

## Needed: A shot of good judgment

Three weeks ago, the Student Health Center received 300 doses of influenza vaccination. The number of doses represents only 10 percent of what the health center normally receives because vaccine manufacturer Wyeth-Ayerst had difficulty developing one of the new flu strains this year.

With only 300 doses available to administer to students and faculty, Dr. Gerald Fleischli, the director of the Student Health Center, decided that at-risk students and faculty needed to have first priority for the shots. The editorial board applauds this ethical and humane decision, as people with diabetes, asthma and weak immune systems can face a risk of death from the flu.

Fleischli made a terribly unethical decision, however, in sending 50 of those 300 doses to the athletic department to be given to the men's and women's basketball teams and reserve football players. This action is outrageous, but more outrageous is the fact that no one seems to recognize this decision as the ethical breach that it is. Fleischli and Bob Crist, team physician for the athletic department, should acknowledge the error and apologize.

Crist has stated that he didn't know there was a shortage of flu vaccines. We're sorry, but unless this is simply a face-saving statement, Crist's ability as team physician should be examined. How could a physician not be aware of this year's flu vaccine shortage? The topic has made national news on an ongoing basis, as agencies across the country have struggled to decide how to parcel out the few vaccines available. We don't buy his ignorance as an excuse for the preferential treatment.

If anyone was going to get the first shot at those 300 vaccines, it should have been at-risk faculty. As Fleischli himself acknowledged, hundreds of students' education can be affected by a professor's absence. Even with a Rose Bowl on the line and our basketball teams' season openers hanging in the balance, one student athlete is simply one student athlete.

The decision to give flu shot preference to the big-money athletes on campus is part of a long-standing policy, according to Fleischli. That may be acceptable some of the time, but this year is a special case. Fleischli was aware of the shortage problem and the fact that more vaccines won't be available until late in the flu season. He acknowledged Tuesday ("UO Health Center short on vaccines," ODE, Nov. 28) that not all the at-risk students have received vaccines yet, so he

should have denied the athletic department's request.

The "long-standing policy" is necessary, Fleischli says, because student athletes travel to other parts of the country and so are more likely to be exposed to and spread the flu. But athletes are generally healthier than the rest of the student population. They will probably be less likely to contract the flu, and the symptoms will most likely be less serious. And if traveling is a concern, why didn't the Club Sports athletes receive flu shots? Many of the Club Sports teams traveled during the two weeks before Thanksgiving, but they did not receive special treatment.

The traveling argument breaks down entirely when we consider Thanksgiving. Most of the student body visited other parts of the country last week. Why was everyone not considered eligible for special treatment? Perhaps the athletic department's self-identified role as University booster — these are the elite students that bring the campus fame and fortune, after all — makes it believe it has special rights and privileges.

Some students may believe that the football and basketball players deserve a little privilege. Sports and sports heroes are highly valued in America, often more so than intellectual or artistic achievements. But athletics isn't the only department that brings money and prestige to the University.

Numerous scientists bring in grants and fellowships, including professor Russell Lande, who got the MacArthur Fellowship's "genius grant" two years ago. The University has the one of the world's leading experts on the Balkans in professor Ronald Wixman, who consults with the U.S. State Department about the problems in Yugoslavia. There are many other examples, but that's not the point.

With so few vaccines available, the most endangered faculty and students should have been the only ones on the short list on Nov. 6. In a situation where health and lives are at risk, no one deserves preferential consideration, except those whose ailments make them especially susceptible. Fifty such people were denied a flu vaccine for the sake of a few athletes, and we wish someone would recognize the inhumanity of that decision.

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



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

## Alumni who donate funds have a say, too

### GUEST COMMENTARY

**Cora L. Bennett**

From your mudslinging editorial about Phil Knight and the WRC ("Hook, Line and Sinker," ODE, Nov. 21), it sounds like the Emerald editorial staff is pandering to the interests of a small percentage of the student population (and the Eugene Weekly), which is the same sort of pandering of which you accuse University President Dave Frohnmayer.

If students were to take a few moments and think about your editorial, they could easily devise a conspiracy theory that involves ASUO President Jay Breslow, his vice president, Holly Magner, and one or two

other students whose feelings are hurt because Frohnmayer isn't under their collective thumb.

You all sound like a bunch of dilettantes. Get over yourselves. Which of the University's reputations are you worried about? The "Most Activist Campus" reputation? That would be worth worrying about if more than a mere 8 percent of University students cared enough to vote in any given student election, including the last one, where the WRC was front and center. Thank the magazine Mother Jones for us, but 8 percent doesn't sound like student activism.

Ultimately, I think Knight is only pulling the Athletic Department's strings — it is their expansion project in jeopardy here. Unfortunately, this University's budget is in serious

trouble if we don't rely on alumni donations. The state funds less than 20 percent of the University's budget. And most people fail to recognize that Knight is not the only wealthy alumnus who has a vested interest in the University's success.

I've met plenty of alumni who feel that their opinions about University policies are as important as students'. While many students may not believe so, alumni care as much about this University's success as we do, and if they are providing money that the Legislature and taxpayers are unwilling to, logic has it that they do have a say in some University practices.

We also don't have the luxury of land, air and sea grants like Oregon State University, whose facilities (other than athletic) are better than our own.

The grants they get have strings, too.

Knight and the WRC are another issue altogether. Knight is as much a dilettante as anyone else in this situation. I don't believe he has any desire to decide what gets taught at the University or to influence admissions policies or anything remotely similar to true University policy.

It's clear at this point that Knight cares about two things in this matter: his precious Nike swoosh getting on TV, and the football team. Like it or not, more people with money — the state Legislature included — care about the success of our football program than care about the success of students academically.

Cora L. Bennett is a political science major at the University.

## Letters to the editor

### Quality journalism, for once

Hurrah! Never in my wildest dreams did I expect such critical and clear thinking, not to mention quality writing, from the Emerald editorial page. But in your editorial ("Hook, Line and Sinker," ODE, Nov. 21) finally naming the University administration as behaving like utter tools in regards to His Honorable Sir Knight (Nike CEO Phil Knight) — well, you have done it.

Your editorial was a quality piece through and through, and I hope you continue to use your wit as an independent critical tool, and not just as a means to get invited to those free breakfasts University President Dave Frohnmayer holds in Johnson Hall.

For most of the past 5 years, the Oregon Daily Emerald has seen itself as some sort of free public relations machine for the administration, and I am pleased to see that you have finally found the guts to go out on your own a bit. I can only hope for more in the future.

Kyla Schuller  
class of '99