

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

Dealing with the Defense Department

Students and scientists alike should question University contracts with the U.S. military

It doesn't get the high-profile protests that the Nike donation has, though the grant money it brings in amounts to 5 percent of total University grants. Indeed, the researchers here are at the top of their field, but it seems no one knows the lab is there at all.

It's the Computational Intelligence Research Lab, where some of the best artificial intelligence minds in the world do research for the U.S. military. For all the controversy about the Riverfront Research Park, CIRL seems to have escaped

notice, though it is currently working on a \$2.7 million project developing, planning and scheduling technologies for the Defense Department.

It's surprising that, in a community so concerned with militarism, accepting this type of grant should come without oversight. It is time for the University community to open a dialogue

about the contracts and grants we accept. And if the applications those grants threaten to create can't stand up to scrutiny, that tells us something in itself.

When told about CIRL's work, many students express shock. "It doesn't seem that there should be any place for military research on the U of O campus. Isn't that why we have military bases?" Student Senator Michael Olson said.

"We definitely need to consider the implications of any research being done at the University. I don't see how military research contributes to the academic development of students at the U of O. I don't see how that fits into our mission statement."

For Matt Ginsberg, founder and director of CIRL, it's about a commitment to science. "The reason I have no problem taking military money is because they let me do the science," Ginsberg told me. And though they look for work with "attractive peacetime applications," they have no problem taking the readily available mili-



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

tary contracts.

Indeed, one reason CIRL accepts Defense Department backing is because military grants are far easier to come by than other sources. "The federal government, because they have this military motivation behind it, is far much more able to provide research funding than, say, Federal Express would be," said David Etherington, current director of CIRL.

Other universities are succumbing to the militarization of academia as well. Today, the Defense Department provides 71 percent of federal research funds toward computer science, a 26 percent increase over the last two decades. As public funding for

universities wanes, institutions reach out for lucrative Defense Department contracts.

But if anything, this should encourage universities who cherish peace to resist the rising tide. Do we really want to be like USC, whose Information Sciences Institute researches attack helicopters? Or Carnegie Mellon, where a robot-driven tank is under development?

Students I spoke with said it makes them uncomfortable to know this university does military work. It should — ultimately, we are responsible for what goes on in our communities. Democracy is all about ordinary people speaking up when questionable activities surround them.

And don't scientists, too, have an obligation to consider who their benefactors are, and how those benefactors might use their work? In Ginsberg's view, not necessarily: "We provide technology. And yes, we care how technology is used; yes, we want people to know that it can be used for

good or ill ... but fundamentally, that's not our decision to make. And when we decided to become scientists, we were at some level agreeing to give that up. We do the work, and it's up to society to apply it sensibly."

This rationale sounds too much like science without a social conscience. Knowledge, once attained, doesn't evaporate. The reality is that CIRL discoveries will either be used for good or they will not; two things can happen to push matters in the right direction.

If Ginsberg is right, it falls to citizens to direct research toward life-affirming ends. We at the University can't do that without knowledge of and power over University contracts and grants. The University should establish a student board to oversee grant acceptance. Besides helping to stop the advance of corporate control, it just might make the whole system more open and democratic.

Next, the CIRL team should recognize that nothing happens devoid of social context. Grants from the military are not free gifts, and they could carry a weighty moral price. CIRL should look elsewhere for backing.

Jeff Shaw is a columnist for the Emerald. His work appears on alternate Wednesdays. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

OPINION



Jeff Shaw

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Enough already

This is an open letter to any and all members of OSPIRG involved in this year's biannual campaign: We know you're up for renewal. We know you want our vote, but enough already! For a group supposedly devoted to environmental issues, you seem to use about four times as much paper on campus as any other group. Posters, sometimes three to a bulletin board; cards and fliers on every single conceivable flat surface in every building; letters to the Emerald nearly every day (what, do you assign them to your members?); sandwich boards on many corners; etc. I believe a truly environmentally responsible organization would cease and desist these wasteful tactics. You've definitely lost my vote — because of your hypocritical behavior.

Dayna Terry
English

Yes on 1, 6

There are two ballot measures before the student body this year that I hope pass by large margins: Question 1, for continued OSPIRG funding, and Question 6, for the elevator that will provide wheelchair access to the International Lounge, the ODE and the EMU Art Gallery.

First, Question 6: a major portion of the

EMU has been off-limits to students in wheelchairs and construction of an elevator is needed to remedy this. Remodeling the EMU has drained reserves to the point that, unless students pitch in, there simply won't be enough money to build one. The ASUO has shown strong support for this project by committing about \$200,000 toward the elevator construction. Please add your support! Vote yes on Question 6.

On Question 1: I have valued OSPIRG's advocacy for the individual and the downtrodden, as well as its watchdog attitude toward big business "attacks" on the environment. Watchdogs are not popular with thieves and robbers. Please vote yes on Question 1. Say no to the influx of off-campus, big-business money aimed at defeating this measure and closing down OSPIRG. OSPIRG is on the enemy list of big business and out-of-state interests in Oregon; don't let them fool you — it's not for YOUR good! Vote YES on 1!

Jim Long
Chemistry Instructor

Vote for 'fresh face'

All things in life move in cycles. If any one thing remains stagnant, it is bound to go bad. The ASUO is no exception to this rule. New people need to constantly circulate through the student government in order to ensure the full representation of the

students and their changing needs. Jessica Timpany is the "fresh face" that the Student Senate and the EMU board long for. She comes to the ballot with proven new and enthusiastic energy to be involved and to represent the students.

As the visibility coordinator for the ASUO Executive office, Jessica has the experience of working with all branches of our government. Her newness to the ASUO gives her the ability to look at the issues at hand with unbiased and uncorrupted eyes. Most important, Jessica has the gall to question the present workings of our ASUO system and the passion to better it. Jessica Timpany is not running for office to pad her résumé or to climb the political ladder. She is doing this simply because in some twisted and funky way, she really enjoys it. Jessica is doing this because protecting student programs, student control the incidental fees and fighting the students' fights excites her.

Jessica Timpany is coming to the ballot as a real student who is in touch with the wants, needs and concerns of the student body. Jessica is the true voice of the students, as was proven by her victory in the primary elections. Elect Jessica Timpany to EMU board finance senator seat no. 5 one more time!

Ben Unger
ASUO Vice President

FYI

CORRECTION

In the story "Prospective CPAs will need to take five-year program in 2000" (ODE April 20), the local accounting firm should have been named as Jones and Roth PC. The Emerald regrets the error.

LETTERS POLICY

The Emerald accepts letters from members of the University and Eugene community, preferably under 400 words. Shorter letters will receive higher priority. Op-ed pieces will only be printed, at the discretion of the editor, if they are written by an authority about a pertinent issue. Letters can be submitted in person at EMU Suite 300, mailed to P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR, 97403, or e-mailed to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu. Please include your full name and telephone number for confirmation. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for length or style.