

## Committee outlines objectives for Center

**GUEST COMMENTARY**

**President's Planning Committee for the CSSC**

As the committee appointed by University President Dave Frohnmayer to determine the mission, scope and activities of the proposed Center for the Study of Social Change (still a working title), we welcome the opportunity to respond to some of the concerns raised by Bret Jacobson in his recent column. The proposed Center provides an opportunity for the University to bring its particular strengths of academic research and public service to the society-wide challenges and opportunities developing as our society becomes increasingly more diverse and multicultural.

While the specific contours of the Center are still taking shape, a simple premise guides its formation: Namely, that it is time to move beyond asking "Is diversity good or bad?" and get to "So how do we make it work?" While we all may hold strikingly different viewpoints about the diversity we do have, don't have or might have, the Center's concern lies with how communities can have conversations about the social changes without tearing themselves apart. This means that the Center has the potential to be a resource for everybody—those who support the further diversification of our campus, state and nation as well as those who have serious questions about

the social changes taking place. The Center is NOT in the business of what Jacobson refers to as paternalistic "social engineering," i.e., determining for the University community what diversity should mean for us or look like on our campus. Rather, the Center is in the business of "social engagement." Its job is to provide the necessary resources and services so that difficult conversations regarding diversity and social change might take place in a constructive fashion. By "resources" and "services" we mean a number of things:

- A center where individuals can participate in cross-group dialogues with others holding differing viewpoints.
- A center where scholars and students (undergraduate and graduate) can acquire direct experience assisting "communities" (i.e., schools, businesses, neighborhoods) in dealing with social change (i.e., changing demographics, workforce composition, influx of unfamiliar newcomers into established neighborhoods).
- A center that draws from its applied experiences in facilitating community dialogues to generate scholarly research on the dynamics and effects of social change, effective cross-group communication and conflict resolution.
- A center where students, faculty, staff, community members and businesses can acquire the

skills necessary to facilitate difficult dialogues in the workplace, classroom, dorm room, etc.

- A center that hosts conferences and other events geared towards cross-group dialogues and community healing/outreach.

While Oregon may not be trail-blazing diversity trends in the way that states such as California and New York are,

we are uniquely positioned to speak from our experiences as a state actively grappling with what these social changes mean for our collective community. Other states can identify with the opportunities, challenges and growing pains currently facing Oregon.

In sum, we have a unique opportunity to create a model of proactive leadership, scholarship and outreach for others to emulate. We, the committee, are very excited by the possibilities the Center holds.

Many challenges lie ahead of us, but so do many rewards.

This opinion was submitted by The President's Planning Committee for the Center for the Study of Social Change.



### Letters to the editor

**Different priorities**

Bret Jacobson's argument is contradictory. On one hand he says that the University should NOT prioritize values, while at the same time he says University President Dave Frohnmayer should make smoothing Phil Knight's ruffled (duck?) feathers a priority.

Jacobson simply argues for a different set of values — i.e. that the University should promote corporate ties and big money athletics. This is not a conflict over "paternalism." It is a conflict over who owns the University and who benefits from its offerings. In my humble opinion, Jacobson is on the wrong side.

**Echo Fields**  
 assistant professor of sociology  
 Ashland, Ore.

engineering must be thoughtfully questioned," is more like a Dr. Seuss-style nursery rhyme than a complete thought. Clever, but it's no "fox in socks." His word choice is even more amazing than his sentence structure. I can only assume the phrase "stimulation of social consciences" came from some out-of-date, new-age sociology text.

Instead of a whole column of thesaurus-assisted rambling, couldn't Jacobson have just said that he doesn't think it's the University's place to prioritize diversity training over more urgent issues? That would have spared me and countless other readers the trouble of having to trudge through ten paragraphs of overly-verbose garbage masquerading as commentary.

**Richard "Pete" R. Hunt**  
 pre-journalism

**Verbose lexicon engenders migraine**

I am not writing this letter to respond to the issues in Bret Jacobson's column ("Paternalistic ideals masquerade as diversity," ODE, Oct. 23). I'm trying to figure out just what, in fact, the column was about. Even after reading it many times, I have only a vague idea of what thoughts and ideas Jacobson is trying to express. I'm not sure if it was Jacobson's intention to leave the reader with a pounding migraine, but I'm sure I wasn't the only one downing Costco-sized tablets of aspirin with a Jack Daniels chaser by paragraph three.

Throughout the article, Jacobson throws in adjectives and modifiers like they were going out of style. I amused myself for hours trying unsuccessfully to find the subject and verb in each sentence. The sentence, "The propriety of a public institution promoting politically driven social

**FDA relinquished its credibility**

I am an optimistic person, and I like to believe the Food and Drug Administration is achieving its function of protecting me and the rest of the U.S. consumers.

However, pessimism is rising within me with the FDA's latest oversight. The recent recalls of Taco Bell-brand taco shells are unsettling. The taco shells, made with genetically engineered corn produced for animal consumption only, were distributed and sold to grocery stores nationwide.

The oblivion of the FDA is unnerving. An environmental watchdog group found the contaminated corn in the taco shells and revealed it to the FDA, which was unaware of the whole matter.

Even more unnerving is the FDA's report that despite recalling the taco shells, the genetically modified corn infiltrated other processed foods and cannot be tracked

down and recalled. This means that you and I are not being protected by the FDA and are quite conceivably eating products that have the potential for harm.

Now I am left to wonder in what other capacities the FDA is failing to protect me as a consumer. With the FDA's latest oversight, I am troubled when I enter a grocery store. Instead of my mouth salivating from the sights and smells of food, my stomach turns in knots.

The "FDA approved" sticker no longer carries the clout it used to. I am not comforted knowing the FDA approves this product but am left to wonder what "FDA approved" really means for my health.

**Rod Yoder**  
 undergraduate  
 undeclared

**Steinem betrayed liberal causes**

I was very disappointed by Gloria Steinem on Wednesday night. I attended her speech knowing that she would be stumping for Al Gore, but I didn't expect her to spend her words betraying her friend Ralph Nader.

She said nothing positive about Al Gore other than he is pro-choice and has promised to appoint liberal justices to the Supreme Court. Rather, she chose to betray a man whom she claims to respect and to instill fear in young progressive voters who are dying to vote for the best candidate in this election.

Her tactic: the Supreme Court. Her claim: Between two and four justices will be appointed by the next president. The truth: Only one justice, Ford-appointed John Stevens, has stated he will step down for sure in the next four years ([www.supremecourt.gov/index.html](http://www.supremecourt.gov/index.html)).

Steinem did make a couple of good points, but they were largely overshadowed

by her half-truths, spins and omissions. It was all I could do to keep from screaming out loud.

What upset me most, though, was that she failed to mention that Al Gore supports the death penalty, NAFTA and WTO, economic sanctions against Iraq, Cuba and others, the war on drugs, the war in Bosnia, nuclear energy, genetically modified and irradiated foods, corporate welfare and our elitist political system. What are the effects of these policies on women in the United States and abroad, Ms. Steinem?

Please research the facts and don't be led blindly by fear.

**Bradley Porterfield**  
 graduate student  
 community and regional planning

**CORRECTION**

In the article "Students get better understanding of principles," [ODE, Oct. 31] key speaker Debra Merskin was misidentified. Merskin teaches advertising, as well as courses on gender and media, in the School of Journalism and Communication. In addition, she wrote the article "What Does One Look Like?," which was published in a book of essays edited by Liz Bird.

In the same story, Christine Quail should have been identified as a doctorate student in the Communication and Society program within the School of Journalism and Communication, and as the president of the Graduate Student Association.

To further clarify, a quote from a student in attendance at the forum was attributed to Quail, who actually said the forum would serve as a "point to let people talk about issues that are of concern to journalism faculty."

The Emerald regrets the errors.