

IFC action justified; court has last word

The Incidental Fee Committee, notorious for its lack of focus and direction this year, took a bold step toward returning credibility to the group when it ousted Chairman Steve Masat Friday.

Masat, the only member who would have returned next year, has been a disruptive influence on the IFC allocation process and student government as a whole. His attempt to expand his power to micro manage the EMU is directly responsible for the administration's decision to remove the EMU's budget from IFC control.

The EMU's budget is \$2.2 million, about one-third of student incidental fees. Hopefully, the administration will consider the IFC's removal of Masat a sign that the committee can once again be trusted with the EMU's budget.

Evidence of Masat's disruptive influence on student government was made glaringly evident at Monday's IFC meeting, which began with Masat and *Student Insurgent*-editor-turned-Masat-attack-dog Jason Moore deriding IFC members with personal attacks and innocuous cries of injustice.

Jackie Gibson of the Mediation Program tried her best to maintain a sense of order at the raucous affair, but was hopelessly ineffective between two sides that refused to compromise. In fact, it took Officer Otis Scarborough of the University Office of Public Safety to clear the room, including ejecting Masat.

If Masat were interested in seeing justice, he would take his complaint to the ASUO Constitution Court. However, justice is not the issue here — rather, power and one person's self-serving agenda are the driving forces at work. If Masat truly believed the committee's decision was illegal, he wouldn't be so frightened to have the issue ultimately decided by the Constitution Court.

The confused tag-team of Masat and Moore attempted several imaginative interpretations of IFC rules, the ASUO Constitution and Robert's Rules of Order to justify the ever-changing foundation for their claims of injustice.

Waving Robert's Rules like a flag, Moore attempted to tell the IFC that the book of *suggested* parliamentary procedure superseded the committee's own rules. Then he and Masat attempted to get the IFC to declare the Constitution Court's lifting of Friday's injunction prohibiting the ouster of Masat to be illegal.

Near the end of Monday's meeting, Moore presented the IFC with two memos from the registrar's office stating constitution court members and third-year law students Paul Loving and William Portello are not currently enrolled. No kidding. Law school ended more than a week ago. No law students are currently enrolled.

Moore intended to suggest the two court members did not have the authority to lift Friday's injunction, issued by Justice Michael O'Leary. However, the ASUO Constitution states a court member's term expires upon leaving or graduation from the University. Thus, the question is not whether they are enrolled. It's did they graduate and what is their current status with the University?

Law school grades are not official until June 1. Also, if the justices owe the University any money, does the University consider them "gone"? Anyone who has dealt with Oregon Hall's collections department knows the answer to that one.

But regardless of any action taken by Moore, Masat, the IFC or the current Constitution Court, the final decision will be left to next year's court. In the meantime, Masat should accept his current fate until a new court can be appointed and rule on the issue.



COMMENTARY

Definitions absent from debate

By Eric Ward, Brian Hoop and Jonah Bookstein

The movement at the University for a revised race, gender, and non-European requirement has been derailed.

Lost amid the squalor of divisive debate on the subject of the new requirement has been a vision of our long term goals. The intention of the supporters of the proposed revision was to implement fundamental curricular change designed to incorporate the complex realities of race and ethnic relations in the United States.

Hope that our academic community could come together on this important issue vanished in a flurry of criticisms on the cost of the requirement, a debate on anti-Semitism and the political nature of the proposed requirements.

Absent from this discussion about racism and anti-Semitism were concrete definitions. What is the nature of racism? What is race? What is anti-Semitism? What do we mean when we say something is multicultural?

Progressives, people of color and Jews themselves have difficulty answering these questions. We as a university community must reexamine the process by which our goal can be achieved.

We have come to the conclusion that we need a requirement that focuses on systems of oppression in the United States on the basis of perceived biological differences, how and why these peoples face oppression and how that oppression is secured by political, cultural and economic systems.

A buffet style multicultural framework — where students study another culture, gender or people in an effort to create a tolerant society — does not force us to confront racism and anti-Semitism.

Classes that study the contribution of African-Americans or other oppressed peoples are fine for a new and improved Ethnic Studies department. But we can study African-American history and still be racists. We can study Jewish cultural symbols and still be anti-Semites. The liberal position — opening yourself to other cultures — is not even a first step to understanding racism.

Because of our failure to recognize that multiculturalism does not address racism or anti-Semitism, those who wished to flee the arena of discourse were able

to force a wedge between Jews, white progressives and people of color.

Racism and anti-Semitism are different than multiculturalism. Racism involves having the power to carry out systematic discriminatory practices through major institutions of society and by individuals based on skin color.

Anti-Semitism, like racism, has long been ignored and denied by most segments in American society. By anti-Semitism, we mean, "the systematic discrimination against, denigration, or oppression of Jews, Judaism and the cultural, intellectual and religious heritage of the Jewish people" (Lerner 1992). Like racism, anti-Semitism can be subtle or overt.

In the United States, anti-Semitism has historically taken the form of Christians referring to Jews as "Christ Killers," institutionally denying college and university access to Jewish people, blaming all Jews for the policies of the state of Israel, believing that Jews have some monolithic power to control society, and most pertinently, continually placing Jewish people in the middle of struggles of power between those who have real power and those who do not.

This pattern of anti-Semitism tainted the last University Assembly debate on the proposed revisions to the Race and Gender requirement at the University. When faculty rightfully raised the concern that anti-Semitism was not being properly addressed, this handed the mainly white faculty another convenient reason to avoid complex dialogue on racism in the United States. The net result: we once again scapegoated the Jewish people.

Whether by conscious intent or naiveté, the issue of anti-Semitism was an effective barrier to establishing a serious commitment to racial and ethnic discourse at the University.

This does not mean the question over anti-Semitism is not legitimate — but some who raised and supported the subject did so only to keep the University in the academic dark ages dodging issues of racism and ethnic oppression.

We all need to educate ourselves. We continue to limit debate on racism and anti-Semitism around the issue of who is able and who is unable to assimilate, voluntarily or involuntarily, into the dominant white culture. Instead we must criticize

that system which forces people to abandon their ethnic cultures.

Within the redefinition of our goals — to create a more tolerant society — must be a clarification of the terms we use to describe our identity groups. Jews are a people, not a race. African-Americans are a people, not a race.

Peoples share common histories, language, cultural similarities, ties to ancestral lands and sacred myths. By defining Jews, Blacks, Chicanos, Indians, Asians, and Arab-Americans as peoples, we embrace a group in their entirety and refuse to use purely superficial, biologically false models.

The call for a revision of the race, gender, and non-European requirement was only one segment of a multifaceted approach to implementing comprehensive change. No one supporting this effort ever assumed changes to the requirement would be a solve-all solution to each student's indifference to racial and ethnic conflict in the United States. The requirement is only one step in a wide range of institutional change needed to commit ourselves to combating systematic racist oppression in the United States.

Included in the original goals were 1) a fully funded Ethnic Studies department with ten tenured faculty members; 2) increased recruitment and retention efforts for hiring of faculty of color and faculty in Judaic Studies; 3) scholarship and support programs for graduate students of color; and 4) an Interdisciplinary Curriculum Development Institute to collaborate faculty expertise on new and existing ethnic studies curriculum.

Both the struggles for an inclusive curriculum and a requirement that specifically addresses racism and anti-Semitism are essential. People of color, Jews, and white progressives must refuse to be drawn into the ideological battle with faculty who are afraid to move into the 21st Century, clinging to the old laws of racial discourse where "minorities" enter at the backdoor of the house and Jews are convenient scapegoats when things get too hot in the kitchen.

Brian Hoop is a member of the Student Senate. Eric Ward is a founding member of *Communities Against Hate*. Jonah Bookstein is a member of the Jewish Student Union.

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