

Constitution Court has home to better highlight its services

■ The ASUO Court finally has a place to hang its hat, and justices hope a new system is more open to students

By Emily Gust
Oregon Daily Emerald

They've found a new office, and they're gathering their past.

And after functioning without a fixed location or organization system, the ASUO Constitution Court is in the process of making itself more available to students.

"We're an organization. We're part of the ASUO, and we're the third branch of government," Chief Justice Robert Raschio said. "In the past we've been accessible to students but not as accessible as we could be."

The court comprises five student justices, two from the undergraduate program and three others hailing from the law school.

Operating previously out of the ASUO Executive office, the court essentially had no permanent place to call its own. Documents and court decisions were stored anywhere from the ASUO office to the hands of individual justices.

But perhaps the most pressing issue was that many students did not know the court was there.

"I think some people read about a Con Court decision, and they have no idea where it came from," Justice Ashan Awan said. "The Con Court's sort of a shadow program without a fixed location."

So in order to make itself more accessible to students while also developing a more effective system of procedure, the court is undergoing an overhaul.

"It's important for the court to start moving in a direction where we offer up a better package so that students who want to access information know how and

where to do it," Raschio said.

The court is moving into Room 20 of the EMU, which is where several other student groups are centered. In addition to filing and storing documents there, the justices will hold office hours during the week beginning fall term.

Awan said that with the new office, students will now see that the court is an actual ASUO program and can inquire about getting involved.

In addition, the process of filing grievances with the court will be much easier. Instead of students being unaware of specific procedure when dealing with the court, they can get advice from the justices before turning in briefs about their cases.

"People can get advisory opinions quickly and on the spot," Awan said.

This applies also to elections time, during which students turn in potential ballot measures to the court for review. This process is another one the court would like to simplify, by stressing that it is not something that has to wait until the last minute.

"If people have ballot measures, I would remind them that they don't have to wait until two weeks before [the election]," Vergamini said.

Also in the office will be a library of legal documents and court history that both students and court members will be able to take advantage of. The court is looking to compile past court decisions and bind them into a book.

"Hopefully [we'll] be able to establish some institutional history that way," Justice Daniel Vergamini said. "It will establish more continuity, and we'll be able to rely a lot more on precedent instead of perhaps having to reinvent the wheel in some cases."

If things go as planned, the information will not only be available in the office; the court also

Constitution Court 2000

Changes in store for the ASUO Constitution Court:

A new office in Room 20 of the EMU, where there will be a library of legal documents and a bound compilation of court decisions for the past 10 years.

A Web page that is currently under construction, possibly providing links to the court's decisions.

Regular office hours, which will begin fall term. During this time, students may come by with questions for the court, especially about potential ballot measures and grievances.

SOURCE: ASUO Constitution Court

hopes to provide it on-line. While still under construction, the Web pages will eventually have links to much of the same information available in the office itself.

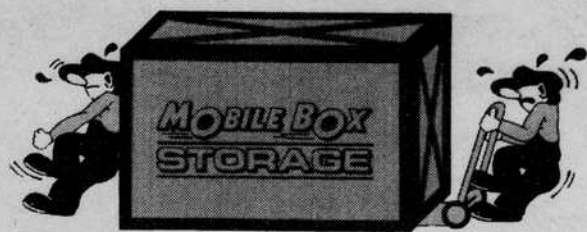
"History and decisions [are going to be] out there for everyone to see, including faculty, staff and community individuals who are interested in what we're doing," Awan said.

In the end, this overhaul will pay off for the court by making its job easier. Earlier this year when it held hearings regarding a couple of separate grievances, it was difficult for the court to find what it needed.

"We held the hearings," Awan said. "We didn't have a clerk, and it was hard to get documents."

In addition to the recent moves, two justice seats on the court itself will soon be open. Justice Vergamini and Justice Elliot Dale are both graduating at the end of the year.

"We would like to fill those two seats with undergraduates," Awan said. "Right now the court is law student heavy, which may or may not be a good thing.



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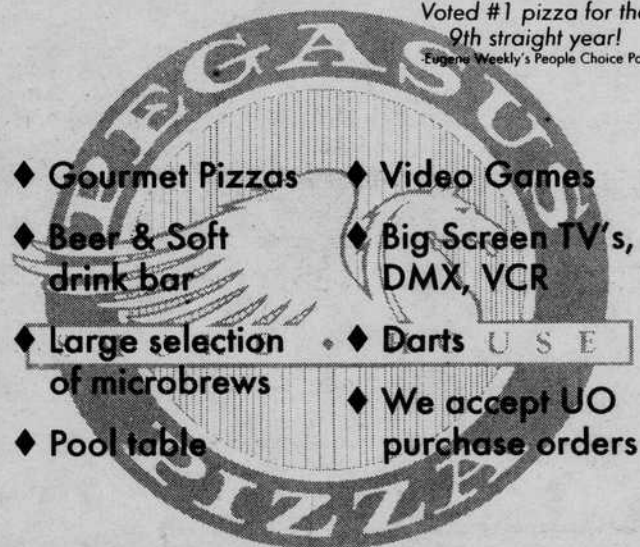
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