

Either cast a ballot or don't complain

Today and Thursday University students once again will go to the polls. The question is, how many?

Last week, Bobby Lee and Karmen Fore captured the ASUO Executive race with just 1,237 votes — a paltry 7 percent mandate of the 16,905 University students. In all, 2,292 students, or 13.5 percent of the total, voted.

This is no criticism or downplaying of the Lee/Fore ticket's victory. They garnered 57 percent of votes cast. They won hands down. End of story.

Or it's "end of story" as far as the executive race is concerned. IFC seats, Student Senate slots, EMU Board representatives and a full slate of ballot measures are on tap in the general election.

Will there be a miraculous turnaround of voter interest? Will students go to the polls and actually take some responsibility for electing ASUO leaders?

Don't hold your breath.

Primary elections, like the one last week, traditionally don't get a high turnout. Some voters wait until the political wheat is separated from the wanna-be chaff. Then they'll cast a ballot.

But don't look for the percentage vote to change much. It might creep into the 20 percent range — still pitifully low.

Why? On a campus with so much activism and where political and interest groups abound, why do the students not even take five minutes out of their schedule to vote?

Apathy and voter demographics are just partial answers. Disinterest might come closer to explaining the truth. The ASUO has become insulated. A common complaint is, "it's always the same people." True, because they're the students who vote.

Fore and Lee, who have expressed a desire to increase student-voter participation, have a tough job. And when things go bad next year, there will be the traditional outcry that "the ASUO doesn't do anything."

If you hear someone complain next year, ask them if they voted. If they didn't, tell them to keep quiet. They have no right to criticize.

There's too much at stake to not vote on the ballot measures. Go to the polls.



OPINION

Experience: accept no substitute

To all students in journalism, and others interested in getting newspaper experience:

Until May 8, the *Oregon Daily Emerald* will be accepting applications for its 1992-93 news staff. We've moved the deadline back, just to make sure we've reached everyone who may be interested in applying. Applications are available at our front desk, EMU Suite 300.

Extending the deadline will also give us a better chance to put together a diverse newsroom that more accurately reflects our audience — one increasingly made up of people of color, non-traditional students, gays and lesbians, among others. In the next couple of weeks, the editor will be speaking with members of ethnic student groups encouraging them, if they're interested, to write for the paper.

Open positions include reporters, copy editors, associate editors, sports writers, editorial page editors and photographers. Because the *Emerald* is independent of the journalism school and the University, there are few academic requirements to work for the paper. Freshmen and graduate students, journalism majors or English, all University students in good standing interested in writing for the paper can give it a try.

Anyone who is not offered one of the 25 staff positions should freelance. Freelance writers work at their own pace,

For the three years The Register-Guard has awarded internships, Emerald writers have filled the position.

and, like staff members, are paid for their efforts.

For all future reporters, editors and photographers, writing for the *Emerald* should be an essential part of the college experience. Here, students learn things they can't learn in a classroom. They write stories, they interview sources, they design pages, they take and develop photos. More than 10,000 people see what they produce the next day making *Emerald* work as hands-on as you can get.

The *Emerald* isn't perfect. We make our share of mistakes, just like any other college newspaper. This isn't the *Wall Street Journal* or *Rolling Stone*, here, we have students who are learning to write and other students who are learning to edit their stories and plan coverage.

However, when you compare the *Emerald* to other student newspapers, it does stand out. Earlier this month, the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association awarded the *Emerald* a first place in general excellence, and another for best design. Eleven individual writers

and photographers won awards for their work as well.

The recognition extends to the national level as well. The Associated College Press in November gave the *Emerald* a first-place award, with a mark of distinction in social leadership, and later gave it national awards in front-page design and coverage. No, we're not perfect, but when compared with our colleagues around the country, we measure up.

And if you want daily newspaper experience, there's really no other game on campus. Getting

a job in the newspaper industry has been tough enough recently, even if you have published clips and experience; try doing so with nothing under your belt. A journalism degree on its own just isn't enough anymore.

Emerald experience might give you the edge you need. For the three years *The Register-Guard* has awarded internships, *Emerald* writers have filled the position. Most of the recent *Oregonian* interns have worked for the campus daily as well.

Sure, going to school is tough, and you may not believe you'll have time to write for the paper. We expect people to work hard, learn from their mistakes and continue to improve with every story. But certainly you can afford to spend 10 to 20 hours a week giving it a try.

Nowadays, you can't afford to ignore the opportunity.

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