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PERSPECTIVES

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Matriculation fee could be unfair

Proposals for a one-time administrative fee could create financial difficulties for some students and unfairly subsidize others

Some people carry hundreds of dollars around in their wallets. For them, the inconvenience of getting money outweighs the increased security and interest of a bank, as well as the temptation to spend money that comes with having money.

The rest of us go to the ATM.

University administrators want to fill their wallets with hundreds of student dollars at once, rather than collecting the money over the course of a student's academic career. Just as keeping all your money in a wallet or under the mattress is convenient but poorly thought out, this new proposal doesn't make a lot of sense.

According to James Buch, associate vice president for Student Academic Affairs, the administration is considering a one-time matriculation fee that would replace the cost of some administrative services (ODE, March 16). The fee could cover IntroDUCKtion, transcripts, degree application and add-drop penalties.

Exactly which of those services might be covered remains to be determined, as do several other aspects of the proposal. This lack of clarity, while understandable, is one of our concerns about the idea.

While setting a fee for entering freshmen who will take four years to complete their schooling might be a simple enough matter, accounting for the variety of enrolled students at the University is far more complex. Some students take fewer or more years to finish their education, others transfer experience and credits from another school, and still others will

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not complete their education at the University.

All of these factors, as well as currently enrolled students, would have to be accounted for under a one-time fee system. We find it difficult to believe this could be achieved simply or equitably.

Equity is a significant concern for us. We suspect a single matriculation fee would prove to be unfair not only to those students who enter the University in an atypical manner, but for all students.

If the fee covered such costs as transcript fees and add-drop penalties, it would violate the point of instituting such fees originally. Transcript fees are meant to reflect the materials and labor required to produce an official transcript. Those costs vary dramatically from student to student because different students need very different numbers of transcripts. There is no reason the average student should subsidize the 20 to 30 transcripts needed by those applying to graduate schools.

Similarly, the entire student body should not have to pay the penalty inflicted upon individual students by add-drop fees. The fees are in place to discourage students from dropping classes late in the term because of the inconvenience and educational harm. Spreading those fees to students who never drop classes late in the term is unreasonable.

The University may only charge a fee for orientation costs. Currently, according to Buch, students who pay to attend IntroDUCKtion subsidize other orientation programs. If this is true, it should be resolved by altering orientation fees. Charging a universal orientation fee would also be unfair.

Students use different orientation programs

by choice. IntroDUCKtion clearly includes a large number of services, many of them oriented toward first-time college students. Those incoming students who don't opt to attend IntroDUCKtion frequently do so because they don't need those services or aren't inclined to pay for them.

The ability to pay is also a significant issue. A one-time fee could cost \$250. As ASUO Vice President Ben Unger pointed out, that's a lot of money for many students.

Some of that cost may be off-set, however. The administration insists that a one-time fee could be covered by financial aid.

Perhaps that claim is true, but it simply means aid that could have been used for tuition costs will instead go to pay an unfair administrative fee. The cost would still be unreasonably high.

For many students at the University, finding funding is a difficult task managed from term to term. These students often deliberately budget around administrative costs and avoid fees and expensive programs such as IntroDUCKtion. These students would have difficulty budgeting and raising the high initial fee.

There are certainly times when universal fees and shared costs are called for, both in the University system and society as a whole. However, the majority of administrative fees that might be covered by a matriculation fee do not fall into this category.

Students should get to leave their money in the bank, rather than in administrators' wallets, until the students decide they want to incur certain costs.

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

Thumbs



TO PEPSI CHAIRMAN ROGER ENRICO:

PepsiCo Inc.'s leader is setting a good example for the rest of corporate America by waiving his salary and putting the money into scholarships for the company's employees. While Enrico could do more — he retains his bonuses, which last year totaled \$1.8 million — he is sacrificing a \$900,000 salary for an admirable cause. Other corporate executives could learn a valuable lesson from this — while business owners make millions and take in massive bonuses for "saving money" by firing workers, the average employee is watching his or her real wage fall. If big business wants support for its goals, the average American will have to benefit from growth.



TO A GEORGIA SCHOOL:

Soda sure has been in the news a lot lately. At a high school outside of Atlanta, school officials had planned a Coke Day to welcome officials from the Atlanta-based soft drink company as part of a program co-sponsored by the school and Coca-Cola. One student showed up for the festivities wearing a Pepsi T-shirt. While representatives of Coke and Pepsi have had a good time making jokes about the incident, school officials weren't amused; they suspended the 19-year-old senior. This decision had little legal basis and violates the much-needed right to free speech that students still cling to.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Williams rethinks rhetoric

An erstwhile teacher, I am always interested in helping people learn to think and write well. It is therefore with pride that I read Barry Williams' letter (ODE, March 9) chastising me for having challenged his idea that "homosexual behavior is unnatural," part of an "absurd, perverse movement" orchestrated by "liberal propaganda." My response to Williams' initial ill-considered polemic (ODE, Feb. 25) has yielded tangible results in the quality of Williams' prose, demonstrable to anyone who compares his two letters.

Gone is the original letter's clumsy pseudo-biology as evidence (Williams' crude reduction of homosexuality to "the wrong devices in the wrong locations"); squelched, too, are the ghoulish predictions of imminent death and eternal suffering for sinners, rendered in the hoariest cliché ("abomination," "the bondage of sin") that evoked the comical-pathetic spectacle of the "prophet" on his soapbox.

Absent, too, are the stylistic pitfalls of the novice writer — the copious exclamation points and overreliance on a rhetorical question that marred his earlier effort. These

are welcome changes.

Instead, letter No. 2 reveals the new and vastly improved Williams letter-writing persona — he of the identifiable thesis and well-reasoned argument, coolly exploiting seeming weaknesses in my earlier letter and demonstrating a serviceable rhetorical style and coherent main claim. The assertions in letter No. 2 are OCA party-line perfect, with their steely intimation of holy war waged signature by signature, part of a mission, as Williams characterizes it, "to engage ... change agents in a public dialogue and contend for the character of our society

through our legislatures and the initiative process." I'm not sure that Williams' self-portrait of a former draft-register and organizer of Yippies who has seen the folly of his ways and careened into other enthusiasms is well-considered, but his second letter does make clearer the political stakes of his theological obsessions.

For these changes, I give us both high marks: Kudos to Williams for the miraculous transformation of his prose and to me for having inspired it.

Brian Whaley
 Graduate student

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