

Building A Future

OUR OPINION: The ASUO's proposed construction of a campus amphitheater could be a welcome addition

When asked about his plans for building an amphitheater in the EMU Courtyard to celebrate the anniversary of University student government, ASUO President Matthew Scotten certainly isn't afraid to speak up.

"Maybe I'm just a visionary, but [the amphitheater] is going to be a beautiful place," he said.

"Its uses are limited to only the imagination."

"A lot of [student] history could be lost if we don't recognize [the 100th anniversary of the ASUO]."

We don't quite buy this rhetoric — primarily that regarding ASUO history — but we do believe the amphitheater is a good thing.

There's no denying that Scotten and Vice President Glen Banfield's brainchild for celebrating student activism is problematic. In an age of budget cuts, Measure 47 and major campus deficiencies, spending \$350,000 of state dollars on an amphitheater seems like a ridiculous use of funds.

But after examining the circumstances, details and history behind the decision, the project becomes more positive — and a lot smarter.

The source of funding for the proposal, the Over-Realized Fund, has sat relatively untouched for close to 20 years, accumulating more than \$800,000. The fund is the product of years of over-estimation in school enrollment, and has never been used for any major purpose.

It's high time it was used. Thousands of students have poured money into the fund with absolutely no results. And if money from the supply was used for the amphitheater, about \$500,000 would still remain in the account. This keeps the fund on solid ground, meeting both ASUO requirements and its potential as an "emergency" fund.

With this established, the amphitheater is the most effective and practical use of the money. No other option gives students such a tangible, immediate return on their tuition and other fees. Alternatives like a parking structure or improving campus lighting are indeed important, but just won't work with the amount of money available.

Other options like giving the Over-Realized money back to each student and putting the amphitheater decision on the spring ballot are also dubious. Such a major use of the fund is unprecedented so exact procedure is vague, but both options would be either extremely difficult or impossible.

Nonetheless, the amphitheater is still a bit of a gamble. It rains for over half the year in Eugene. When will the facility be used? And will students really use it, even in good weather? We think they will, and a portable cover over the stage will help operations in more rainy seasons.



The existence of a top-notch outdoor theater with a 500-person capacity would benefit not only student groups but any student who ever walks through the center of campus. The amphitheater would encourage groups to diversify their programming to a more visible arena. And passers-by could easily be attracted to events at the facility, drawing in a more diverse audience.

With such possibilities, the amphitheater has the potential to not only improve the general campus atmosphere but also open up the world of student groups and government to the average student.

For the facility to become a reality, the use of the Over-Realized funds must be approved by the ASUO Student Senate early next term. Scotten says if the proposal passes there, it will most likely be approved by the appropriate people, constructed over the summer and finished by the fall.

If the senate rejects the proposal, Scotten says no project of its magnitude will happen in his tenure. With upcoming EMU renovations, the amphitheater must be constructed now — or most likely never. And even if the senate approves in a close vote, Scotten says he may drop the proposal in light of any widespread opposition.

The project needs, and deserves, student support. It's the best idea we've seen come out of the ASUO in a long time.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board.

READER VOICES

What do you think of the proposed amphitheater?



"It would be kind of cool to have an amphitheater to sit in, chill at and hear some bands play."

Jason Gold
Freshman
Political Science



"I think building an amphitheater is a good idea, but only if it is used, or else it will be a waste of \$350,000."

Cesar Sroka
Sophomore
General Science



"Well, with budget cuts, I'm not sure it's the best use of money right now, but if it were to work out, it would be great for students."

Diane Schurman
Graduate Student
Journalism



"It's great to have more diversity come to the campus. I'd probably hang out more at the EMU and be interested in more activities if there were more bands playing."

Nicole Cipriano
Senior
English/Art

LETTERS

Why boycott?

I would like to take issue with the two letters published (*ODE*, March 6) regarding the boycott of GardenBurger.

In one, Eloina Gonzales and Daniel Zettler allege that "the individual students, as well as the community at large, have defined the situation and made a choice. No to exploitation!" etc.

How interesting that they point to a need to understand participatory democracy. As a member of my residence hall, a member of my complex's President's Council and as a member of RHGC, the "individual students" and "community at large" told me in no uncertain terms that they didn't want RHGC to support the boycott and

should indeed remain neutral. Had they contacted members of the housing community, they would have learned this rather quickly.

On a personal level, I wish to address the notion in this same letter that says corporations operate "outside of community notions of social responsibility." It is my understanding that Wholesome and Hearty, the maker of GardenBurger, is a socially responsible company. Furthermore, Wholesome and Hearty alleges that they are in no way connected to the farms in question.

This is the crux of my lack of support for the boycott. No one in MEChA has been able to explain why exactly

GardenBurger has been targeted, except to say that it is a high visibility product. Perhaps the social responsibility involved in boycotting GardenBurger and jeopardizing these jobs needs to be reexamined as well.

My message: Cast aside your tired exclamation points! Sit down and talk to the "community at large" as fellow adults, not as ranting propagandists. Tell us why, in spite of Wholesome and Hearty's avowal of disinterest, we should boycott as well. If boycotting GardenBurger is not the way to make a positive change, admit it and tell us what we can do.

Trevor Miller
Biology

Letters policy

The *Oregon Daily Emerald* will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be typed, double spaced and include the author's name, signature, and phone number. The identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted. Submissions signed by more than three people must include at least one and no more than three names designated to represent the group.

Letters must be limited to 250 words or less. The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length, clarity, grammar and style.