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# COMMENTARY

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## The choice to smoke should be an individual decision

**B**y this time next week, all of Eugene's bars and taverns and most of the city's businesses are expected to be completely smoke free, as all cigarette smokers will likely have moved to city sidewalks and be huddled together in a fraternity of exiled tobacco users.

The much-heralded and debated smoking ban will go into effect July 1, and smokers will no longer enjoy free reign in their favorite bars, taverns or restaurants to light up if they see fit. That is, unless, a move by the state Legislature to normalize smoking restrictions across the state and preserve some sense of autonomy concerning tobacco use passes.

House Bill 3953 would, if passed, forbid smoking in all restaurants, except in areas closed to minors such as bars or lounges. The bill has already passed through the House and backers are making a strong push in the Capitol to see that it is signed into law. Last week supporters of the bill moved \$17.5 million in tobacco-use prevention funds from the state's health division toward the measure to effectively force Gov. John Kitzhaber to sign the bill if he

expects to fund anti-tobacco education. If the bill does pass, earlier smoking bans enacted by cities such as Corvallis, Baker City and others would be grandfathered in, but Eugene's would be nullified.

And that would be a good result. Eugene's ban goes too far in restricting individual's basic responsibility to him or herself under the premise of a greater good. No one can argue that excessive tobacco use is not harmful to both the smokers themselves and those immediately around them. But one can argue that it is the individual's choice to either protect his or her health or endanger it.

Mature adults should be left with the choice of whether they would like to smoke or not; the city should not make that choice for them. Emphasis is placed on "mature," as children should not be subjected to unnecessary exposure to second-hand smoke. Children are already banned from these areas to protect them from the excesses of alcohol, so it is within reason to apply the same guidelines to tobacco. Therefore, it makes sense to limit smoking to areas where mindful adults can choose to either light up or avoid

those who do.

One can easily argue that any limitation of personal action through law is a deviation from the logic that individuals should be left to make their own decisions. But today it is highly unreasonable to suggest a system in which personal liberty is the end all, so a rational compromise is the best solution. Leaving smoking within bars and taverns whose owners permit smoking is, then, the most sensible action.

But one can also argue that giving bar owners the right to decide to permit smoking also takes the decision from the hands of the individual. This is true, but only in the sense that for that specific bar the choice has been made for the individual. That person, if he or she disagrees with the owner, can choose another bar. Eugene's smoking ban does not allow for this option, and so in this regard it is also an unfair limitation on one's autonomy.

Not only is this an affront to the individual, it is also an affront to the business owner who must compete with another town that allows its residents the right to choose what they can do with to-

bacco. If Eugene's ban goes into effect, there likely will be an influx of business to the bars in Springfield, Junction City and other neighboring cities that do not impose such stringent limitations on one's personal tobacco use.

This is the very reason why the Oregon Restaurant Association has been an active critic of local smoking ordinances and helped draft HB 3953. A statewide approach that offers a sensible compromise is the best answer to the issue of tobacco use in public places. Let us hope that Oregon's lawmakers realize this.

### The emerald city, a national jewel

It is with great pleasure that we see Eugene has been a focus for the national spotlight this past weekend. While this is not the first time our city has received some national attention, it is pleasing that this round is largely positive and not focusing on Eugene's reputation as the headquarters for anarchy. Locals have long known the benefits of this often quiet city from the educational atmosphere provided by both the University and Lane Community College, numerous outdoor

recreational opportunities, a stable economy and a unique, if at times struggling, downtown area. According to some reports there were nearly 20,000 visitors to Eugene this past weekend that included top track athletes, Bach fans, handweavers and even Norwegian singers and attendees of the Black Sheep Gathering. We heartily welcome them all, and remind them that Eugene's qualities can be enjoyed year-round — if one doesn't mind a little rain, that is.

### Summertime — when the ODE is easy

While most of our fellow students are out of town enjoying their summer break, the staff of the Oregon Daily Emerald will still be publishing this summer. This is the first newspaper of the summer term, to be followed every Tuesday and Thursday by more issues providing our readers with an in-depth look into both campus and local news, sports and entertainment.

This editorial represents the opinions of Andrew Adams. His views do not necessarily represent the views of the Oregon Daily Emerald. He can be reached at aba11431@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

## No ready solution exists for now-pervasive grade inflation

### GUEST COMMENTARY

### *Knight-Ridder Newspapers*

**G**rades are a controversial topic on many campuses these days. Not so much the gloomy topic of bad grades, an old, contentious problem, but the relatively new issue of too many good grades.

Few would seriously deny that the inflation of grades has become pervasive in American

higher education over the past couple of decades. It is said that the Gentleman's C — long considered an acceptable grade by students of both sexes, faculty and tuition-paying parents — has turned into the Gentleman's B, or even the Gentleman's A.

Grade inflation in its various guises can be seen at nearly all campuses. In grading, as in so many areas, student-consumers are getting more of what they demand, rather than what they need, or deserve. Attempts to deal with the problem by enforcing institu-

tion-wide standards tend to run up against faculty members' characteristic insistence on establishing and policing the academic substance of their own courses.

There isn't too much that lone faculty members can do about the overall trend, but some continue trying. One is Harvey C. Mansfield, a professor of government at Harvard. He has long held a reputation as a tough (but not unfair) grader. In any case, he has instituted a two-tier grading system for students in his political philosophy classes: One grade, the mod-

ern-type inflated one, will go on their official transcripts; the second grade, representing what he thinks they really deserve, will be disclosed to them individually and privately.

Under this system, his students will presumably be able to avoid being harmed (in graduate school applications, etc.) for having significantly lower grades than their peers, at Harvard or elsewhere. But, for their own consideration, they will also have the professor's unvarnished assessment of their work.

This approach is not universally applicable. For example, it may not affect students who are far more interested in how graduate school admissions committees view their applications than in how Professor Mansfield views their work in class. Nevertheless, the problem is real and it's not going away by itself. During the 1999-2000 school year, more than 87 percent of Harvard undergraduates received grades of B or better in their courses. That strains credulity.

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## Letters to the editor

### Dievendorf's dedication helped students flourish

It is with great sadness that I read from across the country that Linda Dievendorf has been betrayed by the very institution for whom she has dedicated herself the last 17 years. I came to know Linda while I worked at the Cultural Forum. I performed duties ranging from reception to posturing, security and stage crew. In part because of her good example I have gone on to become a successful agent working in Boston, Mass.

I am not the only one who has flourished in the music industry under Linda's watch. Jason Miller went from concert coordinator at the U of O to President of Horde Tour, and now he is a senior executive at House of Blues International. Adam Zacks went from his student job at the Cultural Forum working with Linda to working for Double T Concerts, one of the largest promoters in the Northwest and operator of the Roseland Theater in Portland. In the coming years, the music industry will be seeded with those who trained under Linda's watchful eye.

I don't know much about the politics of the University and its administration. As an alumnus I am often confused by policy and its effects on students, faculty and the community. But I do understand eco-

nomics. I will withhold my support as an alumnus for a university that finds it more important to hang billboards in New York City than to keep its most dedicated educators and staff.

Phil Simon  
 class of 1992

### Dievendorf's termination will negatively affect University

I have never earned a cent with my University of Oregon degree. I have, however, managed to support myself quite nicely using skills that were born of my experience working with Linda Dievendorf and the Cultural Forum.

On May 23rd, without consulting students, the administration terminated the contract of Linda Dievendorf, who has served the students of the University for almost two decades.

Linda Dievendorf and the Cultural Forum are one of the few resources on campus where students can gain any experience that is applicable to the world outside of the University. Beyond giving students valuable work experience, the result of that hard work is a hugely enriched cultural landscape for the student body.

I can only imagine the shameful political motivations that inspired this termination, but I can say without a doubt that it will have a resounding negative impact on the University as a whole.

Dan Stiles  
 class of 1994



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