

# PERSPECTIVES

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## Outwit, Outplay, Outdonate



### SAINTS AND PROFITS

ERIC PFEIFFER

In a city dedicated to bad taste, where the term classic rock is used with sincerity and trust fund kids denounce the "power elite," it's time to embrace my own cliché.

Although I've never actually seen the show, I've been convinced, wrangled, pushed and beaten into writing a "Survivor"-themed column. May you and your deity of choice have mercy upon my soul.

As a trade-off, no Star Wars metaphors will be used in the following rant.

Earlier this week, the Emerald editorial section invited you to play along in a Survivor game for student activists.

In my own heartfelt pitch to public-access television, I offer the "University Donor Survivor Show," hosted by the sergeant of smooth himself, Duncan McDonald, University vice president for public affairs & development.

McDonald enters stage left, cool martini in hand. "Welcome to the show kids, we really have some fabulous friends on the show tonight!"

Here are the rules:

Each year, University alumni, wealthy entrepreneurs and those looking to max out their tax deductible donations compete for the title of top donor. In return, each of the top-10 yearly contributors will receive a place on the coveted donor wall.

However, unlike the original "Survivor" program, the contestants will not be allowed to participate in the elimination of our donor survivors. This elimination game will be based solely on cash, as any nearly-privatized institution of higher education will tell you.

Furthermore, I'm offering a slight addition to our game.

As each of the 10 finalists are eliminated from the pool of competitors, the Oregon Legislature will match the private donations to the University.

Imagine the possibilities: Donors can still voice their opinions on new football uniform designs or have new buildings dedicated to deceased relatives and friends. Meanwhile, those of us here looking for an education can find one, at an affordable price. I mean, isn't that what the administration and their donor recruitment program really want? We shouldn't have to depend on private donations to keep the University afloat. Donors should be there for the extras a University life can offer: recreation and entertainment.

OK, back to our game.

Don't worry, this won't just be a cake walk for those much-maligned "wealthiest 1 percent," wielding their powerful influence. Student activists, waiting for the annual Spring Protests™, can form human chains around Oregon Hall, blocking the prospective donors from making their contributions. Humanitarian aid consisting of bandanas, cell phones, hand drums and monthly allowances from home will be shipped in from the Survival Center — renamed the Survivor Center.

It will be a cycle of heated competition as businessmen fight against their worst fear: being matched by government funds and young people.

As a consolation for this radical foray into public financing, top donors will receive appropriate access to University policy making. Let them sit in on committee meetings and offer suggestions, but leave the votes to the students. After all, in light of recent campus battles, a little sensible collaboration would help things run much more efficiently.

And here's a twist to our little game: We're not even going to play.

Ultimately, there's a much better solution than knocking activists or donors off our imaginary island. Even if some activists don't respect the opinions of others, people do have a right to their freedom of speech, including donors.

The problem isn't donors giving substantial amounts of money to the University, the problem is a lack of public support that makes us depend on donors for our funding. And the problem isn't student activists trying to tell the world how to think, the problem is when no other voices rise up to contest them.

Eric Pfeiffer is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. He can be reached at epfeiffe@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

## Battle between WISTEC, UO leaves kids with no choices

The Emerald editorial board is very disheartened to hear that the Willamette Science & Technology Center chose to close its doors in response to the Eugene City Council's decision regarding expansion plans for Autzen Stadium.

For those unfamiliar with the issue, suffice to say that after a tangled series of agreements between the University, the city and WISTEC, the City Council's decision allowed the University to build a bus transit station on a parking lot that WISTEC used to raise much-needed funds. (For further elaboration of the issue, search our online

archives, at <http://dailyemerald.com>, for recent stories about WISTEC.)

WISTEC is a wonderful science education museum — the only one of its kind in the area — that serves thousands of 3 to 10-year-olds every year. Getting kids interested in science early in life is fantastic. By the same token, the University and the community stand to benefit by expanding Autzen Stadium and reducing traffic congestion during Duck home games with the bus station.

Our disappointment comes from two sources. First, there were other options for building a bus station

to serve Autzen Stadium that would not have displaced the lot used by WISTEC. The University claimed those options wouldn't work, but they should have tried harder, and the City Council could have done much more to make other options work. WISTEC is a tiny non-profit group struggling to provide educational services to Eugene's children, and the University is a regional powerhouse, with ample resources to find a way to coexist with WISTEC.

Most of our frustration, however, is with WISTEC, for choosing to close down rather than find other ways to meet its financial

needs. The University offered more than \$200,000 over the next six years to cover WISTEC's operating deficit from the loss of the parking lot. We don't think that offer was the only, or perhaps even the best, solution. But WISTEC officials claimed that figure wasn't enough to support their long-term needs.

However, six years is plenty of time for a non-profit agency to find alternate sources of funding. And it should be mentioned that the amount of money WISTEC needs to cover the loss of the parking lot is only \$26,000 per year. We believe WISTEC when it

says it has tried to raise money in other ways, but we don't believe that it is impossible to raise \$26,000 per year in private donations and grants, or in state and federal grants.

WISTEC's cause is noble and right. The community in Eugene supports what WISTEC does. The museum should not have turned its back on the community in the same way that the City Council turned its back on WISTEC. Tit for tat doesn't serve kids.

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