

## Include all students in center's mission

The debate over multiculturalism has, at times, divided this campus. At a University Assembly meeting last year, professors almost resorted to duking it out because they disagreed on the subject.

Even with the emotionally charged debate that surrounds multiculturalism, voters on this campus last spring approved an operating budget for the newly opened Multicultural Center's first year.

The center opened last semester and members of the big four student unions were appointed to run the center. We applaud the decision to hire these people to head the center. After all, the center grew out of plans and proposals from those same student unions.

This center was built with money from the now-defunct Incidental Fee Committee, which agreed to kick in \$50,000 and \$50,000 in matching funds from the University administration.

When the administration agreed to help build the center, the only condition was the center would "raise elements of different cultures up for review and discussion," said Gerard Moseley, vice provost for academic support and student services.

Our hope is that the center will do just that.

In a letter distributed by five MEChA members to members of the Black Student Union, the Native American Student Union and the Asian/Pacific American Student Union, the authors wrote, "What business do white people ... have being on the center's board anyway." We hope this is not the attitude that prevails at the center.

The directors of the center should see it as a way to make all students, especially white students, aware of the triumphs, struggles and uniqueness of other cultures.

Isn't that what the struggle for multiculturalism is all about?

We want every person of every ethnic background to feel that his or her heritage is important and valued.

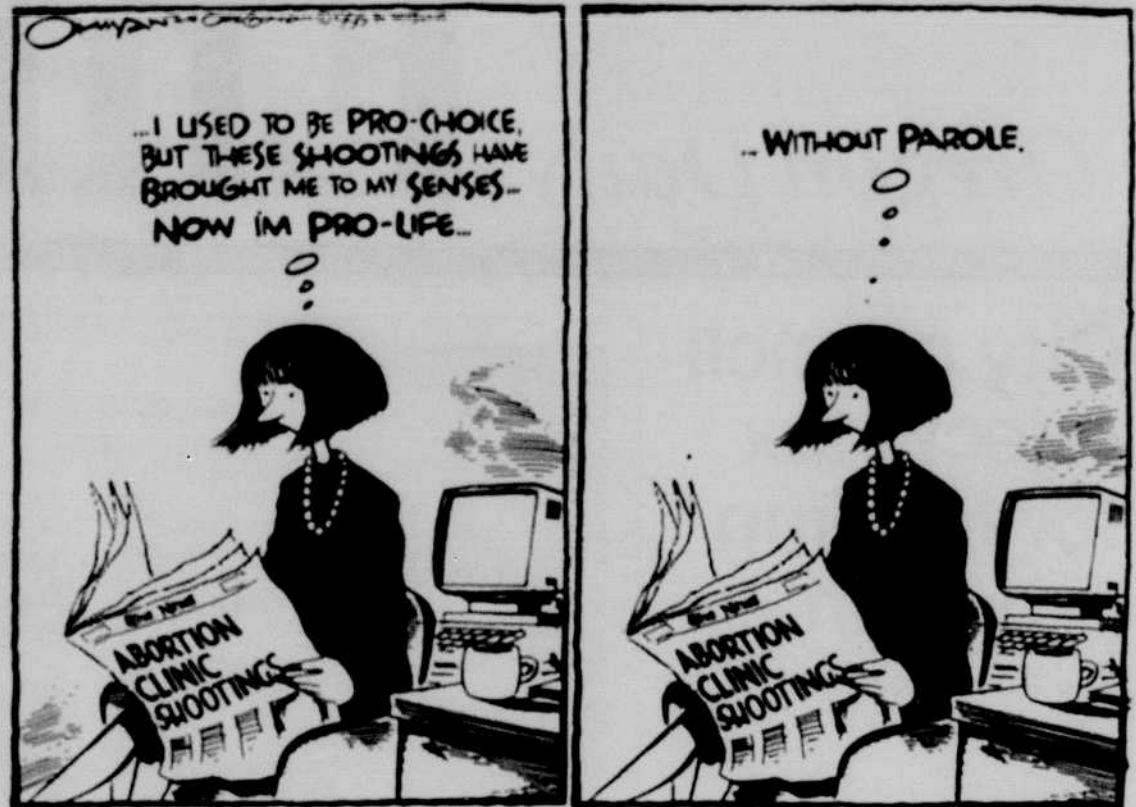
If we shut the door on any one culture we close our hearts and our minds to the value of that culture. They will in turn shut the door on ours. We all have to live in this country and on this campus together; the more familiar we are with each other's struggles and cultures the easier it will be to do so.

We are coming up on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. King preached non-violence and equality.

As a society we have not yet reached that goal, and putting separatist policies into place will not help. It will only make the chasm between the ethnic groups bigger.

The Multicultural Center has the potential to be a place of education and understanding for all students on this campus. The name says it all: Multicultural, being of many cultures.

We hope it will live up to its potential.



### OPINION

## Sports get priority at University

Since the recent excitement over the Rose Bowl, it has occurred to me to express some concern over the place of college sports at the modern college campus.

The United States as a nation has always placed a high importance on sports in general, especially football. The college community doesn't seem to be an exception. It seems that sports have a disproportionately high place relative to the purpose of the University.

College sports, football specifically, appears to attract more attention, both locally and statewide, than any other college event.

When was the last time people turned out by the thousands to see the invocation of the new University president or the completion of the Knight Library renovation?

From an informal perspective, academics have been given a back seat to the college's sprawling athletics department.

At the very least, we should be concerned because the word "university," according to my dictionary, means "an institution for higher learning with teaching and research facilities constituting graduate and professional schools ..." the operative terms being "learning" and "teaching."

Yet, from what I read in the newspaper and from what I know about the administration of college sports, the University is no longer for "teaching and learning" — it is for "playing and winning."

Still, it is comforting that the school is prepping their players for life after college. Students are recruited aggressively from high school to play on college teams, tempted with scholarships. These players aren't pursued for their intellectual ability, but for where they can place the team in next year's playoffs.

This can't be cheap for the athletic department. Nor can it be cheap for the University to have students on campus that were preferentially admitted on condition they would play sports for the school.

I separate the two entities, the University and the athletic



PAUL VAN SICKLE

department because school athletics must be granted an enormous amount of independence in order to have the budget and power of admissions that it has.

My freshman year, I e-mailed former University president Myles Brand to ask him about his salary. He responded by saying when someone has obtained a certain station and responsibility in life, it is often rewarded with the appropriate compensation. In his case, it was a \$100,000 a year, plus housing, etc.

Football coach Rich Brooks does similarly well, that is, in the \$100,000 range.

I wonder then, does his position in life and responsibility reward him with such compensation? His responsibility is to assemble a college football team and push them to an athletic performance that will win a lot.

I don't want to belittle such a responsibility, yet I am curious as to what this elephantine responsibility means to the University. Publicity? Money? Prestige? Academic improvement?

The answer to the latter is no. Winning a bowl game does not a great university make. Even the millions given to the school upon reaching Rose Bowl status

never saw the library, the romance languages, or even the school's highly rated biology department.

Rather, I speculate the money went to flying the team to Pasadena, feeding them steak dinners and new band uniforms for their appearance at the game.

Still, I'm not bitter. I have never been much of a sports fan, particularly since I came to the University. My concern stems solely from the lack of connection I see between college sports

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and higher education.

The way I see it, a college education is too expensive already without resources being spent on trying to get to the next bowl game or becoming national basketball champions.

I only wish some of that money could be reallocated for general student use, even for those students who don't go to football games.

The ancient Romans promoted public games because they would entertain the people and keep them from causing trouble in the city or otherwise inciting rebellion. What is the University's excuse?

Paul Van Sickle is a columnist for the Emerald.

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The *Oregon Daily Emerald* welcomes letters and commentaries from the public concerning topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

Commentaries should be between 600 and 800 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the commentary is submitted.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

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