

## Environmental studies left with few choices

■ **OUR OPINION:** Debate has ended; program must accept negatives

There is a new controversy on campus that's not about problems in the dance program or Gordon Smith's campus visitations. This controversy involves the environment. No, it does not involve the Riverfront Research Park, but the environmental studies department's plan to move from Condon to the basement of Pacific.

At first glance, it is difficult to see why the environmental studies program is not pleased with the move. After all, they will soon occupy not three rooms, but four, nearly doubling their square footage to 2,400 — quite an improvement for a program that has only been in existence for one year.

There is not an overabundance of office space on campus; many organizations do not have any office space at all. What are all of these environmentalists complaining about? Well, the environment in the basement of Pacific.

According to Richard Gale, the program director, an atmosphere of gray unfinished cement blocks and fluorescent lights, like the one in the basement, resembles a prison. He's correct when he says that the University Space Committee could not have selected a more symbolically inappropriate location.

It is definitely understandable how directing prospective majors and professors into a basement with tiny windows would limit the department's propensity for prestige. You can almost

hear the faculty advisor now, "Oh, so you want to work outside, breathe fresh air and help save the environment instead of destroying it? Well, hop on down into our dark cave and breathe the stale air while we sign you up for our program."

The benefits of the new location, such as space, are outweighed by the location itself. According to Gale, there is more to life than space. Apparently, the University Space Committee did not inform Gale of the time when the relocation would be on their agenda.

Nonetheless, the University Space Committee has made its decision. It selected a location to accommodate the entire campus' need for more classroom space and the program's future growth. The University has allocated \$30,000 for renovations of the basement. It has done its best to please all parties. But Gale said he would only be pleased if the program can stay in their current location until there is space available in the law school in three years.

But the registrar and the anthropology program are reclaiming the two rooms they donated to the program to transform them into classrooms, leaving the program with only one room in Condon. There is no way a program this large will be able to function in only one room.

Although it is unclear why the new classrooms in Pacific would not be sufficient, the department should start accepting the relocation because unfortunately, they have no other alternative.



## The Emerald: We deal with it daily!

This column is dedicated to you, gentle reader, and to all that you do. You who mock our mission statement and belittle our bylines. You who flip to your horoscope and then don't even recycle the remainder. This is for all the hate mail you submitted, and for the fan letters you didn't. This is for the snipes, the slurs, the quips. It's for leaving soggy piles of our bonus inserts to collect around the dispensers. It's for every solipsistic campus rag that ever called the *Emerald* amateurish. It's for making 'Oregon Daily Emerroid' stick. This is everything only a columnist can get away with saying.

I have been at this University, off and on, since 1990. I have seen the *Emerald* survive six different editors-in-chief and a half dozen generations of staffers. I have seen small improvements, great improvements, backslides and avalanches. Just this year, I've seen the *Emerald* take home a national award for Best of Show. I've also seen it publish a hard-hitting cover story about quilts — twice.

The *Emerald* has been universally despised since its inception, when it was begun as a method of improving the commentary papers. The campus network of papers has established a finely-tuned feeding chain patterned on the Donner party buffet: devour the fattest first. The *Emerald* has always been at the bottom of the pyramid. It's the harmless herbivore, the bunny that never talks back. Misplaced dignity prevents it from responding to the cannibalism of its counterparts.

In the slumber party-like print environment of the University, the *Emerald* is the square parent serving healthy snacks to the kiddies. It is reviled, ridiculed and ritualistically lampooned by its peers. It gets less respect from the student body than Clinton gets from Congress.

The *Emerald* is hated to such a degree that critics aren't really even under any pressure to argue their case. From time to time some sage announces: "The *Emerald* sucks," and it's like saying Einstein was a genius or atom bombs hurt. No one drops their bagel. There's no contest but this one: complaining about the *Emerald* is like blaming a retarded child for not learning faster, except that there's hope for the child. Here's why.

The *Emerald* is that thing of tedium and utility: a paper of record. The unexciting task of reporting all that occurs on this unexciting campus falls on the *Emerald's* backpack-clad shoulders. Interesting news happens elsewhere, and 'elsewhere' lies outside our domain. We can't make jokes or draw amusing pictures; wit isn't in an *Emerald* employee's job description. The only outlet for satire lies with the columnists, and nobody but columnists read the op-ed

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pages.

The *Emerald's* perpetually sorry reputation is partly a result of its readership's refusal to acknowledge the difference between the missions of the commentary papers and its own mundane mission as a paper of record. The *Emerald* doesn't have to entertain, enlighten or intrigue. Considering the material at hand, it may not be capable of it. It's a service machine, responsible for printing the classifieds, the sports scores and the absolutely uninspiring annual political endorsements that you the reader submit, expect to see, and yet resent reading.



This is the sort of domestic information the *Emerald* churns out daily. The *Emerald* isn't obligated to be dynamite reading. It's not even obligated to completely cover campus events. The journalists who work at the *Emerald* can pick and choose their news stories. Unfortunately, quilts, endowments, parking lots and the like aren't Pulitzer material. If it seems as though the *Emerald* is too superficial, too banal, too boilerplate, etc., maybe that's just because it's accurately reporting University life.

People who don't blink an eye at the millions spent on sports development nonetheless kvetch about the \$129,000 subsidy allotted to the paper in which those sports events are announced. Check where that money goes. It's paying the puny wages of people who would otherwise never put in the number of hours it takes to keep the *Emerald* running. Partly because to be with the jade is to be ashamed, but mostly because it's work. *Emerald* editors can't choose to put something off because they're too hung-over to be bothered. Writers can't submit rhapsodic filler about their girlfriends. Theoretically, a flaked deadline or a half-assed effort will cost you your job.

The *Emerald* serves its dreary proto-professional purpose reliably and with a really dapper layout. Color me brainwashed, but what more do you expect? I hereby conclude my stint as an *Emerald* wag. Good night.

Sonja Sherwood, a senior majoring in Journalism and English, was a columnist for the *Emerald* and may never recover. cheers@gladstone.uoregon.edu

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