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COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Universities must address sports issue

At first it was a group of students who called for change. No one really took them seriously, and despite their encampment on the front lawn of Johnson Hall and some token changes, which were quickly repealed, everything stayed the same. Then some of the University's top faculty members, including English Professor James Earl, started to express their concerns at what they saw as a serious threat to academics. Earl went so far as to draft a resolution that has been adopted by most schools of the Pacific-10 Conference.

That received some notice, but the situation stayed mostly the same.

Then the Knight Commission revealed its own findings, which suggested that there was indeed a problem. And now several folks in the community, including a state senator, are also beginning to find fault with this University and its Athletic Department.

Most everyone is a Duck fan here in Eugene. The football games are a thrilling tradition and a spectacle no student should leave here without enjoying. But what people find fault with is that this same spectacle seems to be getting out of hand.

Recently, the University has received criticism from several state broadcasters and Sen. Rick Metzger, D-Welches, a former Portland sports caster, over a proposed policy to limit their footage from Duck football games to 20 seconds, which they say is a violation of their right to free speech.

In and of itself, this could be seen as a somewhat minor issue, and one that likely will be resolved by kickoff Sept. 1 when the Ducks take on the University of Wisconsin. But in the light of all the other complaints against the University administration because of athletics, it just is one more example of this institution's bull-headed arrogance in regard to sports. One big bowl game win and a likely high spot in the national rankings, and this University starts to strut around like it's the biggest dog on the block. There was the three-story billboard in downtown New York, a multi-million dollar stadium expansion, the games scheduled in the middle of the week before finals for television dollars, and now the University is trying to control local broadcasters to protect a contract with ESPN.

When and where will it end? President Dave Frohnmyer has repeatedly said the issue is one of great importance to the University and that he is actively working to address it with other administrators around the country. One of those could be former University of Oregon President Myles Brand, who is now president of Indiana University and has become one of

the more outspoken critics of the rampant commercialization of intercollegiate athletics.

Yet Frohnmyer's words appear to ring hollow when one takes into account how the Athletic Department continues to draw fire from both the academic community and now the community in general. His most recent move was to announce that the University would begin to scale back the budget subsidy to the Athletic Department from the University's general fund. But this move is meaningless if one takes into account that by the time the subsidy is at zero, the Athletic Department will be making far more revenue from its expanded Autzen Stadium.

How can this University continue to act in such a manner when big, bloated and powerful athletic departments are being criticized by professors, independent groups, former administrators and community members?

The answer is tougher to find than the problems. There is no doubt that demand for top-quality intercollegiate athletic programs will not decrease anytime in the future. This is especially true in a state such as Oregon where a lack of professional sports teams puts an even greater emphasis on the top two universities to field competitive athletics. Therefore, universities themselves cannot be solely responsible for this problem, as fans have created a need for huge stadiums and top teams funded by millions.

But the fans were always there when both the University of Oregon and Oregon State University sports teams were the laughingstock of the Pac-10 and unknowns in the nation. We will love our Ducks and Beavers regardless of where they stand in the nation.

When one takes into account that the demand for athletics will remain constant, the argument can be made that universities themselves must be responsible for stopping their shameless self-promotion. The University has earned the national reputation and attention it has longed for; now is the time when it can show some restraint and end the manic pursuit of an even bigger stadium or more millions in broadcast deals and merchandising.

It's common knowledge that this is just part of the business of higher education. But has it really gotten so bad that we can only resign ourselves to this? Can't we expect our University to adhere to a better standard and not sell its academic mission short just for the sake of prestige on an athletic field?

Let's hope so.

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

The dot-coms' demise isn't all bad

Just because dot-coms are going under everywhere one looks doesn't mean my life after college has to as well.

It's taken me almost a year to be able to see the truth in that statement. As a journalist with an interest and background in the online industry, I thought

my degree and work experience as a Web guru would buy me a one-way ticket to success in the real world. I thought I'd be the one who would get the killer dot-com job every twenty-something dreams about — the job where I'd make

enough money that I could retire in my 30s, work (or maybe I should say hardly work) in a huge downtown office and play foosball or pinball during breaks, spend summer nights on the company "booze cruise," or take an expenses-paid trip to Las Vegas for no reason other than to eat dinner at the Stratosphere. But somehow, these dreams have faded in my mind the same way you forget how sunshine feels on your face during the dead of an Oregon winter.



Carol Rink
Wired

I know I'm not going to get a job like that because it no longer exists in today's marketplace. The dark cloud of impending dot-com doom has made its way through the tech industry, handing out more pink slips than raises or signing bonuses. At least I've come to terms with the fact that I'm a couple years too late to indulge in the blitz of job opportunities.

The scary thing, however, is that there is some good to the demise of the dot-com industry. Just think about the possibilities. Maybe someday we'll finally stop hearing about the kids who join Internet startups to make a quick buck. We'll stop reading articles in newspapers and magazines about the hottest CEO who struck it rich with the right investors. We'll realize that working 12-hour days so we can retire quickly isn't as glamorous as it's cracked up to be. We'll appreciate the jobs and lives we have in "suburbia" because we won't be burned out from the long commute in and out of the city. We'll be able to afford apartments and houses that aren't the size of a shoebox, as well as spend time with friends and family, not just the caffeine-addicted co-workers in the cubicles next to us. We might actually own stock in a company that doesn't just give us our paychecks. We won't try to become the

next Bill Gates anymore. If we are unemployed, we'll look for a company that wants to hire and retain experienced employees, not the next whiz kid down the street.

Most importantly, we won't be one of the statistics. We won't be part of the thousands of SUV-driving wannabe yuppies who lose their jobs every day (according to Challenger, Gray and Christmas, a Chicago-based employment consultant that tracks the dot-com sector, the 2001 dot-com layoff toll now numbers almost 65,000). We won't be mentioned on message boards for Web sites that serve as online sources for "bad news" and related information on the failures of the dot-com industry. We won't be the topic of discussion among our friends, who we hope pity us, but instead enjoy their boring 8-5 jobs more than we'll ever know.

So where does this leave me and my journalism degree? Since I can't join the force of dot-comers, I guess I'm stuck with one realization. I might actually have to use what I learned in college to get a job — or at least a job with security, whatever that may be. And I think I'll take that stability over anything, unless it comes in the form of my own private jet ...

Carol Rink is the online editor for the Oregon Daily Emerald.

Gene tests raise complex questions

GUEST COMMENTARY

Knight-Ridder Tribune

To the surprise of those who expect him to oppose reflexively any government restraints on business, President Bush announced that he would support legislative restrictions against using genetic tests to deny people insurance coverage or employment.

In his June 24 radio address to the nation, Bush said "genetic discrimination" is unjustified because "among other reasons ... it involves little more than medical speculation."

Bush's position is both correct and a bit too easy. Congress should, indeed, enact a prohibition on using genetic test results in employment and insurance. But down the

road a blanket prohibition may well prove counterproductive, unenforceable or both.

Bush overstated things when he said gene test results involve "little more than medical speculation." Existing tests can produce results that range from mere possibility to high probability that an individual will contract a particular disease. Over time, both the numbers of tests and their predictive capabilities are sure to grow.

Most of our current limitations on employers' and insurers' rights to discriminate are based on the conviction that an individual should not be disadvantaged for possession of an attribute over which he or she has no control.

Given the state of things at this moment, the situation seems to cry out for legislation. But it is an illusion to suppose that this genie can be kept bottled up indefinitely.

In the future, says Professor Paul R. Wolpe of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Bioethics, genetic testing will be "a fundamental, ubiquitous part of our health care."

But Wolpe says there may be less obvious solutions to some of these problems. An employer's motive for not hiring someone with a genetic susceptibility to a particular disease, for example, generally will stem from a desire to avoid large medical expenses for that employee. But what if we had a different system of health care, in which such expenses fell not on individual employers but on society as a whole? That motive for discrimination would disappear.

By throwing his support behind the effort, President Bush has substantially boosted the prospects for a bill to ban genetic discrimination. But this is an issue with many layers of complexity, and it won't be solved by a single piece of legislation.

