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# PERSPECTIVES

## University falls far short of excellence

*Our illustrious institution's ego overshadows its real quality: mediocrity*

### Opinion



Ashley Bach

Kyle Boller could have gone anywhere, and in the end, it came down to the University of California and the University of Oregon. The high school senior from Newhall, Calif., one of the top five high school quarterbacks in the country, had to make the monumental decision of where to play college football.

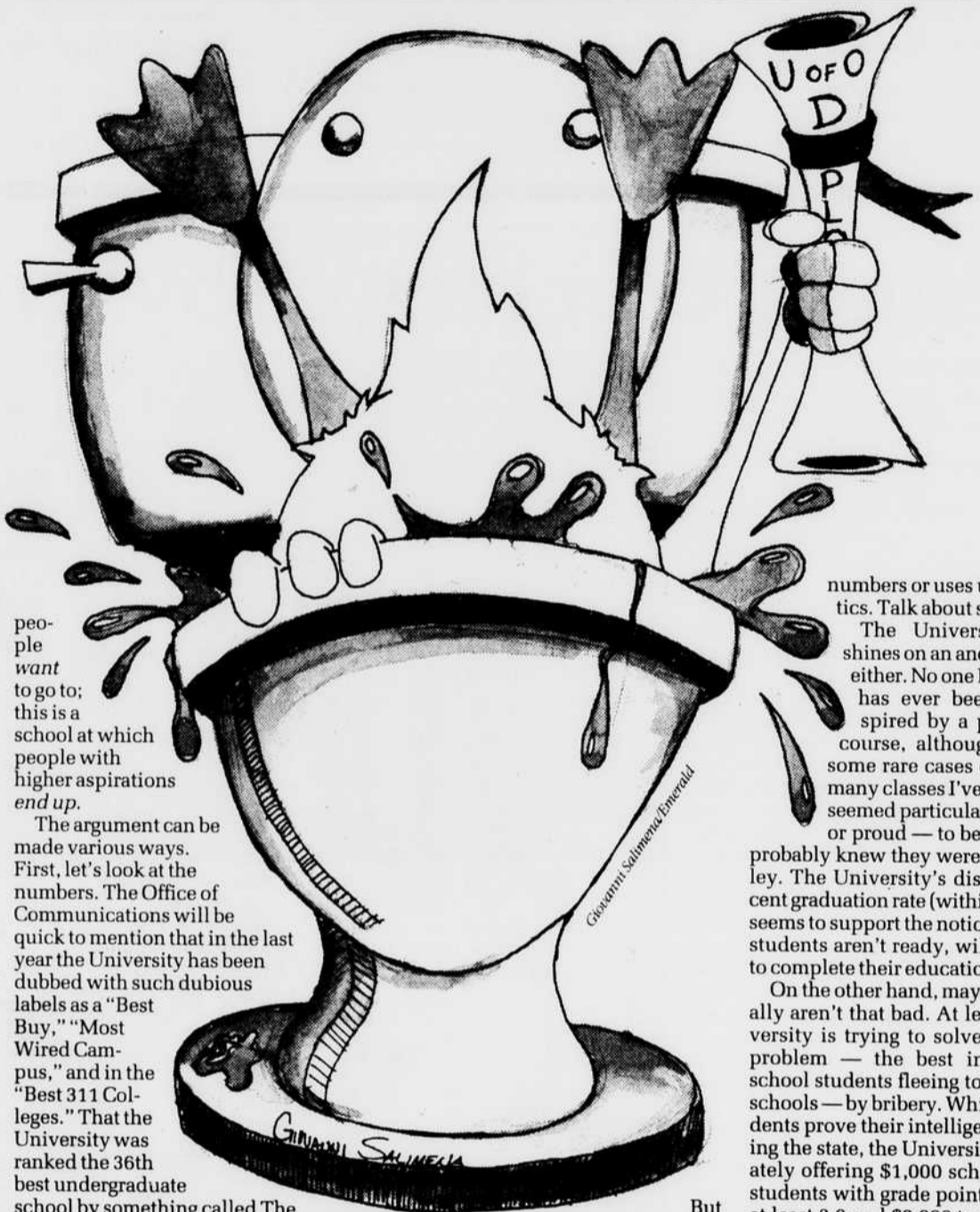
Last week he chose California. Why? The big reason was academics, he told The San Francisco Examiner, adding, "To get a degree from Berkeley is pretty big."

Smart kid. While top high school athletes are normally more concerned with the caliber of a college's weight room and party scene than its teaching, Boller is on to something. His decision, and the basis for it, is something the University endures with thousands of students a year.

Boller and his counterparts know something the administration and various professors seem unable to grasp, that public relations peons try to cover up with a stream of press releases. That is, the University is not a great school. In fact, it's not even a good school.

It's hard to accept, I know, for those of you who were under the assumption that you were part of an institution that had some unique qualities to call its own, some secret weapons it could throw into the mosh pit that is national college recruitment. But it's just not true.

The truth is we're attending a school that can barely measure up academically to its fellow state universities, let alone the best colleges in the country. The story is the same for most students and many professors across campus: This is not a school



people want to go to; this is a school at which people with higher aspirations end up.

The argument can be made various ways. First, let's look at the numbers. The Office of Communications will be quick to mention that in the last year the University has been dubbed with such dubious labels as a "Best Buy," "Most Wired Campus," and in the "Best 311 Colleges." That the University was ranked the 36th best undergraduate school by something called The Gourman Report and among the top 63 graduate programs by the Princeton Review. And that the University's undergraduate and graduate programs in such subjects as psychology, architecture, education and math were ranked in Gourman's Top-25 and Top-50 lists.

These accolades are noteworthy but hardly remarkable. Every major university in the country probably has a list just as big, if not bigger. The real question is this: In how many college rankings, guides, lists and books is the University and its programs hardly a footnote or not mentioned at all? I venture to say it's quite a few.

But that's not all. The school's most damning ranking position has always lain squarely within U.S. News & World Report. The magazine's annual college guide, the most important and widely read in the country, has consistently ranked the University in the *third* tier of universities, out of four. To put this in perspective, the University is on equal ground with such academic heavyweights as Ohio's Union Institute and the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

To add insult to injury, each fall when the rankings appear professors and administrators can be heard grumbling about how U.S. News skews its

numbers or uses unfair statistics. Talk about sour grapes. The University hardly shines on an anecdotal level either. No one I've talked to has ever been truly inspired by a professor or course, although I'm sure some rare cases exist. In the many classes I've had, no one seemed particularly happy — or proud — to be there. They probably knew they weren't at Berkeley. The University's dismal 56 percent graduation rate (within five years) seems to support the notion that many students aren't ready, willing or able to complete their education here.

On the other hand, maybe things really aren't that bad. At least the University is trying to solve part of the problem — the best in-state high school students fleeing to out-of-state schools — by bribery. While these students prove their intelligence by leaving the state, the University is desperately offering \$1,000 scholarships to students with grade point averages of at least 3.6 and \$2,000 to 4.0 students and valedictorians.

And at least those of us who choose to stay will get college degrees to enhance our marketability in a competitive world and give us better futures. I've just come to accept that I won't be getting any jobs or opportunities based on the prestige of my school. There is none.

Honestly, though, the University isn't a *bad* school. But I almost wish it was. At least then we'd be notable for something.

*Ashley Bach is a columnist for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.*

## Letters to the Editor

### Enough is enough

Friday's editorial by Vince Medeiros, ODE Jan. 22, was an example of how not to write an editorial. Not only did he fail to get me to sympathize with his weak will-power, but he spent a good deal of his time worsening the public's view of college students.

Perhaps if he spent less time drinking and more time researching, or actually working to change some of the things he complains about, he'd find out what "enough" can really mean. Hey Vince, how about: Enough of the perpetuation of the social myth that all college students do nothing but drink cheap beer and whine? Enough romanticizing behavior that can lead to addiction, crime, bad grades, ill health and even death? Enough wasting valuable editorial space with stories of your drunken behavior. Save it for people who care.

If you're not here to study and learn, including writing 10-page term papers, maybe you ought to reexamine your

real purpose. \$3,750 is a lot to pay for a cover charge.

Megan Koster  
Senior, Anthropology

### Campus radio

Campus radio, giving the students the chance to play the music that only we like. I am sure that this is not the actual slogan of the campus radio station, KWVA, but it probably should be. At the end of fall term, a friend of mine and I turned in an application for a radio show. We asked around to try and see what students thought of the existing radio station on campus, and what students would like to hear played. The first response we received was: Oh, you mean the station that you need ear plugs to listen to? After many references to words that cannot be printed to describe the station, we decided that we should tailor our program full of music that a wide variety of students would listen to. Our mock set list included lots of live recordings including Phish, the Grateful Dead and various other blues artists;

good music for a well-cultured listening base.

Phase 2 of getting our radio show was going into the station and talking to people who would rather not see you unless you have torn clothing and at least three piercings. We were blown off time and time again and told that it was not worth leaving a message for the station's general manager because, "He does not return his messages." Not exactly a common practice of managers. So after many phone calls, we decided to go into the station to see exactly what was going on in there. After being told again that the general manager is never there — which begs the question, why is he the general manager? — we gave our pitch to the people in the station.

We would like to play a lot of live recordings including Phish, the Grateful Dead and some blues. We asked why the station was not allowed to play those bands. The response was, because "Sean hates them."

Wow, so much for campus radio, the station of the students.

Frank Jezukewicz  
Sophomore, Journalism