

Parking crunch lines UO's pocket

■ From permits to meters to citations, the University makes money, but students shouldn't count on spaces

By Beata Mostafavi
Oregon Daily Emerald

Peter Vomocil has spent up to 30 minutes driving around campus in search of a parking spot and said he views other cars as "vultures" he has to fight off.

Although Vomocil, a junior theater arts major, spends about \$80 a term for a parking permit, some days he's forced to find a metered spot. And even then, he sometimes ends up losing out, either because space is limited or he's ticketed for parking illegally or letting the meter run out.

"Parking is cutthroat on this campus," he said.

Vomocil is not the only critic of University parking.

The Department of Public Safety gives out about 6,000 parking permits throughout the year, although there are only about 3,200 spots available at one time. This includes the nearly 500 metered spots on campus, which doesn't always accommodate everyone who drives to school.

Rand Stamm, DPS parking and transportation manager, said DPS collects about \$25,000 to \$40,000 a year from citations, with overtime meters probably responsible for the bulk of the fines.

With such limited parking space, many students choose to avoid the parking war and find alternative ways to get to class, which has been encouraged by DPS.

Stamm said that because of people's different schedules, "there's almost always some open spaces anytime of the day," but some spots are farther away, and students fight for closer spaces.

Stamm added that driving to school isn't always the most reasonable mode of transportation anyway.

"With such a tremendous population density on campus, it makes much more sense economically and environmentally for people to use alternative means of transportation," he said.

Junior psychology major Sarah Leitch, who lives about 13 blocks away from campus and isn't close to a bus line that runs regularly, normally rides her bike to school to steer clear of parking chaos.

"Biking takes so much less time than finding a place to park," she said.

Leitch sometimes drives when she has to go to school directly from work, but even on those days she tries to find a two-hour parking spot on a street, which has its own inconveniences.

"It's all about luck," she said of finding a place to park off-campus. "And I've also left class early to move my car because I didn't want to get a ticket."

But when students get desperate to find a spot quickly in order to avoid being late to an exam or missing a class, parking illegally is sometimes the lesser of two evils.

Vomocil, who said he has spent almost \$55 in parking fines in the past two weeks, said one of his biggest arguments is that some meters only allow 45-minute or 1-hour parking, which sometimes isn't even sufficient for one class period.

"There are days I'm willing to park illegally just to get a spot," he said.

Stamm added that one option many students don't know about is auto-park, a small electronic device that allows students to pre-pay for meter spots at a 5 percent discount. Students can purchase an auto-park pass at the DPS office.

Although some students may wish the University would offer parking spaces at no cost, Stamm

said there's no such thing as "free" parking because all lots have maintenance expenses, which are paid for mainly by meters, permits and citations. He added that the University had considered building a parking garage years ago but received too much public opposition.

But some students say that even if more parking spaces were available, they'd choose other alternatives because it's not worth the associated costs. Junior psychology major Laura Shula said that she'd still walk to school to avoid the trouble.

"It's a hassle to find parking, and I'm a poor college student," she said.

Stamm added that no matter how many parking spots are added, people will perceive parking to be a problem because available spaces won't be in desired locations.

"There's a joke that no one will be happy until everybody can park right in front of the building they need to go to," he said. "You can never make everyone happy."

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OUS funding rally to hit Salem

■ Higher education backers head to the Capitol to rally the state's budget-makers

By Andrew Adams
Oregon Daily Emerald

More than 800 people are expected to gather on the steps of the capitol in Salem today to show their support for more state funding to be directed toward higher education.

Gov. John Kitzhaber's proposed budget for the 2001-2003 biennium for the Oregon University System is nearly \$100 million less than the amount needed to maintain the current service level. Tuition is also expected to increase over the next few years.

In response to the threat of less funding and increased tuition, the Oregon Student Association has organized a rally in which they

hope to bring together students, faculty, parents, business leaders and representatives from all seven schools in the OUS to show their support for more higher education funding.

John Wykoff, legislative director for the Oregon Student Association, said the rally will feature several different speakers commenting on why quality higher education in Oregon is threatened by the budget cuts.

"We're having the rally to raise the noise level about higher education," he said.

Wykoff added that speakers will also remark on the strengths of the state's colleges and universities that demand adequate funding.

The Alumni Association has been active in motivating alumni to join in the rally, said Paul Steiber, the association's commu-

nication director.

He said he expects a few hundred alumni to attend the rally to express their sense of gratitude and appreciation for what a university education has helped them achieve.

"Alumni have great feelings for higher education," he said.

Tim Black, advocacy director for the Office of Governmental Affairs, said the rally is being held at a key point in the budget process. He said the state's budget will begin to be discussed in the Ways and Means Subcommittee on March 19, and many funding decisions will be made soon after.

He said it is important then for state legislators to know that higher education has a high level of support in the state.

"We definitely want a big turnout," he said.

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