

# Perspectives

## A Double Standard in the Bedroom?



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

**M**arriage does have its perks. Any unmarried couple can have eternal love and all that warm, fuzzy stuff. But in return for legalized commitment, married couples can receive better health care coverage, be awarded lower car insurance rates and, in some minds, secure social legitimacy.

But a specific benefit granted to married couples at the University and in the Oregon University System is an in-state tuition price for out-of-state students who are married to University employees.

But what about domestic couples who cannot be lawfully married?

For years, same-sex domestic couples have been denied benefits granted to married couples who are in exactly the same type of relationship. While the U.S. Supreme Court will almost surely have to decide in the near future whether or not gays and lesbians can be legally married, the fact remains that they cannot.

This is a legal situation that, while unfortunate, has remedies. Already the Public Employees Benefit Board, an OUS board, has decided such domestic relationships should be granted similar benefits as married ones. In 1998, the landmark case *Tanner v. Oregon Health Sciences University* helped to secure health and dental coverage for same-sex domestic partners.

Tuition reduction benefits were not decided on at that time. On Thursday, however, the State Board of Higher Education voted to extend these tuition benefits to the same-sex domestic partnerships. It's a decision that is in keeping with the health benefits policy and is in keeping with the anti-discrimination policies of this University.

One contentious issue that has come up, however, is the standard to which same-sex domestic relationships must be held in order to receive benefits. Same-sex couples must fill out an Affidavit of Domestic

Partnership that married couples do not have to fill out. Some of the stipulations, while often being true of married couples are not legally required of them, such as those that require partners to share residence or to be faithful for the past sixth months.

When a married couple applies for benefits — health or, now, tuition — no one asks them if they've been faithful or if they "share a close personal relationship," as the affidavit says. The trick, though, is to prove domestic partnership. This is a valid object of the affidavit: Because same-sex couples cannot get a marriage license, there must be other ways to document the partnership. How far should this documentation go?

Gays and lesbians often feel they are being held to a higher standard. It seems that there are two ways to alleviate this: Either require both kinds of couples to adhere to this strict standard of cohabitation and fidelity or come up with another way to doc-

ument a same-sex domestic partnership.

It seems that the key point of a marriage certificate is commitment. If a gay or lesbian couple can swear to this same commitment without having to divulge all their relationships in the last six months, then they adhere to the same rules a marriage does. One affair in the last six months for a married couple is neither public information nor a reason to suspend their health benefits. The same should stand for same-sex domestic partnerships.

Until the Supreme Court, or the state of Oregon, makes a definitive statement about the legality of same-sex marriage, these small steps are necessary to keep things as equal as possible.

The idea in offering benefits to same-sex domestic couples is to be fair. The double standard isn't.

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

### Letters to the editor

#### Don't waste athletic tickets

I recently found out why it is nearly impossible to get tickets a few days before the Duck's football games. First of all, there are those of you out there who pick up tickets and then decide to watch it on TV. Worse yet, some of you totally dismiss the game due to bad weather or some other pitiful reason. There are 6,000 tickets at the disposal of students, and even if a couple tickets go unused, in my opinion, that is a travesty. Now, as if the odds of getting tickets could get any worse, in the event that there are extra students tickets the Monday before the big game, those tickets then become open for the general public to purchase. Not horrible right? Wrong. The tickets that we, as students, buy through

the incidental fee process are being auctioned off, and the profit is going to the Athletic Department. Now, some of you are thinking, OK, so I had better go get my tickets to get my money's worth, but that is doing a disservice to your fellow students who want to go see the game. Bottom line, get your tickets early, and if you can't go, give them to someone who can.

Jeff Kershner  
Athletic Department Finance Committee

#### So what if GTFs don't speak English?

I am prompted to respond to communication issues raised by comparative literature major Vanna Nordyke (ODE, Oct. 21). While I agree that fluency in language (not necessarily English, although it's handy in America) is essential for good communication, here's the truth: The world doesn't run that way.

I take argument with the fact that just be-

cause a Graduate Teaching Fellow doesn't speak English well that it wholly stops the learning process.

While standards are important for higher education that all students pay a price for, it is important to recognize when a situation presents itself where the individual must evolve.

So the GTF doesn't speak English? Ask the questions anyway. Won't the other students understand you? And some may be grateful that you took the lead to initiate discussion. Form a group outside of the GTF section. Talk with the professor. Perhaps help the GTF with his or her English.

A final note: I don't believe it's the University's responsibility to provide a perfect environment for the student, rather an opportune one.

Susan A. Ryan  
pre-journalism

#### CORRECTION

The story "Funding cut for domestic violence services" (ODE, Oct. 20) should have read: Options Counseling has made a commitment to continue offering its batterer intervention programs.

Also, Womenspace Domestic Violence Services is offering its full range of shelter and advocacy services, including emergency shelter for battered women and their children, legal advocacy, transitional housing assistance and a broad scope of counseling and support services.

### THUMBS



**To supporting nursing women**  
The Oregon Health Division has designed wallet-size cards that say it is legal to breast feed in public in Oregon. Now if women are harassed while breast feeding, they can defend themselves with a portable version of the law.

**To sowing the seeds**  
The University is continuing the work of the Summer Diversity Program by creating a new position, a Coordinating Diversity Intern, for the ASUO. Diversity is a key issue on campus, and ideas or suggestions of the summer program may find fruition during the school



**To mistreating workers**  
Reebok International, Ltd. released a statement acknowledging allowing poor working conditions in two of its factories in Indonesia. Although Reebok gives out annual human rights awards and, in fact, blew the whistle on themselves, it's sad to see that these situations continue despite efforts to improve conditions.

**To rewarding criminals**  
A group of Lake Oswego residents are attempting to drum up money to send a registered sex offender, who is a former University student, to college to keep him out of their neighborhood. While we understand their fears, pushing the man — who is classified as "predatory" — into a new community is no answer, and college is a luxury that few people are handed.