

PERSPECTIVES

Freedom of what?

University of Wisconsin students confuse freedom of speech with censoring opinions

Students from the University of Wisconsin-Madison have filed a law suit against their university stating that they do not want their student fees to subsidize campus organizations with which they do not agree. The National Organization for Women; the International Socialists Organization; the Campus Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Center; and an AIDS support network are among the groups these students do not wish to fund because of a conflict in opinion.

They argue that being forced to fund such programs is a violation of their First Amendment right to free speech.

Since when has silencing others strengthened the right to free speech?

If the Supreme Court rules in favor of these students, universities across the nation, including the University, will be forced to prorate fees according to each student's personal beliefs. This decision would overturn a recent Oregon Supreme Court case that decided that groups such as OSPIRG, even though all students might not agree with their objectives, can seek funding through student fees.

It may sound appealing, but the result would be devastating. Universities would no longer be able to fund campus groups.

The cost of refunding money and creating questionnaires would make it impossible to operate such programs.

These conservative Wisconsin students are crying free speech but destroying the avenues by which students pursue this free speech (i.e. affiliation

with student groups and organizations).

As it stands in Oregon, universities give all groups the opportunity to receive student-fee funding. The exceptions include religious groups (because of the separation of church and state) and politically affiliated groups. Oregon law also prohibits fees to be spent on groups that endorse issues or candidates.

By giving all students the ability to start their own groups, universities are giving everyone a chance to exercise their freedom of speech. In addition, the opportunity creates a diverse range of groups and opinions.

Without student fees, campus publications such as Oregon Voice and The Student Insurgent and groups such as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Alliance and the Black Student Union may be eliminated or cut because the majority of students do not want to fund them.

However, as college students, we should be concerned with creating public debate on a range of issues.

One only has to look at history to realize that

holding the opinion of the majority does not always make you right or well-informed.

Every viewpoint brings a unique aspect to a debate and is vital in advancing thought and criticism. Our education at the University should not be limited to what we learn in the classroom, but should be supplemented by groups that enrich the campus and our lives with minority viewpoints.

Ensuring a diversity of opinion is in fact one of the functions of the First Amendment, and it is ludicrous that the Wisconsin students are using the First Amendment to do the exact opposite.

The great French author Voltaire summed it up when he wrote to a comrade, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to my death your right to say it."

Just because we disapprove of what a group says or believes does not mean that we should withhold fees from that group. This process undermines the whole system and freedom of speech on college campuses.

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

YOU SEE YOUR HONOR... THESE ARE EXACTLY THE TYPE OF PEOPLE I'M TALKING ABOUT.



Letters to the Editor

Deep in debt

Student debt at the University and across the country is a major problem that the government has been neglecting.

I am personally graduating with thousands of dollars of debt.

For the past 20 years, grant aid programs have failed to keep pace with inflation and rising college tuition and expenses.

As a result, it has become more and more difficult to afford a college education and graduate without massive debt. The ASUO, USPIRG and the U.S. Student Association are fighting for our rights as students by working to educate the U.S. Congress about the problems students have accessing college and advocating for a \$400 increase in the maximum Pell Grant.

This would increase the maximum

grant from \$3,125 to \$3,525. Support the representatives from ASUO who traveled to Washington, D.C., during finals week last term.

Sign a debt check which shows the U.S. Congress that we are serious about our education and are struggling to pay for it. Show your support and concern for the University of Oregon and for yourself. Take action.

Élan Schmitt
Journalism

Joltin' Joe

The ODE paid its respects to Joe DiMaggio by printing an Associated Press story about DiMaggio's passing (ODE, March 9).

However, I'm a lover of baseball, and I feel like saying a few words about Joltin' Joe. With his passing, baseball has lost the last of a rare

breed: players who play for the love of the game.

DiMaggio may be remembered by some as the man who had a 56-game hitting streak or the man who won nine world championships, though, in my eyes, he was a baseball lover.

The baseball diamond was not just where Joe worked, it was his playground too. Today's players can say they play for the love of the game, but they don't mind holding out for a little more money.

Joe DiMaggio earned the first \$100,000 contract not because he held out but because he earned it.

Joe went about his job taking the field everyday, ready to entertain people by playing a sport he truly loved.

I can only dream of seeing him play a game. My eyes light up just watching

highlights of a true baseball player.

Joe will always remain on the field in spirit, and when the first pitch is thrown out this season, just remember that the last lover of the game is still kicking around the ballpark in spirit.

Chris Golec
Psychology

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.

Thumbs



THUMBS UP

To protesters:
An unarmed African-American was shot 19 times by New York police officers last week. Protesters have taken to the streets to rally opposition against the police officers involved and the department itself.

To working together:
Tree lovers and the city of Eugene finally came together after much debate about the 80-year-old maple tree in Owens Memorial Rose Garden. The city diagnosed the decaying tree as a hazard, and after independent research, the tree lovers agreed.



THUMBS DOWN

To not playing fair:
Rev. Greg Dell was suspended from the Methodist Church for performing a gay marriage, which took place last year. About 30 percent of his congregation at the Broadway United Methodist Church in Chicago is homosexual.

To inadequate coverage:
Although spending for the Oregon Health Plan has increased, fewer Oregon residents are covered by the program. The number of Oregonians who are not covered but are below the poverty line rose from 17 percent in 1997 to 23 percent in 1998.