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PERSPECTIVES

Students must participate in important politics

The University provides ways for students to get involved in University and state decisions

AN EMERALD EDITORIAL

Welcome to Oregon. Remember to vote. Oregon is closing in fast on another election year, and an important one at that. Sen. Ron Wyden, the popular local Democrat, is up for re-election. So is local Democratic House Rep. Peter DeFazio. Bill Sizemore is running as the underdog candidate for governor against John Kitzhaber.

And then there's the Oregon Legislature. The coming session's biennial display of bickering and bureaucracy will be the first that will be missing representatives due to term-limit restrictions. The legislature must also make a decision that is crucial for Oregon's public higher education institutions — whether to OK the Oregon University System's new funding model that allows all of the universities to keep their own tuition and fees instead of pooling them for later redistribution.

And then there's the ASUO. Last year, under President Bill Miner and Vice President Ben Unger, the ASUO took on at least a dozen important issues, but they may have taken on too much. Some important campaigns — such as the fight for tenant rights — seemed fleeting, while others just took up too much time. Unger has since graduated, and Miner took an internship in Washington, D.C.

This year's ASUO Executive of President Geneva Wortman and Vice President Morgan Cowling has an even more difficult task facing them. While Miner and Unger took on local battles, Wortman and Cowling will have to add legislative issues to their local fights. Tuition costs are an annual fight for University students, and

the institution may now be feeling the effects of incredible out-of-state tuition increases. While these statewide battles for student rights and privileges are crucial, Wortman and Cowling have to avoid getting caught up in state politics and find a balance between local, state and national campaigns.

Graduate teaching fellows will appreciate it, freshmen will appreciate it and off-campus apartment chumps will appreciate it. The only major actions made by the new executive has been to freeze a couple student organizations' budgets. Although these may not have been the most popular decisions, it does show that Wortman and Cowling aren't just breezing through the job.

Then there will be the ASUO elections. The last two years' elections have been utter fiascos. It seems everyone gets edgy during election season, and the ASUO Constitution Court is left to resolve the infinite number of grievances fired back and forth. Last year's ASUO election was worse than most state elections. It was dirty, petty and ugly. Don't expect that to change.

Over this 1998-99 school year, there will be dozens of important political decisions made by the ASUO, the Oregon legislature and state voters. Students need to register to vote in order to jump into the University fray and shake things up. Head a campaign, because students have made a difference in the past, and



AMY GOLDHAMMER/Emerald

they can do it again.

With close to 20,000 students on campus, students make up a large constituency in Eugene. City Mayor Jim Torrey regularly meets with citizens of the city (which includes students), politicians will make campaign visits to campus and the legislature will be making some major decisions affecting higher education.

So, welcome to Oregon. Remember to vote.

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

LETTERS POLICY

The Oregon Daily Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters must be limited to 250 words or less. The Oregon Daily Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, clarity, grammar and style.

Letters may also be dropped off in Suite 300 of the EMU.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Blame misplaced

I was appalled by Brandon Smith's attempt to place blame for the Designated Driver Shuttle's woes on the shoulders of the Student Senate Summer Committee. In his lengthy letter to the editor (ODE, Aug. 19), he creates for the reader a fantasy world in which student senators conspire to ruin DDS, and his prodigious arithmetic talents cover up the inaccuracies and outright lies told to the summer committee months ago.

While this makes for entertaining reading, Mr. Smith should keep in mind that a few senators are around to help clear up the fact.

First of all, Mr. Smith's statement that DDS is "under severe restrictions imposed by the ASUO Executive and the student senate" is patently false. Before the Aug. 10 meeting where DDS was granted full access to \$50,000 awarded through a ballot measure last fall, DDS had access to over \$26,000 granted to it by the 1997-98 student senate. I hardly think that \$26,000 was an obstacle to suc-

cessful operation.

Second, Mr. Smith furnished inaccurate and false information to the summer committee in the July 19 meeting with regard to the pay he and his staff members received. In that same meeting, he admitted to violating ASUO rules regarding payroll by giving himself and his employees raises without consulting the student senate — an action that is explicitly forbidden. He completely disregarded safeguards ASUO has against improper expenditures, and piled insult upon injury by refusing to furnish documents requested by senators that could back up his statements about DDS's hiring practices.

Finally, Mr. Smith's statement that "had the student senate not postponed the DDS budget for the past three weeks, DDS would have been operating sooner" rings false. Again, DDS was able to access \$26,000 since at the latest July 19, and DDS loaned one of its vans to help a group of students move. This same van was described to me as "unsafe" and "not road worthy" only days after it was used

to move furniture.

Mr. Smith has exercised poor judgment in more than a few instances this past month. Hopefully, he will direct his energies toward making DDS a successful program, rather than trying to blame other people and organizations for his acts of incompetence.

Selena Brewington
Student Senator

Constituents ignored

Last month, I wrote Sen. Gordon Smith urging him to oppose the Forage Improvement Act when it came before him in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on July 29. My letter was dated July 17, 1998, and his response, which I received August 10, is dated July 9. I suppose I expected a form letter, but I was surprised to receive one that pre-dates my letter! What is more discouraging is that his response thanked me for my "thoughts regarding reforms to the Endangered Species Act" and explained his support for Sen. Kempthorne's Endangered Species Act

reauthorization legislation. I did not write to Senator Gordon about the Endangered Species Act, and his response did not once mention his position on the Forage Improvement Act.

Sen. Smith voted in favor of the Forage Improvement Act despite my letter and polls indicating that a majority of Oregonians oppose the legislation. He also supports the Kempthorne reauthorization bill. Not one conservation organization supports the Kempthorne bill while thousands of environmental, trade, and religious organizations, and hunter and fisher groups, oppose the bill. The Kempthorne bill, with its "no surprises" clause and protections for huge landowners, is a death warrant for dozens of imperiled species whose ranges overlay private lands. As my senator, I expect Gordon Smith to support habitat protection, species conservation, and sustainable development. I also expect his office to be tactful and considerate when replying to his constituents.

Mark N. Salvo
Washington, D.C.

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