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COMMENTARY

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Friday, September 28, 2001

Editorials

Party House paints unrealistic picture

Kudos are in order to the Office of Student Life and Greek Life for attempting to educate incoming freshmen on the dangers of excessive partying, albeit terribly ineffectually. The "Party House 2001" event, which was held Sept. 20 in the Student Recreation Center, was a showcase of the sorts of potential situations that freshmen may encounter in pseudo-typical party situations.

One featured room included an intoxicated woman vomiting into the toilet while her friends held her hair back during a fraternity party. Another had a young man who became so intoxicated on his 21st birthday that he went to the hospital for treatment. Another room featured police doling out MIP fines to underage party-goers.

Although the point of the skits was obvious, the effectiveness of the event was more elusive. Most students in attendance claimed the best part about the "Party House" was finding out just how much those MIP fines were (so they could start saving up?). The situations on display weren't anything unexpected or novel, and the project would have been more informative for freshmen if the actors had given ideas for avoiding MIPs altogether.

Incoming students are not as naive as we assume they are. Part of the lure of coming to universities is the freedom from authority figures so that students can party, be irresponsible and drink so much that their real friends stick around to pull their hair back. Teenagers have been taught from an early age that partying is part of the

college experience. Some accept it while others reject it.

The fact is, the "Party House" probably had a fun, raging party in other parts of the house that viewers didn't get to see. There were probably other people in the house who were also intoxicated, but knew their limit and were having fun. Shielding this other side of the issue is what ultimately makes this anti-drinking campaign, and others like it, futile.

Anti-drug and drinking programs are famously ineffective. Drugs and alcohol are unhealthy for your body, but there is a reason that people do these things: because it can be fun. Messages from anti-drug advocates fail because they don't present both sides of real-life situations. Therefore, people don't believe the messages and are inclined to discover the consequences on their own. When they do so, they will find they have learned more about consequences, irresponsible behavior and self-control from their own mistakes than they could from a skit.

Teaching students about the ill effects of drinking is a fine idea, but is ultimately impractical and a waste of the University's money. If the Office of Student Life and the Greeks want to inform freshmen, they should continue with their ideas of offering information on campus resources for alcoholism, rape and drug abuse. Regardless of the effectiveness of campaigns against alcohol and drug abuse, students need to know that resources exist on campus to help them, and it is truly a service to disseminate that information.

Enjoy freedom to read

University students should count their lucky stars for the freedom to read as they buy their textbooks this week. The American Library Association released a list of the top ten books of 2000 most "challenged" as being appropriate for schools and libraries. Among the reads under scrutiny were staples of University curriculum, including Maya Angelou's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" and John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men." The "Harry Potter" series was also criticized for perceived Satanic content.

Most challenges came from parents who were concerned with offensive language, violence, racism or sexual content within the respective books. Challenges are defined as a formal

complaint filed with a school in an attempt to remove or restrict the material because of raised objections by a person or group.

Sunday marks the end of Banned Books Week, which serves to raise awareness about the overt censorship prevalent in modern America. The bottom line is that banning books is unconstitutional, and as a community we have an obligation to our children to uphold democracy through freedom of speech. Praise is in order for our forward-thinking community that does not censor literature based on its morality or unconventional context.

The complete list of banned books is available on the American Library Association Web site at www.ala.org/bbooks/challeng.html.

Editorial Policy

These editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. The editorial board members are editor in chief Jessica Blanchard, managing editor Michael J. Kleckner, editorial editor Julie Lauderbaugh, assistant editorial editor Jacquelyn Lewis, community representative Gabe Shaughnessy and

community representative Jessica Southwick. Responses can be sent to editor@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Please include contact information. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

Grad students welcome

GUEST COMMENTARY

Sasha Tavenner Kruger

You don't have time to be reading the newspaper, what with all the grading you have to do, the office hours you have to keep, the preparations for your classes and your own homework on top of it all.

Yes, you are a graduate teaching fellow. Or, you are studying, researching and trying to hold down a job or two or three. The application for the latest financial aid package is due. You might not have much time, but you probably have opinions. You might have a few "Tales of Horror" involving teaching or grading or a professor who ought to wear black leather and spikes as fair warning. Perhaps you have time-saving grading tips. Why are you in grad school again? You might have something to say about that, too.

If you have a comment for your comrades with ink-stained fingers, or something to tell the world, this is your place to do it. Come one, come all, and make your views heard. Or read, at least.

This guest column is a brand-new graduate student forum where a new author will have a chance to have their say every other week. The topic is up to the author but ought to have something to do with the graduate school experience or the more generic "student" experience. GTFs are especially encouraged to participate. To loosely paraphrase our contact on the

Emerald staff, content can be pretty wide open, as long as it includes a tie-in to campus life or issues which students would find relevant.

A call to action is one example of appropriate material. If you choose to discuss a project that you are working on, we simply ask that the relevance to students is clear. The column should have a first-person perspective.

Any GTF or unsupported graduate student is welcome to contribute. If there is a flood of response, we will save the columns for future use.

If there is only a trickle of incipient authorship, then you'll hear more from particularly prolific people.

The graduate student community is surprisingly large — more than 3,000 people this term so far (including law students, and registration is still open), approximately 850 of whom are GTFs. (Numbers for last year were about 3,000 and 1,200, respectively.) We are also remarkably provincial; rarely do people cross departmental boundaries or spend much time outside the lab, library or office.

This column is an opportunity for graduate students to share experiences with the entire campus. The details may differ, but we are all in this together. We help make the University run. Our opinions matter. Our experiences, once described to others, help us see that we are not isolated, nor are our troubles and triumphs completely unique.

Public forums can be hard to come by. Let's make this one work.

Do you want to have a say? Contact Sasha Tavenner Kruger (quack@darkwing.uoregon.edu) for information on editorial guidelines and deadlines. Sasha Tavenner Kruger's views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Steve Baggs Emerald