

## The Truth about CHEATING



ONE OF THE 91%?

Giovanni Salemina Emerald

**H**ave you cheated? Oh, come on now. Admit it; 91 percent of us already have. We cheat.

According to a Rutgers University study of 10 universities — including ours — an average of 89 percent of students admit to cheating. And hey, we're not a mediocre university; we were higher than the average at 91 percent!

Ouch.

Well, we must face the music. Bite the bullet. Take a good look in the mirror.

OK, enough of the clichés. But isn't that the point? We all need to start doing our own work and thinking for ourselves. It's obvious that there's a severe lack of originality and drive to produce good work. But why?

While parents may cite moral degradation and the laziness of "Generations X, Y and Z," the truth is that all of society feeds into this cheating consciousness. One of the reasons cited for cheating in high school was to get into college. And now that we're here, time pressures, grade pressures and social pressures are among the new reasons to cheat. Most students probably don't plan on cheating for their major tests, projects or papers, but stuff just comes up, and pressures collide. Time is the major culprit.

Moreover, the Internet makes credit cards, pornography and risky stock trading available to all — make that in-your-face to all — and opportunities to plagiarize are no different. If you have the time to look up a fact on the Web, you're just one click away from downloading a complete paper. E-mail is an easy way to get a sibling's recycled paper, and almost-untrackable Web sites are easy to

hide from a busy professor. It's like the Internet is just daring us to cheat.

So it's society's fault. Right?

No. It's ours, too. Homework, tests, projects and papers are all there to give students a way to prove they've learned something. It's doubtful that teachers just love to grade so much that they assign papers for fun. More than just a sense of accomplishment is lost when students cheat; the learning is lost a bit, too. Cheating is the best example of karma there is. In the real world, someone is going to ask a cheater to produce real evidence that he or she has some skill. What are cheaters going to do then?

Finding the test in a dumpster is easier than studying for four hours. But solutions to cheating do lie in simple things, like using the powers of the Internet for good instead of evil. It's a tool, just like any other. The idea is to develop a way of thinking about the Internet that makes students realize the powerful resource they have without making the resource do all the work. But too many students are doing just that.

And numbers don't lie. Or do they? Ninety-one percent? Can we see a show of hands? It seems like an awfully high number, and it hinges significantly on the definition of cheating. What is spelled out clearly in the handbook as cheating may not be the definition 91 percent of us had in mind when we answered whether we'd ever done it. You always have to be on the lookout for lies, damn lies, and statistics.

But before we blame the numbers entirely, we still recognize cheating for the major problem it is. Cheating hurts everyone. For the person whose paper has been copied, it hurts his or her originality. For teachers, it skews their sense of how they are getting through to students. For the cheating student, it only teaches laziness. And for the student who observes cheating or is asked to help someone cheat, it creates a morally and socially uncomfortable situation: No one wants to be a snitch.

But maybe we should start. No one wants a surgeon who cheated on his or her exams.

But apparently some of them have.

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

### QUOTED

"He walked into our practice and just proved that he knows how to play — when to set picks, when to move the ball. He was very impressive considering he hasn't played for a year."

— NBA Dallas Mavericks coach and general manager Don Nelson on the recent addition of rebound-champion and headline-maker Dennis Rodman to the Mavs lineup this week. ESPN.com, Feb. 8.

"I wanted to give up hope. But now I can help other people."

— 14-year-old Nick Breach, who is dying of a brain tumor, on his decision to donate his organs after his death. CNN.com, Feb. 8.

"Derrick Thomas leaves a tremendously positive legacy that will permanently enrich everyone whose life he touched."

— NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue on the Tuesday heart-attack death of the 33-year-old Kansas City linebacker. Prior to his death, Thomas was involved in a car accident that left him paralyzed. YAHOO.com, Feb. 8.

### Letters to the editor

#### LGBTQA is inclusive, diverse

As a graduate student in community planning, hopefully Mark Stevens (ODE letters, Feb. 4) will have the opportunity to take a basic sociology class, which may clear up some misunderstanding that has apparently taken place. Ideally this would help him understand why organizations like the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Alliance and the Black Student Union (to name two of more than 30 groups) exist: These unions represent groups that have been marginalized in our culture. These student associations have organized around their marginalized status in society that has historically empowered heterosexual white men at the expense of others. Organizations like the BSU, ASUO Women's Center and LGBTQA have formed in response to this social structure in which people of color, women and LGBT individuals are systematically excluded from power.

The exclusion Stevens perceives in the LGBTQA is an unfortunate mistake. These student unions exist to support students whose cultural identity is mar-

ginalized and to do educational outreach so that more "inclusive" society is possible. Divisions in society arise when ignorance and fear prevail. Organizations like the LGBTQA seek to bring about social justice by dispelling stereotypes, thereby creating a world where people are empowered regardless of their race, gender or sexual orientation.

Had Stevens participated in "Gay Day," (an event, like all LGBTQA events, to which allies are explicitly invited), he would have found a diverse group dedicated to constructing a more just society, not through exclusion, but through education and coalition building. We hope to see him, and all allies, at future events.

Molly McClure

LGBT issues coordinator, ASUO Women's Center

#### Heterosexuals allies of LGBT community

In response to Mark Stevens' letter (ODE, Feb. 4), I would like to address two very common mistakes. Stevens' first mistake is that he never addresses the power structure of society in regard to sexual orientation.

The term "community" can refer to society as a whole, a group of people living in the same locality,

a social group or class, etc. I think that when we discuss the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community we are referring to a social group that is singled out and viewed as deviant. The term does not always all include every living thing.

If individuals who share the same views as Stevens are willing to remain blind to the societal construct of oppression within sexual orientation, they will never be able to understand the struggle of the LGBT community. In addition, I think that it is crucial to note that the non-LGBT individuals who participate in the LGBT community do so as allies, meaning they share the vision of community.

I think the way that Stevens frames his discussion void of power relations and structure is dangerous because it creates the notion that somehow heterosexuals and asexuals are being discriminated against. It is silly to suggest that heterosexuals and asexuals are "marginalized" because they are not included in the acronym. Allies are crucial to the liberation movement; maybe an A should be added to represent them. Those who are not allies have no place in the movement.

Heather Mitchell  
environmental science

#### LETTERS POLICY

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