

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

UO makes good step to end credit misuse

Like a freshman undergraduate who recklessly uses that "emergency" credit card for pizza, CDs and other frivolous purchases, some here on campus also need to learn how to use their University credit cards.

Following a state audit that essentially scolded the University for misuse of credit cards, including purchases of airline tickets, food, flowers and even alcohol (unlike the freshmen who cannot buy beer with their parents' credit cards), University Vice President for Administration Dan Williams said there was a need to "evaluate and improve business practices."

Fortunately, the University administration decided to admit that some misuse of credit cards occurred and will address the situation. But rather than an enraged phone call from parents when they receive a credit-card bill, University faculty members will receive a "buddy" card that lists what they can and cannot purchase with their University credit cards.

So now when they get those itchy fingers to do some shopping, faculty members and administrators will ideally take a breather and check to see whether they can actually go ahead and make that purchase. Not only will there be handy aids to guide folks through departmental purchases, but the University is also planning to hold workshops to further elaborate on how University funds can be used.

While this all seems a little ridiculous, it will provide a foundation to give the University's academic departments a better sense of accountability for what they do with their funds. The audit showed that this was necessary, and it is good to see that the University is stepping up and taking responsibility for past mistakes.

Exclusion law an insult

The powers-that-be here in Eugene have been trying for some time to turn the downtown mall into some type of small city shopping utopia. This effort has, for the most part, failed. One frequently sees "For Rent" signs in storefront windows rather than "open for business."

And while it is commendable to see the City Council and others trying to fan the flames of a downtown revival, it is disheartening, to say the least, to see them trying to do it by excluding some residents from even being in the mall. On Monday the council voted to expand

the area under the city exclusion law that allows police officers to remove any person who has been cited for a crime within the exclusion zone. That zone will now grow to the area between Eighth and 10th avenues and Oak and Lincoln streets.

While it is troubling to give the Eugene Police Department more control over individual rights, it is more concerning to witness the council's disregard for basic respect for the citizens it tries to represent. This exclusion law will further alienate those people in the mall who already feel marginalized, and it does not combat the real source of crime but only pushes it to other areas of the city.

Essentially, the city is trying to change the look of the downtown mall by keeping folks it deems undesirable away from the area. But that is just an insult to civil liberty. If people commit serious enough crimes, they should be incarcerated. But if it's just a citation, they should not lose their basic right to be wherever they choose.

Liability ruling makes sense

In a rare move from a state that has taken almost every opportunity to infringe upon an individual's right to own a firearm, the California Supreme Court ruled recently that a firearm manufacturer cannot be held liable for a mentally unbalanced man's shooting rampage in a San Francisco office building.

For some time, trying to make the makers of firearms responsible for the actions of criminals has been a tool for many anti-firearm zealots. This line of logic is both faulty and dangerous. If one follows this reasoning, then the crimes of the individual lose any meaning because a third party can be held accountable for what that criminal did.

The shooting spree in San Francisco was indeed a tragedy, and defending a firearm manufacturer does not defend the actions of the man who left children without parents and husbands and wives without their spouses. Instead of trying to attack the legality of firearms, individuals should instead focus on keeping rifles and handguns out of the hands of criminals or insane people. Suing a firearm manufacturer does not work to achieve that goal.

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

Jabbering and driving don't mix

It should be illegal for one to simultaneously drive a motor vehicle and gab on a cellular telephone. I arrived at this conclusion after I was forced to venture to an Ikea store outside Seattle. After spending several days perusing the home décor aisles of Eugene stores, I came to the conclusion that this city has a complete and utter lack



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of high-quality modular storage solutions for my contemporary lifestyle, forcing me to traverse to greener pastures. This required a road trip along the straight and wide expanse that is Interstate 5, whose panoramic views of pastures, grass-seed farms and

rolling hills are about as interesting as this column. But take heart, for although the drive took four-and-a-half hours, this article probably won't be any longer than 20 inches. For those of you who have never experienced Ikea, it is truly something to behold. An entire warehouse showroom separated off into little mock-living areas filled with furniture, decorations and accessories that no one could possibly know how to pronounce, such as Tromsnes, Poäng and Jonglör. As the afternoon wore on and my

shopping cart filled with more and more fabulous knick-knacks, my thoughts turned to the splendor and beauty of Jack's apartment in the movie "Fight Club," prior to the explosion that either blasted all the furniture into a thousand pieces or fused it all together into one giant, smoldering Swedish lump. Sure, the entire purpose of the apartment scene was to expose the way that material possessions define the life of their owner, but didn't you marvel at the simplicity of the clean lines, modular designs and contemporary style?

Like Ed Norton's character, I don't want to be defined by my Omar storage unit, but that doesn't mean that I won't put my damned clothes in it. It does fit perfectly in my room and complements my existing theme quite well, after all.

For those of you who started reading this article because you are interested in cell-phone usage, I am getting there, so bear with me. On the drive home, the back of my car stuffed with ready-to-assemble furniture and white plastic bags printed with the blue-and-yellow Ikea logo, I was nearly run off the road, not once, but twice, by inconsiderate motorists who decided their telephone conversations were obviously more important than, say, paying attention to the road or the car (mine) in the lane next to them.

The first person who nearly killed me was a man who looked to be in his mid-40s. I tried to justify his rudeness by telling myself things such as: "It's probably his sick child calling from the hospital," or "It's his

wife, asking for a divorce."

The second person who nearly ran me off the road was a teenage girl. I didn't even try to justify her rudeness. She was so immersed in her conversation that she was using her arms to gesture about wildly instead of using them to maintain control of her car.

Now, this is not the first time that such events have nearly cost me my life, but it was the first time that said events had threatened to turn my Ikea products into a smoldering Swedish lump à la "Fight Club" (just kidding). These events merely stick in my mind because they are the most recent.

Now, I don't mean to generalize, but I can say from personal experience that I have difficulty carrying on a telephone conversation and doing anything else. I can accuse many of my friends of this same incompetence. I can also attest to my sister's inability to speak and function, as she nearly burned our house down while gabbing with a friend during her teen years.

It just seems to me that something as potentially dangerous as driving, especially when you factor in the momentum of modern sport utility vehicles, should require the full attention of the driver. Gabbing on a cell phone creates an unnecessary distraction that could result in a fatal accident for the driver, the driver's passengers or any number of innocent bystanders such as myself.

Russell Weller is the design editor for the Oregon Daily Emerald. He is not paid by Ikea, Inc. or any of its subsidiaries. He can be reached at rweller@dailyemerald.com.

Marijuana is safer than legal drugs

GUEST COMMENTARY

Richard Alevizos

The editorial written by Andrew Adams entitled "Glamorization of marijuana poses risks for society" is quite wrong.

First, Mr. Adams would like to set himself up as a knowledgeable source for marijuana information, though he cites no credible sources he draws from, except maybe his own brain. He states that "using marijuana in this fashion makes it no nobler than beer." First, we are supposed to assume beer is noble, when it is not. Second, we are asked to make a comparison between one drug which is legal, and another that is not. And even though it is legal, beer is more harmful to the human body than marijuana, which is not legal. Sometimes life is not logical, and more importantly, sometimes the laws of this country aren't either.

Second, he says, "Any study on drug use in this country will show marijuana is the most pervasive narcotic, and more young people are learning how to use it than any other drug." I would like to know what studies show this. It sounds like Mr. Adams has read plenty of them; can't he cite at least one to back up his shoddy opinion? And the assertion that more young people are learning how to use it than any other drug is not a reliable assertion either. Alcohol is still far more attainable and other drugs such as diet pills, Prozac, Ritalin and a whole host of other over-the-counter narcotics are more frequently used than marijuana. So once again he

has missed the mark.

I do agree with him, however, when he says any drug is dangerous to a person with an addiction problem. Maybe on this point he is speaking from personal knowledge. How many people in this country take Valium, Xanax, Prozac, etc. just to maintain an "even keel?" How many are hopeless alcoholics? How many have died from being an alcoholic?

Nobody is proclaiming marijuana a wonder drug and nobody is underestimating its threats. People have, however, underestimated its benefits, deliberately stopped funding of research and studies to prove the benefits and have made an all-out effort since the 1950s to portray marijuana users as communist freaks capable of killing your baby. These efforts are as ridiculous as Mr. Adams' current attempt at modern damnation.

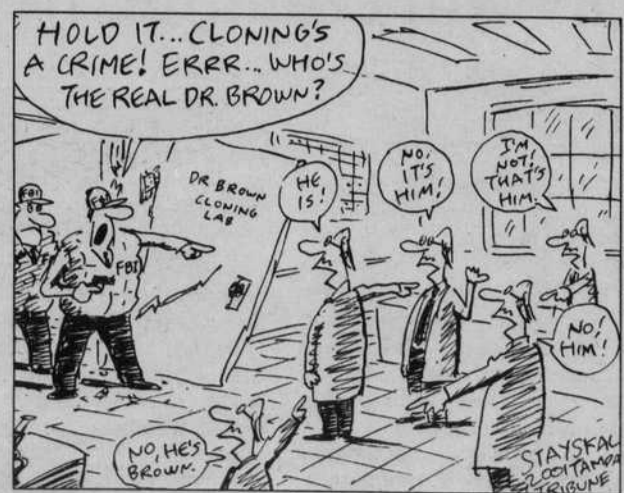
Let me remind you, Mr. Adams, of some statistical facts: First, 300,000 people a year die under the direct care of a physician.

An equal amount die each year from alcohol and tobacco. I still have yet to hear of a man dying from smoking too much marijuana in the more than 5,000 years it has been used. Also, I have yet to hear of a man telling his wife or girlfriend; "Sorry I hit you

honey, I smoked too much pot today." But with alcohol (and sometimes tobacco — the ever-pervasive nic-fit) you hear plenty of lame excuses for bad behavior. I just don't buy your epidemic theory, Mr. Adams, and nobody else should either.

And just for the record, I do not smoke marijuana. I also do not believe people should be smoking it every five minutes. I do believe that if the law is not applied equally to all substances, e.g. alcohol and tobacco being more harmful but legal, and marijuana not, then there is no point to following, nor upholding, those laws. Laws can, have been and are often not ethical and not logical, and when the establishment refuses to change the law, then the people have to do so on their own. It is my sincere hope that one of these days we can actually get a good, qualified leader to do something right for once.

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