the reduced-cost and free vaccinations, the Health Center thwarted what could have been a very bad crisis. The Health Center deserves praise for its actions, and now it's the students' time to help the health center.

The \$5 fee is a one-time-per-semester deal, so the most a student will pay during the year is \$15. Not much, considering what the health center has to offer.

However, while students should understand why the fee is being instituted, they should also recognize that the increase is a symptom of the woeful national health care system. For a supposedly civilized nation, the United States' medical care system is still stuck in the dark ages. Medicare, Medicaid, and similar programs are good, but do not even come close to solving the problem.

The Student Health Center is doing its part to give students affordable health care. But as medical costs continue to soar upward, it may not be able to continue its current level of service. If that happens, students may not be able to afford to be sick anymore.

Millions of Americans can't pay for health care. If something isn't done soon, fee increases like the one at the Health Center will become commonplace.



## Occupancy drop should be examined

For the first time in a long while, University Housing seems to have plenty of room for everyone who wants to live in the dorms or in family housing.

According to figures released last week, the housing department has an 88 percent occupancy rate, compared to 94 percent at this time last year. And when several apartments became available in family housing recently, no one was on the waiting list to take them.

Administrators in the housing department see a number of different factors providing relief in the housing crunch that has plagued the campus area in recent years. The department itself has purchased more dormitory housing, such as Riley Hall, to accommodate the record-size incoming classes of the last few years.

The LTD free-ride bus program makes it possible for students to take advantage of less expensive housing farther away from campus. And next year's enrollment cap means fewer students will compete for housing.

The housing department should take a

good look at these factors before moving ahead with its plans to construct more family housing this fall.

As more non-traditional students enroll at the University and the "average" college student becomes older and more likely to have a family, the demand for family housing may very well increase.

And the University administration's decision on the definition of domestic partnerships, which should be released any time, could also boost the demand for housing at the University if the ruling makes unmarried couples eligible for housing benefits.

If these events come to pass, the department's plan to build more housing is justified and the calculated risk it is taking will likely pay off. But if this term's lower occupancy rates represent the beginning of a trend, housing officials need to reconsider their plan.

And the only way to find out if the drop in occupancy represents an exception or a new rule is to talk to current residents, examine the needs of incoming students and take a look at national and regional trends.

## Judging life

Ronald Rousseve's suggestion (*ODE*, May 21) that we use a "quality of life" premise to support both pro-choice and pro-euthanasia positions fails to make important distinctions between the beginning and the ending of life. Furthermore, a policy of predicating life as worthy based on its matching "a set of criteria for humanness," rather than the innate sanctity of life, is wide open to abuse.

There are at least three differences between the pro-choice and pro-euthanasia positions outlined by Rousseve. First, a woman choosing to abort is deciding not to end her own life, but the life in her womb. Second, unborn life is not suffering from a "hopeless condition of painful deterioration." Rather, the embryo, then fetus, is developing at an astonishing rate: heartbeat at 24 days, brain waves at 43 days, complete ears, fingers, toes at 49 days, etc. Third, no "technological

marvels of modern medicine" are needed to support healthy life in the womb.

Besides, judging life, especially someone else's life, to be worth living based on a personhood test is a dangerous tack. We know unborn life is subject to extinction. The implication for other lives that fail to demonstrate such "qualities of actual personhood" as the ability to "relate caringly to others; and the life" is obvious. In our contemporary American culture, which undervalues its women, children, elderly, poor, disabled and racial minorities, thoughtful people should have grave reservations about the quality of life positions.

Kathleen Freeman  
Graduate student

## Sex work

Feminists have been split for a while on the issue of pornography. Is it the exploitation of women who have few other

good economic choices? Or is it a woman's right to choose any work she wishes? The first group wants stricter laws and the second is rallying for decriminalization of all areas of sex work.

I have some loyalty to both sides. But what I don't embrace is the attitude presented by Jenny Kane (*ODE*, May 25). Her letter is victim blaming, and it perpetuates the idea that if women want to end their oppression they need only "command and earn respect." If it were that easy to do, none of us would be oppressed.

But we are! And I think some of that can be seen in the pornography industry which is predominantly run by and servicing men, while it is women posing and being berated by the men and women with attitudes like that seen in Kane's letter.

Let's think about our sisters when we speak. Women should be uniting and supporting each other, rather than placing blame on them, which disen-

franchises us.

Tiffany Burge  
Sociology

## Free will

In response to Jeff Sparks (*ODE*, May 21). Just because a person expresses a freedom of choice doesn't mean the world's best selling book is wrong. God gave us free will, you know.

Earl Gosnell  
Eugene

## For Oerther

Pollution is largely an economic issue. Thus, the primary way to make polluters stop

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their crime is through economic sanctions. This takes two forms. First is boycotting products made from environmental destruction. The second is fines levied against the perpetrators.

The reason why the second mechanism is not effective is because there are no laws against pollution. It is because existing laws are either not enforced or are enforced with a minimum of fines. Simply, there is no reason for a criminal to stop breaking the law, if the law does not significantly affect the criminal.

I am glad that at least one candidate for governor, the Libertarian candidate Dr. Fred Oerther, supports increased fines and stricter enforcement.

Jason Damisch  
Eugene

## Letters Policy

The *Emerald* will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.