

## The drop-out dilemma

**OUR OPINION:**  
High college drop-out rates can be linked to cutbacks at the high school level

The statistics are nothing new. In fact, for people who have been at the University for a while, the numbers may be getting old, but they still deserve repeating. Of all the incoming freshmen, the University reports only 40 percent will leave with degrees from the University.

No matter how many times that statistic is repeated, it is still shocking. Admittedly, the statistics are a little deceiving. Many students transfer, some leave for jobs and others enroll again at a later time. Still, a good percentage of these students simply disappear from the academic scene, never to return. Why do these students drop out, and perhaps more importantly, who or what is to blame?

To some degree, it is natural that colleges would experience a significant amount of drop-outs. College is the first time many people are completely free from parental guidance, and some students can't handle it. They party too hard and study too little. With no one to enforce attendance, they choose sleep over class. In other words, they just mess up.

This is to be expected, and there is little the University or anyone else can do about it. The problem isn't with these drop-outs — it's with the ones who just seem to fade out of the college picture altogether. It's with the ones who probably shouldn't have come to college in the first place. And surprisingly, the problem revolves more around high school than it does college.

At one time, high school was a place to get young people ready to enter the working world. Now it is a place to get young people ready for college. More and more, high school is becoming a form of col-

### DROP OUT FACTS

- 25 percent of incoming freshmen at the University will not return to school here next fall.
- 40 percent of current freshmen will never graduate from the University.
- 50 percent of current freshmen will not have a University diploma five years from now.
- 26.6 percent of Oregon high school students entering college in 1992 left school before their class graduated in 1996.
- 7.2 percent of Oregon high school students dropped out during the 1995-1996 school year. Irrelevant classes was the main reason given for dropping out.

lege training — a prelude to a college education, worthless on its own. For those people who are college bound, that's great. For everyone else, it poses somewhat of a problem.

With cuts in education at all levels, high schools have had to cut back on the non-essentials. This means non-academic programs like shop and the arts are usually the first to go. What is left is a basic academic curriculum that is geared specifically for college-bound students.

Unfortunately, not all students are college bound and for those that aren't, high school can become a waste of time. If someone is not planning on attending college, a strictly college-prep education may not provide as much value as one that incorporates other elements. It isn't surprising to find that as the high school curriculum becomes more and more narrow,

the high school drop out rate continues to rise. Many students find high school has nothing to offer them.

But not everyone who is not "college material" drops out of high school. Many go with the flow, doing just what it takes to get by. When high school ends, these students are faced with an interesting dilemma. Even though they have no idea what they want to get out of a college education, they see few other options. Their whole education has been to prepare them for college, so it seems natural that they should go. As natural as going to high school after junior high.

Students who end up in college because they think that's where they're supposed to be don't stand much of a chance of succeeding. With no real plans or goals, it's easy to see how these students slip through the cracks of the system and drop out. Many realize that college isn't for them. In many cases they learn the lesson a couple of thousand dollars too late.

Instead of assuming everyone should go to college, high schools have a responsibility to satisfy the needs of different kinds of students. Even bringing back basic shop classes could provide an alternative for people who really have no interest in traditional academic courses.

College isn't for everyone and further, it shouldn't be. People not interested in pursuing academic career could better meet their needs outside of college. As long as there aren't alternatives for high school graduates who aren't ready for college, however, high drop-out rates will continue to plague the college atmosphere.

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

### All thumbs



#### To ABC News:

After losing a \$5.5 million lawsuit to Food Lion Inc. on Jan. 22 for using false resumés for an investigation of the supermarket chain, the network has set a dangerous precedent in its deceitful actions. While most muckraking must involve some level of deception, ABC's blatant lies harmed the media more than Food Lion — even if the story in question was right.

#### To bike owners:

We all know the campus is a bicycle black hole, with 834 thefts in the University sector in 1995 alone. Regardless of all the tips police present each year, the real solution is not to ride an expensive bike on campus. It's too dangerous, and if one does so, there's no excuse if the bike is stolen.

#### To Mayor Jim Torrey:

Torrey's one-on-one meetings with citizens on Wednesday may have been poorly attended, but its symbolic effect was undeniable. By reaching out to the average citizen, not just people of power, the mayor displayed his willingness to at least listen to common concerns. The only thing left to be determined is whether he will act on any of those ideas.

To Pi Kappa Phi: We hope the new fraternity, with its hopeful and enthusiastic new leaders, will take the place of such Greek tragedies as Sigma Chi, which lost its local charter last year.

### The Drawing Board



### A penny... (and maybe more) for your thoughts

■ What's your opinion on University, state or national issues? Be a staff columnist or submit a guest commentary and share your views with over 10,000 readers.

■ Submitted commentaries must be on a topic of importance to the University community and one of personal experience or knowledge to the writer. A 500-word maximum length is also recommended.

■ Staff columnists are enrolled University students who write twice a month on topics of their choice and are paid per column inch. Along with general columnists, a writer who comments solely on University affairs is also sought. The person must be well-versed in campus affairs and willing to write as often as once a week.

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