

# COMMENTARY

Newsroom: (541) 346-5511  
Room 300, Erb Memorial Union  
P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403  
E-mail: ode@oregon.uoregon.edu  
Online Edition:  
www.dailyemerald.com

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

Thursday, August 16, 2001

## Editorial

### ASUO must interest students in its work

For those in student government, the job is often more trouble than it is worth. Most students usually do not know who their student leaders are, and when asked are quite adamant they do not care.

That is somewhat troubling. It shows that students feel disenfranchised from their government and view it as something distinctly outside their university experience. The reasons behind this are as varied as the diverse campus population. Many are only here for classes squeezed between jobs they need to pay for all those credits. Some are older returning students who already feel alienated from their peers, others are here but would rather be partying, and still more are concerned only with academics. And underlying all of these is the sometime narrow-mindedness of those who actually work in the EMU.

Granted, those who are in the ASUO benefit from their past experience with student groups based in the EMU. But oftentimes when they work there and only relate to other people who are active there, they tend to forget to try to look at the campus from the perspective of folks who do not belong to that same culture. They forget that most students do not know where exactly the Ben Linder Room is in the EMU, what the "Green Tape Notebook" is, how much power the Programs Finance Committee holds and all the other little ins and outs of campus politics.

Therefore, the plans of current ASUO leaders Nilda Brooklyn and Joy Nair to improve the communication between students and their government are commendable. They and the staff need to work hard in coming weeks to lay down the foundation for a student government that does not alienate the rest of the campus because it is too wrapped up in a battle of student egos in the EMU.

Brooklyn and Nair say they will host a fall movie series and provide more resources on the ASUO Web site. Those are good first steps, but one is forced to ask how many students want to spend their free time watching movies in the EMU or even know what the address for the ASUO Web site is? Probably not that many.

The two and their staff need to come up with more engaging methods to make students interested in their government so that everyone on campus can understand the value of what the ASUO is trying to accomplish. For instance, how the ASUO is currently trying to keep student fees under the

control of students and not the administration.

If more students know about the ASUO, they will feel more engaged by campus government and will also be more willing to come to the ASUO with their own concerns. And when that happens, our student government will be more effective in representing the concerns of everyone on campus and not just those inside the EMU.

### Millrace project an impressive use of student talent

What exactly is the Millrace? It is a question asked by many freshmen and even upperclassmen as they ponder the murky and at times unpleasantly pungent creek that wanders through campus.

Some say it was once a waterway that carried cut logs from the Willamette River to mills, and others say it is just a rather foul, oversized storm drain. But despite its general appearance, it does have a place in the hearts of many on campus. Especially for those who live in the University Inn residence hall and have the pleasure of seeing what can be found floating in the waterway. This can be as varied as shopping carts, oversized nutria (river rats) or even the occasional fraternity brother.

To others on campus, however, the Millrace is the focus of a project to improve the waterway and also the water in it. More than a dozen landscape architecture students have lately been hard at work developing a manmade waterway that will help clean the murky Millrace by using natural grasses and a system of dams. This is just another example of how student talent can be used to improve the community, and this time it incidentally helps out a campus fixture.

### Emerald going on short break

We at the Emerald would all enjoy a month-long "working vacation" at ranches in Texas, but our breaks are full of work and little vacationing. This issue is the last regular twice-weekly edition, but we will return Aug. 22 with a special edition focused on the law school. Then the Emerald will not publish again until we come out with the Back to the Books edition on Sept. 17. It is the largest paper of the year and full of news for returning students, new students and anyone interested in the campus and the greater Eugene area.

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

## Betas are the perfect college pets

I guess I could write about some important issue like stem-cell research or global warming, but I won't fool you. I know very little about either of those things. I could also bore you with my view of how the media portray women and why that annoys me, but I don't think I will do that either. Instead, I am going to tell you about my pets.

I have eight (one of them is just visiting) betas or Siamese fighting fish, whatever you want to call them. Four of them moved to

Oregon from Wyoming with me.

You'd be surprised how well these fish can travel. You put them in a small, clear container with a lid, and you are good to go. Set them in your cupholders, and

you'll have someone to talk to for the whole ride. I do think that Ziggy Stardust, the oldest of my fish (over a year), gets carsick. He turns white, which is weird because he's black. Ziggy is the toughest of all of my boys. He has moved long distances with me twice. Both times he had to ride in the car for hours.

I do believe that betas are some of the greatest pets ever. They come in a variety of colors. You

can find one to match anything you want: your paint, your hair color or your bedspread. They can live in small spaces because they have lungs and breathe from the surface of the water, making them a very convenient pet for desks or residence hall rooms.

Right now the visitor to my collection, Pixel, lives in a beer mug. He is on loan from a friend who found he didn't have time to properly take care of him, but this friend assures me that he will take Pixel home before school starts. I hope so, because I have to move again, and it gets a little difficult hauling eight fish around.

Another great thing about betas: You have to try very, very hard to kill them (unless you drop them down the sink drain or they commit suicide). It's okay if your life gets a little hectic and you forget to feed them for a while. They will be fine, unlike any other pet, which keels over if you don't feed it for a few days. They do have to have their water changed every now and then. I would like to do it about every two weeks, but if I don't get to it, they'll still live. Remember, they breathe from the surface of the water, so unlike goldfish, they will be fine in the same water for weeks.

Not that I am recommending that you don't feed your fish or change its water, I'm just saying that if it so happens you get a little busy and forget about them, they will be okay. This simple fact makes them the perfect college pet.

Betas are also quite entertaining. When you own more than one and you place their bowls next to each other, they get angry. They puff up their bodies, spread their fins and flare their gills to intimidate the other fish. This will also work with a mirror. Billy Idol (yet another one of my fish), however, doesn't do that. He just swims around really fast and looks angry. Because of the fact they are so aggressive and territorial, all Betas must be kept in separate bowls because they will kill each other. No one start an underground beta fight circuit please — that's sick.

They are also very affectionate fish. They can recognize different people. All my boys will swim happily toward me, showing off all their wonderful colors and fancy fins, when I go near their bowls. When my mom was here and she fed them, they didn't give her the time of day.

I do have to warn you, though, that betas can be addictive. I have had my habit for many years now, and I keep influencing others to the habit of collecting betas. It is very hard to own just one. It seems every time I go out I end up buying another fish. They are cheap and nice to look at. I am running out of room for all of them though, so for right now I think that eight fishbowls is quite enough.

Someday, though, I will have my own beta farm.

Jessie Swimeley is the photo editor for the Oregon Daily Emerald.



Jessie Swimeley  
Fish Lover

## Letters to the editor

### Oregon Voice won't be the only liberal campus publication

I found your recent article about some Commentator defectors taking over the Oregon Voice incredibly amusing.

First, the decision not to talk to the Commentator about the departed staff members is a small matter that casts a dubious shadow over the accuracy and depth of the Emerald's report.

More importantly, those taking over the Voice may have slightly misread the journalistic lay of the land at this institution. One member was quoted as saying she was surprised there was no left-leaning journalism on campus. That's a laugh. We all know that the Emerald fills the role of leftist town crier better than any small, self-promoting pop-culture-sycophant magazine ever could. And what about the poor Insurgent? Isn't it bad enough they have to live in their own skin, but do they really need to be ignored so rudely by the new OV staff?

In the end, we at the Commentator won't really care too much about the Voice, except to occasionally point out the absurdity of its very existence and continue to shake our heads at the absurdity of the Emerald's skewed news print.

Bret Jacobson  
publisher  
Oregon Commentator

### Harrington billboard offensive

Perhaps I'm a bit late in sounding off about this, but I find the 100-foot billboard of Joey Harrington at Madison Square Garden obnoxious. I live in New York, and I cringe every time I pass it.

The expenditure seems like yet another way in which the University of Oregon Athletic Department places its football program over every other sport on campus (basketball runs a close second). When was the last time that we

spent \$250,000 in private donations on the men's crew, women's volleyball, or another "non-revenue generating" sport? The fact is, we don't.

Not only is the ad tacky, it smacks of inappropriateness. Hey, I know, why don't we send a University of Oregon gift basket to all the Heisman Trophy voters?

Kalpna Krishnamurthy  
New York, NY  
Class of 1997

