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PERSPECTIVES

State schools should share dollars

AN EMERALD EDITORIAL

If the University kept its tuition money, specialization by state schools would be difficult

University President Dave Frohn-mayer has a goal. He wants to reform the way tuition money finds its way into the University budget.

Currently, the money paid by University students for tuition goes into a big pool, along with money from the state's other universities. This money, along with additional revenue from the state, is then redistributed to the state's universities.

Frohn-mayer doesn't like this system, and his complaints are not without justification. The University receives the smallest per-student share of this money, despite being the largest school in the state and offering a vast range of programs.

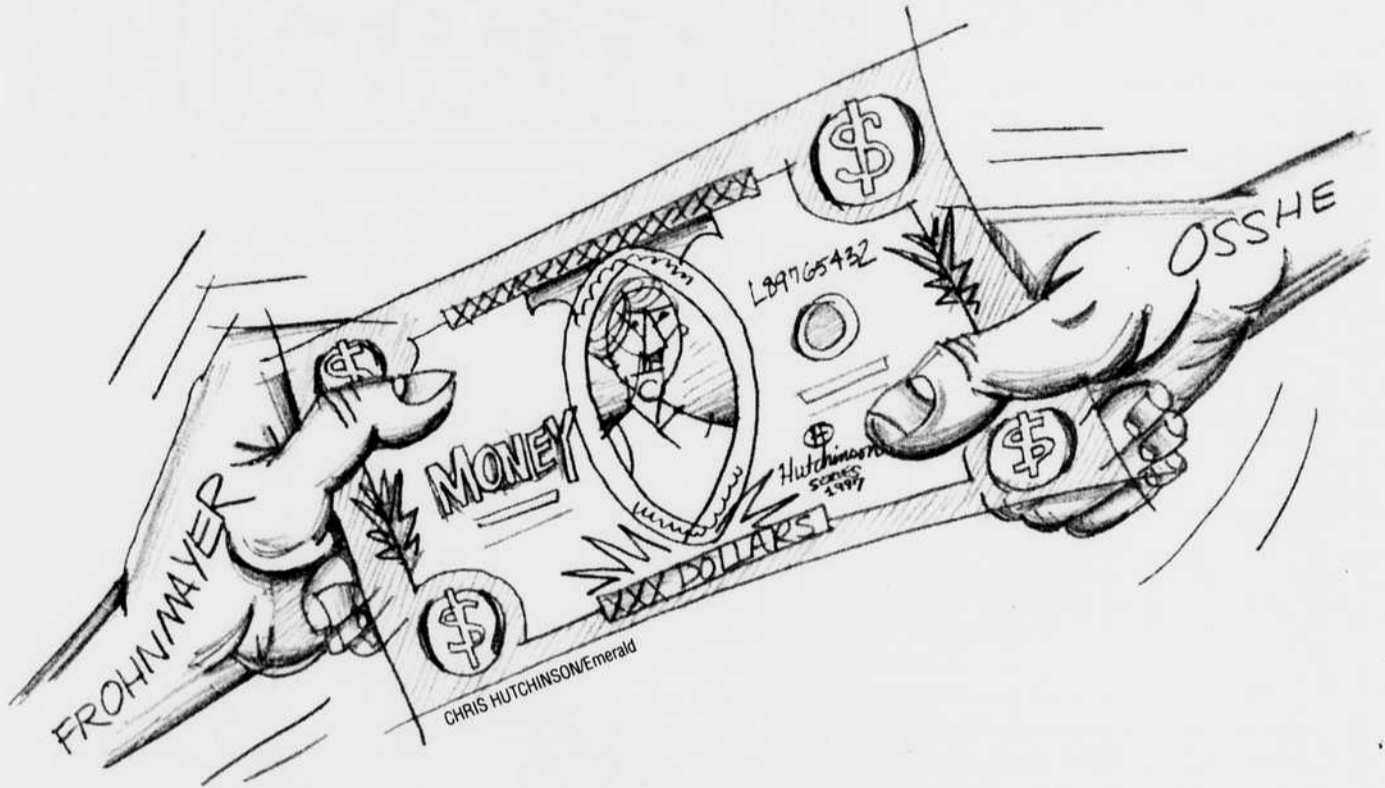
"I feel this has to be changed," Frohn-mayer said. The change he would like to see is one he said is also being examined by Gov. John Kitzhaber: all state schools would keep their tuition money to spend on their own programs.

Such an idea has the advantage of seeming perfectly logical on the surface. After all, if the University has 17,000 tuition-paying students, why shouldn't those students receive the academic benefits their money can buy?

Unfortunately, the situation isn't that simple. The University is not a private institution, looking out for its own interests and fighting for students with other private institutions scattered across the state. It is a public school, part of the state system of higher education. The University receives state money, and it was created to serve the needs of the Oregon community.

Those needs would not be best served by a system in which each institution kept its own tuition money. In order for the entire system to function effectively, individual schools should not be competing against each other for dollars and people.

None of this is to say we don't think the University deserves more money. With



such a wide variety of programs, the University fills a crucial role in the Oregon community and, in order to continue to do so, should receive a healthy share of state funding.

The problem is that the University cannot and should not fill every academic need in the state. Earlier proposals to reform the higher education system have focused on creating specialized programs at different schools, so that Portland State might focus on engineering and Oregon State on computer science.

This isn't to say that basic programs in those areas shouldn't be offered at all schools, but rather students who want to specialize in certain fields will be able to find one well funded, strong program in the state.

We think the idea of specialization needs to be examined further. In many academic areas, the entire state of Oregon is woefully lacking. If our higher education institutions are going to serve the variety of academic needs within the state, as well as recruit quality faculty and students from other states, we need to have strong programs in a wider range of academic interests.

The proposal to keep the University's tuition money for our exclusive use is that it thwarts efforts at specialization and cooperation. Rather than sharing resources and students with other state institutions, the University of Oregon would be forced to compete with other schools.

After all, if we get to keep the tuition money we have, we'll be more inclined to provide "popular" programs and recruit

primarily out-of-state students, thereby increasing the amount of money the school can spend. No state program will want to provide less popular majors or programs that focus on recruiting less profitable in-state and part-time returning students.

The purpose of a public higher education system is not to fight for dollars and students; it is to fulfill the needs of the state, offering a range of valuable and needed educational options. The strength of this system relies upon enhanced cooperation and sharing among state schools, not upon the University hoarding tuition money for its own purposes.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reasoning wrong

The premise of the assisted suicide editorial (ODE, Oct. 14) is correct, but for the wrong reason. In an ideal society there would be no need or reason to legislate so-called rights. Members of the society would recognize these rights and adhere to them faithfully and without reservation. But we do not live in a "perfect society" and not everyone respects or understands the true nature of the common good.

To bring the editors' premise to its logical conclusion, there should be no legislation regarding equal opportunity employment, medical assistance or food and shelter programs for the poor. There should be no need for prisons, nor law enforcement officials. In a mature society members would be self-regulating. I venture to say that experience tells us this is not the case.

The premise of the editors is flawed because it fails to take into account the fact that with every so-called right there is an inextricable responsibility. Granting, for the sake of argument, that an individual has a right to kill him/herself assumes that both the individual and the society are

responsible enough to safeguard that right. But what does this mean? Have we even asked this question? In a culture where children are regularly murdered by adults and other children, where emphasis on individual rights excludes the common good, it seems to me that we are not mature enough to accept this burden of responsibility. We need time to grow a bit, to understand the full implications of such a right. To speak only of individual rights is to cloud the real issue.

So, I say to the editors, the real question is not whether "someone should be able to tell us how to live...." The more appropriate issue is whether we, as a culture, are mature enough to accept the responsibilities implied by an assisted suicide law.

C.J. Renz

Associate Pastor, Newman Club

Cassini worthwhile

I am writing in response to the "Thumbs down" editorial (ODE, Oct. 13) on the Cassini mission. Unfortunately, the writer(s) of this opinion seem to further demonstrate the need for this mission. The Cassini spacecraft will carry about 72 pounds of highly radioactive (though less

dangerous than ignorance and hysteria) Plutonium-238 dioxide for generating electrical power. There is indeed a risk of this material being released into the Earth's biosphere due to an accident. I acknowledge this possibility. NASA acknowledges this possibility. The opinion statement that "NASA insists... there is no risk of contaminating the Earth," is false and might be considered slander and/or yellow journalism. NASA and most well respected experts on this subject believe the risk is small and that even in a worst-case scenario, few (if any) people would be injured.

The opinion also calls into question the "need" for the Cassini mission. I might contend that there is little or no "need" for many things, including love, religion, art, tasty food, music or even living (from a rather abstract point of view, though). However, humans still insist on "needing" these things. Why? It is because it is not forks, knives, jobs, thumbs, or walking upright that separates humans from animals and inanimate objects, it is knowledge, culture, love and all those "unnecessary" things that do that. Those "unnecessary" activities are what

give meaning to life.

They are the essence of our soul. The Cassini mission to the majestic ringed planet Saturn, and its mysterious and enigmatic moon Titan, is not merely a project of robotic exploration. It is a spiritual journey into the mystical cosmos, where we not only seek answers to our most fundamental questions ("Who are we?"; "Why are we here?"), but where we define our own answers to those questions.

Sometime during the middle of the next decade, when we are all watching and hearing the information, sights and sounds from other worlds, hopefully we may all come closer to realizing just why this oh-so-fleeting life is worth living at all.

Chris Jones

Chemistry and computer science

Web adds costs

I have been following the decision to charge for printing and labs closely. As a student who frequently uses the library, this whole fiasco has a large impact on me.

One angle that has not been discussed, at least to my knowledge, is the increased use of the Web in courses. I have been a stu-

dent here since '93, when the Web was created. During this time, I have seen the involvement of the Web in course curriculum go from "what's the web?" to "all notes and all assignments being distributed ONLY on the Web."

This change does not trouble me. I think the Web is an excellent information dissemination medium. However, being required to pay to get required assignments is unacceptable. In fact, professors and/or departments have printing budgets to cover the cost of reproducing materials for the entire class. With these materials now being distributed on the Web, these funds would be going unused (or less used). However, I have not seen anyone discuss this.

Overall, the combination of the Web and printing materials as necessary should save money, time and resources. However, off-loading the financial responsibility to retrieve necessary class materials from the University to students is unacceptable. The University should simply use the money saved from the printing budgets to bring back free printing in labs and libraries.

Trenton Lipscomb
 Computer science