

Students deserve money resolution

The University has an extra \$337,000 in the bank, and everybody has an idea of where the money should go.

The existence of the account was reported Dec. 9, after which both the Incidental Fee Committee and the University administration staked a claim to the money. The IFC believes it is student money accumulated from the interest of previous student fees. A study from the administration business office backs up this claim. However, based on recent revelations, nobody really knows where the money came from.

Vice Provost Gerard Moseley said some of the money may have come from a discretionary account controlled by the University president's office. Moseley said he's planning to investigate the source of the funds — a process that may take a while.

When the University has a finished report in its hands, it will decide what to do with the money.

Certainly the University doesn't want to make a rash, uninformed decision. Most groups — including the IFC and the administration — could probably find good uses for the \$337,000. And if one group has a legitimate claim to the money over another, that group should have priority.

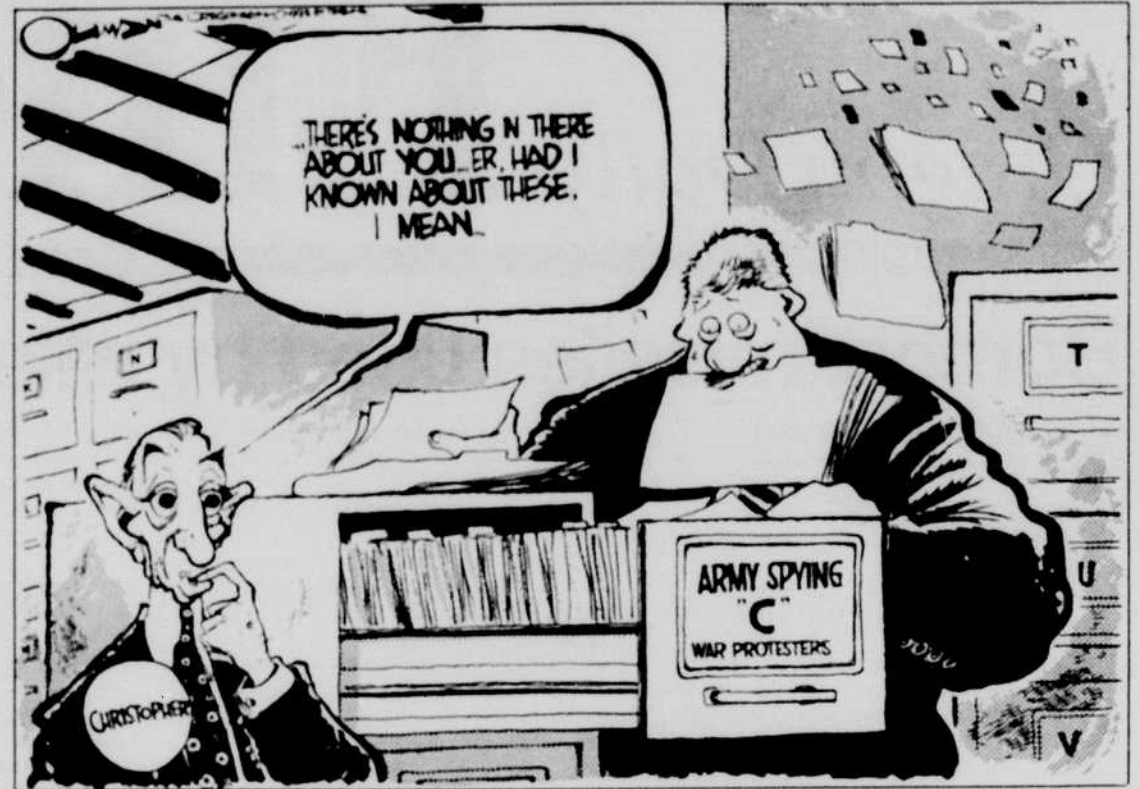
But the University has already stalled enough. Technically, the EMU business office discovered the surplus in June — a full seven months ago. In those seven months, the University has accomplished little more than angering the IFC. The University has had more than enough time to conduct a full investigation. By now, either the IFC or the administration should be enjoying a money windfall.

With tuition rising and budget cuts coming, both groups could use the money. The IFC could offset higher student fees, or perhaps set up an emergency fund. The administration could use it for scholarships, which would also offset higher tuition for many students. And the sooner someone gets it, the easier next year's budget will be to determine.

The administration is putting itself in an awkward position by taking so long. First, administrators could wait until this year's IFC is out of office and then push the money past newly elected members. Or people could interpret the administration's apparent control of the situation as an indication of where the money will eventually end up.

ASUO President Bobby Lee suggested the IFC, ASUO and EMU Board form a committee to investigate the money's origins. At the very least, that would set up a more democratic method of distributing the money. Unless the administration comes up with an indisputable origin for the money, anything it decides by itself will appear self-serving.

The money is there and students are waiting. The last thing students need now is more stalling and quibbling.



COMMENTARY

University trains, doesn't educate

By Eben Fodor

Inspired by the excellent commentary from Daniel Frank (*ODE*, Jan. 5) on the quality of education (or lack thereof) here at the University, I would like to continue in the same spirit. While I readily admit there are many great instructors at this university teaching many great courses, there are also way too many mind-numbing ones.

First of all, are we being educated or are we being trained? Education broadens the mind, expands thinking and frees the spirit. Education gives us the tools by which we can more fully appreciate the world. It creates a framework for evaluating and analyzing complex relationships and interpreting diverse perspectives. It empowers us by developing our innate capabilities.

In contrast, "training" adapts us to fit into society's economic roles. We are trained to become doctors, lawyers, bricklayers or landscapers. We are given the necessary information to perform a designated function. Professors often refer to this as the "real world," and we are led to believe that our only legitimate role in society is to become a cog in the wheel of the great economy.

In my experience, the University has largely become a training institution. As students, we are simply buying our way to a higher station in the economic system. We do not expect to become better people, just better paid.

But even this advantage is fading. Where once our degrees assured a position of some responsibility, now they only assure us of beating out the less-educated job applicant. And we are happy to have any job at all. But jobs are a problem of society. Back to the University.

Many professors teach classes using the wheelbarrow technique. They arrive in class with a wheelbarrow full of facts and proceed to dump this information on the students. Students are supposed to act like sponges and soak up all the information that professors have

dumped. It's a one-way process. No interaction. No integration. No analysis. Just a big swallow. Gulp.

Our minds are treated like computers. We are taught to download vast amounts of data. We are encouraged to memorize, not to understand. To absorb facts, not analyze them. We are taught there is one way. There is one political system, one economic system, one justice system, one nation under God, and only one right answer on the midterm.

Academia thrives on reductionism, differentiation and compartmentalization. All the world can be divided into convenient categories. Supposedly, reducing countries into either "developed" or "undeveloped" categories gives us a greater understanding of the way the world works. Could this instead dull our minds by eliminating the true complexities and nuances of various social and political systems?

I recently heard a professor define life as an "improbable organization of matter." When we reduce the definition of "life" to its most basic characteristics, are we enlightened, or endarkened? The professor went on to talk about phenotypic plasticity and multi-dimensional hyperspeciation. This is one dialect of the language called "science speak."

There are as many languages or dialects as there are academic departments. Words and terms are used to differentiate us from others. Should words act like barriers that block and separate bodies of knowledge? Aren't words intended for communication?

Specialization is encouraged. Generalists are just lost souls

seeking the right field in which to specialize. Interdisciplinary programs are for academic drifters. We are taught any overlap between subject areas should be ardently ignored.

While I might argue economics is simply a branch of philosophy based on broad abstractions, its proponents have built an entire body of knowledge on the assertion that this is a unique and independent area of academic pursuit. But how can we ignore the obvious ties with politics, sociology, history and ethics?

Academia has clearly accepted the supremacy of objective knowledge over subjective knowledge. Objective knowledge always has a correct answer. There is no intuitive solution.

Subjective knowledge has all but been thrown in the waste bin. After all, human beings are capable of complete understanding of the world through systematic, objective analysis, aren't we?

We are taught to be practical. Idealistic pursuits are discouraged. We are told dreaming and wondering are a waste of time. Instead, we should get serious and focus on that which is known and can be proven.

And finally, is our education to be devoid of spirituality? Must we divorce ourselves from the unknown and unknowable dimension of the Universe? We will never know and understand everything and we will never be able to answer the really big questions. Let's admit it. We are humble creatures, and even with a Ph. D., we will never know the meaning of our existence.

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