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# Perspectives



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

## 2 degrees of education

Some things never change. With all the innovations in technology throughout the years and the withering away of grand institutions like religion, the sense that life is always evolving hangs constantly around us. But some things are consistent and give us a sense of stability throughout the ages.

School and learning, while in their many forms and with their many historic problems and exclusions, have always been about people getting together. In ancient Greece or Rome, scholars gathered to talk. In the middle ages, the monks were already assembled in groups to foster education. And in modern times, school-aged children and grownups have mustered the courage to get out and get an education. Because education is more than reading on your

own, it's about being together to learn from others.

All the technological strides in the world can't take the place of school, the community of education.

Or can they?

The University unveiled a new program this week that will debut this fall. Many programs at the University come and go, but this one is special: It's the first ever degree program available completely on-line.

All courses and correspondence can be done without really ever leaving home. It's the real-world equivalent of Dot.Com Guy, the man who said he'd live without leaving his home and who gets everything he needs from the Internet, including groceries. Well, now he can get a masters degree in Applied Information Management to boot.

The idea of on-line degrees is both

creepy and cool. Imagine getting a psychology or sociology degree on-line with no human interaction. Isn't that a bit ironic? And the interaction that spices up the classroom atmosphere is so often amazing. How much does someone learn just through listening and interacting with peers versus reading a book?

Yet, it's cool. Many students have taken University courses on-line. In fact, the Distance Education program at the University has grown in popularity each year. In fall term 1997, there were 217 participants. Last term 412 people enrolled. And they're doing it for all types of reasons.

The main point, though, is to have a class where you never go to class. Courses such as Economics 201 and 202 or Political Science 201 and 204 are available on-line. And the work is about the same. The experience is much different and perhaps more efficient. Students can take more work than they have time for or can take classes for summer school while they are in Europe. If a student has a scheduling conflict, he or she can take a Web course and avoid the time conflict. There are many more applica-

tions for these on-line courses and degrees than just people who can't physically get to school. They can be fantastic for people who have the discipline to work by themselves.

And it's not all devoid of human contact. While you don't hear a professor's lecture, a writing class could have an e-mail chat about someone's paper, for instance. Think about how much interaction you have with people via e-mail or through surfing the Web. Virtual communication is vital to our modern world.

One day an on-line degree may be as common as a traditional one. And it's not nearly as cheesy as those Sally Struthers' commercials where you can learn to be a bookkeeper or legal assistant with just a few courses at home.

This one degree being offered on-line is just a test. It's a masters degree, so people taking the sequence will probably have been traditional students who have sat through the "real" classroom experience. They have been there, done that, and now they are moving on to more exciting things. Like using your computer to interface with the world.

And while we toil in classes every day, that may not be the case forever. Times for education are finally a'changin'.

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

### QUOTED

"I hope they'll be able to work it out. I hope that the system will allow for it to be continued."

—University of North Carolina Athletic Director **Dick Baddour** discussing how UNC basketball stars Ed Cota and Terrence Newby are supposed to be in District Court the day that the NCAA Championship game is scheduled to be played, April 3. The Tar Heels could make the game but would be without the two star players due to their involvement in a brawl on Halloween. ESPN.com, March 27.

"The tobacco companies face a virtually unlimited pool of prospective plaintiffs. In other words, they don't have a shutoff valve."

—**Stephen Gillers**, law professor at New York University, on Monday's tobacco lawsuit verdict in which a woman who began smoking after warning labels were put on cartons won \$20 million in damages.

"Our priority is to overcome our own poverty."

—**Vladimir Putin**, former KGB agent and hand-picked successor to Russian President Boris Yeltsin, on his landslide victory Sunday in the Russian presidential election.

### CORRECTION

In the story "Sensing urgency for 2000-01" (ODE, March 28), Cathrine Kraayeveld's name was misspelled.

In the story "UO waits till end to beat the Clan" (ODE, March 27), Simon Fraser was misspelled.

The Emerald regrets the errors.

## Working together to improve labor practices

When it comes to battling the abuses of sweatshop labor, we will get more done working together than against one other.

When it comes to battling child labor, forced labor, discrimination and harassment, we are all on the same side, heading for the same goals. I cannot think of a person on this campus — faculty member, staff, student or administrator — who does not want to support living wages, reasonable hours of work and adequate safety and health for workers. This is also true for those workers who make University licensed products — the clothing and other items that carry our name. When a product bears the University name, we all want to be as certain as we can that no harmful or unethical labor practices went into its manufacture.

### COMMENTARY

Dave Frohnmayer

How do we do that? Together.

A number of students, including ASUO leaders, are actively seeking solutions. Some have put forward ideas for specific action. Many voted for action in the last election.

I have heard the student voices uniting behind one newly forming international monitor. We, as a university community, are acting — although perhaps not quite as quickly as some students have urged.

This is much more than a student issue. It is an

issue for everyone at the University, including faculty members, staff and administrators. We are a diverse community, and we seek responsible answers that reflect and honor that diversity.

This means that ultimately the answers must be found by all of us, working together.

Any time an issue affects the entire campus, the entire campus should confront it and work to solve it. Sometimes, as in the case of licensing codes of conduct, a committee is formed that includes all the campus voices: students, faculty and staff. As is appropriate for an institution of higher learning dedicated both to free expression and due reflection, that group studies, thinks and discusses the issue, then makes recommendations to the president. Ultimately, under the laws of our state, the president must decide what action to

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