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 Online Edition:  
 www.dailyemerald.com

# COMMENTARY

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Thursday, July 5, 2001

## UO's use of 'development' funds should be watched

Following the release of a report by the Secretary of State Audits Division it appears the University has had some trouble ensuring accountability in the use of thousands of dollars. Auditors have questioned the University's use of credit cards and donated funds, and Vice President for Administration Dan Williams has acknowledged that there have been some mistakes made in using these.

It is hard to believe that expenses like these could have passed through with little notice: Nearly \$8,000 spent on football tickets for donors, \$3,336 for airline tickets for a dean and staff member to attend the Aloha Bowl and an almost \$500 rental car insurance premium for another dean. Auditors questioned several other expenses as well.

The University has to have some independent means to ensure that almost every dollar can be accounted for and is used responsibly. After a change in the state system a few years ago that gave each institution the responsibility to account for its own use of funds, it appears that this task is a little too much for this University.

Several deans — or at least those who would comment on the expenses — stood by their departments' use of funding by saying it was necessary to maintain good relationships with donors. They called this using "development" funds and maintained it was in accordance with University policy.

This does make sense, and it is quite true that donor dollars make possible a myriad of beneficial educational programs here on campus.

But without some better system of accountability there will always remain the risk of funds being used inappropriately simply because University staff can do so.

Let's abandon this temptation by placing the University's use of funds under greater scrutiny. Williams said the University is committed to making changes, so let's hope these come about soon.

However, what is still troubling is the University's use of University Foundation dollars. The state auditors had several questions about these funds because of the foundation's rigidly private nature. State auditors said several of the foundation's employees were not completely forthcoming in providing records of their transactions and there is still some ambiguity about whether those transactions can, in fact, be reviewed by the state.

It is curious, to say the least, that the University puts such a dense smokescreen around the foundation's dealings. This reluctance to allow public scrutiny only arouses suspicions instead of creating confidence.

Williams told The Register-Guard that "at some point, there has to be a certain level of trust between the general public and the University." But that trust will continue to be strained here if the Uni-

versity continues to keep under wraps how it uses the massive amounts of donated dollars it receives every year.

As the University moves forward with its Autzen expansion, it has been criticized for the eagerness with which it accepts large donations. This has led some to speculate that the University is becoming more and more privatized as generous donors begin to exhibit more and more sway on campus. These critics will only have more ammunition if the University continues to maintain a screen of confidentiality.

### Speed limit increase makes sense

Many students on campus are frequent travelers on both Interstate 5 and I-84, and an increase in the speed limit for those roads that has recently passed in both the state Senate and House may soon be making their trips through the state somewhat quicker.

This increase from 65 mph to 70 mph makes sense, as anyone who is familiar with traveling in the I-5 corridor can say the average speed is not that of the posted speed limit. But legislators made clear that the increase is not intended to increase the speed of traffic, but rather make the posted speeds comply with the almost accepted speeds on those major roads.

When pitching the bill, its sponsor, Sen. Randy Miller, R-Lake Oswego, asked his fellow lawmakers to consider how fast they travel when driving up or down to Salem on I-5. Most, apparently, keep with the flow of traffic, as they have voted the bill along.

But there should be some concern, as raising the speed limit could further increase the flow of traffic. Drivers who have become accustomed to pushing their speed up to 75 mph from 65 mph may now feel free to push it past 80 mph. And as anyone who has had extensive experience driving Oregon's freeways can tell you, this is not inconceivable. Added to this is the provision that increases the speed for trucks to 60 mph. One should hope this does not give truckers the motivation to push their rigs too fast.

But those are just worrisome "what ifs." Traffic does move fast on Oregon's roads, and it is high time that legislators realized this. Speed limits on dangerous roads are good safeguards to prevent auto accidents. But on the straight and often flat stretches of major interstates where traffic has been moving along safely for some time, it makes sense to bump up the speed limit.

Ideally, Oregon's speed limit signs will become just that — a recognition of the signs of the times and not an impetus for drivers to push their lead foot down any farther.

This editorial represents the views of the Emerald's editor in chief and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Oregon Daily Emerald.

## Needed: a good topic for this column

After being a reporter going on three years, finding a subject to tackle for a column can be a fairly daunting task.

Granted, I write a music column for Pulse, but music and entertainment are two of my hobbies, unlike reporting, which I hope to turn into a career.



Jeremy Lang  
The Be-In

The ethical importance of remaining neutral and objective — in my opinion — is of paramount importance. It's not my place to comment on the news. That belief endures whether I have written about an issue or not, from the ASUO and the Oregon University System's higher education budget to Congressman Gary Condit or President George W. Bush's policy on whatever.

That's news, and I'm a newsman. It's just that simple.

Not that columnists have an easier job than reporters, just a very different job. Both, when done well, require research, strong, punchy sentences, and an ability to reflect the constantly changing world.

But this doesn't negate the fact that I have an opinion. I simply refuse to ever risk undermining readers' ability to believe that when I inform them about an issue, event or person, the information is coming to them without a personal slant.

I hold to this defining principle so strongly that, despite my sarcastic sensibilities, I won't even opine on the AP story in Tuesday's Oregon Daily Emerald about the dead anchovies in a Brookings harbor. So wow, that kills a lot of topics. No current events, religion, politics, the importance or lack thereof of student government — and plenty of my views on entertainment appear later in this issue.

That pretty much leaves the weather, and I'm simply not going to write an opinion piece about the weather. Technically, I can't do that anyway. On Tuesday I wrote a story about this week's heat spell and open waterways on the Willamette. That's the minute level to which I take my objectivity.

How 'bout them Mariners? Cynical — and quite broad — opinions abound that nobody in the news business is objective. Every word spewed from a reporter's head into his or her computer comes equipped with some kind of political or ideological slant.

Sure, corporations play a bigger part in today's news media, and the sharp decline of two-newspaper

cities lowers competition and thus the tenacity of investigative and thorough reporting. But the situation is far from bleak.

And my principles are in no way unique. I simply consider first my objectivity and the obligations that come with the privilege of news writing whenever I make a choice in this business.

This fall, I'll travel to Washington, D.C., for a political reporting internship. Although I don't expect the atmosphere to change my journalistic ideals drastically, I do expect to have my concept of reporting challenged and fine-tuned.

Little effort is needed to sit at a college newspaper independent from the University administration and vow a willingness to fall on my sword for journalistic integrity.

Maybe all of this is so important to me because journalism is more than a career; it can become your life. I adore the classic images of reporters jumping out of bed at 2 a.m. to cover a breaking story or spending hours researching and digging for investigative work. This isn't just how I act on the job — it's how I live my life.

If only I had a topic for this column.

Jeremy Lang is an associate editor at the Emerald. He can be reached at jlang@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

## Letters to the editor

### Satcher deserves kudos for issuing 'Call to Action'

I want to applaud Surgeon General David Satcher for having the courage to release his long-awaited "Call to Action to Promote Sexual Health and Responsible Behavior." Sadly, frank discussions of sexuality are all too often avoided because of discomfort with the topic or because of scientifically baseless political opposition. By releasing his findings, Dr. Satcher has raised awareness about the state of America's sexual health and the critical need for more knowledge, more services and more open discussion, so people can make responsible choices. This report will save lives.

The call to action is an important step. However, implementation is up to us. Planned Parenthood has launched an initiative called "Rights, Respect, Responsibility." As part of this initiative, 16 Oregonians from across the state recently completed a 14-day European Study Tour. We had the opportunity to hear from students, educators, health-care providers, media specialists and researchers about how the Netherlands, Germany and France have succeeded in dramatically reducing unintended pregnancies, abortion and STDs through providing young people with honest and accurate information about sexuality, responsibility and relationships, combined with access to contraception.

Just as the Surgeon General has called us to do, we intend to work with Oregonians to develop healthier sexual attitudes and behaviors. We have begun a bold initiative that we hope will be one of many throughout this country to save the lives and futures of our most important national assets, our children.

Kitty Piercy  
 public affairs director  
 Planned Parenthood Health Services  
 of Southwestern Oregon

### Old growth trees still in danger

I think it is great that your paper is telling people about the great outdoors. I only want to inform you, and those who really care, about what else is going on in the woods.

The Forest Service is anxious to cut down old growth trees in the

Fall Creek area. A timber sale named "Clark" has been the home to many tree sitters from this area. The sit has been going on for three years and has proved to be somewhat successful in that the trees are still there. But the Forest Service still has a deal and plans to deliver. This valuable piece of Oregon is still threatened. People who really enjoy Oregon and care about Oregon should know this.

Chuck Holding  
 Erb Essentials

### CLARIFICATION

The story "State auditors question UO's spending habits," which ran July 3, should have identified the University Law School, which is in the Knight Law Center.



Wayne Stayskal Tribune Media Services