

All is not good at the University

A recent study on the experience of black Oregonians highlights a problem the entire University, as well as Eugene and state community, should be aware of: Many black students and faculty members on Oregon campuses feel isolated, frustrated and alienated.

The November study, led by chairman of the state Commission on Black Affairs, Robert Phillips, included nearly 200 interviews conducted at five state campuses.

Among his findings, Phillips found black University faculty members frustrated with their double-time load of mentorship and instructional duties due to their small numbers. The professors also felt they were viewed as having lower-quality intellect, making it harder for them to get research grants.

Black University students said they felt out of place and alone, primarily because there are so few black students, not many classes on the black experience, and few black faculty members.

Black athletes at the University felt they were valued more for their athletic ability than anything else.

This issue does not stop with the black community; it involves everyone — no holds barred. The fact that people here, at this University, in this town, have such feelings is something we all need to be aware of and concerned about.

The numbers are startling. Black students at the University have a 26.9 percent graduation rate, compared to the 45.2 percent graduation rate for white students. Black athletes fare little better — they graduate at a 30.8 percent rate, compared to 44.2 percent of white athletes.

Obviously, something systemic, something in the University, is desperately wrong.

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The report offers recommendations to remedy the situation at the University, including a study of the athletic department to find out "why the black male graduation rate in revenue-generating sports is so low"; offering incentives for hiring more minority faculty members and finding new ways for students to voice concerns regarding bigotry, hatred and racism.

Unfortunately, the problem isn't that simple. To hire and recruit qualified black professors will cost money. It would be money well spent, but the University would have to pay the incoming professors what they are worth. In that lies the problem. The University faculty, in general, is woefully underpaid. Long-time professors would not take kindly to incoming faculty getting substantially more money than they do.

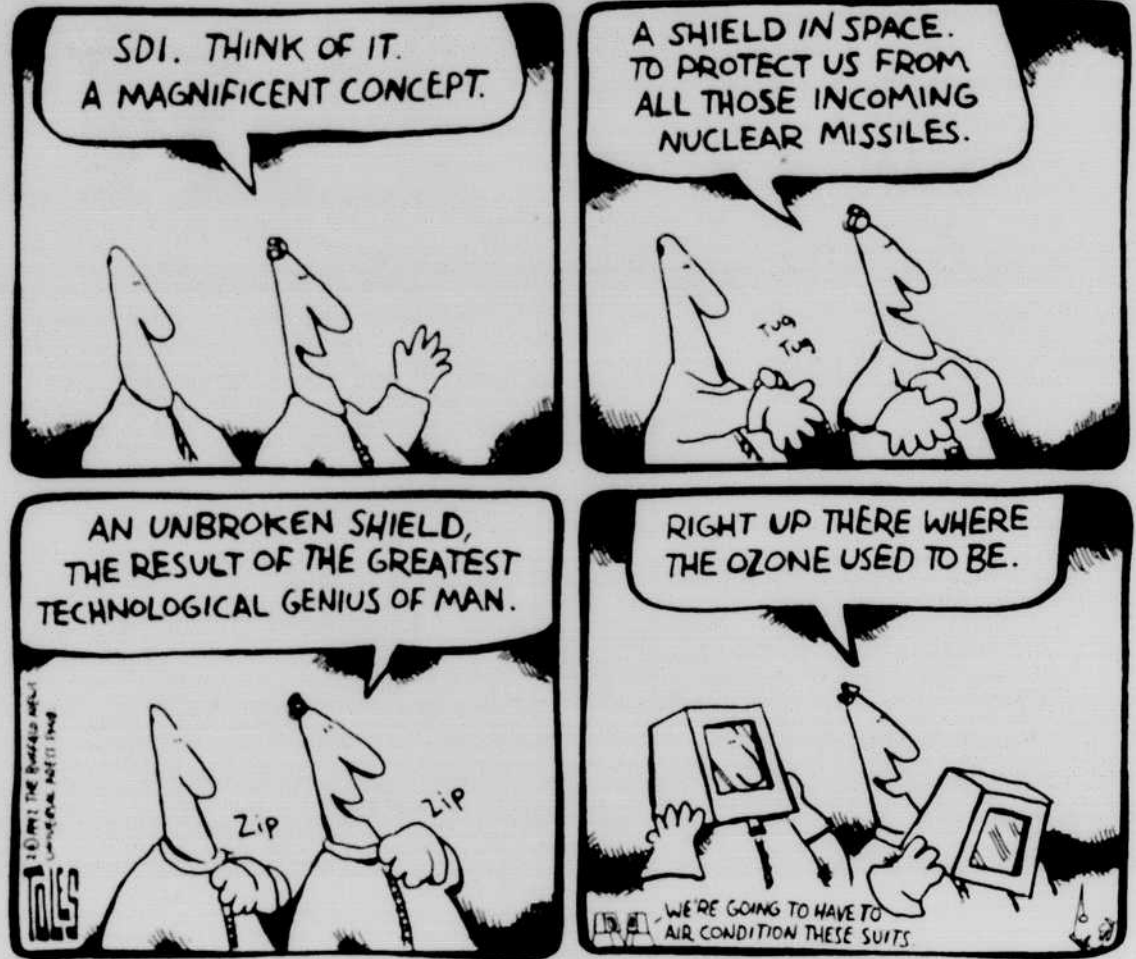
Instant resentment, and no closer to solving the problem.

As long as the Oregon State System of Higher Education continues to underpay professors, the University and other collegiate institutions in the state will be in a quandary. Hiring qualified professors — of any kind — is high-impossible if the pay is bad.

But while the money situation might be, for the moment, unsolvable, the other suggestions by the report need to be discussed.

Finding new ways for students to air their views is a good step. Nothing is ever lost by talking things out. While some would debate the degree to which they exist on this campus, no one could argue against the fact that bigotry, racism and hatred are still present. More outlets in which students, faculty and others have the opportunity to discuss their differences are desperately needed.

Change is not a one-way street. Creating a substantial shift in people's society-bred views requires work from both sides. Only through companionship, mutual trust and cooperation can anything be accomplished.



LETTERS

Even worse

Ozone depletion? Sad to say, I am not surprised. Perhaps it may be difficult to think of what it will be like. Whether you grasp this yet or not, what life will be like at increased UV levels, you may well ask: "Why didn't we do something?"

We? Us? What of the corporations in the 1970's, when the danger was first exposed? That's right, 1971.

I can find articles — credible ones — back that far. The year I was born.

But it is more far-reaching than this. What of jet planes in the '50s and '60s? What of coal burning at the turn of the century? This damage has accumulated over possibly near a century.

Maybe it is too late. Not for the U.S., oh no. We have the resources to convert, but not without the growing pains, of course. But what of all the third world countries?

I would not wish to be the one to tell them, "Sorry, you can't have your energy. I know it will kill 30 percent of your population and shut down your hospitals and your government, but that's the way it is. It isn't as simple as "do or don't." This is only the beginning. The events to come, the consequences, they will be much worse than simple malignant skin lesions.

Patrick Kelley
Biology

Then why?

In response to the Mike Freeman column the *Emerald* published in the Feb. 6 edition.

I do not feel people have gone to great lengths to hunt down and divulge personal information about JoSonja Watson. Freeman says that some of the information released was irrelevant. I realize Watson was not running for president, or a seat on the Supreme Court, but why do you feel stealing or trying to obtain a fake I.D. would not have any effect on her ability as vice president?

If Bills and Watson felt the "trill trouble" ordeal was so irrelevant, then why didn't they make it known before the election and let the students make their choice. I'm not saying Watson has to be a "God-abiding, lawful, clear-thinking, virginal example of perfection," because the majority of us are not.

As ASUO vice president though, she should have set some sort of example. Freeman is right, "We exist in Eugene, Oregon and Eugene, Oregon, only." So "on this small campus that claims to be so accepting and diverse and welcoming, particularly of those of different ethnicities, beliefs and backgrounds" can't we find someone who is worthy of being a leader, and not someone who made some "dumb" mistake?

Maybe Watson was a "victim of her past, her inexperience and her foolishness," but she should not try to amend her mistakes by "serving in the ASUO and growing as a person" as Freeman states, but by admitting to those mistakes and trying to correct them. That's how you grow as a person.

Robert Goyette
Student

Blind

It is good to see JoSonja Watson has good friends to support her in difficult times, but it is unfortunate she and her supporters are blind to her situation.

In her press conference, she admonishes "those that would play in the mud rather than focus attention to valid issues" (*ODE*, Feb. 5). The "valid" is sued are the only things relevant here, and her politics are the most important issue, not race or criminal activities.

The fact is that she stole from the student body, and these facts were used only as a vehicle, much like the spotted owl is used as a vehicle by the radical environmentalist movement to eliminate the timber industry. This tool helped expose the

hypocrisy of our liberal leaders, this eliminating one of them from elected office.

It is time our leaders came back to reality and more broadly represented their constituents, no matter how few people voted for them.

Andrew Schrenk
Chemistry

Experiments

I would like to respond to Mike Freeman's column (*ODE*, Feb. 6) written in defense of our ASUO vice president JoSonja Watson.

In your column you make several excuses for why the student body should overlook Watson's mistakes ranging from saying her mistakes were small (they were not) to we have all made similar foolish immature mistakes.

We have all made mistakes, to be sure; we have not applied for fake ID cards! We have not shoplifted. The recall effort is only a small example of how the public feels about its politicians.

Our government was designed to consist of the very best representatives of a given community. On the national scene, Americans are tired of being represented by people who are not living up to that standard.

Here at the University Watson's past behavior has indicated that she is not the best representative of our community. The best representatives of our community make sure they are not overpaid, do not take advantage of their position to receive extra payment.

This is unfortunately not how politicians function, but it is how they should function.

Watson should be allowed to experiment within the student government, experiment with excellence with maturity and with honesty. Her recall was not race-based, it was a result of a larger problem a general lack of excellence within the ASUO.

Luke Pingel
Psychology