

PERSPECTIVES

Sorry, no do-overs

Letting freshmen redo a bad year negates what higher education is supposed to mean

Consider the following tale of two students: Two freshmen walk into a bar. Wait. Scratch that.

Two freshmen walk into the University set to begin a four-year odyssey of learning and self-discovery.

After a term, one is bent more on a four-year haze of drinking and debauchery. Not surprisingly, her grades reflect her attitude. As the first year draws to a close, she has a couple of good friends and some memorable moments, but her grade-point average is barely registering on the left-side of the decimal point.

The other student foregoes most of the mid-week parties and spends the year working his butt off for a passel of Bs and Cs. He's just having a little trouble adjusting to college life. When June rolls around, his transcripts sport a 2.0 GPA. Not stellar, but well-earned.

Two weeks ago, a bill that could dramatically impact the college careers of these two students was introduced to the Oregon Legislature.

The Educational Bankruptcy Act, sponsored by Rep. Mike Lehman from Coos Bay, would allow incoming students at Oregon's public universities to cancel their first-year grades and start over.

Many of us have wished we could magically make a term, or maybe even a year, disappear. But acknowledging some measure of responsibility for our academic performance, we generally dismiss such an idea as laughable.

That the Legislature might even consider this proposal makes them equally worthy of ridicule.

The major failing of this bill is that it doesn't acknowledge that many of the reasons students perform poorly during their freshman year are totally within their control. Freshman No. 1, who chose to party rather than study, is a different case than

freshman No. 2, who just doesn't know how to approach college.

These issues are already addressed by state schools. At the University, for example, incoming students are offered the opportunity to take part in Freshman Interest Groups, seminars and the Discover Oregon program, all developed to aid new students in finding their academic niche.

The more intimate nature of these programs helps prevent freshmen from falling through the cracks. Several other options are provided by Academic Learning Services, which offers tutoring, study skills workshops and classes on college transition.

Factor in what is probably the most potent defense against total academic meltdown — academic probation — and it seems unlikely that a student would even get to the point where scrapping the entire year becomes a desirable option.

But suppose that the first hypothetical freshman decides that she wants to start anew. She can simply saunter over to the registrar and get information on how to petition for the removal of her first year grades. All she has to do is pay another year's tuition.

Of course, that's several thousand dollars and nothing to sneeze at. Lehman's betting that the high price of college would keep the bill from being used often.

But if a student was so concerned with finance, wouldn't that be enough incentive not to screw up in the first place? The bill also limits a second chance to those who can afford it, a result that runs contrary to the goals of public education.

Admission to the University is based on the presumption that students can achieve at least adequate performance at the post-secondary level.

Note the word adequate.

The 2.0 GPA required to stay in school gives students room to slip every now and again. Were this bill to pass, it would trivialize the achievements that many of us work so hard for.

Why make a college degree, which is already sinking in stature, mean even less?

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

Thumbs



THUMBS UP

To progress: Nancy Mace made history Saturday as the first female graduate of The Citadel, a formerly all-male military college. Mace, 21, graduated magna cum laude with a degree in business administration.

To moms: Mother's Day may be officially over, but take a minute to think of where we'd be without them.



THUMBS DOWN

To a slow start: After receiving \$4.2 billion from Congress to provide health insurance for children in 1999, states are only expected to have spent \$800 million by the end of the year. Critics blame a lack of outreach to uninsured kids.

To moving backward: After legislators fought to have it considered in the wake of the Columbine High School shooting, a bill that would require background checks at gun shows has been sent back to its committee.



Giovanni Salimena/Emerald

Letters to the Editor

Exec wants you

With the advent of our term just around the corner, we are eagerly anticipating the beginning of our year. Our transition into office is one of the most exciting and critical phases of our work, as it is now we establish the office for next year. Creating an ASUO Executive staff is more than simply hiring people to fill empty seats. Our job is to create an office structure that is efficient, accountable and dedicated to working toward your issues. We created, eliminated and restructured positions that emphasize outreach. For example, we've created positions

like safety advocate and University housing advocate to increase specific student communication. Our main objective next year is to reach all students on campus, rather than that traditionally limited demographic most often addressed by the student government. To do this we need to create an office that mirrors the demographic of the student body, and we can't do that unless more than the traditionally involved student applies. That is why we need you! The responsibility now lies upon your shoulders, as it is up to you to apply for positions in the executive. Applications are available in the ASUO office, EMU Suite 4. The

deadline is Wednesday, May 12. Apply today. The student body needs you.

Wylie Chen
ASUO President-elect
Mitra Anoushiravani
ASUO Vice President-elect

Nader vs. Knight

I'm appalled that columnist Aaron Artman can stoop so low as to accuse Ralph Nader of whoring for money for himself (ODE, May 5)? He lives simply, does not own a house or a car. He lives for his work to better our lives. He, like OSPIRG, keeps an eye out for

America's well-being. To my estimate, he is one of the few honest men in America, not like Phil Knight who "did not know" what labor practices in his overseas fiefdoms were like. Come on! Why did he not personally investigate his crummy sweatshops? He squeezes dollars out of his vastly underpaid work force and "gives" them to the University as a huge tax advantage and to further his own philanthropic image. Good for us! But why do you have to run down Nader to elevate Knight?

Hilde K. Cherry
Eugene

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.