

COMMENTARY

Thursday, January 24, 2002

Editorial Student committee surprisingly powerful

The Student Health Advisory Committee doesn't have the same prominence as student/faculty boards for the Athletic Department or University administrative issues. But with the resignation of University Health Center Director Dr. Gerald Fleischli, the committee now will play a vital role — finding a new director.

Hiring a new director will display SHAC's important power sharing. Students serving on the board offer their opinions on how the health center is run. They will decide whether the new director should have a stronger background as a doctor or an administrator. SHAC members also helped with hiring the new director of nursing.

Compared to other student/faculty committees, SHAC has considerable decision-making weight. The Athletic Department student task force has yet to make any real progress or affect the decisions administrators make.

SHAC is a group where student voice has influence and a quantifiable impact on the health center's administrative decisions. The health center should be applauded for making SHAC a success, and the way the group is used should serve as a model for more University student/faculty committees.

Editorial Policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@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.

Where there's smoke, there's fines

On Friday night, when you stop by your neighborhood bar for a drink, you might notice something seems a little different. The same three guys are sitting at the bar that sit there every other night, and the jukebox is still playing someone's questionably bad selection. But you breathe in, and it's no longer the traditional smoky haze that leaves you smelling like an ashtray. It's clean air — at least in most Eugene bars.

More than a year ago, amid an excess of media coverage and local debate, the Eugene City Council made the decision to prohibit smoking in public establishments, effective in bars on Jan. 1, 2002. As the deadline loomed closer, many of the bars in town became construction zones as bar owners raced against the clock to finish construction on covered smoking decks or rooms. And as we rang out 2001, we also said goodbye to smoking in bars and hello to a smoke-free 2002.



Rebecca
 Newell
 Columnist

Personally, the smoke-free thing doesn't seem like a hard concept. If you smoke, do it outside or in the designated areas. But several Eugene bars are claiming it's too difficult for their clientele to comprehend or for their staff to enforce. The owner of O'Donnell's Irish Pub, Shon O'Donnell, complained in a Jan. 19 Register-Guard article that he's constantly reminding patrons not to light up. And when they do? He slides them an ashtray and tells them they can't smoke in the bar. Does anyone else see this as a mixed message? Local customers know they can't smoke in restaurants and bars. With the amount of media coverage and political debate that the local controversy has seen in the past year and a half, it would be hard for a recluse to claim ignorance. Yet in several bars — including O'Donnell's and Max's Tavern — bar owners are claiming that they can't seem to stop customers from smoking. Of course, when

you're providing ashtrays at the bar, it tends to send customers a message that doesn't exactly coincide with the new anti-smoking ban.

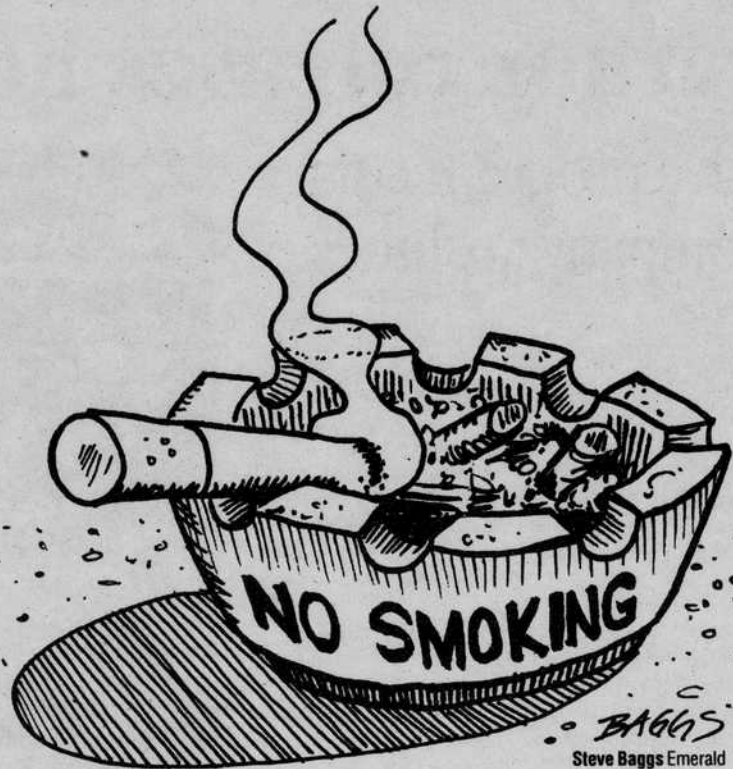
I don't buy the excuse that it's too "tough" for bar owners and workers to "police" their customers smoking habits. It's a bar, and bartenders typically deal with bigger problems than asking a customer to step outside for a smoke — such as cutting off an unruly inebriated patron or breaking up fights. They seem to do a pretty good job of announcing last call at 2 a.m. or pulling drinks at 2:15 a.m. And why? Because no bar wants to lose its liquor license for breaking laws regarding alcohol distribution. No license, no livelihood. If they tied smoking violations to losing a liquor license, bartenders would be armed with fire extinguishers to put out "illegal" cigarettes.

So why is everyone whining about being fined? After all, they are breaking the

law. From the complaints aired in the Register-Guard article, you'd think that the Lane County Health Department is sneaking around in trench coats, peering through back windows in a sneaky effort to catch patrons with cigarettes. In reality, alleged infractions are investigated only when someone calls Lane County's no-smoking complaint line. And it's those filing complaints that are telling a different story than the bar owners who received fines this past week.

The bars that are receiving citations are breaking the law, and they are doing it on purpose. Regardless of how they are fined or who files a complaint, it doesn't change the fact that it is the bar that's breaking the law. The majority of Eugene bars are complying. What makes a handful of resisters so special?

E-mail columnist Rebecca Newell at rebeccanewell@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.



BAGGS
 Steve Baggs Emerald

Letters to the editor

'Payne' in the NRA

In a time when it is more evident than ever that Americans must be responsible for not only their own personal safety, but for the safety of their neighbors, it's disappointing to see the kind of prejudice and stupidity displayed in Pat Payne's column ("Bunglers can boil in their own stew," ODE, 01/08).

I'm a life member of the National Rifle Association. I've been a member for more than 25 years. The author's disrespect of elected NRA President Charleton Heston is an insult to every NRA member. It was meant as an insult, and I take it as a personal and organizational insult. I voted for Mr. Heston and am proud of the job he's doing for our association.

Payne owes an apology, which I imagine he is both too arrogant and cowardly to tender. As for his condemnation of Attorney General John Ashcroft, I can only say it's about time the United States had an attorney general who respects both

the wisdom of the authors of the Constitution and the maturity of the American people.

I assume Payne feels that he's too immature to own any dangerous device and that, by extension, all people are too immature to be trusted with them, or that only he has the native intelligence to decide what devices and technologies his fellow citizens can be trusted to own. Holding either of these beliefs should be enough of a sign of a prejudiced mind to take the credibility from any of Payne's writing.

I realize the column was intended to be humorous. However, cloaking purposely insulting comments about any group of people as humor is rude and transparent. I suggest the Emerald remind Pat Payne of that fact.

Glenn R. Vandergriff
 Centreville, Va.

Bilingualism a necessity, not a nuisance

The editorial on the language requirement being a "nuisance" was extremely short-sighted ("No, Non, Nein; In any tongue, 'no' to lan-

guage requirement," ODE, Jan. 17). Assuming one can now predict exactly what will be of use and value in future life is extremely naive and a bit arrogant.

The world doesn't revolve around the English language. If you ever intend to successfully deal with individuals from various countries and cultures, you'll find any language skills of value. While classrooms aren't the "best" way to learn a language, all students can't go to another country for immersion learning, either. You learn things about language in a class that you'll never learn in daily usage.

I lived in Europe unexpectedly, in a country whose language I had never studied, yet the skills I had from Latin in elementary school (amazingly useful), and French in high school/college, enabled me to learn, read and speak very quickly. I was able to use everything I had learned to live there very successfully.

Don't write off any education (especially not anything as fundamental as language skills) just because your narrow focus doesn't allow you to see the practical applicability

now. Life is rarely interested that you have a plan about what you will do, what your career will be. The world has a tendency to throw curveballs at you. It will amaze you how useful the things you have learned may turn out to be when you least expect it.

Rand Stamm
 parking/transportation manager
 Department of Public Safety

National insecurity

I hope I am not the only one to see the contradiction. President Bush builds an international coalition to fight terrorism, which is a valuable and worthy effort by any measure. With this, Bush draws people together to dismantle the forces that endanger us all.

Bush abandons international treaties on global warming, chemical weapons and land mines, and now he abandons a key treaty to our national security, the Antiballistic Missile Treaty. With this, Bush thumbs his nose at the concerns of others.

According to our National Academy of Sciences, Europe

stands to become another Siberia; a global warming disaster could befall them in a decade. As sea level rises, small island nations may cease to exist. War-torn peoples around the world are maimed and killed by abandoned land mines.

By abandoning the ABM treaty, Bush can race forward with his ill-conceived and useless missile defense program, a technology whose absurdity was horribly demonstrated on Sept. 11.

Will Russia be more willing to negotiate nuclear arms reductions? Not likely. Will China, India, Pakistan and North Korea shun nuclear weapon and missile development? It is not likely. So are we more secure with a missile defense system? Not at all.

Bush's motivation is easy to track. The money trail leads to those who purchased his presidency. Bush pays his political debts with the currency of our collective security. Beyond politics and beyond arrogance, this is immoral.

Eldon Haines
 Eugene