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Giovanni Salimena Emerald

## SCHOOL'S OUT for one-time drug offenders

**H**ere's a warning to students, especially those in the low-income bracket: Don't make a single mistake with drugs — don't get busted — or your federal financial aid can be withheld. Never mind that college is a place of experimentation; university life is, for many students, the first step outside the family home and many teenagers' first experience with freedom. Never mind that a single mistake with drugs doesn't, in reality, ruin one's entire future.

This is the lesson Congress sent to the youth of America on Oct. 7, 1998: Despite the prevalence of drugs (both legal and illegal) in society, you may not make one mistake. Do it and we'll deny you the chance to better your life.

So in the past year, college students have responded. At first the policy wasn't enforced with any amount of regularity. For the 2000-2001 school year, however, more than 8,000 students out of nearly 8.5 million applying had their eligibility for financial aid reduced or eliminated. In the face of this enforcement, college campuses have been abuzz with the issue.

More than 90 campuses are now affiliated with Students for Sensible Drug Policy, a national group started in 1998 at Rochester Institute of Technology, which is "committed to providing education on harms caused by the War on Drugs, working to involve youth in the political process, and promoting an open, honest, and rational discussion of alternative solutions to our nation's drug problems," according to the group's Web site. ASUO President Jay Breslow is currently working to have the Student Senate adopt a resolution supporting the SSDP's efforts to have Congress repeal the drug-conviction section of the Higher Education Act.

The Emerald editorial board applauds SSDP's mission and the ASUO's move to support that mission. Withholding education and denying a second chance to drug users will do nothing to fix the problem. Those attracted to drugs need to be shown that there are other things in life that also provide pleasure and that ultimately provide a much deeper sense of satisfaction.

One of the purported purposes of higher education is to expose youth to a wide world of experience and opportunity. Seeing that there are important issues to think about and fulfilling work to be done in the world can go a long way to combating the allure of drugs such as

cocaine and heroin. The government's current policies of complete denial don't wash with youth, because one experience with cocaine provides a huge rush of pleasure and the urge for more.

Maybe a college education isn't enough to reduce demand for drugs, but denying federal funds to a 19-year-old for a slip-up (possibly due to peer pressure or a seemingly harmless sample at a party) will only make the situation worse. Such a student, forced to leave college, may see further drug use as the best option. What are his or her choices? Is flipping burgers really a more satisfying solution?

To make the situation worse, the effect of this policy is to penalize low-income and minority students, and those who tell the truth, for drug use. Not all students will be denied a college education. Only those applying for federal funds lose out. Rich kids can rack up the drug convictions and still go to college. And minority youth make up a disproportionate number of drug arrests. That may be due to racial profiling and discriminatory sentencing, or it may not, but the effect is still the same.

Truthful students get penalized as well, because the infamous "Question 35" is answered by the student. The federal financial aid authorities can't possibly check the records of 9 million students. If drug convictions are discovered later, the money is forfeited, but it's pretty much the honor system.

One final nail shuts the coffin of this unfair policy: Drug convictions are the only crime considered. The government is saying that a rapist or a murderer deserves federal money and a second chance, but a student who smokes a joint doesn't. And according to Rolling Stone magazine, the federal government requires no such disclosures about drug convictions from business owners when awarding grants or subsidies. The insanity of those discrepancies is clear all by itself.

SSDP's ultimate goal may be to end the country's war on drugs, and that may be a smart move. But we are excited by the group's efforts to end the government's war on low-income youth who are seeking to make their lives better. The ASUO gets kudos for bringing the issue up. Now if someone could just submit the resolution to the Senate rules committee for approval, the effort can begin here.

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

## Letters to the editor

### What rights will you have in the workplace?

Chances are your plans are ready: Each quarter brings you closer to a degree, with the likelihood of a good job. You expect employers will find you an attractive hire, and you are assured that discrimination because of gender, age, race, religion or disability won't occur. These individual rights have been fought for and won.

But what rights will you have, once hired, to effect change in the workplace? Will you have the right to organize in a union and to bargain in good faith?

Chances are you will enjoy fewer collective rights than did your parents. American workers have seen an erosion of community standards supporting labor's role in the workplace.

One local example is the plight of labor at The Register-Guard, where for almost two years the Newspaper Guild has made little progress obtaining a contract. The family-owned paper, whose liberal face makes it seem an attractive spot for a new journalism or business graduate, has hired a tough, anti-union negotiator.

These problems are not uncommon. We see anti-union sentiment at retailers and public agencies. In their efforts to organize and negotiate, warehouse workers at B-Mart and teachers and drivers at Head Start of Lane County have met with strong resistance from management.

Your future employment is assured by a tradition of individual rights. But what about your rights to organize in the workplace? What will your employer think of your labor activism?

These are questions better left out of the interview!

Erik Muller  
Eugene

### Bret and Matt want to work for you

I have served on the ASUO Student Senate for nearly two years. During that time, I have never been as optimistic about an Executive candidates' potential to serve the student body as I am after meeting with Bret Jacobson and Matt Cook.

Jacobson and Cook have unique ideas to serve students and assist student programs. If elected, they plan to develop a [public relations] hub to help groups promote events and inform students about events that their incidental fee helps to fund. They also have ideas to work with the Alumni Association to help fund events. With the increasing challenge of maintaining a reasonable incidental fee while simultaneously helping programs grow, this is a critical issue.

Bret and Matt have the most potential to connect with students who haven't spent a lot of time in the ASUO office. They aren't afraid to question the status quo in the ASUO and have worked hard to educate themselves about present problems and solutions in student government. With the Oregon Legislature posing questions about the incidental fee as it debates the higher education budget, we need an ASUO Executive that will work to ensure that all funds are spent responsibly.

### Vote on DuckWeb!

The ASUO general election starts today on DuckWeb and runs through Wednesday at 5 p.m. Please take a minute to look over the candidates for president and senate, to read the ballot measures and to vote. You can read the full text of the Emerald editorial board's endorsements (Nilda and Joy for ASUO Executive, Yes on OSPIRG, No on MCC) by visiting our Web site ([www.dailyemerald.com](http://www.dailyemerald.com)) and clicking on the "Perspectives" section.

Bret and Matt are not running to serve their own interests or to further an agenda. They are running because students have expressed their desire for Bret and Matt to be elected.

Vote for Bret and Matt: Capable, qualified and dedicated students who want to work for you.

Jennifer Greenough  
senior  
political science

### Nilda and Joy are best for ASUO Executive

Until recently, I was unaware of how many ways the ASUO affected me. I was unaware that the people in the Executive office make decisions that will have an effect on student programs, the voice and image of students in the eyes of the general public, the committees that students have a seat on and a voice in, and on student-faculty relations. Knowing this, I realize more fully the impact of the general elections that are going on this week.

With such important issues at hand, it is vital that the best candidates are elected into the office of the Executive. Nilda Brooklyn and Joy Nair are these candidates. They have worked tirelessly to voice the concerns of students on campus and in the community. They will make the decisions and hire the staff that will make a positive impact on the school and surrounding area. Most importantly, they will recognize the concerns of students. The coalitions that they have built in their combined four years of experience will dramatically increase their ability to make concrete positive changes.

It is because of this hard work, combined with the reality of the impressive tasks and decisions to be handled by the executive that I will vote for Nilda Brooklyn and Joy Nair. They are truly the best candidates for the job.

Nadia Hasan  
freshman  
undeclared

## 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 about the poll questions and results.

### Last week's poll question:

What should the ASUO spend the \$100,000 overrealized account money on?

Results: 102 total votes

Kick-ass music festival —

46 votes, or 40 percent

Covered moving sidewalk —

15 votes, or 13 percent

Full-time bike taxi —

6 votes, or 5.2 percent

Improved student lounge —

19 votes, or 16.5 percent

Free massage clinic —

29 votes, or 25.2 percent

Listen up, ASUO: Massage was a close second, but most students (well, most poll respondents, and no one knows who these people are) want a kick-ass music festival. Now the question is, what bands will most of the student body feel are kick-ass? Don't even suggest J Lo.

### This week's poll question:

It's tax season. What do you do?

The choices:

Pay on time

Pay late

Cheat

Don't pay

What are taxes?