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# COMMENTARY

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Wednesday, November 28, 2001

## Editorial

### ASUO must halt undue energy fee

A recent King County Superior Court ruling that abolished an annual energy fee for University of Washington students is encouraging, and offers hope to University of Oregon students that our own \$30 per student, per term fee could eventually be removed, as well.

There are no lawsuits pending to challenge the energy fee in Oregon at this time. But Jasmin Weaver, the former student body president at UW who filed the lawsuit, has proved that university student executives have real power to combat nonessential fees. And if Washington can do it, so can we.

The ASUO Executive should press the University of Oregon administration for the immediate removal of the energy fee. The Washington ruling stated that UW's energy fee was classified as a tuition increase, which, under Washington law, can only be authorized by the state legislature.

Washington, like Oregon, added the fee this school year to compensate for rising energy costs, which amounted to about \$135 per student annually at UW. Now the university will have to refund the \$1.4 million, with interest, back to students. It may be difficult to accomplish the same feat here because of differing budgetary procedures at the two schools. Nobody knows whether the Washington court's decision will even affect the University of Oregon. But this ruling should serve as an example of what could be, if students were to rally behind the ASUO.

For its part, the ASUO needs to do more to get our energy fee money back into the hands of students. While their efforts to improve conservation around campus are admirable, ASUO President Nilda Brooklyn and Vice President Joy Nair should consider joining with the Oregon Student Association and other schools in the state to help lobby for the end of the fee.

At a time when most students are struggling to try to absorb the increase in their individual heating and electricity bills, they shouldn't have to pick up the University's electricity tab, too. Energy conservation is a major concern on every university campus, but unfair energy fees need to be attacked more aggressively.

And students, often apathetic to student government, should be sure to follow this issue closely — we need to speak up and let the University of Oregon administration know that students won't put up with any more tuition increases disguised as fees.

## Editorial Policy

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## Letters to the editor

### Candidates should focus on Willamette

In light of the impending gubernatorial race, it's important that Oregonians are outspoken about the serious issues facing our Willamette River and insist that their candidates make restoring the Willamette central to their platforms. We've neglected our river for too long, allowing it to become the most toxic river west of the Mississippi. We can no longer afford such dereliction.

We, and our leaders, need to get serious now about cleaning up the Willamette River. A five-and-a-half-mile stretch of the Willamette in the Portland Harbor was declared a Superfund site last December. The river receives the most toxic discharge of any Western body of water; four million pounds of toxins were released into it in 1997 alone. The Department of Environmental Quality found that 50 percent of all fish captured downstream from Portland had skeletal deformities. These are not qualities of a living river, but those of a dying one.

Oregonians need to voice their concerns to Oregon's leaders and demand that they do a better job of keeping the Willamette healthy. The upcoming gubernatorial race is an opportunity to make the Willamette River a first-order concern instead of a first-rate disgrace.

We need to call upon the candidates in this election to increase enforcement of clean water laws and hold polluters accountable for their actions. We need to ensure, through prevention and informed stewardship, that the Willamette doesn't fall into its present sickly state again.

Arek Fristensky  
 sophomore  
 English

### Football fans need to take responsibility

I work in an office in the EMU, so I spend a lot of time there. As a result, I know a lot of the people who work in and around the EMU. Though I am no football fan, I have no particular dislike for it. But I do have an intense personal dislike for inconsiderate people.

Upon arriving at the office one day last week, I found a very large line stretching through the basement. The people in line were trying to get Civil War tickets, I am told. A large pile of garbage, including drink bottles, papers, food wrappers, paper airplanes and other types of detritus surrounded this group.

Do any of these people realize that a campus worker has to clean this up? Does it dawn on any of these people how rough they are making someone's job today? Grow up, children. You may have jobs someday, too.

Randy Newnham  
 senior  
 anthropology, linguistics

### A well-rounded waste of time

If there is one phenomenon that strikes me as truly wasted time, it's the hours I've spent languishing in oversized science lectures. We all know the type: Geared toward non-science students who would sooner amputate their arms than sit through a vague, low-level biology class, but are conscripted into doing so by the requirements of the University. Yes, these requirements are ostensibly designed to make bachelor of arts degree candidates feel more well-rounded. But honestly, how many of us are really enlightened in any way through the 12 credits of mandated science? How many of us retain anything we learn for longer than the final exam? These classes are not only large and impersonal, but also expensive. We pay for the "privilege" of being forced

to partake in something we aren't interested in.

Yes, the production of a well-rounded student should be an important goal of any decent college, but this is not the answer. I find myself graduating with a bitter dislike for science, which has more to do with bad memories of overcrowded lectures and endless wrangling with GTFs over inflexible syllabi than with the subject matter itself. These requirements strangled my "inner scientist" long ago. They should be reconsidered.

Aaron Knott  
 senior  
 political science

### Hard work of Executive goes unnoticed

Two of the most competent students, Nilda Brooklyn and Joy Nair, are at the head of our student government. However, it seems that the countless hours they've spent during the summer and this school year go unrecognized, while a bogus grievance suddenly gains media attention. It would be refreshing if the campus media reported the progress of ASUO's fight against the energy fee, the push for a Eugene housing code, or the multitude of smaller campaigns and projects with the fervor they have given to the unsubstantiated grievance.

Nilda Brooklyn and Joy Nair have initiated almost every office campaign and are quick to intercept anything that could be detrimental to students. Many backdoor fee increases, tuition increases and incidental fee attacks would go unnoticed if it weren't for these two young women. Their inspirational leadership is unmatched, and I feel confident to have them as the ASUO president and vice president.

Dylan Domaille  
 sophomore  
 biochemistry