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# OPINION

editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

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EDITORIAL

## Policy changes reflect, improve campus reality

■ **OUR OPINION:** *The new laws dealing with sexual misconduct and student/faculty relationships will help solve difficult problems*

The decision has been made. The University Senate approved changes to the Student Conduct Code and a proposal for an Oregon Administrative Rule Wednesday that clarify and create University policy for relationships between students and faculty as well as sexual misconduct.

That's a lot to swallow. But put simply, the decision helps clear up the messy world of sexual assault and injects a bit of common sense into policy regarding student-professor relationships. We support the senate decision, on both counts.

Last fall, we were less than enthusiastic about both policies. Our present change in heart mostly lies in specifics. Last fall, neither policy had any. Now they do.

The original changes in the conduct code were particularly troublesome. In October, we called the policy's definitions of sexual assault and explicit consent "broad" and "dangerous." After months of work, the Student Conduct Code Committee worked to improve many of these deficiencies. We applaud them for that.

Now explicit consent is defined as "voluntary, non-coerced and clear communication indicating a willingness to engage in a particular act." This reflects more accurately the reality of sexual behavior among University students. Other important terms specifically defined in-

clude "sexual assault" and "rape."

Another welcome addition is mandated punishment for those who have sex with students who are in "mental incapacitation," like under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This is also an important aspect that reflects much of what happens on and off campus among the student body.

The student-faculty edict is a bit more simple. It seems the only people getting up in arms about it are faculty and perhaps a few students with wide dating preferences. With this law especially, we wonder why it wasn't implemented long ago. Of course professors should not be dating students they supervise. Of course this is a conflict of interest.

Even our original fear of this law being a "broad proclamation banning chaste behavior" seems to have been quelled.

The specific language of the law prevents witch hunts or abolition of proper student-professor relationships.

The fact that a third party can issue a complaint has also become less problematic. Now, any parties with complaints "found to have been intentionally dishonest or made with willful disregard of the truth" will be punished with the "full range of sanctions available."

We like all these changes. Now let's get these new rules into effect so they can start making a difference. Even if they don't automatically make the campus community safer, they'll definitely make it a lot simpler.

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

## Media inflate common sense story

We expected reporter Tad Shannon and *The Register-Guard* to cover it — but not three weeks in advance.

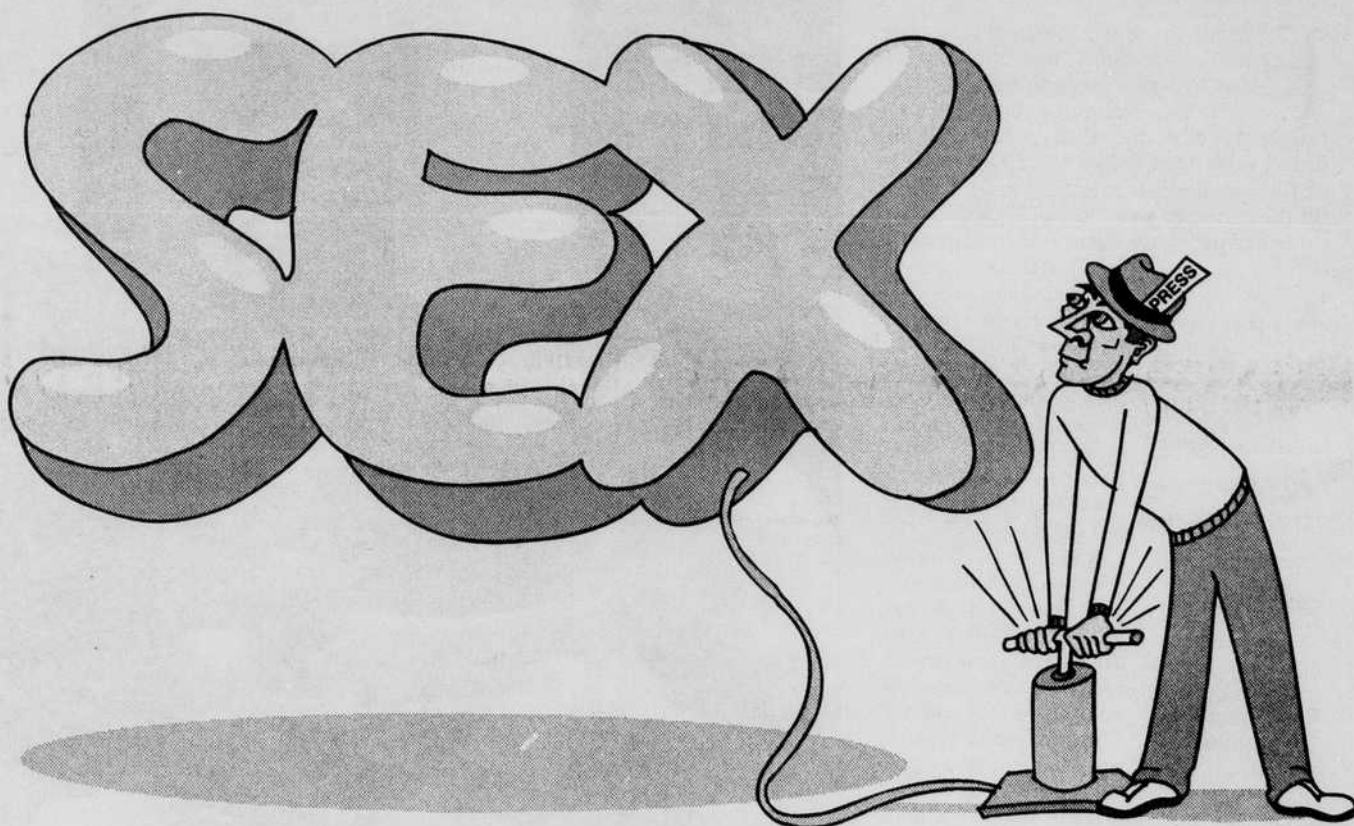
Before that, it was former journalism dean Arnold Ismach suggesting that we devote more energy to this "important" issue.

Yesterday, *Good Morning America*, ABC News, *The Oregonian*, the Associated Press, Portland television and radio stations from Southern California called the University to get information on the subject.

What's the topic all the nation's media want to know about? The University's new sex policies.

The University Senate's move to revise the Student Conduct Code's definition of sexual misconduct and to reprimand faculty members who engage in sexual or romantic relationship with students they directly supervise is important, and we commend their decision. But it's not the most important thing happening on campus.

There's a bill before the Oregon Legislature that could possibly eliminate the incidental fee process and the student programs it funds. There's a debate between President



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

Dave Frohnmayer and student groups over corporate sponsorship and farmworkers' rights. Measure 47 is forcing the University and the surrounding community to plan for major budget cutbacks.

The concept that teachers shouldn't date their students isn't a revolutionary idea. Neither is students' needing

explicit consent before engaging in sex. These concepts should be part of everyone's common sense — not the hottest topic since the discovery of possible life on Mars.

Now that the senate's decision has been made, our energy should be focused on some of these other issues. Maybe the media will follow.

One final note: When ABC News called the *Emerald* to inquire about the sex policy, they said they'd be coming to campus on Tuesday, and they asked us where they could find a good party. Anyone got an idea?

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READER VOICES

Do you think students should be allowed to date professors?



"I don't think it's right because it could lead to ethical problems and a conflict of interest, whether or not they're taking a class from them."

Reuben Burda  
Freshman



"It could be a problem if it leads to special treatment. A line has to be drawn somewhere for professionalism."

Dennis Asai  
Freshman



"If they're not in a class, they can date them. If they're in the professor's class, I don't think they should, if not, then it's OK."

Connie Rawson  
Sophomore



"I feel that teachers should be able to date their students only after the student is done taking a class from them."

Jessie Thompson  
Sophomore

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LETTERS

### Biking maniacs

This marks the fifth time I have been struck by a bicycle while walking on University sidewalks. The fact that I am bruised and sore shouldn't stop folks from racing around on pedestrian walkways. What should stop them is the law.

I have always been on a sidewalk when these collisions occur. Am I at fault? Probably so if (gasp) reading while walking counts.

I just have a feeling the if I were to take a Harley and do the same ride as some of our bicy-

clists, I would soon be looking at a judge. I have noticed a disregard of offenses by our campus gendarmes — I suppose parking tickets are of much more importance than public safety.

Riding bicycles on sidewalks upon the University's grounds is illegal and occasionally very painful to old folks (original word replaced) like me.

If you can't help yourself and just have to ride the walks, could you at least slow down?

W. Richard Patty  
General Science