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COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Commentator staff should 'toe the line'

The Oregon Commentator, a self-proclaimed conservative campus periodical, has somewhat successfully represented the underrepresented conservative voice at the University for 19 years. Though the newsmagazine is not aligned with a specific political party, it has long taken pride in its right-wing slant, and included wording in its mission statement alluding to it. But the Supreme Court recently ruled that groups such as the ASUO Programs Finance Committee must maintain "viewpoint neutrality" when allocating student fee money, in order to maintain an open marketplace of ideas on campus. To comply with the ruling, all University groups applying for fees must remove political affiliations from their mission statements, as outlined in the ASUO Green Tape Notebook. During the Jan. 18 Commentator budget hearing, PFC postponed voting on the group's budget because it found the periodical's mission statement advocated political views.

Things have obviously changed since the Commentator first adopted its mission statement, and the time has arrived for the publication's leadership to adapt the statement so the group will be able to continue receiving funding from PFC. This move would allow the publication to promote its conservative philosophy within the pages of its magazine instead of in its mission statement. There is no need to fight this particular battle with PFC when the solution is simple.

To add injury to insult, the Commentator decided to file a grievance with the ASUO Constitution Court against PFC on Jan. 25 after it had appealed PFC's decision. Filing a grievance in an act of defiance is both childish and a waste of ASUO's time. All University groups should have knowledge of PFC's viewpoint neutrality requirement and should know to edit their mission statements to accommodate the committee. Just because the Commentator has had its statement passed by PFC in previous years doesn't mean it isn't time to update it.

All student groups that seek budget approval from PFC must adhere to its rules or they risk losing money. Requiring student groups to remove political content from their mission statements is a condition designed to help the PFC maintain the diversity of ideas on campus. The Commentator is an important conservative voice at the University, and it should work with PFC to ensure the publication's future on campus.

Editorial Policy

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

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Our lives seem to be constantly focused on the future with little thought about the present moment. Almost devotedly, we dance to the incessant tick of the watch. We plead with the clock to move faster at work. We stare at it in class, almost as much as we would an attractive person. It is the first thing to greet us in the morning with its neon-flashing

smile. In fact, we are so close to our beloved clocks that we've given them faces and hands and personified them to the level of speech.

So, what does the clock say?

Despite our deep-seated devotion to these devices, time — in all reality — has no concern for us



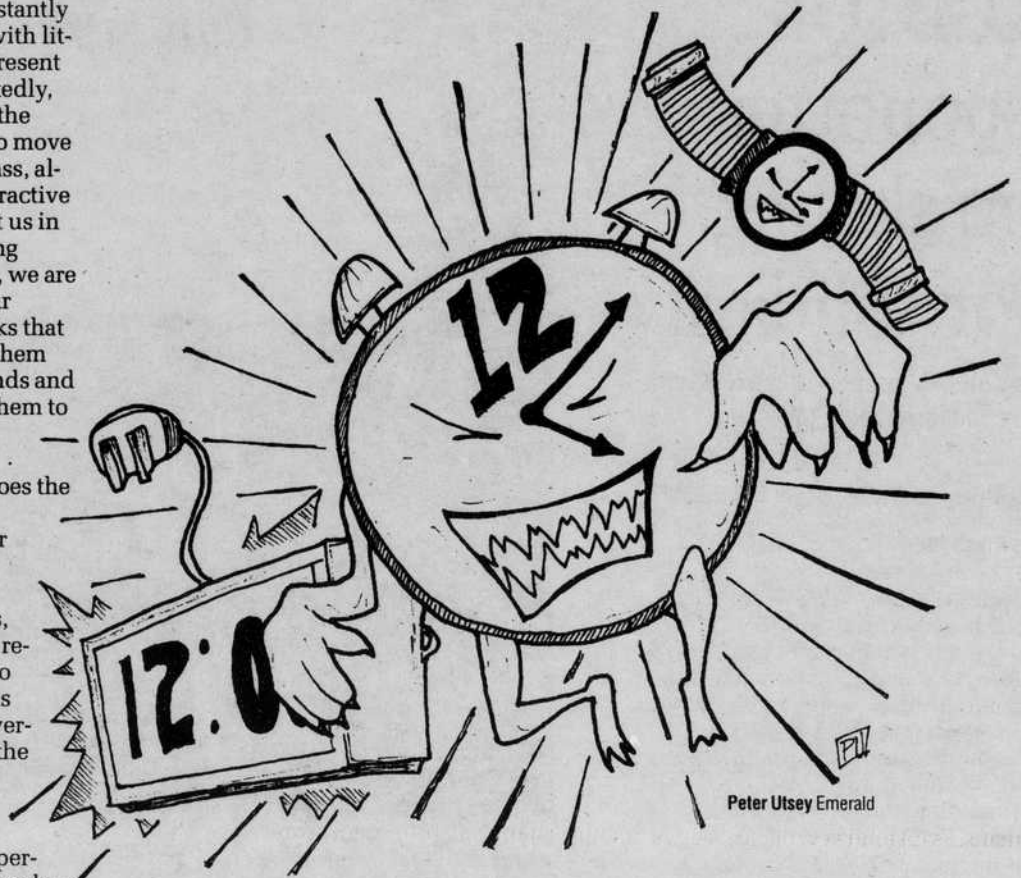
Tara Debenham
Columnist

whatsoever, and I think we are overly concerned about it. I've heard the theory that if one were to travel faster than the speed of light, time would stop. Obviously, this is an unfeasible idea for any person on Earth. Yet, it seems as if people have actually set out to test this theory, considering the way we run from place to place, one moment to the next, without pausing. The problem is the more we try to clutch time in our fists, the more time slips through our fingers. It is definitely one of those strange, paradoxical concepts we humans have set up for ourselves.

I'm not saying we should have a march against day planners, burn all clocks and go back to calculating time by the height of the sun. After all, to a certain extent we have to plan the future. But perhaps too much thought goes into what will happen and not enough into what is happening at the moment.

From the brilliant words of my sixth grade math teacher, "Be where you are." If we try to challenge time, it be-

'Be where you are'



comes the unstoppable enemy. If we try to forget about time, it will sneak behind and eventually pounce on us. What we need to do with time is just start living it. Live in the present. Whether outside in the rain, or in a freezing lecture hall or weighing bananas at Safeway, how do you feel right now? We have five senses, but do we take full advantage of these? How much more could we experience if we gave attention to each? The present moment is the moment closest to eternity. It is without beginning and without end.

Although the verb "to be" is one of the first learned when studying languages, it is a verb few of us have actually mastered. I am certainly no example of self-mastery. You would think I'm tied to some invisible yo-yo, the way I bounce

up and down and end up tied in knots. But I am realizing, through much self-inflicted pain, that I'm only really living if I let myself think about the present and take time to experience it.

So now that you've read my few words of wisdom, I'm sure you all feel inspired to parade around campus singing "Let it Be," by the Beatles, even if I do sound like one of those strange, poetic romantics. But for whatever it's worth; just sit back and take life in. Consider the fine oval quality of the lentils in your soup and the lovely streaks the never-ending rain makes against the window. Consider the moment.

E-mail columnist Tara Debenham at taradebenham@dailymerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

Poll Results:

Every week, the Emerald prints the results of our online poll and the poll question for next week. The poll can be accessed from the main page of our Web site, www.dailymerald.com. We encourage you to send us feedback about the poll questions and results.

Last week's poll question:

Whom would you nominate to be an honorary Olympic torch bearer?

Results: 109 total votes

- University President Dave Frohnmayer — 13.8 percent, or 15 votes
- Jeffrey Grayson — 3.7 percent, or 4 votes
- Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey — 2.8 percent, or 3 votes
- Frog — 29.9 percent, or 32 votes
- PFC Chairwoman Mary Elizabeth Madden — 35.8 percent, or 39 votes
- Don't care — 14.7 percent, or 16 votes

This week's poll question:

Should University computing officials be allowed to monitor heavy bandwidth users?

The choices:

- Yes, heavy bandwidth users decrease access for all users
- Yes, students who use the system illegally should lose their Internet privileges
- No, the University should have a policy to protect students from communication surveillance
- Don't know

Letter to the editor

Seat belt laws restrain freedom

Seat belt laws deny, through prior restraint, a person's right to determine health standards for his or her own body, the ultimate private property. Not using a seat belt is a state-created, victimless crime.

While seat belts might save some people, there is ample proof that people have been injured and killed because of them in some accidents. Some people are alive only because they didn't use seat belts. In those cases, the victims are subject to fines for not dying in the accidents.

The government has no constitutional authority to maim and kill some people just to save others. It has no right to take chances with a person's body. If a doctor attempted to force you to use a device, take a drug or have surgery, he or she would be violating patients' rights — your right to decide what measures you take to protect your own body. They would be subject to prosecution under the law. When politicians force you to use their device, they violate that same right and face no consequences.

Because we feel safer wearing seat belts, studies show we tend to drive more recklessly. Therefore, money we spend for traffic safety should focus on responsibly educated drivers and safer roads and vehicles. Preventing accidents will save lives, alleviate the cost of property damage and, most importantly, give us freedom.

There is nothing wrong with voluntary seat belt use. However, mandatory seat belt laws should be repealed in order to restore liberty in the United States.

William J. Holdorf
Chicago, Ill.