

CONTACTING US

NEWSROOM: (541) 346-5511
E-MAIL: ode@oregon.uoregon.edu
ONLINE EDITION: www.uoregon.edu/~ode

ADDRESS: Oregon Daily Emerald
 P.O. BOX 3159
 Eugene, Oregon 97403

PERSPECTIVES

EDITOR IN CHIEF
 Sarah Kickler
EDITORIAL EDITOR
 Mike Schmierbach
NIGHT EDITOR
 Holly Sanders

Higher education technical training can go too far

A recent report suggests the need for high technology education is less than believed

AN EMERALD EDITORIAL

For several years now, the dominant mentality in Oregon's higher education system has been that students need to receive an education that will prepare them for "the real world."

In particular, that world is perceived as being made up primarily of "skilled" jobs, positions that often require specific training in science, math and technology. The University of Oregon and other state schools have increased their involvement with business and added more classes to teach about computers and other high-tech industries.

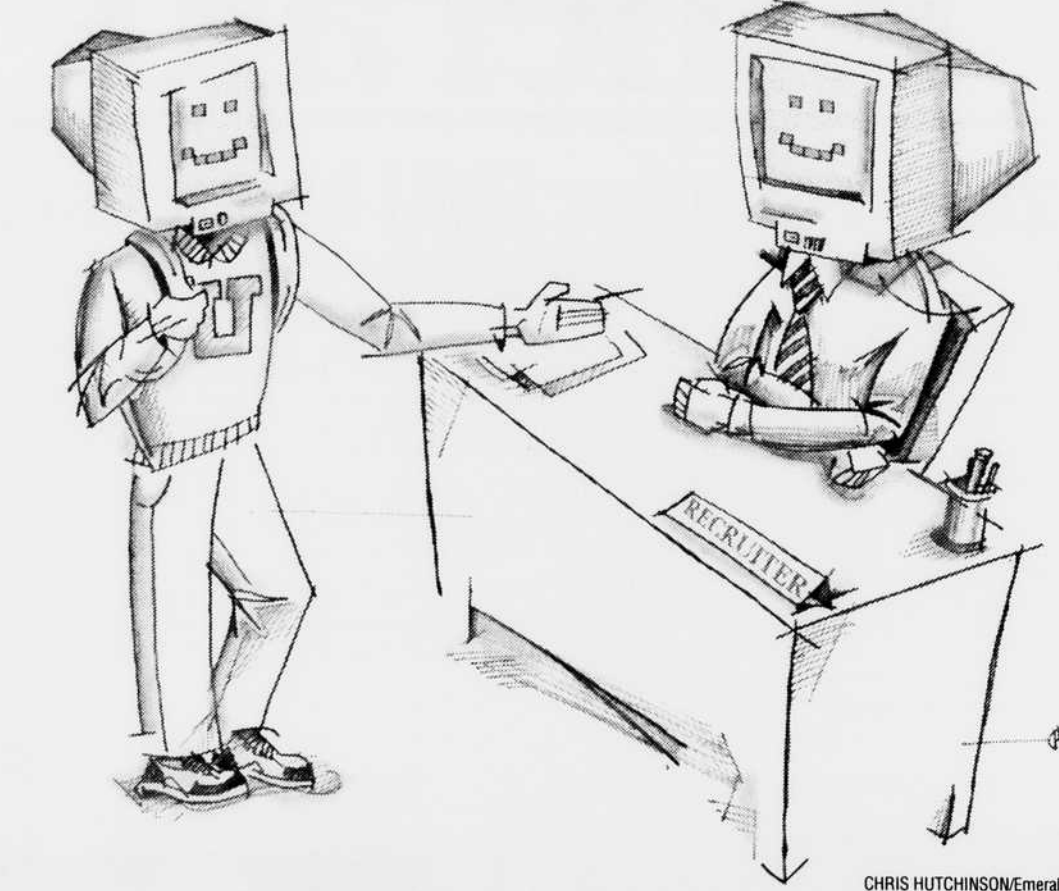
Additionally, Oregon schools have taken other steps to cater their programs to industry. The assumption of those pushing these changes has been that corporations will request more technical training and a greater number of high tech graduates.

For example, in November the Oregon State System of Higher Education Board (now called the Oregon University System) voted to implement a new set of performance indicators. These indicators rely in part upon surveys of graduates and employers about the usefulness of the student's degree in the job market.

In fact, OSSHE Chancellor Joe Cox specifically pushed for employability to be considered a high priority among standards of performance, according to an article in the Emerald (ODE, Nov. 24).

There are certain philosophical and social problems with pushing so hard for business-oriented education and especially with emphasizing high tech.

As many critics of recent changes have pointed out, flooding the market with high tech-trained graduates will not only save businesses money in training (amounting to an additional subsidy of an industry that already



reaps major rewards from local and state government), but it will also create a glut in the labor market, artificially lowering wages and making it hard for graduates to become employed in this supposedly booming field.

In addition, more fundamental questions exist about the degree to which corporations should shape the curriculum. If the primary focus of the university system is to tailor graduates to the needs of industry, we stand to lose more than just humanities and arts classes that are perceived by companies as being of little use in the job market.

We also face the greater risk of censoring professors, classes and departments that represent a

threat to the dominant, pro-corporate view that higher education administrators seem to hold. Whether done in the name of progress or politics, such proposals would greatly weaken the ability of free-market capitalism's foes to organize, educate against and combat the omnipresent forces of the market.

All of these arguments have been made before, of course, and will be made again. Now, however, there is new evidence that, regardless of the desirability of preparing students exclusively for the job market, high-tech training might not be the right path to take.

A new study, reported in Tuesday's New York Times, suggests that the majority of new jobs being

created nationwide are in middle management, not high technology.

There are, of course, certain problems with the study. The question of what constitutes middle management is a valid one, as the researchers created the category for the purposes of the survey. Additionally, the study reflects national, rather than local, trends.

Nevertheless, we think the results of the survey warrant consideration. According to the study, only 8 percent of new jobs created between 1989 and 1995 were in high technology, while 37 percent of the jobs were in management.

Those jobs, according to researchers from the Educational Testing Service, require only ele-

mentary training in problem solving and creative thinking. Such an education can be given through most "traditional" liberal arts programs — although employers did show a preference for those schooled in business classes and their often pro-corporate rhetoric.

Realistically, in fact, many of these jobs don't require college training at all, which suggests that a diploma's crucial role is not, and should not, be enabling its holder to get a job. Rather, college ought to be primarily about providing students with a broad educational background that allows them to understand their community, the world and the social, political and artistic landscape of the time.

Even in Oregon, the majority of jobs will never be in technical fields. Opportunities in these areas are not rising as quickly as predicted and training the requested number of students will only help lower wages.

Instead, the Oregon higher education system (and it is still a system, rather than a collection of individual schools) should work toward creating critical thinkers. Such students are capable of filling the jobs of the coming century, but they are also capable of altering the structures that create those jobs.

After all, it is worth noting that this rise in management came in the midst of downsizing that lowered even management wages and eliminated many lower level jobs (replacing them not only with useless layers of management but also low-paying service positions).

Although it may seem hypocritical, the thing universities most need to teach is that students should question the very existence of elite institutions of learning that funnel different classes into different rungs on the corporate ladder.

That would be higher education than we have today.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ASUO needs Hunter

In regards to next year's proposed budget elimination of staff member Cheryl Hunter (ODE, Jan. 27), the Club Sports Executive Committee implores you to reconsider the ASUO proposal. The severance of Hunter's position is a regressive maneuver that will inevitably set back future ASUO leaders.

We give ourselves as an example. The Club Sports team coordinators would not be as effective in their leadership role without administrative support and guidance. Throughout the years, our director's (Sandy Vaughn) actions as a general facilitator, organizers and representative of student needs have kept this program running smoothly. We see Hunter's position as synonymous. In response to ASUO cries for "autonomy," the Club Sports Executive Committee manages to make all our budgetary and management decisions without administrator interference; rather, we are advanced by Vaughn's administrative and advising experiences.

We understand the desire for the 1997-98 ASUO to leave behind a visi-

ble legacy at the University ("This is Ben and my watch," [Miner] said. "We're going to do whatever we can to slam dunk it, to do what a lot of other administrators saw was needed but couldn't do anything about" (ODE, Jan. 27).), however this is not a productive nor endearing contribution. On behalf of the student body, we hope the ASUO channels its energy into more effective campaigns. Think before you "slam dunk."

**Donna Goode
 Peter McCormick
 and three co-signers**
 Club Sports Executive Committee

University needs cash

While I may not like what businesses like Nike do overseas, I'm not certain institutions like the University can afford to turn away large cash donations. State funding of higher education is on the decline, and not just in Oregon. If someone like Phil Knight gives \$25 million to hire more professors and build a new law school, with no strings attached, then the University should take it and run.

If there is any oversight to be done regarding from where and from whom the money comes, it should only be to determine if any conditions are attached. Does the University give anything to a donor in exchange for a large donation? If the answer is no, then the money should be used for a good purpose, regardless of what we think of the donor's politics or business practices.

Steve Williams
 Graduate student

Safe campus needed

In the recent years, students have worked hard to try to guarantee a safe campus environment. In creating a conduct code that supported survivors, students said campus needed to be a safer place.

Now that process is in jeopardy. With the current ruling concerning sexual misconduct, the safety and effectiveness of the code are in question. Because an alleged offender is being allowed back on campus after four separate findings of guilt, the code is proving ineffective. That is

unacceptable. Students need a safe campus. Students need to stand together to demand a process that gives survivors the protection they need. If a strong code cannot protect the campus environment, then students need to both help and protect themselves.

One in four women are survivors of sexual assault during their college careers; giving support to survivors to know their rights and to empower them to do something is important if we all truly want to see a decline in sexual violence. Demonstrating concern and a pledge for help will not solve the problem, but it will go a long way to start finding solutions.

It is true that not every person has heard the specifics of any case; one does not need to know the specifics to support the findings. One needs to trust in the system that students created to make campus a better place to be. If students cannot trust themselves, who can they really trust?

Bill Miner
 ASUO President
Ben Unger
 ASUO Vice President

CORRECTION

The story "Intern files to impeach ASUO Executive" (ODE, Feb. 11) contained an error. The story should have stated that the Student Senate can also forward a brief to the Constitution Court opposed to the grievance against the ASUO president and vice president. The Emerald regrets the error.