

# Don't bet on Social Security



**OUR OPINION:**  
Personal savings, not Social Security, is the key to future stability

**A**s hard as it may be to imagine, today's college students will be tomorrow's senior citizens. And as senior citizens they are going to need some source of income to support themselves in their old age. Most college students might be under the impression that Social Security will be that source of income. Most college students are wrong.

Despite the fact that the Social Security program was originally designed during the Great Depression to support the elderly after they retire, today's generation has little chance of getting much out of the system they will be paying into their entire working lives. The fact of the matter is Social Security is going broke, and no one has much of a plan on how to save it.

The reason Social Security is close to bankruptcy revolves around the type of system it is. Unlike a personal retirement plan where one invests money into savings and then pulls from it when he or she retires, Social Security is a cross-generational transfer payment. This means the working generation pays for the retired generation with a Social Security tax. Then, if all goes well, when they retire, the next working generation pays for them. While the plan sounds good in theory, it is flawed in practice.

There are several problems with the current system that, if they don't bankrupt the system, will severely weaken it. One problem is that because people today are living so much longer than they used to, it costs more to support them. When the retirement age was set at 65 over 50 years ago, most people didn't live that long. Now with people living into their 90s, there are too many retired people receiving benefits compared with the number of people putting money into the system. This problem will be even more severe when the baby boomers start retiring and there is sud-

denly an increase in retired people receiving Social Security checks. Unless the system is somehow fixed, most people agree it will be completely bankrupt by around 2044.

That means tough luck to today's college students who will be lucky to see much of the money they put into the system. Even if Social Security is saved, it is likely that most people will see far less money than the retired enjoy today. Instead of relying primarily on Social Security, young people today will have to come up with other sources of revenue to support themselves in their old age. And given how little most people are saving for the future today, that could be bad news.

Thinking about saving for retirement when one is young is a hard thing to do. College students aren't always sure what they'll be doing next week, let alone 40 years from now. But as hard as it is to believe, almost everyone will be elderly eventually, and when they are, they'll need something to live off on.

Unfortunately, for many people saving for retirement is a luxury they can't afford. When all of one's income is going to pay expenses like tuition, rent and food, there isn't much chance to save. However, even putting aside a small amount of money into a retirement fund now is a smart move to ensure future security. Setting aside a little money today could save a lot of hardships tomorrow.

Instead of seeing Social Security as something that will allow retired people to maintain the same lifestyle they enjoyed when they were working, we should view it more like a welfare program for the elderly. If this happens people will start to see Social Security as something that keeps the elderly off the streets, not a replacement for personal retirement savings.

It may seem too early to think about retirement, but it isn't. People who hope to have the same type of lifestyle they enjoy now should seriously consider some type of savings program for their future. Counting on the government to do it with Social Security is a mistake most people can't afford to make.

*This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board.*

## Corrections

■ In the Jan. 21 story on the Skinner Butte cross, Attorney Bill Wheatley was falsely quoted as saying "This should not be up on the hill where it can trouble non-Christians in the community." University Law Professor James Mooney actually said this. The mistake was due to an editing error. The Emerald regrets the mistake.

■ The Jan. 21 article entitled "PFC controls allocation of incidental fees" excluded certain facts, possibly misrepresenting the role of the ASUO Programs Finance Committee in the incidental fee process.

The PFC has a total budget of \$2,319,228 for the 1996-97 school year. The entirety of this budget is allocated to ASUO programs. However, about 25 percent of the PFC budget was allocated to programs directly by students on spring ballot measures. Therefore, the finance committee has no direct control over this portion of its budget.

The PFC's budget constitutes about 41 percent of each student's \$135.05 per term incidental fee. The remainder of each student's incidental fee is allocated to the EMU and Athletic Department by other student governmental bodies and to subsidized student services by past ballot measures.

The Emerald regrets any confusion the article may have caused.

## LETTERS

### Coverage applauded

Congratulations to you and the sports staff for putting out an excellent insert on women's and men's basketball (*ODE*, Jan. 9). After spending over 30 years in women's athletics it is such a breath of fresh air to see the women treated with an even hand in terms of coverage. I haven't read it all yet, but I will. Thanks so much for all your efforts!

**Peg Rees**  
Instructor Physical Education

### Faculty insensitive

In mid-November, I had the unhappy duty of calling my son home because of a death in the family. Unfortunately, it was near finals time. Not only did my son have to deal with mourning the loss of a dear relative, but he also had to endure the skepti-

cism and mistrust of faculty members who, upon his return to campus, wanted to refuse to give him his exams or allow any other concession.

The mix of a deep personal loss, traveling in a storm and the frustration of not being able to concentrate on studies because of grieving made for a pretty stressful November and December.

I understand that some students try to avoid tests and research paper deadlines by lying to their instructors, but I really believe that "what goes around comes around." In the meantime, what do the students learn who have truly experienced a loss? That there is no understanding, compassion or empathy left in the world? That those who are supposed to teach them have no grasp of humanity?

I would suggest if the University wishes to have alumni who contribute to its en-

dowments and students who encourage others to attend the University, they might train the insensitive faculty among them to — at the very least — treat students like valued clients. They do provide the faculty's livelihood, after all. Every one of my son's instructors knew why he had been called away. How kind it would have been to have one of them 1) believe him and express sympathy and/or 2) anticipate his need by having a backup exam ready.

There are, on a daily basis, so many opportunities to show kindness. I've always considered it one of the real goals of a truly liberal education. I would like to believe I am not alone in this belief. I strongly urge that, for those for whom it is appropriate, some training in reverence for life be provided at the University.

**M. Catherine Smith**  
University Parent

## Contact US

■ **BY MAIL:**  
P.O. Box 3159,  
Eugene, OR  
97403

■ **BY PHONE:**  
(541) 346-5511

■ **BY E-MAIL:**  
ode@oregon.  
uoregon.edu

■ **IN PERSON:**  
Suite 300, EMU