

Programs too costly for most students

Next Tuesday and Wednesday, students will vote on nine student-sponsored ballot measures. Five involve increasing incidental fees. Although each has merits, only one of the five should pass.

Measure 4 asks students to pay \$6 per term for an LTD pass. Fine. Off-campus students deserve cheap transportation to and from school. And if other students don't use the pass, they can get a full refund shortly after the term starts, or a partial refund within the term.

The other four fee measures aren't as justifiable, not because they aren't conceptually valid but because they involve increasing non-refundable student fees, which this paper soundly opposes.

Students must pay \$103 every term in student fees already, in addition to \$804 per quarter for tuition, the level of which has increased steadily — about 30 percent — since 1990's Ballot Measure 5. And tuition will continue to skyrocket as higher education adjusts to this newer, leaner tax base.

In other words, many students can hardly afford to attend school anymore. Some have to postpone their education to earn money for tuition, others quit completely. Increasing student fees along with tuition just doesn't make sense.

Proponents of the measures will say that each program requires a relatively small increase. True. However, several small increases add up to one large increase. The four measures would add a combined \$4.13 per quarter, \$12.39 for the year. And keep in mind that incidental fees could be higher next year, depending on the this year's IFC budget allocations. It adds up.

In addition, it would be wise symbolically to level fees rather than raise them. Every year, students campaign for ASUO and IFC positions by saying that student fees will go down. If they actually *do* decrease, students will be grateful that even a little burden is being lifted. For once, it will feel like student government genuinely identifies with the student body. As was the case with the now-defunct columns near the entrance of University Street, the image of saving money can often be more important than saving money itself.

The Multicultural Center, the Sexual Assault Exam Fund, the Family Center and the Non-traditional Student Office are all valid programs and offer needed support for various campus factions. But all need to find alternative sources of funding, whether it comes from fundraisers, alumni donations or outside grants. Student fees are high enough.

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OPINION

Action needed now on Measure 5



How do you feel the Legislature is handling the current budget problems with respect to Measure 5? Explain what students can expect in the coming years with the changing scope of state higher education.

There is a large cloud overhead. I am speaking figuratively and not about the rain clouds we have seen in the past few weeks. The name of that cloud is "Measure 5."

Measure 5, for those who have been asleep, is the property tax limitation legislation that was passed in November 1990 through the initiative process. Without detailing all the particulars of this complex legislation, it suffices to say that it results in significantly decreased funding to all state agencies. Higher education is a state agency.

At the University, the decreased funding from the state resulted in closing most of our teacher education programs, the College of Human Development and Performance and the downsizing of 20 other programs, plus substantial tuition hikes. All of that occurred in the first biennium. Measure 5 was in effect. The cuts increase geometrically for the next few biennia, and the cuts for the third biennium, 1995-97, are so draconian that it

is almost impossible to think or talk about them.

To solve this problem, there must be tax stabilization — that is new legislation that halts the decrease in state revenues. That can occur in either of two ways: the State Legislature taking action or Oregon voters approving another initiative.

Unfortunately, many are beginning to doubt the Legislature will be able to break out of its current gridlock. With the current split between the House and Senate and the divergent ideological stances of the two political parties, the opportunity for compromise and action is not great. I hope the immediate future proves me wrong, but do not count on it.

No one, however, should conclude that the only remaining option available to us is to become depressed and tune out or drop out, either metaphorically or actually. Although the Legislature itself may not resolve the crisis, it can help open the door for voters to resolve the issues through the initiative process.

Legislative leaders can work with the private sector, especially the business community, and the public sector, including the schools, higher education and labor, to craft a proposal acceptable to the general public. Surveys have shown that the most acceptable tax stabilization plan is one that involves a sales tax dedicated to education (primarily the schools, but perhaps also higher education), with the exemptions needed to make it progressive, such as exempting

food, shelter and medicine. Legislative leaders also need to assist in assuring that such a proposal is voted upon sooner, rather than later. A good outcome would be a tax stabilization proposal on the ballot this fall.

As a growing number of people begin to realize the depth of the problem, we are seeing some movement toward a solution, though we are not yet there. We need to continue to find ways to encourage that important change of outlook. I pledge to do all in my power to bring about this change and to hope everyone at the University will continue to take advantage of every opportunity to be helpful in resolving this crisis.

We can each help by continuing to remind our elected state officials that we want to be able to vote on tax stabilization in the very near future. When our chance comes, when a good alternative finally reaches the ballot, we should be prepared to work for its passage and to VOTE.

It is up to us, all of us, and not merely to the state Legislature, to fix the problem. What the initiative process has wrought, so can the initiative process repair. After all, only all our futures depend on it.

Myles Brand is president of the University.

Editor's note: Brand agreed to take part in the "Ask the President" columns, in which the Emerald forwards a question to the President's Office for Brand's response.

LETTERS

Agenda exposed

The Emerald's attacks against the Incidental Fee Committee and its chairman, Steve Masat, seek to promote a political agenda aimed at taking power away from students. The Emerald's news reporting on IFC affairs this year has been characterized by bad reporting and outright misrepresentation to suit the ends of a few student editors.

Its diatribes against Masat are especially wrongheaded and misplaced. Masat is one of the few voices of sanity in a student government characterized by a profound lack of leadership and direction. Under his leadership, the IFC has provided minimal financial support for numerous programs that serve and empower students.

At the same time, the IFC has attempted to save students'

money and promote empowerment by taking a critical look at the EMU's super top-heavy management structure and its long-term plans to fire student workers and bust the union at the EMU.

Masat and the IFC deserve our support. These are the people who have been fighting for the interests of all students.

Jason Moore
Editor, Student Insurgent

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