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OPINION

editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

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The ASUO fishbowl is a sight to be seen

Student government is a fascinating circus complete with bizarre sideshows

If it is possible, ASUO government mediocrity has reached a new low. Like episodes of *Melrose Place*, the system manages to go beyond the bottom of the barrel — weekly.

While trying to determine what to write about for this column, I found myself with a new topic daily. Student programs have run amok; the primary elections are riddled with controversy; corporations want status among the incendiary fee-receiving groups and

OPINION



Amanda Erickson

an informal hearing with the ASUO Constitution Court turns into five hours of wry laughter.

What's going on here? I think it is some sort of art-imitates-life thing. As in: "See your government at work! Operates like the real thing only in the microcosm world of the University! Just add water and your sea monkeys will come to life!"

So, I couldn't just pick one stone of corruption to examine when there is a whole stream full of them. I'll talk about them all.

■ **Footnotes** — poor Footnotes. I like Footnotes. It is like one of those older siblings who gives you their quiz answers from the same classes they took. No, not like "Big Brother." They hide in a surreptitious little corner of the EMU. They lurk in your classes, unseen, all-knowing, taking notes on small pieces of paper that they hide in their clothing to disseminate to the masses later, the ignorant masses.

Okay, so they are not quite spies, but they do offer a really neat service for slackers everywhere. But — oh, it pains me to say this — but I don't think they should be funded by the students. There just cannot be another "incidental" fee burden on the students. However, the EMU Board has made a grave error in attempting to make things more difficult for Footnotes to operate.

■ **Lane Transit District** provides a valuable service but it should not be permanently funded by the students. It's the city's bus system, for chrissakes. It already receives fees from every student, so that all students can ride "free."

A lot of students don't know that at the beginning of every term they can get that money back; other students just don't bother with getting the refund. For that reason alone, LTD makes bucks on people that never use its system.

Of course, we already know that corporate influence is lurking in the ASUO; after all, OSPIRG wins the incidental fee lottery every year just for showing up. I was checking out the virtual meeting ground of ASUO watchdogs at uo.asuo.org and one individual felt that all students should be required to pay the bus fee whether they ride or not because it helped out all students. Communism is alive.

■ **SETA** — that is, Students for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. They do not

need any more money. I have a problem with any political action group being supported by the ASUO. My understanding of this group is that it would like nothing better than for the University to halt its animal research program.

By stopping this program, it would hurt other students who have chosen animal research as their field of study. I won't ramble on ad nauseum about all the animal research that has benefited the human race — you know this — but I feel strongly that SETA has no right to try to undermine other students who are here for an education.

All I have seen from this group is a fake, caged gorilla in front of Johnson Hall handing out irrelevant literature. "Why, oh why," Dorothy asks Oz, "must I pay for



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

this?" The answer: a resounding silence.

■ **The ASUO Primaries and Constitution Court** — a stunning example of our student government at work. If you've been on campus at all this week, you will have smelled something rotten in the wind. It hasn't cleared up because no one can discern exactly which vegetable down in Suite 4 has gone bad.

The Con Court's informal hearing on allegations of serious negligence and misconduct surrounding the primaries and the campaigns that preceded it can be summed up as five hours of wry laughter and haughty looks.

They have still not made up their minds but, if you've noticed, the General Elections are proceeding. After waiting this long, I feel the Con Court has no choice but to let things slide. If you procrastinate long enough, things tend to take care of themselves, unfortunately, to the disservice of the students.

■ **The Commentator** — how I sometimes miss my old haunt. Throughout this election's brew-ha-ha (resulting partially from a petition filed by Farrah Bostic and Chris Kantowitz, both associated with the rag we love to hate, the *Oregon Commentator*), the ASUO and the Con Court have sought to dismiss the allegations by insisting that some sort of personal vendetta was involved.

I love it! Just because the *Commentator* is the only group on campus that actively reports on and scrutinizes the University and all its entities, anything that comes from that direction is viewed with fear and defensiveness. As it should; the watchdog bites. I'm afraid, though, that their claims are sound and valid. Just as valid as Judah Eckenberg, who emphatically denies any association with anybody except himself.

So, darlin' academics, why should you care? Because the ASUO is you. It stands for Associated Students of the University of Oregon, and every tuition and fee-paying student belongs to it. Everything they do, they do on behalf of you. Apathy is a human right, but money isn't free, and you are giving bundles away every term to ludicrous causes and overripe bureaucracy. That is all.

Amanda Erickson, a senior majoring in journalism, is a columnist for the *Emerald*. Her views do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper. E-mail: aericks@gladstone.uoregon.edu

LETTERS

Responsible democracy

In the April 25 issue of the *Emerald*, Ben Unger was quoted as saying "This [the lawsuit against the elections] makes the whole system look bad, and my real fear is that we're going to lose [House Bill 3644 which calls for the removal of the incidental fee] in Salem because of these people's attacks."

This is the most irresponsible and antagonistic statement a public official (elect) could make in this regard. To connect the process of enforcing the law with a potential loss of student rights is misleading and false.

In response to Mr. Unger's antagonism, I say this: by taking action against this election, we (students) have shown that we have a very effective system of checks and balances. We are able to police ourselves and since students have called attention to

recent improprieties, we have made a strong case to those in Salem that we are in fact very capable of managing the incidental fee.

We are asking for student government to be made accountable for their actions and they have been made so. If those who are named in the lawsuit feel that this display of democracy makes us look bad as a student body, I shudder to think what example they expect us to follow.

Chris Kantowitz
Political Science

Who cares?

"The ASUO plans to target students who historically do not vote" was the headline in the April 17 *Emerald*. We're told that "if the ASUO Elections Board has its way,

more than 20 percent of the student body will cast its vote [for campus leaders]."

How will the ASUO achieve this impressive goal? Dave Whipple (Elections Board Publicity Coordinator) suggests getting people who normally don't vote to do so. With this powerful strategy firmly in hand, the ASUO brings us to election day.

Eight percent of the student body casts a vote.

The April 18 *Emerald* brings us choice, controversial, quotes from the two leading tickets: "We support programs." Miner says, "We'll fight harder than anybody else if we are elected," counters Oberriter forcefully.

What programs? Fight who? I wonder.

And now the scandal: (this where it gets exciting) Miner and Unger might have put

up some illegal posters. "Kick 'em out" the losers cry. Oh yeah, and someone is going to get fired.

In the *Emerald's* April 21 editorial, the editor sums it up for us: "It will be interesting to see the fallout from all the infighting and miscommunication."

Let me make a prediction: next year, the students will be subjected once again to ludicrous campaign promises, a voter turnout goal that won't be met, the losers will cry foul, there will be some scandal, it will all be covered in painful detail in the drama queen that is the *Emerald* and the winners will disappear, never to be heard from again.

And next year, once again, 92 percent of the student body won't give a shit.

Kevin Prentiss
Russian