

PERSPECTIVES

Idle minds

Many students are proudly not making the grade, but they're only hurting themselves

There I sat, trying honestly to ace a final that was worth 40 percent of my grade, and everyone was looking for excuses.

It was a 400-level music class last term, with four short film criticism papers and an essay exam making up our entire grade. Not exactly rocket science. But as more than a few students turned in their exams, they slipped into long tales about how they hadn't turned in any of the short papers and weren't sure about the exam either.

Could the professor give them a few days to turn the papers in? And just how important was this exam to their grade anyway?

Opinion



Ashley Bach

I cringed in my seat, knowing just how stupid these people had been, but I wasn't surprised. Stories like this one pop up in classes every day. We're surrounded by unbelievably horrible students. Papers are being written without attention to basic composition, or not at all. And tests and projects are being botched with wild abandon.

I'm expecting a lot of Fs and Ds and Cs to be entered into gradebooks next week, but the scariest thing is, students don't care — or rather, they do a good job pretending.

Exactly why this is so can be explained in a variety of ways. The easy answer, as we know, is the University is a sub-par school, with horrendously low admissions requirements. A few terms of a foreign language, a 3.0 grade-point average (which is nego-

tiabile) and the mere *submission* of your SAT or ACT scores practically guarantees your acceptance.

With standards like these, one can see why so many students come to the University more interested in burning "incense" than writing a good thesis. Bad high school students become bad college students. We're bred to be underachievers from the beginning.

But college should be a place to reach higher goals. I'm a better student than I was in high school, but that's with no help from peers or a school that pushed me to do better. In fact, I've been pushed to do worse. My good grades aren't because I'm such a great student, but because I'm good relative to everyone else.

This isn't really encouraging, knowing my A paper is only an A among the other Cs and Bs, but it's the truth.

And we face bigger problems. Bad grades aren't just expected by fellow students; they've become a religion. Staying up all night to write a paper, or turning one in late or not at all, is something to brag about. Skipping class is a part of life, and just getting by is a badge of honor.

It's "slacker chic," centered around the belief that doing anything else but academics should always take priority. Many students make this their motto for four, five, six or seven years.

There are some inconsistencies in this, however. Students relish laughing off their bad grades, as if they don't care. But many



deny it. Every student pores over professor's comments on graded papers, eager to see how they measure up, and posted exam grades always attract a crowd.

But slacking off is expected, even enforced. It's no wonder that so many students moan in disappointment after seeing their grades. They didn't follow their heart's desire.

Some students, I must concede, don't have the *ability* to get good grades. While their mere presence at a university is questionable, they can get help — from professors, fellow students, tutors or Academic Learning Services.

And in an ideal world, the mere process of gaining knowledge and enlightenment would take precedence over any written grade. Unfortunately, anyone who thinks this is what college is all about is fooling themselves.

College is an investment, not just an experience. And getting respectable grades is a way of maintaining the value of that investment. But many students would rather spend their study hours with more fleeting pursuits. Keeping up with your classes may not be as fun as say, a Wednesday night at Taylor's, I admit, but its value will last far longer than closing time.

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

Letters to the Editor

Bigger isn't better

Since I transferred from Lane Community College, 35 percent of my classes have been taught by student teachers, and every class has relied on GTFs to do the majority of classwork critique, feedback and grading.

Why am I paying more to get feedback from students? We all pay big bucks to learn from professors, not from students. I want the expertise of my professors and their insights, critiques and grading policies for all of my coursework and not just at special times for special papers at special office hours.

At LCC, where prices are cheaper, professors grade student course work. Students there can feel secure with their grades and know that they adequately reflect the quality of work expected by their teachers.

Time and time again I have experienced burnt-out GTFs already pushed to the limit form their own schoolwork. Their tight schedules result in poorly grading students' work throughout the term. I don't pay big bucks to learn from GTFs, and I resent hav-

ing students determine my course grades. We aren't getting what we pay for; we are getting ripped off.

Rachel Rosnor
Political Science/Philosophy

Campus trees

This letter's purpose is to clarify the circumstances surrounding the removal of a big leaf maple tree by the south side of Gilbert Hall on Feb. 18. The day had been stormy, with gusty winds. By early evening, several people reported to the Office of Public Safety that they had observed a large crack opening up in this tree in the main trunk.

This information was relayed through channels to me as campus arborist. By 7 p.m., I had inspected the tree. It was clear the tree was in imminent danger of complete failure and would have to be removed. No horticulturally sound measures could have saved the tree. Upon removal, the tree was found to be almost completely hollow in the main stem.

Please understand, we take no joy in re-

moving a tree. The decision to remove is not done lightly or capriciously, as we care about our trees, too. However, there are times when concerns for public safety clearly must dictate our path. We mourn the tree's passage, but feel relief that no one was hurt or killed.

John Anthony
Campus arborist

Gracious Ducks

I am from Los Angeles and the father of a sophomore at the University. I have always enjoyed all sports. Because the University's women's softball team was playing close to my home at California State-Northridge, I was able to attend their games on Feb. 27 and 28.

A mother of one of the players recognized me on Sunday from Saturday's game. She asked me if my daughter played. No, I said, I just enjoy watching. I told her it sure would be nice if I could have a softball as a memento. Before I could bat an eye, she returned with a ball signed by all the players thanking me for my support!

I returned home glowing. You would

have thought I had received a ball from one of the home runs hit by Sosa or McGwire. Thank you and Go Ducks!

Howard Benjamin
Los Angeles

CORRECTION

In the March 11 edition of the Emerald, the men's basketball photo with Flo Hartenstein scoring over Georgia Tech's Alvin Jones was taken by Scott Barnett. The Emerald regrets the error.

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. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, clarity, grammar, style and libel. Letters may be dropped off at EMU Suite 300.