

# PERSPECTIVES

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## Vote yes on OSPIRG, no on MCC

*Editor's note: As of 9 p.m. Sunday night, the ASUO Constitution Court ruled that the ASUO General Election must be postponed until a decision is reached on Bret Jacobson's appeal. Whenever the election occurs, we urge you to consider the following.*

### Support OSPIRG, but demand further accountability

If you haven't heard about the Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group and its ballot measure by now, you're probably dead. Posters are everywhere, and the organization's support and opposition is out in force. The short explanation is, OSPIRG wants \$144,426 of student money to continue its environmental and consumer advocacy work. "Honesty" is a campus group opposed to giving money to OSPIRG. The Emerald editorial board spoke with both sides last week.

The OSPIRG representatives repeatedly mentioned that having students vote on OSPIRG was important because it was a referendum on issues. Students rarely get to cast a vote saying, "Yes, I believe in these things," OSPIRG spokeswoman Melissa Unger told us, and voting for OSPIRG is just that opportunity.

On the other hand, representatives of Honesty told us repeatedly that it wasn't at all about issues. Honesty spokesman Bill Beutler told us that he, too, cared about the environment, although later comments led us to believe he didn't share the liberal values OSPIRG stands for. Anyone can say he or she cares about the environment, even President Bush. But OSPIRG has liberal solutions to liberal issues. Honesty doesn't seem to agree with that.

Accountability was Honesty's big concern, and it's a concern we

share. But we also generally agree with the work OSPIRG does, and the group has made strides toward greater accountability in recent years. As long as this continues, we support OSPIRG's request for student incidental fees.

Perhaps the biggest point we would like to make is that OSPIRG needs to present its financial statements to students every year. In our meeting with OSPIRG, we were handed a budget to illustrate where the money goes. But anyone can write up a budget for anything; being shown one is insulting. A budget is not proof of expenditures. An end-of-year financial statement would be.

OSPIRG's board of directors needs to address the accountability issue at its meetings and arrange to have financial statements sent here so students can look at them. Apparently, students can go to the Oregon State PIRG office in Portland and request the student PIRG's records to track the money. But if OSPIRG is using our funds honestly, they should send them here. Every student who votes for OSPIRG should call and make that request. It's \$144,426 of your money, after all.

Honesty said that OSPIRG is a fundamentally dishonest group because it doesn't have any real benefit for students. We couldn't disagree more.

OSPIRG offers real benefits to students, in the form of attention to and work on local and national issues, as well as professional training in organizing and grassroots lobbying. There are no other student groups that do this sort of work on this scale. And the group's benefits are available to any student who gets involved. That's true of every student group. One must be active to reap the benefits.

Honesty's claim could be disarmed, however, if OSPIRG's paid

staff would appear on campus more often. More could be done to show students the benefits they receive. We challenge OSPIRG to prove their effort to the non-believers. What does \$144,426 buy us?

The issue of how OSPIRG uses its money has some merit; students who are deeply concerned about it might want to consider voting against the group, in order to send a message.

However, we think OSPIRG is fundamentally honest, and if it is, it should prove it. In the last few years, OSPIRG has become more open about how its money is used, and it has let students look at its records. The group needs to do more.

In order to stop the continual threats from opposition groups and to keep doing good work, OSPIRG needs to make its financial statements easily accessible on every campus. Students should vote for OSPIRG and demand that it become more transparent. That way, we can all see its honesty and everyone can benefit.

### MCC needs a better plan for spending student money

The Multicultural Center is asking for \$18,555.87 to establish a fund to help small student groups pay for events on campus. These events, the MCC says, would present "culturally diverse programming."

Ordinarily, we would be in favor of giving small groups money to further enrich the cultural fabric of University events. Students benefit from exposure to many cultures, and such events provide recreation on campus. In this case, however, we do not support the MCC's request.

There are two reasons we oppose



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

this ballot measure. First is representation. Any student group should have the opportunity to present its programs. We're not convinced that all groups will be encouraged to visit the MCC when seeking money for events. The Student Senate, on the other hand, has members directly elected by students, and student groups can go in front of that governing body and ask for money. It seems a safer bet that equal consideration will occur at the Student Senate.

Our other concern is organization. MCC spokesman Mario Sifuentes told us that the MCC will be rewriting its bylaws and establishing a board to dole out the money.

But that hasn't happened yet. The MCC is asking for \$18,555.87, but it doesn't have a structure in place for distributing the money, and we had to ask about accountability. Sifuentes said that although nothing was set up yet, he thought our suggestion of requiring purchase orders and providing financial statements was a good one.

We agree, and when the MCC has a written plan for executing this cultural programming fund, we may support it. In the meantime, we ask you to vote no.

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

### Poll Results

Every week, the Emerald prints the results of our online poll and the poll question for next week. The poll can be accessed from the main page of our Web site, [www.dailyemerald.com](http://www.dailyemerald.com). We encourage you to send us feedback regarding the poll questions and results.

**Last week's poll question:**  
I think University professors get paid:

**Results:** 107 total votes  
Too much — 11 votes, or 10.3 percent  
Not enough — 71 votes, or 66.4 percent  
Just right — 14 votes, or 13.1 percent  
Don't care — 11 votes, or 10.3 percent

Wow, we have a slam dunk. Maybe the question was too much of a "gimme." Or maybe professors are the only people taking our poll.

**This week's poll question:**  
Do you think the ASUO election process has been fair and equitable?

**The choices:**  
Yes  
No  
Don't know  
Don't care

## Save diversity: Save Whiteaker school

### GUEST COMMENTARY

Sam Douglass

I write out of concern for the greater Eugene community. As in other communities nationwide, the Eugene public education system is caught up in economic strife. In order to best use its funds available, George Russell, Eugene School District 4J superintendent, proposes to close two elementary schools, including Whiteaker Elementary School. It is this school that I am most concerned about.

The Whiteaker school lies in the heart of the old Whiteaker neighborhood, just west of Skinner Butte. Many of Eugene's Latino residents live in this neighborhood. Here, one can find stores with bilingual cashiers that sell authentic ethnic food and hear Spanish spoken in the streets.

However, many say the heart of this neighborhood is the elementary school. As the school lies within close proximity to their homes, Latino families living in the area can walk their children to school. At the school, the

staff, many of whom are bilingual, instruct what may be the most diverse classrooms in Eugene. Here, children from all parts of the Americas — North, South and Central — can learn as much from each other as they do from staff.

Closure of Whiteaker threatens this unique community. No longer will immigrant families have the option of having their children cared for and educated within blocks of their homes. The children will lose their sense of community and culture as they are transferred into more mainstream elementary schools.

What's more, the area will become less attractive to new Latino families. One man I talked to recently had been saving money for several years to buy a house in the area. Having finally saved enough to make the down payment, he is waiting to see if Whiteaker Elementary will be closed. If it is closed, he plans to settle in Springfield, which he feels is more welcoming to Latino families. So it appears as though 4J may undermine the diversity of which it is so proud.

The school board needs to consider what kind of message it will be sending to the Latino community if it closes

Whiteaker. The mostly bilingual school currently serves the needs of the monolingual (Spanish only) families in the area. However, 4J transmits a gravely negative message to this Latino community if it makes these services less accessible. Doesn't this contribute to perceptions that say, "You're not welcome here, nor are you important enough to have your needs met"?

This seems to be the ever more popular (and racist) message that the United States wants to send to Latino immigrants. If we wish to maintain Eugene as a community that is welcoming to all races, we need to keep Whiteaker open and help increase community support for this unique school and its families.

To help our greater community take a stand for diversity in our schools, please call Superintendent Russell at 687-3123. Tell him you want to see Whiteaker Elementary School stay open. Also, join me at the community meeting at the school March 8 at 6:30 p.m.

Sam Douglass is a senior Spanish/general science major, a Whiteaker resident and a Whiteaker Education Committee volunteer.