

## ASUO fails to connect with students

■ **OUR OPINION:** Campus apathy relates solely to student government, not general activism

As we listened to the ASUO Executive candidates spout their various ideas and thoughts about the student body, two things were repeated over and over again.

1) Students don't care about student government and 2) Students are always willing to volunteer for organizations like Saferide, Sexual Assault Support Services and other causes they care about.

Both of these statements are true. Students are apathetic toward the ASUO and general EMU community. And they do volunteer for common causes like making campus safer and helping victims of crime.

But none of the candidates seemed to comprehend the troublesome relationship between the two truths, and ultimately the reason why nobody cares about what they do or who wins this election.

People in the ASUO complain the average student has no idea what they do. They are convinced they affect the student body in important, even grand ways. Therefore, it is their job to educate the student

body on the decisions they make and generally monotonous lives they maintain.

The problem is, the ASUO, as it is now, will never fulfill this goal. It will never convince students that student government is something they should be interested in.

Much of this argument lies in the "average student" we all like to throw around as an example. This person is not involved in any student groups, unions or government. He or she ventures into the EMU only to study, if that. And he or she does not give a rip what the people in the ASUO Executive, Student Senate, Programs Finance Committee or innumerable other committees do. Why? Because it does not affect his or her life.

This is even more important because this average student makes up the majority, or at least a large part, of the student body. The ASUO cares about these people and wants to reach them. But they say they are up against a self-proclaimed, widespread "apathy."

This apathy, however, begins and ends with student government. Students care about issues that affect them, their friends and the perception of the greater good. They are willing to volunteer for organizations like Saferide and SASS because they feel they are making a difference and can see tangible results of their labor.

To the average student, nothing student government does is tangible. Even big moves like the roping off of 228 seats at a men's basketball game only affect a small number of people.

If any concern does exist among students, it would probably

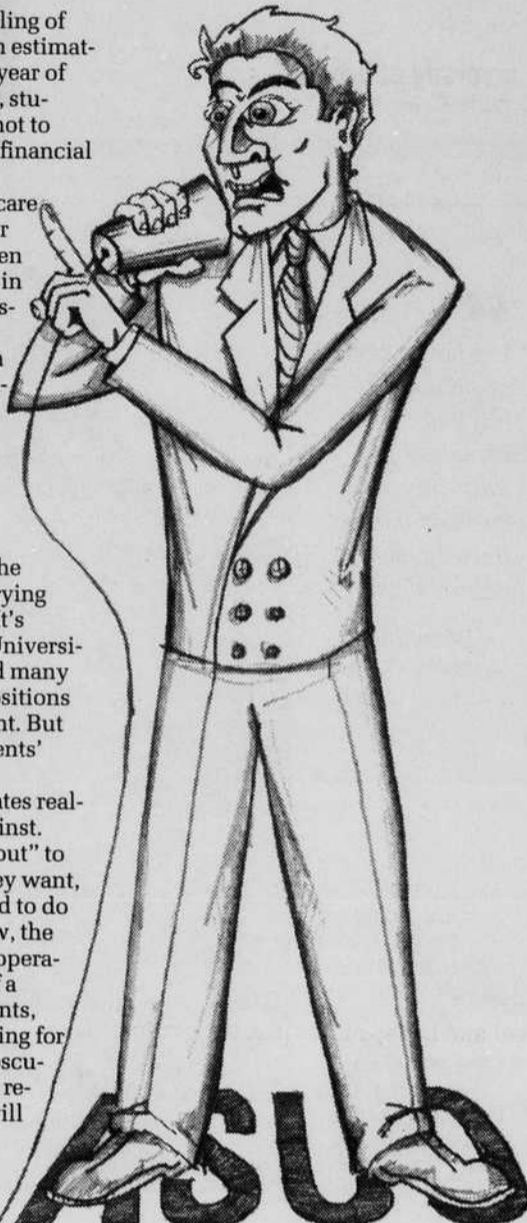
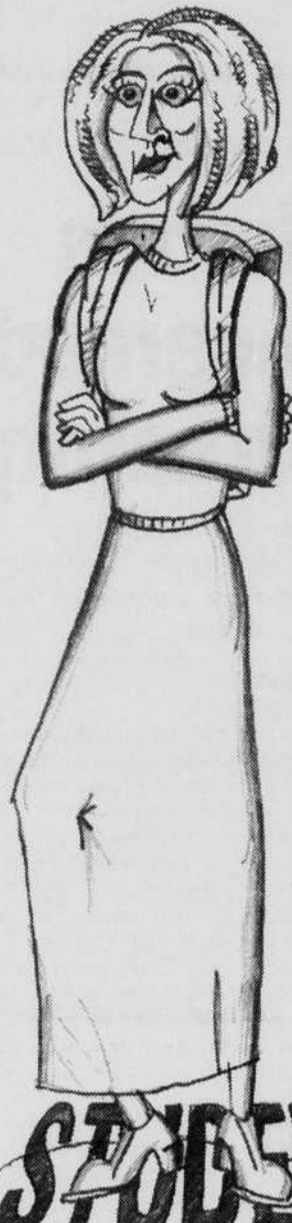
lie in the ASUO's handling of incidental fees. With an estimated total allocation this year of more than \$6.3 million, students would be dumb not to care about the ASUO's financial activity, right? Wrong.

Most students don't care much about where their incidental fees go or even its minute fluctuations in amount. The fee increases by less than \$20 a year, not nearly enough to make the average student care.

This all paints a sad picture, we know, but it's reality. Students aren't apathetic. They're just smart enough to realize that the ASUO isn't worth worrying about on a daily basis. It's necessary to keep the University going, of course. And many student government positions and duties are important. But they aren't part of students' lives.

We hope the candidates realize what they're up against. They can try to "reach out" to the student body all they want, but will be hard-pressed to do much good. As it is now, the ASUO is a centralized operation, not given much of a thought by many students, toiling away and "fighting for student interests" in obscurity. And until genuine reform occurs, this fact will never change.

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



### READER VOICES

What makes your ticket the most qualified to be ASUO president and vice president?



"We're the most willing to go in there and make some noise. We've done it all year, and we'll do it next year."

**Ben Unger**



"I really think it's time to get somebody in there who wants to make things interesting."

**Ed Madrid**



"I will not sleep until the library stays open until 12 and we've partied with Ric Flair, the nature boy."

**Brad Smith**



"We feel we have more solid program ideas. Instead of just talking about campus safety, we're going to push for a campus watch program."

**Ryan Ositis**



"Through our combined experience on the Student Senate, Constitutional Court and various student programs, we know what needs to be changed [with student government] and how to change it."

**James Boyd**



"We've been through the elections before. We've all heard the same stuff last year. We have feasible strategies that you can actually sit down and explain to people."

**Brandon Lee Smith**

### WINNERS

#### Tiger Woods

The 21-year-old golf superstar set nine records on route to winning the Masters, including youngest winner and widest margin of victory.

#### Walter Cronkite

The 80-year-old broadcaster is quickly recovering from quadruple bypass surgery and says he is in excellent shape.

#### Linda McCathern

A jury awarded the Portland woman \$7.6 million after ruling that the Toyota 4-Runner she was driving was to blame for her paralyzing car crash.

#### Douglas C. Engelbart

Inventor of the mouse and 20 other computer patents, Portland inventor Douglas Engelbart won the \$500,000 Lemelson-MIT Prize for 1997.

### LOSERS

#### Wall Street

Fears of inflation sent the Dow plummeting 134.38 points last week and made investors uneasy about the market's future.



#### President Clinton

The President's line item veto power was ruled unconstitutional by a U.S. District judge.

#### The CIA

The CIA admitted that its own intelligence mistakes may have led Gulf War soldiers to demolish an ammunition sight filled with dangerous chemical weapons.

#### Walter Conte

The high school principal was arrested on charges of voyeurism after videotaping 16 cheerleaders changing behind a two-way mirror in his home.