

Athletics looks too good for handouts

Aw heck, that big ol' debt over in the athletic department didn't need to be paid off all that quick, did it? Besides, all that tax money the department has been rallying for should be rolling in any minute, taking care of its debt and any other financial problems.

So, it's no big deal that the department spent most of the \$600,000 it made from the 1990 Freedom Bowl game on attendance expenses for department employees and their friends and families, payroll bonuses, and overtime.

The department spent about \$330,000 on airfare, travel and meal expenses for 103 coaches and staff members, along with 63 of their friends and family members; included in this group were coaches of sports other than football that went along for recruiting purposes.

Also spent was nearly \$104,000 on bonuses and overtime for department administrators and football coaches. By the time the money was spent, the athletic department netted about \$5,000.

Granted, some of the expenditures were absolutely necessary, like overtime and travel expenses for key staff. And true, such spending is quite the norm among Pac-10 football conference schools.

The problem is the University is not funded like all the other kids on the block. Because of last year's approval of Measure 5, which wiped out Oregon's higher education funding, the athletic department, along with the rest of the University, is suffering significant financial loss.

The department recently asked for tax dollars to subsidize University athletics; the state Board of Higher Education will vote Friday on whether to allocate the funds.

Someone should give athletic director Bill Byrne and his department officials groveling lessons. Don't they know one doesn't wear a coat and tie when asking for handouts?

The department now carries the burden of a \$1.7 million debt; it, along with the rest of the University, has serious financial problems. However, between the bowl expenditures and Byrne's recent \$31,000 mission to have the Casanova Center sculpture moved, one would never know athletics is in trouble.



Watson's attitude questionable



THE FINE PRINT

BY CHRIS BOUNEFF

In the large scope of cosmic events, it really wasn't that big of a deal.

ASUO Vice President Jo Sonja Watson had shoplifted about seven dollars worth of stuff from the University Bookstore. That was in November 1990. Campus publications didn't find out about it until November 1991.

In the interim, Watson hasn't performed any earth-shattering acts, especially considering student government doesn't do much in the first place.

So, it really isn't that big of a deal.

Except for her attitude.

To Watson's credit, she admitted that stealing the merchandise was a mistake. To her discredit, Watson does not believe the incident does or should reflect on her leadership abilities.

This attitude is somewhat surprising, especially from someone who voted to remove former Incidental Fee Committee Chairman Michael Colson from the IFC after a kangaroo investigation by last year's ASUO president concluded that Colson might have altered the official minutes for an IFC meeting. Based on such inconclusive findings, Watson was perfectly willing to remove someone from student government who wasn't ever found guilty of anything.

Was the alteration to the minutes a big deal? Yes and no. The actual change was mini-

mal. But someone violated the trust between public and public servant, and that is serious.

After the shabbily conducted investigation, Colson was blamed. His judgment was questioned. Eventually he was removed.

Watson's theft was just as minimal. Post-It notes, batteries and a troll doll do not constitute a conspiracy to undermine student voters, but the theft does tell us something about Watson.

It tells voters something of her decision-making and reasoning abilities. She took items, very non-essential items, for no reason. She failed to comply with the ruling against her. She didn't appear for some court dates, and she was delinquent in paying her fines.

What this means in the larger scope of student government isn't clear, but it should have been up to voters to decide, so Watson shouldn't be surprised that people are questioning her abilities as a student leader.

And it's not just the College Republicans doing the questioning. The group sees a chance to jump all over someone whose politics are the opposite of the organization's, similar to how Watson and company attacked Colson because of his views. But even mainstream students, like myself, are now more skeptical of Watson.

Watson, however, chose for students what it should mean — nothing.

"People might question me," she said, "but you can also look at it as if, well, you didn't know about it before then and you

didn't question me, so why are you bothering me now?"

The problem is that these non-earth-shattering events sometimes do make a difference, and it should be up to the voters to consider what does and what does not tip the scales one way or the other. Watson should know that.

Fortunately for Watson, the results of her actions may never be known. With only 6 percent of the student body voting in last spring's election, the likelihood that a full 10 percent of the student body caring enough to sign a recall petition is low.

And even if it is put on the ballot, getting another 6 percent to vote in a recall election shows the issue is moot and shows student government for the joke it is.

With all this in mind, though, I would like to think that we could hold our leaders (and I'm not talking about piddly student senators, but the people who represent students outside the University) to a higher standard; that we be allowed to consider something other than a golden track record, if it exists.

That we be allowed to question Clarence Thomas about allegations of sexual harassment or berate Ted Kennedy for his womanizing, and that however trivial, we question Watson's judgment for stealing and her unremorseful attitude about possibly violating the public trust.

The answer is uncertain, but the question is right. And Watson should know that.

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