



OPINION

That \$31,000 could go a long way



THE FINE PRINT

BY PAT MALACH

Priorities sure can get mixed up sometimes, can't they?

If you've been paying any attention to the news lately, you probably have a good idea of what this is leading into.

Yep, it's the \$12 million Casanova Center and the \$54,000 sculpture that has become a center in its own right — the center of a controversy.

The athletic department's dream building across the Willamette River at Autzen Stadium has sounded some alarms about just where athletics, aesthetics and education are carved on the totem pole of priorities for administrators, art lovers and fund-raisers alike.

Bells began ringing when Athletic Director Bill Byrne decided that one obnoxiously silly little sculpture (at the risk of exposing my artistic intolerance) was ruining his \$12 million baby.

Byrne tried to have the sculpture cut down with blowtorches, but the artist responsible for the work and local art lovers flocked to the Casanova Center to stop Byrne's torches. University President Myles Brand quickly arrived on the scene to extinguish the flaring tempers and set up a committee to decide where the sculpture might be relocated.

In turn, the committee decided the sculpture was best suited for the south side of the Casanova building, where most people wouldn't be able to see it. Everyone appeared to be happy. The sculpture would remain, but Byrne wouldn't have to look at it on his way to work every day. And artist George Greenamyre has to be the happiest of all. He is going to be paid \$4,000 for a redesign that will amount to saying, "Uh, yeah. Set it up like it was before, only on the other side of the building." That's a hard day's work for any artist.

There was just one more little problem — the \$31,000 it's going to cost to move the art. The University administration stepped forward in these times of budget reductions, tuition hikes and department closures to say it would fork over the cash to move the allegedly ugly

art.

But more practical people in the community questioned the wisdom of spending that kind of money on such a frivolous endeavor, especially when the University is begging for state tax dollars to offset the \$1.7 million athletic department deficit.

To curb the brewing controversy, several unnamed donors stepped forward to foot the bill for the sculpture's journey south. Again, the University is off the hook and everyone involved seems happy.

It's really cool that people have the money to help out the University in its time of need. It restores my faith in the species when people can raise that much money for something so unimportant and silly. I imagine if these people knew about some of the real problems on campus, money would come rolling in by the truckloads.

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So as a public service, I spent a little time calling around campus to find out what some other departments would do with \$31,000.

Sally Fullerton of the soon-to-be-defunct human services department said she would use \$31,000 to "provide scholarships to help students finish their degree requirements in the short time they have left."

That kind of money would mean one more full-time position and possibly five new classes per term for Folklore and Ethnic Studies, said co-director Sharon Sherman.

Judy Newman of the Parent and Child Education Program, which helps children with

mental, physical and sensory disabilities, said \$31,000 would allow them to serve about 30 to 35 more children and their families.

Outdated equipment at the Institute of Neuroscience could be replaced with that kind of money, Ruth Bremeller said. "Many pieces are outdated but we nurse them along and make do," she said.

Robert Gilbert, dean of the recently gutted College of Education, must have too many ideas to narrow it down to one item. He had his secretary return my call to say, "No comment."

International student adviser Peter Briggs said \$31,000 could be used to provide scholarships to more international students in order to reach the culturally diverse level that is constantly being mentioned.

"We'd love to move into the Casanova Center," he added.

Donna Franklin of Child Care and Development Centers said they would be able to open another toddler program. "We've got 20 to 25 people on the waiting list right now."

She also said they could use the money to fix up some of their buildings. "Have you ever been over to our East Campus sites?"

Some of the ideas for spending the money were pretty simple.

"(The money) would just about cover the cost of replacing 25 herbarium specimen cabinets that are falling apart," said David Wagner of the University herbarium.

And even more cabinets. "Aerial photography cabinets," said Peter Stark of the map library. "We have 51 filing cabinets of different ages, sizes and quality."

Knight Librarian George Shipman said donated money is not used to keep the library open, but if it were, \$31,000 would allow the library to reclaim 60 percent of its reduced hours.

Incoming students who have to get a measles vaccination would be interested to know that \$31,000 would buy 10,000 shots in the arm.

Judge for yourself, but there are some pretty worthy causes among those listed above. So unless we want to concede to the accusation that we live in a society that values image over substance, let's get those donations rolling in.

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