

PERSPECTIVES

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In need of a better standard

The state Senate's Ways and Means Committee began considering a bill Wednesday that would establish the Oregon HOPE Scholarship, which would give Oregon high school students with a 3.0 or higher GPA a free ride at state colleges. Senate Bill 100, sponsored by Sen. Ryan Deckert, D-Beaverton, and Sen. Tom Hartung, R-Cedar Mill, is intended to show high school students that scholastic achievement is important and induce them to stay in Oregon for their higher education.

This bill, as written, is not a good idea, and the Emerald editorial board hopes it gets killed in committee or gets rewritten to address what we think are some serious problems.

Merit-based aid, as a concept, seems reasonable. As a community, lower-income high school students are offered quite a bit of emotional and financial support throughout the educational process. The Oregon Need grant, Pell grants and fee waivers may not cover everyone's need, but there are programs out there. So it might be responsible of the state to also establish a program encouraging students who excel to continue their high achievement and showing other students that the state values their success.

However, until need-based grants assist every person who requires them, until a wider definition of scholastic aptitude is developed and until some standards are applied, the state doesn't need to be helping those who are uniquely positioned to help themselves.

According to the Oregon Student Association, 11,000 students were denied financial help from the Oregon Need grant because it is underfunded. Sens. Deckert and Hartung would be doing much more valuable work if they fought to get more money from taxpayers to fully fund need-based student assistance. As soon as the Need grant covers everyone in need, then we can talk about making scholarships based on merit.

Despite the funding issue, our biggest concern was the idea that a 3.0 GPA means that a student is excelling scholastically. If we want to encourage students to be intelligent, educated citizens, more or different parameters

need to be established. We know of students who skate through easy classes their senior year in order to push their GPA higher. Does this mean they're challenging themselves or excelling? Hardly.

A full definition of scholarship would include Advanced Placement classes (maybe HOPE students should be required to take two, for example), community service (require a certain number of hours or a certain number of different agencies), jobs (special consideration could be given to students who have shown they can balance education and employment) and extracurricular activities, in addition to grades.

And what about SAT scores or letters of recommendation? Those of us familiar with scholarships and financial aid know there are many indicators of a high achiever. Adopting more parameters would mean a more complicated formula for awarding the HOPE scholarship, but it would also do much more to properly encourage students.

The final concerns we have about this version of merit-based aid involve standards. Should everyone who meets the scholastic requirements be eligible for aid? Even within merit-based aid, is means testing totally unreasonable? Why does the state need to give a free ride to students whose parents make, say, \$100,000 per year? In fact, some wealthier parents might want their children to learn the value of both money and education, and they might require their children to pursue scholarships or get a job to pay for college them-

selves. Denying those students the HOPE scholarship won't force their parents to pick up the bill.

Another standard we worry about pertains to the budget. How much money should the state dedicate to a program just to show support for smart kids? After all, smart kids are the ones who can easily ferret out scholarships from all over the country, send off 30 scholarship applications and probably receive 10 awards. Smart students already have "HOPE." How much more do they need, and should it come at the expense of need-based grants? Maybe a limit could be set — say, 30 percent — and funding for merit-based aid

would be restricted to a certain percentage of funding given to need-based grants.

Working through concerns like these is possible, however. We hope the Senate gives this issue substantial thought and debate. Encouraging students to become intelligent citizens who care about learning takes more than just throwing some money at "B" students. And in the meantime, there are plenty of lower-income students who *do* want to expand their education, but there isn't even enough money to help them.

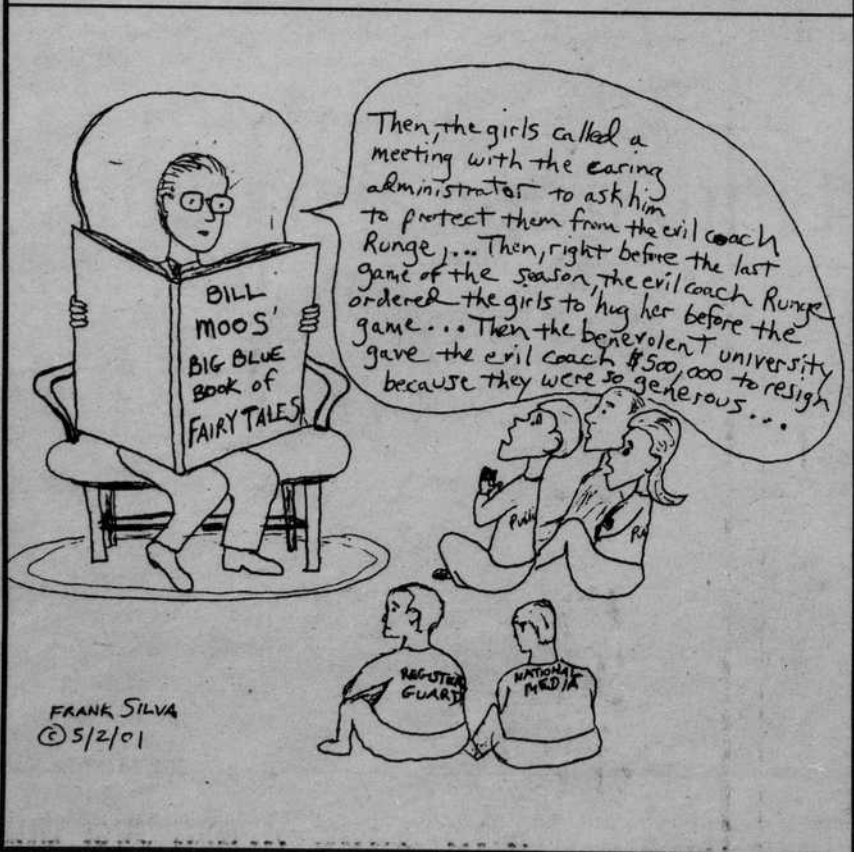
This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

Leftfield

Frank Silva



Let's learn from our heritage

GUEST COMMENTARY

Lach Litwer

Our country is one whose history bears the scars of growing from an imperial colony to the strong, diverse nation we are today. Some of these scars are ugly. During World War II, America disenfranchised many thousands of Japanese-Americans because of their ethnic background. In 1963, Lee Harvey Oswald, a former U.S. Marine, shot and killed John F. Kennedy, the president whom many people credit with having initiated a large portion of the civil rights movement. Despite the many mistakes we've made, no one has argued that we should disown our heritage. Rather, we acknowledge our mistakes and learn from them.

In the column titled "Flag Folly" (May 1, ODE), Pat Payne shows us a stellar example of the cultural intolerance that he is so quick to attribute to those who disagree with him. By stereotyping and slandering Southerners who value their Mississippi heritage — warts and all — he plays into the culture of xenophobia and hatred which so many have given so much to remove.

While serving at Keesler Air Force base in Mississippi, I came to know quite a few people who identify with their Southern heritage. Most of them were

tolerant, open-minded people, willing to accept at face value all who are willing to extend the same courtesy.

Never mind the questionable historical perspectives Payne spews regarding the Civil War. It is his flagrant intolerance for the most fundamental right of all in a free society — freedom of thought — which should be particularly offensive to all who value it. As a serving member of America's fighting forces, I can choose to disagree with those who hold different beliefs than I do, but I'd be proud to give my life to protect their right to believe as they wish.

I fear, however, that the greatest threat to this freedom comes not from some foreign enemy, but from a close-minded, reactionary culture, which can be found simply by opening a newspaper.

Lach Litwer is a freshman psychology major.

CLARIFICATION

In the Emerald article "Senate hands out \$20,395 of surplus" (May 3), the \$10,000 from the general surplus and the \$12,000 from the McArthur Court subsidy will cover the cost of the two non-conference football games next year. Students will not pay out of pocket.

The Emerald regrets the error.