

No clear mandate for requirement

The state Board of Higher Education wants students to be prepared for the 21st century's society. That certainly is a worthy goal and will require a broad-based education that includes English, math, science and history.

But is foreign language among those subjects? Should it be required that all high school students wanting to attend college be proficient in a foreign language?

According to the board, it should be. On Friday, the board adopted a proposal to require foreign language proficiency for students wanting to enter a state college or university. In other words, high school students would have to take a second language if they wanted to continue their education.

That certainly wouldn't be useless. It would spell out for students the need to compete in an international economy. It would encourage students to understand and study other cultures, thereby broadening their own perspectives. It would also emphasize the importance of communication in a constantly changing global community.

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On a strictly utopian level, this is a good idea. Too many students think the world revolves around the United States and English-speaking people.

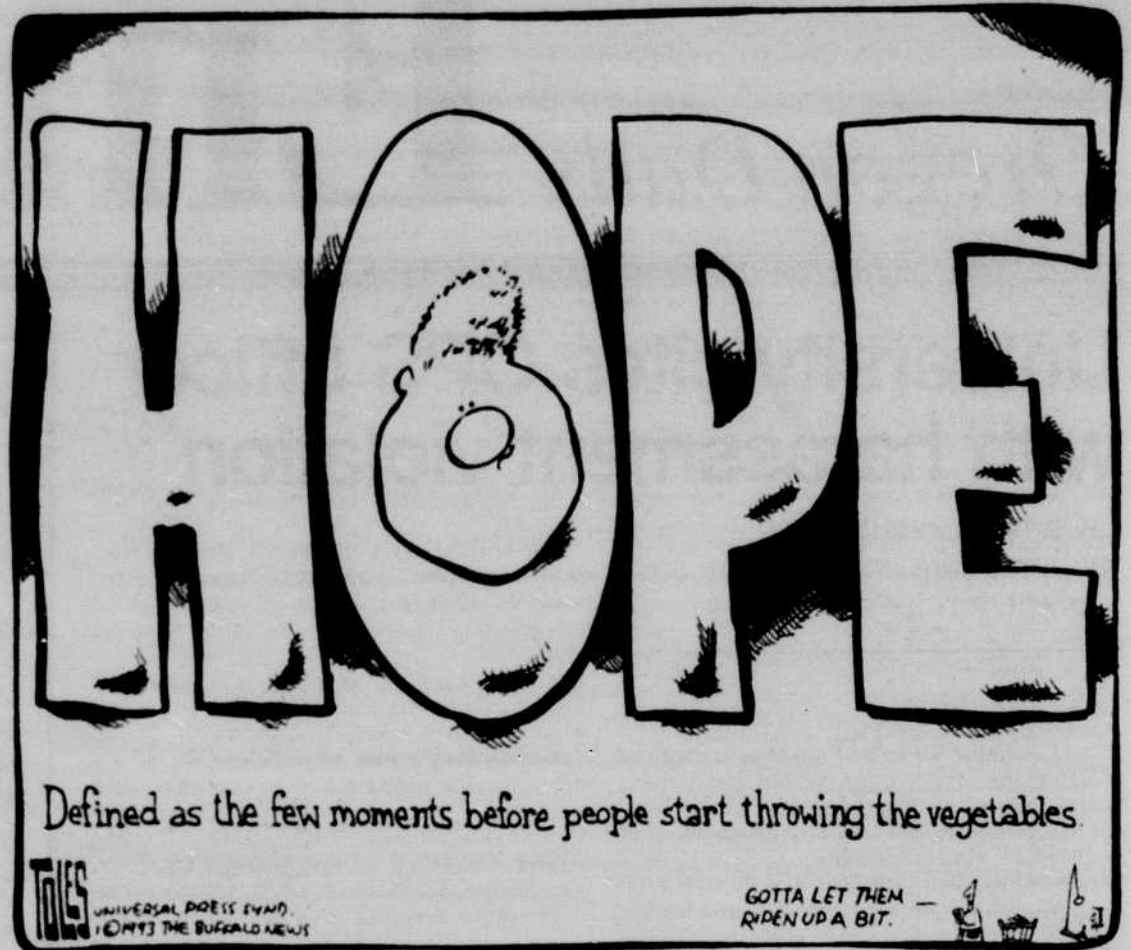
Unfortunately, the problems with the plan outweigh the positives. First, too many students from the state's high schools already lack proficiency in English, math and science to justify adding another requirement. Basic requirements must be solidified before adding new ones.

Second, many people decide early in high school that college is not for them. Either they aren't interested in continuing their education, or they need a little time off. However, a few years later, many of these students decide to come back. Those students would be out of luck because they weren't on the college track through high school.

Third, most college bound students take two years of foreign language anyway. The state board has always recommended foreign language as a desirable subject, and school counselors preach the necessity of learning a foreign language. Therefore, a school can easily emphasize the importance of learning a second language without requiring it.

Finally, the board hasn't satisfactorily defined proficiency. Does it mean taking two years of a foreign language? After two years, one student may not be capable of communicating with a two-year old, yet another may be ready to go to Spain.

Although the importance of taking a foreign language is unquestioned, the state board shouldn't require it. Students should want to take a second language, not have to.



OPINION

Sorry, but I'm not a Euro-American



I have recently come to the realization that life at the University is really quite simple — if you're schizophrenic. Waving the flag of diversity, the University has created an environment where nobody is sure of who they are or what they stand for.

To create an environment that embraces every possible variation of cultures and lifestyles is a noble cause, one in which the University community has failed miserably.

Rather than fostering harmony and understanding, factionalization has divided groups into sub-groups, creating a belief system that says, "I am more diverse than you; therefore, I am a better person."

The University has gained a reputation as, if nothing else, the Northwest's focal point for ultra-liberalism. Although the activist crowd may seem omnipresent throughout the University and Eugene, their numbers are deceiving.

In reality, the University's reputation as a bastion for radical leftists is perpetuated by an extremely vocal minority. This becomes evident after attending two or three demonstrations, protests, rallies or whatever they choose to call their gathering that day.

What becomes evident is that all these events are attended by the same people. There are perhaps 50 or so students at the University who apparently major in "Protest Arts" and are capable of rallying another 200 mindless cattle around them whenever the whim strikes.

Unknown to most people outside the University, most stu-

dents are just that — students — and are too busy trying to graduate to take five minutes out of their day to scream incoherently into a microphone or smash a few government windows.

But why is any of this an issue, and how does it affect life for University students? The answer is simple. The public is being fed an inaccurate picture of the University as a training ground for domestic terrorists and, when asked to provide funding for the training ground, is likely to refuse.

Such perceptions can also create difficulty for graduates searching for jobs. Many employers may be turned off at the prospect of hiring someone who may attempt to politicize the work place, someone who will set their social and political goals ahead of those of the employer.

Although this vocal minority of students may actually believe they are doing some good, they fail to realize (or refuse to accept) the potential damage they cause the University and their fellow students.

They also fail to recognize the hypocrisy of protesting against the very institutions that allow them the opportunity to have enough free time to protest. Were it not for the University or the federal government, both of which fund these students' educations, they would be too busy trying to survive and would be unavailable for protests.

So, bear in mind that while you attend the University, the eyes of the state are upon you. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to break down the stereotype you are expected to follow while here, and be your own person.

Unsure how to do this? Allow me to set a precedent, with myself as the example. Contrary to what I have been told, I am not a Euro-American. I am simply an American, no hyphens, thank you. Granted, my ancestors came from Europe, but only after being sold by a German

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landlord to a Russian landlord and then escaping Josef Stalin's purges.

Actually, this bit of history alone could serve as an excuse for me to claim the politically correct moniker of "victim," but I choose not to. Aside from the fact that if I went to Russia, there would be absolutely no trace of my ancestors that survived the purges; I have little to complain about.

Some people would doubtlessly try to pin the label "German-American" on me, if only I would let them. Because some of my ancestors were German does not mean I will beer, eat sausage and wear lederhosen every October. My attachment to Germanic culture goes no deeper than the two years of high-school German that I failed miserably.

Simply because some people I am related to were from Europe, does not mean I have to accept this label and whatever baggage comes with it.

If being your own person means you are not one of the vocal minority, fear not. The University now has a whole set of classes designed to eradicate your personality and replace it with a politically correct model. All you need to supply is a weak mind. Check your spring class schedule for details.

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