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We all pay the price

CAPTAIN SENSIBLE

PAT PAYNE

Tuition is a perennial problem for college students, especially out-of-state students. For the University of Oregon, each year will set an average out-of-state student back around $13,000. If you're an Oregonian, you can knock off $10,000. If you want to go to Harvard, even if you hail from Massachusetts, expect to pay about as much as a luxury, four-door Lexus with no extras. For the entire year. No fooling, folks, to attend the prestigious Harvard, the school with its own coats of arms, expect to shell out $35,000 per year.

HIGHER EDUCATION DEBATE

And, there is an extra hurdle if you're from California. There are "exchange programs," if you will, that allow students from different states west of the Rockies to attend universities in other western states for only 150 percent of in-state tuition. However, if you're from California and want to go to either Eugene or Corvallis, the response you can expect is "Go invade Idaho, you evil Californicator." Feh. So much for us all being one big, happy country.

It's not this hard in Europe. Higher education is free. Just pass an insanely hard battery of tests in your last year of high school, and you're guaranteed a spot in any university of your choice. And even if you can't make it into a university, there are free (or near-free) vocational schools or smaller colleges. However, would it fly in America? It could mean raising taxes, and right now, we have people without children griping about having to pay taxes to run primary and secondary education with the refrain "I don't have children, why should I pay to send someone else's brats to high school?"

Let me digress for a moment and say to these people: Fine. Don't pay. We'll just let one of these uneducated kids perform your double bypass 20 years from now.

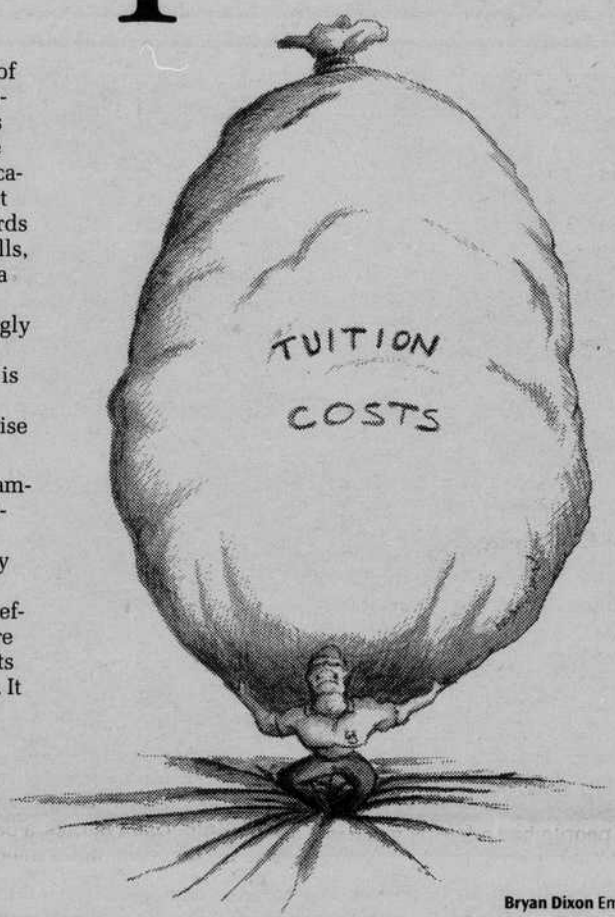
Something has to be done. A dinky tax credit and a few relief bills passed by Congress aren't going to do it. Something has to be done to bring tuition down across the board, at both public and private schools. Whether that is government subsidies for schools — which is done already on the state level, and a fat lotta good that does for those of us who aren't residents of said state — or other, alternative ways — perhaps private subsidies from businesses or perhaps even forcing schools into a competitive model in both price and education value — something has to be done. Because now, "guns or butter" has become "schooling or automobiles."

Even worse ...

A disturbing trend on many college campuses is the increasing instances of rape. According to one Department of Justice report, on a campus with a female population comparable to ours (around 10,000), 350 women will be victims of rape during their college careers. Even more appalling is the fact that of those women, nearly two-thirds will be victims in their residence halls, more than will be victims of rape at a fraternity house or living in apartments. Why this number is sickeningly high is a matter of debate. However, there can be no debate that one rape is one too many. Campus authorities must do what they can to stem this rise in sexual assault.

They should, either through on-campus groups or residence hall associations, offer self-defense training to those who wish to take part. Security should be strengthened in dorms as well, which would have the double effect of making the residents feel more secure while putting potential rapists on notice that they are not welcome. It might even behoove the residence halls to consider some sort of enforced prohibition, as many sexual assaults are fueled by alcohol.

What we do *not* need, however, is the perpetuation of the myth that all men are rapists. Someone who commits as horrible, unconscionable of an act as rape is an abnormal person. Yes, we need to be aware and come together to end sexual assault. We have to come to the aid of those who are victims or potential victims. We have to end the so-called "rape culture" proffered by garbage speakers such as "Eminem." We do *not*, however, need to engage in pointless political name calling at a time when we need every person on campus to come together to end campus rape at colleges across the United States. All men are not rapists. But we can help put an end to rape.



Bryan Dixon Emerald

Dieringer tragedy demands response

GUEST COMMENTARY

***Mike* Kepferle**

From across the country, we have heard of the loss of Jill Dieringer and have read with much sadness and many prayers the ordeal and pain of the University community, her friends and her family who are trying to understand and deal with this latest tragic case of meningococcal disease.

I live in Maryland, but since we lost our 18-year-old son, Pat, to the rapid, devastating attack of this highly preventable killer disease, we have become acutely aware of the pain and suffering of families nationwide from very similar losses. I feel compelled to write to the families and students in Eugene about this terrible disease and the incredible pain it causes those who have to deal with its often-fatal progress.

Parents need to become better informed about this disease. Your community seems to be responding effectively to this health issue, and your paper should be commended on reporting on the availability of the vaccine. Although it might not be a total shield, it protects people in about 70 percent of the cases by dealing with four of the five main serogroups of the bacteria. While we all wade through confusing information on the disease, I would like to point out that the chances of an outbreak or single death happening become reduced significantly simply if students are vaccinated, if parents are afforded the opportunity to vaccinate their children and if all are provided the information that clearly states what may happen if they aren't vaccinated.

In Maryland, a law was passed last year requiring incoming college students to show proof of meningitis vaccination or to sign a waiver. There is some issue with not all insurers covering the cost, but if children are required to receive the vaccine, it can help convince insurance companies to cover the costs. I strongly urge those of you in Oregon who are trying to sort through the issues and deal with the loss of Miss Dieringer to do two things.

First, ensure that you are able to get the vaccine, and if you are a parent, demand that your children be vaccinated. If you are a student, get the shot now. Have the doctor show you the information insert with the vaccine, and then, if your doctor resists, find another doctor.

Second, write or call your state legislators, asking them to start a bill to protect against meningitis with a vaccination program and education. It took many dedicated legislators and parents, and the loss of a few good teenagers to help ensure a bill passed in Maryland. Parents in Texas, New York, Michigan, Illinois, Georgia and California are trying to include high-school and middle-school children in their states' bills with varying degrees of success.

I sincerely hope and pray that Oregon can improve quickly on Maryland's groundbreaking meningitis vaccination legislation, which passed here too late for our son. Meanwhile, I hope that your colleges and universities are at least complying with the ACIP, ACHA and CDC recommendations that dorm students be afforded the information about and opportunities for vaccination against meningococcal meningitis. Know that my heart breaks for Jill's family and friends. We are walking the same path of tears that you and too many others have also walked. Our prayers and support are with you every day.

Mike Kepferle lives in Lexington Park, Md.

Letters to the editor

Goodbye from a classmate

I went to high school with Jill [Dieringer] at LaSalle High School in Milwaukie. We had English together every year, I think, and we always ended up sitting close to one another. We would make a point of saying hello to each other every time we would see each other.

She gave me her senior picture, and on the back she wrote, "I'm looking forward to seeing you at our 10-year reunion." I'll remember that for the rest of my life.

The sisters of Kappa Delta are right about one thing: She always had a smile for everyone, all the time. I'll miss you Jill, as does the Class of 2000 at LaSalle High School.

Troy Crivellone
Portland

Thanks for the smile

I also went to high school with Jill [Dieringer] at La Salle. I was quite shocked to hear of her death. I found out when I was checking my e-mail and found several messages from other former classmates about her death. I will always remember Jill for her kind spirit and beautiful smile, which she shared with all of us at La Salle. She was one of the sweetest and most caring people I have ever met. She cared deeply about others.

Erin Dibala
Helena, Mont.

CORRECTION

The story about getting help with your taxes ("Beta Alpha Psi to aid students with tax season woes," ODE, Feb. 14) left out Feb. 17 as a date to meet with the accounting fraternity. The location is the Chiles Center, room 228.

The Emerald regrets the error.