

COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:
 Andrew Adams
 Associate Editors:
 Jeremy Lang
 Peter Hockaday

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Editorial

Academic skills should dictate who receives aid

The New York Times has reported that 28 of the nation's top universities will soon change their guidelines for financial aid. Those schools making the changes include such top-name universities as Yale, Stanford and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

It is encouraging to see that these schools, which are some of the most expensive in the country, feel obligated to give students in financial need an opportunity to attend classes on their prestigious campuses. For decades, higher education in the United States has been an exclusive enclave of the rich, the brilliant or those with unequaled athletic prowess.

Increasing need-based aid should bring new perspectives to higher education and help administrators find some of that longed-for diversity, which is so often praised on most campuses. But as painful as it is for some people to hear it, a college education is not a right. Entrance to a university is something that an individual should and must work to obtain. Those people who do work hard in their early years and obtain high grades and respectable test scores, and can also demonstrate some sort of social responsibility by being active in sports or other organizations, should be given the rewards of scholarships and grants.

Therefore, a move toward adjusting standards for need-based aid should be taken with due consideration to ensure that the best and the brightest do not get left behind. When colleges and universities attempt to bring about social change through admissions and scholarships, they run the risk of defeating their main purpose — to educate those who want and can handle a university education. Let's not see the University of Oregon, or any other school, extend financial aid to those who may need the money but don't have the academic skills.

It is, without a doubt, justified to ensure that those who deserve to attend a university but cannot because of financial reasons should be given some financial aid. But it is highly unjustified to give students aid based solely on their financial ability. Be they poor or rich, if they are bad students they should not attend a university.

Sadly, however, our capitalist system ensures that most poor students who do not have university-level skills do not attend, but many rich students who should not have even graduated from high school are welcomed with open arms.

It is not a perfect system, but universities should not attempt

to change that with scholarships. The fact remains there are those who qualify for need-based aid and should receive it, and there are those who qualify but should not take aid from others.

Legislative session ends

Following a walk-out from the Capitol building by most of the Democratic lawmakers, our legislators were hard-pressed to finish most of their business in a timely manner. But they did it, and at 5:15 a.m. Saturday, Oregon's 71st Legislative Assembly adjourned.

Much was accomplished during the tumultuous session that witnessed wrangling across the aisle over budget issues and other pieces of legislative business. Yet by many news accounts, in the early hours of the morning on Saturday there was much back-slapping and praise for a session that finally ended with Oregon schools getting more money, the Oregon Department of Transportation receiving repair funds and an assurance for adequate hospital staffing.

It is good to see that students who fall prey to date-rape drugs now know that if their assailant is ever caught, tougher laws enacted by this Legislature will increase the rapist's prison time because of the use of date-rape drugs.

But for all the handshakes and smiles leaving Salem lately, there should be some concern over the lack of support for higher education. It took months for legislators to get around to filling in some of the holes the governor made, despite claims of support by many legislators.

And while it is understandable that the budget process takes some time, there should have been more concrete work to ensure higher education was properly funded early on in the session. The guesswork, rumors, suspicions, inaccuracies and fears that pervaded during most of the discussion about the higher education budget seemed to protract the process longer than necessary. This made several instructors and classified workers worried about losing their jobs, and students fearful they would not be able to afford a university education.

It may be how the system works, but in the case of higher education when the benefits are clear, state lawmakers should have made a stronger effort early on to assure those in higher education that the system would not suffer too much.

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

Audit revives debate on donor anonymity

GUEST COMMENTARY

George Beres

Some months ago, Oregon newspapers took issue with what others mistakenly viewed as an innocent request by the president of a state university. Now, because of a new report from state auditors, published by the Oregon Daily Emerald, that request loses any claim of innocence.

The press objection had been to an appeal Dave Frohnmayer of the University of Oregon made to the Oregon University System, asking the right to assure anonymity to the University's major donors. Frohnmayer's argument had some credibility, since some donors — unlike those who enjoy public esteem when their gifts are announced — prefer to keep a low profile. The OUS rubber-stamped approval of his request. It then was overruled by the state Legislature.

The concern of the press is that the mass media — and through them the public — need to know who is giving big bucks to state institutions. At issue is the occasional effort by a major donor to use philanthropy to in-

fluence education policy.

A prime example of how that works is Phil Knight's recent gifting turnaround. After announcing a donation of \$30 million to help expand the size of the University's Autzen Stadium, Knight pulled back the gift. He was angry about his alma mater becoming a member of the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) at the urging of Oregon students.

Expansion plans for the Ducks were in a bind — until the OUS came to the rescue. It drafted a new guideline that, after the fact, made it illegal for the University to be a member of the WRC. Reinstatement of the massive gift has not followed, but some anticipate it.

Now the OUS and the University have new financial confusion to wade through. It is described in a state audit that faults the University for failing to adequately control and account for how its employees spend public dollars. In response, a University vice-president agreed improvement might be needed.

My experience as a one-time University employee convinces me that the assurance of seeking improvement is sincere. But the audit uncovered another questionable money matter where the

University stonewalls when it comes to disclosure: the existence of a camouflaged University foundation that escapes having its donations publicly reported. The University Foundation in Agate Hall on campus is labeled "private," suggesting it can be used without accountability to state guidelines.

The auditors got only partial information on how money from this low-profile foundation is used, according to a published comment by audit administrator Jim Pitts. His statement said the University claims that by designating the foundation "private," it can use the money as it chooses, without state review.

If the money is spent improperly, auditors — and the public — have no way of knowing. But something else is clear and ironic. Even if the president's request to keep some donors anonymous was denied by the Legislature, anonymity still exists. In fact, it thrives, thanks to a private foundation, unaccountable to the state and its citizens, as it operates out of the same building that houses the University Alumni Office.

George Beres joined the University of Oregon as sports information director. Later, before retirement, he managed the UO Speakers Bureau.

We've all helped sports become business

GUEST COMMENTARY

David Whitley

Are you sick of schools paying coaches 10 times more than Nobel Prize-winning professors? Are you tired of kids who can barely spell SAT getting into college?

If you can't live with the exploitative, money-grabbing business of college sports, here's the first thing you do.

Look in the mirror.

It's your fault. It's my fault. It's everybody's fault, and always has been.

So what do we do about it?

The topic is hot again after a report by the Knight Commission, a group of 28 ex-college presidents and other eggheads.

After 18 months, it concluded higher sports and higher education don't mix. Next, it will report Chihuahuas can't speak English.

I long ago accepted college sports for what it is — big-time entertainment in school clothing. The coaches, administrators and players do what they're hired to do. Try to win, sell tickets and keep fans happy.

Most play by the rules we've given them. And when athletes get an education along the way, all the better. But first and foremost, college sports is a business and has to be treated like one.

Unless you live in an ivory tower. The commission envisions an Ivy League panacea, where every jock is a scholar, Steve Spurrier teaches P.E. and winning doesn't matter. In a perfect world, sure. In our world,

such idealism and reality has never mixed.

"The responsibility to bring athletics into a sincere relation to the intellectual life of the college rests squarely on the shoulders of the president and faculty." So said a Carnegie Foundation study. The year was 1929.

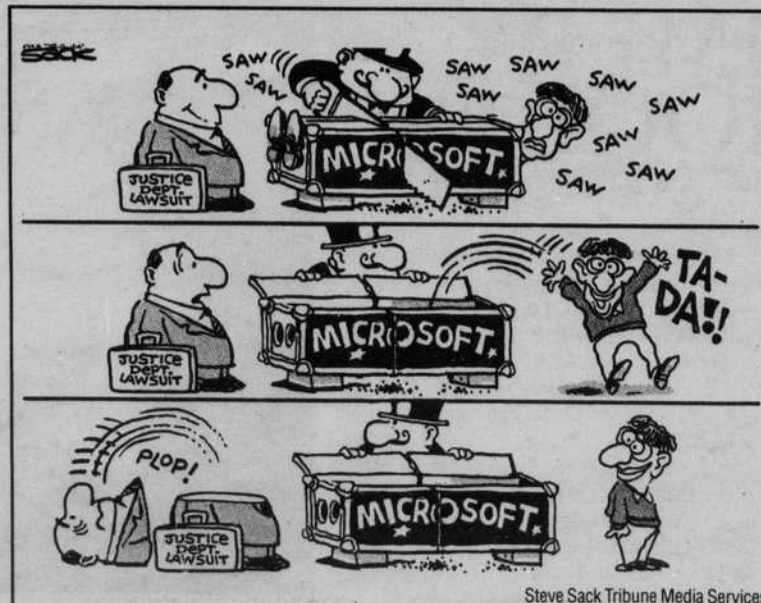
The sports genie isn't out of the academic bottle, it was never in it. The public has always wanted student/athletes. But forced to make a choice, we'll take the latter. The Knight Commission believes change will come with a few simple steps. Like slashing salaries, eliminating corporate money and telling TV where to stick it.

OK, you slash Bobby Bowden's salary. You make Michigan return the \$22 million it's getting from Nike, then see how long non-revenue sports survive. You suspend Lute Olsen because his starting five declared early for the NBA draft. You tell CBS the \$6 billion it pays for the prime-time NCAA Tournament isn't as important as getting Shane Battier in bed by 10 p.m.

The commission has a valid point. Things are getting worse.

So look in the mirror. If you want colleges to be purely educational, start by calling Florida Athletic Director Jeremy Foley. Tell him the school should junk its \$50 million football stadium expansion. It's too symbolic of a system we can no longer live with.

Somehow, I think his phone will remain still. A silent testament to a system we really can't live without.



Steve Sack Tribune Media Services