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COMMENTARY

Thursday, January 31, 2002

Editorial

Bush's speech lacks specifics, comes up short

Tuesday night, as President Bush delivered his State of the Union address, the nation listened with more interest and attention than ever before. Although Bush showed that he has become an eloquent speaker and has matured as a leader in the months following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the content of his speech was disappointing.

On the surface, the speech was powerful. Bush used strong words, playing on the emotions of a country still coping with unparalleled grief. But if one reads between the lines, the speech was reminiscent of Ronald Reagan-era rhetoric, charged with buzz words cleverly strung together without any real substance.

Bush's speech was overly concerned with foreign affairs rather than important domestic issues. His references to "terrorist countries," such as Iraq and North Korea, were abstract. The president's condemnation of entire nations he believes are linked to terrorism blurred the line between the definition of war on terrorism and war between the United States and a specific country. The broad focus of the speech was on finding terrorists and bringing them to justice. While this topic is certainly important, the terrorist threat is no longer as immediate as it was a few months or even weeks ago. Bush overlooked many issues currently plaguing our nation, such as the current recession and rising unemployment.

When the president did mention domestic affairs, the details of his plans were vague. He briefly mentioned education, welfare and the environment, citing a need for improvement, and stressed the need for a homeland security bill, but he offered no concrete plan of action for any of these topics. Even when discussing the recession, the president simply said, "My economic security plan can be summed up in one word: Jobs." What president's economic stimulus package isn't going to focus on jobs?

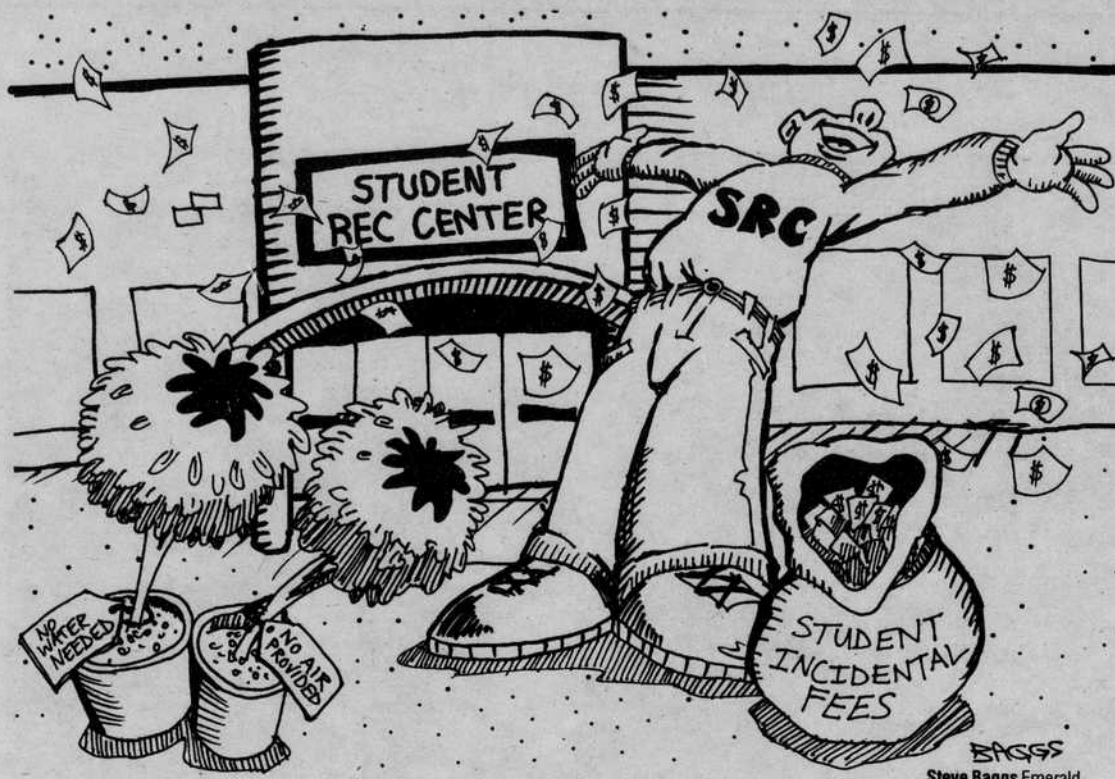
Bush's speech was built on promises and political rhetoric, which is usually expected from a State of the Union address. However, Bush should have concentrated less on the elusive "evils" of terrorism and more on solutions for economic problems at home. Americans were looking for reassurance from our nation's leader that we will emerge from the current economic recession, but Bush simply offered more questions than answers.

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.

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Fake plants reek!

The next time you find yourself in the Student Recreation Center, do me a favor. Take a look around the facility, then close your eyes and take a deep breath. Do you smell that? It's the sweet plastic smell of fake plants permeating the otherwise fetid air.

According to Dennis Munroe, director of physical activity and recreational services, the fake plants were purchased with a \$11,275 one-time transfer of student incidental fees from the overrealized fund. The recreation center bought about 25 plants with the student fees and has them strategically dispersed throughout the center.

Did I mention they're fake?

I can't begin to comprehend the folly in featuring fake plants in a gym, of all places. Ironically, the rec center is where people go to gain the ability to breathe oxygen more easily. Fake plants only cheapen the atmosphere.

Munroe said the plants were implemented in an attempt to beautify the otherwise drab rec center walls. They were also meant to encourage students to not only work out at the gym, but to "hang out" there, too.

Let's be honest. The rec center will never become a college hot spot like Rennie's Landing or Taylor's Bar and Grill because people don't go to the gym to socialize —

they go to get a workout.

With nearly 25 fake plants, the recreation center has enough tackiness to compete with a Springfield stereotype. The rec center recently commissioned an artist to paint colorful murals of physical activity to fill the hallways leading to the locker rooms. What's next, pink flamingos and garden gnomes?

The fake plants wouldn't be so annoying if students had any say in the purchase. It would have been wiser for the rec center to consult with students instead of throwing thousands of dollars into useless objects.

There are a bevy of projects I can see just by walking around the building that would have been better suited for \$11,000 in surplus funds.

Why not help with the installation of bathrooms in the covered tennis center that was built in part to attract high-profile college tennis tournaments? The University certainly shouldn't embarrass itself by

inviting Pacific-10 Conference schools to a tennis tourney and then expect the attendees to wait in line outside of a Honey Bucket during match breaks.

Munroe said the rec center needed to invest in changing the current washers and dryers because the machines were incapable of handling the high volume of dirty towels. They also need custodial machinery and new software to swipe student identification cards.

The Programs Finance Committee approved a rec center budget Jan. 26, allocating \$537,428 for the SRC in 2002-03. The increase in funding was partly to allow the gym to hire someone to do preventative maintenance, i.e. repairing exercise equipment. With all of these expenses, fake plants shouldn't be a priority.

Attempting to beautify the campus is practical only when students will appreciate it. The plants do not add anything to the ambiance of the gym; they are merely a reminder of money badly spent. So the next time you find yourself huffing and puffing on a broken tread mill at the gym, remember you're inhaling the finest oxygen \$11,275 worth of fake plants can generate.

E-mail editorial editor Julie Lauderbaugh at julielauderbaugh@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.



Julie Lauderbaugh
Editorial editor

Letters to the editor

Cutting grants will hurt Oregonians

In the near future, our Legislature will be making a grave decision that will significantly affect the access of higher education to students in Oregon. Our budget deficit falls at \$720 million, and the ominous changes that are to come due to this shortfall should be disturbing to all students.

Among the programs that could be cut during our Legislature's special session are the Student Childcare Block Grant and the Oregon Opportunity Grant. Budget cuts to the OOG alone will mean 1,500 to 3,000 students will be without essential grant funding they require to continue their higher education. The proposed \$2 million cut to the SCBG will mean 433 student families will lose coverage in April, and the funding for this program will not return until 2003.

Imagine sitting in a psychology class with 200 students and one or two University students who benefited from the

SCBG are in your class. In order to gain the education they need to support their families, they now have no other choice but to bring their children to classes with them. How well could you concentrate? How are these parents supposed to continue their education without the SCBG program that helped keep them here?

As extreme as this seems, my point is that it is very important we all promote retraining Oregonians, especially student parents, and support further education in Oregon's higher education system for both the benefit of our community's future and our own futures.

Carmen Stuewe
senior
international studies

Don't crush Moss Street neighborhood

Mike Eyster and the University Housing Department finally admit that they intend to remove the 10 blocks of historic neighborhood at Moss, Columbia and Villard Streets. The Register-Guard and the Emerald are covering a story the housing de-

partment dreads having to talk about.

By admitting that they consider the 112 homes as "temporary" and that they are busy evicting low-income graduate teaching fellows' families, they run the risk of the rest of this town writing itself into their decision. The Moss Street neighborhood exists now as a safe, low income nodal neighborhood due for its 100-year historic review.

Just across Moss Street, there are vast, empty lots they could build on. Sure, build a new day care center, but don't crush families and a great neighborhood in the process.

Zachary Vishanoff
Eugene

CORRECTION

The story "UO graduates earn Fulbright" (ODE, 1/28) should have credited Tom Mills as saying less than 30 universities in the country have as many Fulbright scholars selected in any given year as does the University. The Emerald regrets the error.