

Order in the Court (and the ASUO), according to former justice

I resigned as chief justice of the ASUO Constitution Court for two reasons. First, due to institutional separation, the role of the court and its decisions have not been adequately explained to the student body.

For various, necessary reasons, a judge of any court is prohibited from explaining the decisions of that court or commenting on any matter before that court. Court decisions and cases are explained by the legal community (lawyers, scholars, retired judges and other commentators) surrounding the court.

In the ASUO, however, we have no similar legal community. Without adequate information and explanation, students understandably become confused about the role of the Constitution Court and its decisions. I resigned to help reduce this confusion.

Second, a series of increasingly frequent and harsh attacks leveled at the court and individual justices continue to damage the ASUO and poison our political discussions. Some of these attacks result from students expressing their frustration with the court

(frustration resulting from the confusion I described above).

Some of these attacks, however, are direct, calculated efforts by some students to advance short-term political goals at the expense of the court and the ASUO. I resigned to respond to these attacks, especially those in the second category, which I consider unfair, without merit, destructive and dishonorable.

Now that I've identified some of the problems, I offer a few proposed solutions.

Understand that your opponent is not your enemy

At the heart of most of the problems I've identified lies the unfortunately common belief that our political opponents must be our enemies. This belief is wrong and acting on such a belief does nothing but poison the atmosphere of political discussion on campus and threaten the integrity of the ASUO.

Someone who holds a different political view, sees the world differently, or (specifically regarding the Constitution Court) follows a different judicial philosophy is not a bad person. Disagreement does not imply malice, an intent to harm or intentional bias toward

any person. Disagreement does not indicate character flaws or a lack of integrity.

Disagreement simply demonstrates a difference of opinion. Contrary to some rumors and speculation, no justice of the court made his or her decision based on

Commentary

Joel Corcoran

prejudice against the ASUO Executive or any other person or organization in the ASUO. As much as we disagreed with each other, I never questioned the integrity, intelligence, dedication or knowledge of any justice I ever served with. In fact, I firmly believe that justices holding very different legal philosophies make a court better and are a great asset to the ASUO. Such differences ensure a complete and thorough discussion of the issues presented in every case.

However, those who disagree with the court's judicial analysis should speak their opinions. We should explain why the court's logic or reasoning may be wrong, but we shouldn't attack the integrity of the court or an individ-

ual justice simply because we disagree with a particular decision. We shouldn't call the court "undemocratic," or accuse the justices of "having God complexes" simply because a court decision went against our particular political interests. Reasonable people often disagree. Unreasonable people will say such disagreement indicates a character flaw or lack of integrity.

Get informed before you express an opinion

In addition to understanding our opponents are not our enemies, we need to do a better job of gaining information about particular court decisions before criticizing those decisions.

In response to several decisions, a number of students wrote letters to the editor, which appeared here in the Oregon Daily Emerald, describing the court as tyrannical and attempting an undemocratic effort to usurp the ASUO Executive and deny students their basic right to vote. Had these students read the court's opinions before they wrote these letters, they might have understood the court's rationale for its decision and how wrong these as-

sertions were.

Before we criticize the court, or any ASUO organization for that matter, for its decisions, we need to understand the basis of those decisions. Criticism is effective only when properly directed at incorrect reasoning or improper behavior. If we don't understand that reasoning or behavior, our criticisms are unjustified, misdirected and ultimately meaningless.

Conclusion

I've spotted some problems in the ASUO, but I don't have all the answers. I'll continue to do my best to help reduce the confusion described above by explaining the court's role and its decisions, here in the pages of the Emerald or elsewhere, to help you make informed opinions about the ASUO. But my efforts will be worthless unless we all stop personally attacking our opponents for political or legal opinions and start becoming more informed about the issues arising in the ASUO.

Joel Corcoran is the former chief justice on the ASUO Constitution Court. He resigned from the court on March 1. He can be reached via e-mail at jcorcora@law.uoregon.edu.

Letters to the Editor

Hot air

In her Emerald commentary on Monday (ODE, Feb. 22), ASUO President Geneva Wortman made an argument for the special election but failed to address the major points that suggest a corrupt process.

With incredibly vague language, flitting generalities and plenty of platitudes regarding "student power," Wortman made the case that the grievance process needs to be changed. However:

1. It would be utterly insane to revise the process if the elections coordinator is still employed by the ASUO Executive. This is the main point of corruption with the current special election.

Elections Coordinator Taylor Sturges extended the ballot measure deadline to only the ASUO Executive, which resubmitted an OSPIRG funding measure. Other groups did not know of the extension. This clearly sug-

gests that the elections coordinator was under pressure to do so by the ASUO president. This is corrupt, and it clearly shows that the elections coordinator should be in an office independent of the executive.

2. Wortman never addressed why funding measures needed to be on the special election ballot, except for citing the precedent set by rules for the general election. But if she uses this logic, all regular rules must be followed, including the election of all appointed student senators.

If you choose to follow one rule, follow them all. Picking and choosing again suggests a corrupt process, especially considering that Wortman was heavily involved with OSPIRG in the past.

Wortman's commentary was cheap political rhetoric at its worst.

Andy Combs
Political Science

Funding issues

The debate about whether OSPIRG should be funded and how to go about getting funding for OSPIRG has become a serious problem for students (ODE, Feb. 25). OSPIRG does provide services that students can take advantage of and ones which we all benefit from. By having powerful student voices in the state political system, we students are somewhat protected from programs and policies that would gradually take away our rights to education and reduce the health levels of our lives.

However, OSPIRG is funded at the whim of students at the colleges and universities in Oregon. Traditionally, OSPIRG received one year of funding directly from the ASUO Programs Finance Committee and the next from a student vote.


I think that OSPIRG forgot that all socially conscious organizations need to continually

let the membership know what is happening within the organization. As a PFC member a few years ago, I questioned OSPIRG as to what they did with their money. They told us that the money was sent to Portland and from there it was divided as OSPIRG saw fit. I questioned how much of the money befitted students at this University. They could not answer that question.

I believe that all student groups that receive money from the ASUO must be completely transparent as to what they spend their money on. We all help fund these student groups through incidental fees. And all student groups must therefore present their next year's line-item budget to the PFC for approval, or not be funded.

I urge OSPIRG to comply with these ASUO requirements.

David Lewis
Anthropology



**spring
registration
begins**

**Thursday
March 11th
10am**

**register early...
classes fill quickly!**

EMU Erb Memorial Union

- ☉ Fibers
- ☉ Jewelry
- ☉ Ceramics
- ☉ Drawing
- ☉ Painting
- ☉ Woodworking
- ☉ Stained Glass
- ☉ Bike Repair
- ☉ Photography
- ☉ And more...

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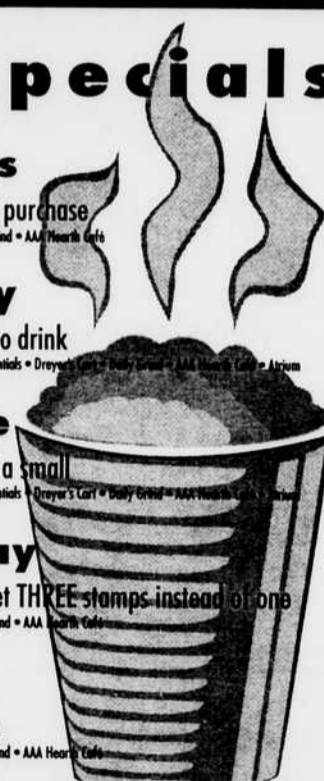
Monday • March 8th **mocha madness**
Free syrup flavor with any mocha purchase
Valid at The Buzz • Greatful Bread • Daily Grind • AAA Heart Cafe

Tuesday • March 9th **ten percent day**
Get 10% off any coffee or espresso drink
Valid at The Buzz • Greatful Bread • Erb Essentials • Dreyfus Cafe • Daily Grind • AAA Heart Cafe • Atrium


Wednesday • March 10th **larger than life**
Get a large coffee for the price of a small
Valid at The Buzz • Greatful Bread • Erb Essentials • Dreyfus Cafe • Daily Grind • AAA Heart Cafe • Atrium

Thursday • March 11th **triple stamp day**
Buy any coffee or espresso and get THREE stamps instead of one
Valid at The Buzz • Greatful Bread • Daily Grind • AAA Heart Cafe

Friday • March 12th **friends day**
Get two lattes for the price of one
Valid at The Buzz • Greatful Bread • Daily Grind • AAA Heart Cafe



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**Saturday
March 13th**

Men's Rugby 8am-12noon • Southbank Field
Women's Rugby 12noon-5pm • Southbank Field

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