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University needs to push for a diverse community

AN EMERALD EDITORIAL

Too few minorities are employed on the faculty at the University, as a recent report shows

If you are reading this in class, take a moment to look at the people sitting around you. Odds are, many of the faces you see are white. Now, look at the person standing in the front of the room. According to a report by the Oregon State System of Higher Education, there is little more than a 10 percent chance your instructor is a minority.

Overall, the report indicates the University and the state system as a whole rank roughly equal to other comparable institutions in minority hiring. In itself, this is not as inspiring as it might seem. The

fact is that higher education facilities throughout the country have a disproportionately small number of minorities on staff.

Ideally, the minority population at a University would be roughly proportional to the overall numbers of particular minorities in society. This doesn't mean the University should carefully count the number of different ethnic groups hired, adding one here and subtracting one there just to get the proper mix.

It does mean the University should be aware of the discrepancy and should attempt to hire qualified minorities when possible.

In particular, the University and the state have done an abysmal job of hiring and retaining African-Americans. The report indicates the University's staff is only 1.4 percent African-American, far be-

low the national level of roughly 9 percent and even lower than the actual percentage of African-Americans in the population.

The University is certainly not oblivious to the problem. Efforts to recruit minorities are underway, and some departments are even eligible for incentives if they strengthen their recruiting efforts and succeed at their goal.

Nevertheless, at some level these numbers indicate a failure on the part of the University and the state. They are not without explanation, however.

The biggest problem is the same one that plagues every aspect of University operations — lack of money. Without more funding from the state, the University can't afford to pay any of its faculty adequately.

This is particularly harmful for minority recruitment. Because

they are poorly represented, minorities are heavily recruited by all schools, including those which have large amounts of money to offer their faculty.

There is another problem, though. Many minorities look at the current lack of diversity in the state and in the schools and feel uncomfortable with Oregon.

The University's lack of minorities is matched by the lack of minorities in the community. The message of diversity being sent by the school is not being reflected in Eugene or in the faculty. This is the fundamental problem with our minority hiring.

A diverse faculty is important for minority students, who often feel uncomfortable when surrounded by almost exclusively white faces. Diversity is also important for white students, who

need to be exposed to a range of cultural experiences.

While the University has tried to provide diversity for both these reasons, its reach has been limited. Not only is the faculty insufficiently diverse, but the community is excessively white as well. Students need to bring the lessons of diversity into the community where they live, eat and work.

Until the message of diversity at the school reaches beyond a multicultural requirement and a smattering of groups associated with the Multicultural Center, the University will continue to have a difficult time recruiting minority faculty members.

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

DRAWING BOARD



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Homosexuality more than sex

While I thoroughly agree with your support of Portland's policies regarding all agencies' treatment of queers, you showed an irresponsibility in referring to queer rights as an issue of "who one sleeps with."

Queer theory has advanced far beyond the issue of mere intercourse; likewise, few queers would announce their sexual orientation has to do with nothing else besides sex. Being queer involves a host of perceptions, experiences and thoughts that extend far beyond one's sexual behavior.

Kyla Schuller
Comparative literature

New policy framework

Your editorial (ODE, Oct. 16), which disagreed with President Frohnmayer's proposal to change the way campuses are funded, was a sad defense of the status quo when new policies are needed if Oregon's colleges and universities are to meet society's new needs. Higher education is more important to standards of living and quality of life in the Information Age than ever before, but campuses are receiving less state taxpayer subsidy. Following our old policies, as you suggested, will only cause our colleges and universities to slowly circle the drain.

Your editorial said that if Presi-

dent Frohnmayer's proposal was adopted, "the University of Oregon would be forced to compete with other schools." We already do. And the level of competition is increasing as state funding declines.

We need to think of the funding from the state Legislature as a subsidy because the price of the service we provide to students is lower than it costs us to deliver it. We are only able to provide a college education at a loss because the state Legislature provides a subsidy and because we have received private donations. As the state taxpayer subsidy has declined, the University has become more tuition-driven and market sensitive.

We might wish that things were different and some still hope that state support will increase substantially to historic levels. But that didn't happen last year. In spite of a very strong economy, higher education's share of the state's general fund declined again. And don't expect relief in the future because Measure 11 requires new prison construction and because health care costs rise as people live longer.

One of your justifications for maintaining the status quo was that "the University receives state money, and it was created to serve the needs of the Oregon community." Let's put that statement in perspective. When the Oregon State System of Higher Education was created in 1929, two-thirds of the total

budget came from the taxpayers and tuition was about \$100. Today, the state taxpayer subsidy comprises only 15 percent of the University's total revenues. It is time to let go of the old notion that the University is state supported with a little bit of tuition revenue and accept the fact that the University is now tuition-driven with some subsidy. In this context it is not a matter of trying to avoid competition with other schools but rather which policies will allow campuses to compete effectively in a less subsidized and more market sensitive survey.

Reasonable people might differ about the merits of a centralized board of higher education versus a more market-driven approach. But, I think we would all agree that the central system and the revenue sharing approach advocated in your editorial works better in a highly subsidized context. The University's high subsidy days are far behind it.

As President Frohnmayer's proposal and the recommendations from the Governor's Task Force are discussed in the months ahead, those with vested interests in the status quo will argue that we will lose some things by changing the system. They will be right.

It would be silly to think that there were no good qualities to the old system or that the people who have dedicated their professional

lives to making it work have somehow failed. Rather, it is simply that the world has changed and there is no going back. If Oregonians want higher standards of living and quality of life in the Information Age, then we must have strong universities and colleges, which will only happen after we let go of some outdated beliefs and create a new policy framework for less subsidized and more market sensitive conditions.

Gerald Kissler
Associate professor

New data on death

The Emerald's opposition to Measure 51 (ODE, Oct. 13 and 14), which would repeal our assisted suicide law, did not surprise me. It was the lack of candor on behalf of the editorial board which surprised me, and several points deserve to be set straight with our student body.

According to a well documented study in the Netherlands, the assisted suicide, hemlock-style elixir fails one out of every four times it is used. The Oregonian cited this study in its support of Measure 51. This failure ratio is neither difficult to explain nor understand; when the human body ingests poison, it attempts to expel it through vomiting or a myriad of different techniques, as our first instinct is survival (see Darwin). The fundamental problem with Oregon's current assisted suicide law

is that, because we do not allow euthanasia (the killing of a patient by the doctor, which is widely practiced in the Netherlands — in fact, 7 percent of all deaths in the Netherlands are now assisted), the doctor cannot take it upon himself to end the suffering, poisoned patient's life if the attempt fails. I ask you, members of the editorial board, what should be done with the one in four patients who survive the "dose of death" when they suffer from excessive vomiting and pain? Surely you don't support euthanasia; your article frowned on it.

Measure 51 is not a debate on the virtue of assisted suicide. Measure 16 decided that for us, but when news of the Holland study came out, our Legislature sent the bill back to the people, knowing that these newly divulged facts might possibly change our minds. The Emerald editorial board must therefore believe that the Oregon Legislature should have performed a quick fix on a poorly written bill — specifically by legalizing euthanasia. In fact, the Legislature, bowing to the moral genius of the people, believed legalization of euthanasia to be a decision too grave for its power and gave the voters a second chance to decide for ourselves, in light of these new facts.

Use that second chance wisely and vote yes on Measure 51.

Jonathan Collegio
Economics and political science