

Student senators should retain seats

The University Assembly Committee on Governance Reform, headed by associate fine arts professor Laura Alpert, meets today to plan a series of campus forums that will give students and faculty a voice in making changes to the University Assembly and University Senate.

The assembly, a body of more than 1,000 members that includes faculty and the 18 members of the Student Senate, and the University Senate, which is currently made up of 36 faculty members and the 18 student senators, makes decisions on curriculum and other important issues. These student senators provide the student body with an important voice in the workings of the University.

Currents have been stirring among faculty in both bodies to reduce half the number of students sitting on the University Senate. Faculty, it seems, has lost respect for student representatives. A string of unreasonable zealots have led some faculty assembly members to conclude students are an impediment to responsible governance.

Students will lose a valuable opportunity if the foibles of their forbearers cost them these seats. An education in democracy ensures that students become responsible citizens capable of stepping into the leadership roles that await them. Reducing the number of students on the University Senate runs contrary to this democratic ideal, and deprives students of the opportunity to learn the mechanics of governing.

Strong beliefs poorly researched and ardently promoted endanger student representation. Too often, student representatives have been under prepared, less than cooperative and ignorantly enthusiastic.

Last year Student Senator Hillary Aitken sat on the Assembly Committee on Multicultural Education that wrote the new multicultural curriculum requirement. Aitken impeded the pace of ACME by coming to meetings without a thorough understanding of or, it seemed, a desire to grasp the important and complex decisions facing the committee. She compounded her ignorance by loudly insisting on her prejudgments — holding up votes and discussions with opinions she brought into the room, headless of the faculty members' reasoned debate.

Current Student Senate President Martin Fisher is committed to changing the faculty's perceptions of student representatives. He hopes the student senators will not sit together or vote as a block. By promoting the image of students as reasonable, open-minded adults rather than adolescent ideologues who blindly vote along popular lines, Fisher hopes to preserve the 18-seat student voices on the University Senate.

Aitken should serve as a warning to this year's student senators. Democracy requires more than simply voting your opinions. Responsible representatives must openly discuss and defend their opinions as well as voice them.



LETTERS

Library needed

A recount has confirmed that the measure to build a new Eugene Public Library fell short by a handful of votes in the November election. The margin of defeat was so narrow that the EMU precinct's under-vote (ballots cast by voters who skipped this measure) could have easily changed the outcome.

We would like to stress that the need for a new public library will not go away. Of the state's major cities, only Eugene has added no public library space since the 1950s. In that time, the city's population has more than doubled, and the public library's circulation has increased by a factor of six.

It is interesting to note that University students check out nearly as many books each year from the crowded, 1950s-vintage Eugene Public Library as from the University's spacious, modern Knight Library. Many of the public library's popular novels, travel guides, children's books, and other materials are simply not available in a university library designed for research purposes.

We would like to thank the hundreds of dedicated volunteers who gave their time, energy and resources in the recent library campaign. With each election, Eugene has moved closer to endorsing a bond measure.

The longer Eugene delays building an adequate, cost-effective, up-to-date public library, the greater the need will become.

Anne Carter
President, Eugene
Public Library Foundation

Abortion wrong

It seems ironic when I read today's front page (*Register-Guard*, Dec. 7). A man is being sentenced to death, having committed the crime of murder. Yet there are so many who commit this crime and are not punished at all. Men like the one who was the victim, in this particular case.

Murder is a particular kind of action. This action may not even cause a person's death for

some time (infecting someone with AIDS, for example), but it is still murder. Yet at least one such action is still quite legal, and in many cases even supported by our government against innocent Americans!

When an action alters the future well-being of any human, a crime has been committed. So, a woman sits in a clinic today. If no action were taken, she would have a healthy baby in five months. Yet in a few moments, a deliberate action will be taken to ensure that this is not going to be the case. I agree, let's not delve into this woman's body. But in five months, I'm going to expect an investigation. Where is the baby? It was, by logical definition, murdered. But not by the law of our once blessed country.

I think there are lots of people much more worthy of the death penalty than the man I read about today. And they would say the same thing. "I've done nothing wrong."

Bob Weigel
Eugene

Care limited

Jennifer Ulum, spokeswoman for Sacred Heart General Hospital, repeated the mantra "Not on our time, property or by our physicians," when she explained hospital policy forbidding doctor assisted suicide (*ODE*, Dec. 5). Three weeks ago another Sacred Heart Hospital spokeswoman, Bev Mayhew, intoned the same "Not on our time, property or by our physicians" dictum forbidding artificial insemination or abortion. Both Ulum and Mayhew prefaced their comments with concerns about meeting community needs, but the reality is that the Vatican's sledge hammer is closing more doors to legal medical services.

If physicians at Eugene Clinic and Women's Care PC are forced, financially, to join Sacred Heart they'll be forbidden from providing these three medical services. Citizens concerned about Sacred Heart erecting unreasonable barriers to safe, legal medical care must make their voices heard. Urge Sacred Heart to put substance behind its so-called concerns

about community health needs by at least not forbidding "its" physicians from providing these services at facilities away from the main hospital premises.

Sacred Heart gobbles deeply from the public trough via its tax exempt status as a "non-profit" religious institution. Now it bites the very hands of the public from which it feeds.

Call or write physicians at Eugene Clinic and Women's Care PC. Contact Sacred Heart to reverse its irresponsible stance that potentially prevents patients from seeing their own physicians for these medical services.

Sacred Heart's monopolistic, oppressive attitude is akin to words spoken 1,995 years ago — "There's no room for you at the inn." Slam!

Carol Berg
Eugene

Gender or sex?

From the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary*:

gender, n., grammatical classification or one of classes (masculine, feminine, neuter) roughly corresponding to two sexes and sexlessness.

From Fowler's *Modern English Usage*:

gender, n., is a grammatical term only. To talk of persons or creatures of the masculine or feminine g., meaning of the male or female sex, is either a jocularity (permissible or not according to context) or a blunder.

Contrary to popular misconception, words in and of themselves cannot be sexist, only genderish. Similarly, an employer cannot hire or not hire on the basis of gender, but rather on the basis of sex. Furthermore, to insist that the gender of our words rigorously—not-loosely matches the sex of the items referred to is chauvinism, which Webster defines as "excessive devotion to a cause or ideal." A ship may be called she, the pronoun he may sometimes embrace a woman, and either sex may hold the position of chairman without requiring the change of his job title to a piece of furniture.

Earl Gosnell
Eugene

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