

The price of \$ecurity



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

Choice in purchasing, including the option to not purchase at all, is a fundamental American principle. A proposal being considered by the Oregon State Board of Higher Education, which would require all students in Oregon public universities to be covered under some basic health care insurance, is a bad idea and

should not be passed.

The current plan under consideration, though still a long way from being passed, would require students who are not covered by private insurance to buy insurance through the school they attend at about \$14-17 per term.

While that isn't a very large sum compared to many other fees students incur to matriculate at a university, the fact that the fee would be mandatory is a big problem. Obviously buying insurance at a low rate makes sense for those who don't have private insurance. In fact, it's not very smart to go without it when the coverage is so inexpensive. And we certainly advocate everyone having the best coverage possible. But to make its purchase mandatory is ridiculous. People should have the choice to spend their money in the way they see fit and to not be forced into an expenditure they don't prioritize highly.

The result of making the insurance mandatory for

all uninsured students will be the subsidization of the few people who already use it heavily. In fact, that is one of the reasons that some want this plan to be passed. The rising costs of health care force premiums up for those in the University plans and create a need for more purchasers, hopefully those who will not use the services much, to cover the costs for the few regulars in the health offices.

That scenario, described by Elizabeth Dickenson, a risk manager for the Oregon University System, is called "adverse selection." The argument she makes is that when health insurance is voluntary healthy people generally choose not to purchase it.

Wow, imagine that. People actually making their own decisions of what to buy or not to buy.

The logical conclusion is that consumers know best what makes sense in their lives. The adverse selection argument is an illogical reason to tax many students who choose to use their money in a different fashion. It is arrogant and irresponsible to assume that the board of higher education knows how to spend our money better than we do.

Those uninsured students who wish to remain uninsured should have their intellect and decisions respected.

If approved, it is estimated that the plan will be implemented anywhere from fall term 2001 to five years from now. But it shouldn't be approved at all. There is no valid reason to charge all students a mandatory fee to cover the cost of some students' insurance. The choice of whether or not to purchase insurance should belong to the individual.

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

THE WEEK IN THUMBS



To a new campus garden, admission age 21

The Student Senate last Wednesday approved a ballot measure to build a beer garden on campus to be funded by student incidental fees. Since the Collier House and Clancy Thurber's Pub closed in September there hasn't been any venue on campus where beer is served. The plans must still be approved by the ASUO Constitution Court and voted on in the upcoming ASUO student election.

To the pot patch easing cancer pains

The American Cancer Society is funding a \$361,000, three-year grant for researching whether a marijuana patch could ease the pain, nausea and vomiting of chemotherapy patients.



To zebras quieting of the crowd

With 1:02 remaining in the men's basketball game against USC last Thursday the Oregon crowd went so wild in their cheering they shook the basketball rim during the Trojan's Brandon Granville's free-throw attempt. The referees awarded Granville an extra free throw, which he made.

To starting a bad habit too early

According to the first national survey of middle schools, almost 10 percent of students smoke cigarettes. Apparently kids do like Joe Camel!

Letters to the editor

All students have right to Saferide

I would like to make some comments on the article about a grievance over Project Saferide (ODE Jan. 19). As we know, Saferide is funded by student fees, therefore it should be available to all students. However, it offers rides only to women.

One evening, I had to walk my friend home, who had broken his leg, because we were denied the service since my friend was male.

I understand their concern on the rape issue, but men can be raped or robbed as well, and when you are injured, you don't want to walk home.

As for the legal issue, depriving men of access to a service seems to be a violation of Federal Statute Title IX, which prohibits discrimination based on sex. As I understand it, this grievance is not about eliminating Saferide, but to make the service available to all students. All of us pay student fees, and we all deserve benefits resulting from student-funded services.

Manami Imaoka,
Graduate student, College of Education

LGBT more than 'homosexual community'

While I was pleased to see "Gay Day: Building a Queer Community at the University of Oregon" included in

the Emerald (ODE, Jan. 28) I was distraught to see the phrase "homosexual community" used repeatedly throughout the article.

While some might easily overlook the error, members of the LGBT community would be quick to point out that "homosexual community" is a misnomer. "Homosexual" is a term that specifically denotes an individual whose sexual orientation is primarily individuals of the same gender. However, the LGBT community is actually much more diverse and includes many people who don't identify as "homosexual" (hence the "B" for bisexual and the "T" for transgendered, to start). We are lesbians and gays, yes, but we are also bisexuals, transgendered folks, people who

identify themselves as "queer" and the partners, children, siblings, friends and supporters of LGBT people.

Part of the goal of "Gay Day: Building a Queer Community at the University of Oregon" is for LGBT people and their allies to recognize and respect the differences under that acronym umbrella, and to create new ways to make our community even more inclusive.

We celebrate the broad spectrum of people included under the term LGBT, and the "homosexual community" just doesn't do the diversity of our community justice.

Molly J. McClure
LGBT Issues Coordinator for the Women's Center