

Newsroom: (541) 346-5511  
 Room 300, Erb Memorial Union  
 P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403  
 E-mail: editor@dailymerald.com  
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 www.dailymerald.com

# COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:  
 Jessica Blanchard  
 Managing Editor:  
 Jeremy Lang  
 Editorial Editor:  
 Julie Lauderbaugh  
 Assistant Editorial Editor:  
 Jacquelyn Lewis

Monday, February 11, 2002

## Editorial

### Commentator's mission is clear, but PFC's isn't

The Programs Finance Committee finally approved the Oregon Commentator's mission statement and budget after a two-week break in the action to clear up the issue of "viewpoint neutrality" in programs' mission statements. Commentator staff members came to the rescheduled hearing ready for a fight and equipped with case law. Television station KEZI even had a camera and reporter in the EMU Board Room ready to capture the action. The meeting started, and the PFC members approved the mission statement unanimously in one of the quickest, most anticlimactic and confusing moments student government has seen this year.

PFC seemingly laid down and played dead on the issue, giving no specific reasons on the public record as to what changed since they tabled the budget the first time. PFC chairwoman Mary Elizabeth Madden declined to comment on the passing of the mission statement.

Other PFC members acknowledged that the committee had sought advice from University administrators, and logic seems to hold that they would ask University General Counsel Melinda Grier for legal interpretation of the Southworth case, cited frequently by both sides as to why the Commentator should or shouldn't get its funding.

The Southworth decision stated that the manner in which student fees are allocated should remain viewpoint neutral to avoid discrimination against fee-funded student groups.

Grier said through a spokeswoman that she could not confirm whether or not she counseled PFC because it would violate client confidentiality.

Both PFC and Grier have a responsibility to students that must be upheld. Grier ought to help student leaders make an informed decision. She handles legal issues for the University as a whole, but "University General Counsel" should encompass every part of the University, including student leaders.

PFC needs to state the reasons for its decisions on the public record, especially major decisions that have legal and economic ramifications. The public deserves to know the logic the PFC uses to allocate student fees. When discussions and decisions of this magnitude seemingly happen outside the board room, more questions arise than answers.

## 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.

## Editorial Board Members

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Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, more than \$1 billion have been raised for the victims. With all the donations and volunteering taking place, this has proven to be one of history's most unified

responses to a crisis. It would seem that we're pulling together with a newfound pride. Just look in any clothing store and you'll see: The hottest colors are



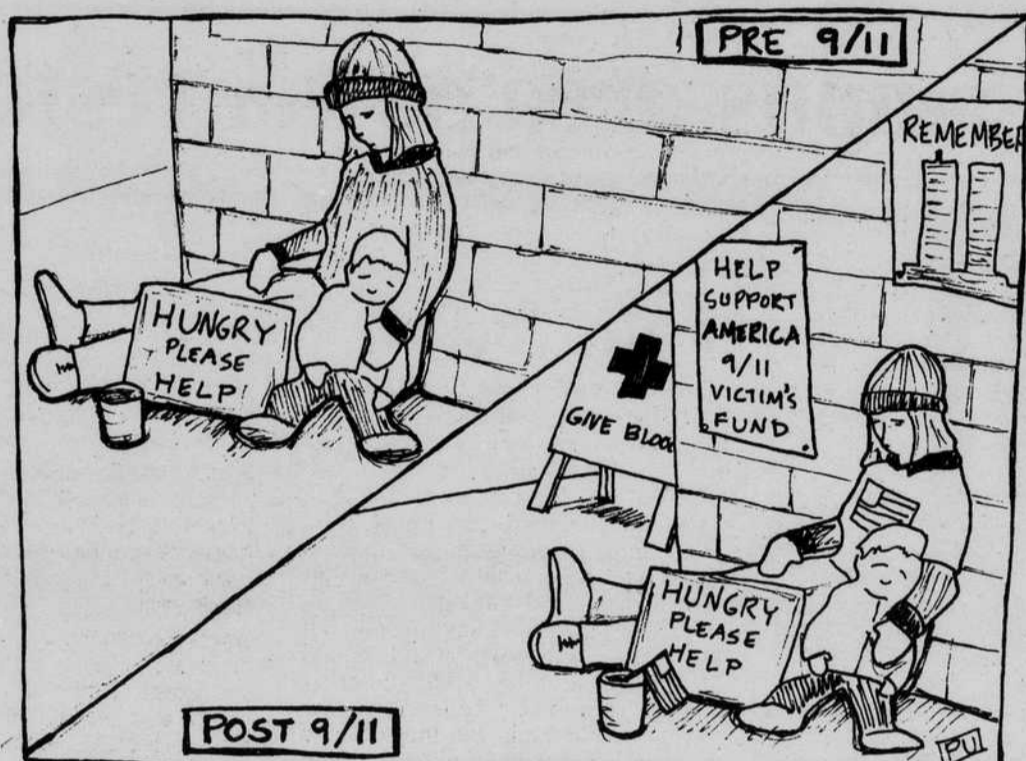
Tara Debenham  
Columnist

red, white and blue, and the favorite T-shirt logo is "I Love New York." Apparently, Americans are taking a fresh look at life, themselves and their country — at least, that's the way an optimistic broadcaster would describe it.

I think it's great that so many people have given their money to the relief effort in New York. But my qualm is why should it take an attack on our country to finally give people the initiative to come together, donate and volunteer? Why just New York, and why just now? There were numerous other charities in need before this happened that are still in need. But unfortunately, much of the attention has been taken away from them.

People like to do things in great herds, especially when it contains some drama. We are drawn to the scene of the action. Blood donations were at an all-time high in September. Now those amounts have dropped even though the need for blood is just as real. Although the attacks on the United States were extremely tragic, and many people were hurt or killed, we need to realize that these people aren't the only ones suffering. Since Sept. 11,

## Keep on giving



donations to Habitat for Humanity have decreased by 40 percent; this is a charity that is usually one of the most successful in the nation. The organization provides homes for people in need. Fewer homes being built means more people are being left without adequate help. The AIDS Walk in Washington, D.C., has also suffered since the attacks, raising less than half the money it usually does.

Some of this setback in charitable donations has to do with the slowing economy. As people cut back their budgets, the first thing to go is usually giving to charity. But it's not only citizens who are cutting back. The government is cutting back as well. Now that \$329 billion has been requested by the Department of Defense, we can all say goodbye to Bush's promised reforms of Social Security and Medicare. Everything from infrastructure to environmental programs will be feeling the squeeze on their budgets. Now, more than ever, is a time to reach

out and help those in need, whether that be through money donations or — for us empty-pocketed college students — a little precious time.

Although I have been ranting on the United States as a whole, I ought to congratulate the people of Eugene. We are probably doing a better job than many other cities, considering St. Vincent De Paul said that donations have actually gone up since Sept. 11. But that doesn't mean we should pat ourselves on the back and call it good. It's easy to give when everyone is giving, but a lot harder after the hubbub is over. Just think how much society could benefit if we always reacted with concern toward the welfare of our citizens, in the U.S. as well as abroad. Donating money didn't just start with Sept. 11, it is an ongoing process — one that should never stop.

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: Should the Oregon Commentator be forced to change its mission statement?

Results: 83 total votes

- Yes, if the Oregon Commentator uses student fees, it should follow ASUO rules — 33.7 percent, or 28 votes
- No, the Oregon Commentator does not promote any political affiliations — 60.2 percent, or 50 votes
- Don't know — 1.2 percent, or 1 vote
- Don't care — 4.8 percent, or 4 votes

This week's poll question: How will you be celebrating Valentine's Day?

The choices:

- Eating chocolate
- Studying
- Hanging out with friends
- Buying Hallmark stock
- Wondering where it all went wrong
- Nothing

## Letters to the editor

### Fans should show more class

As an Oregon alumna (1977), football season ticket holder and former band member, I was extremely embarrassed and disappointed when I logged onto CNN Sports Illustrated's Web site and saw that one of the college basketball articles was about how Oregon fans/students accosted USC coaches, including making personal insults at the head coach, after the USC game. I was similarly disappointed at the Fiesta Bowl, when a large group of fans in the endzone started taunting the Colorado fans near the end of the game.

It is unfortunate that many Oregon fans apparently do not have a fraction of the class that the coaches and members of Oregon sports teams have — and I hope the University will take strong action to try to prevent this type of behavior. Not only is it embarrassing to the school, but it can result in retaliatory behavior against Oregon players and coaches when they are on the road, putting our own teams and coaches in danger.

Kathy Fowler  
Hillsborough, Ore.

### Education should be a priority

Currently, the Oregon Legislature is getting ready to go into Special Session to discuss the future of funding for Oregon students. They, instead of encouraging and supporting students, seem to be cutting more and more of our funding. So much for "our children are our future!" Whatever happened to prioritizing education? How much more can they possibly take away from us before they realize that we have textbooks that date back to the 1900s? Don't they realize how many people depend on government grants?

One of the proposed cuts is to the Childcare Block Grant. If they are successful with these cuts, 1,200 to 3,000 students will lose the resources to go to college. That means 433 student families will be left without education! They want us to make something of ourselves, but then they turn around and take away the only opportunity some of us have for higher education. State legislatures need to prioritize funding — prioritize what's important to society and its future.

Ola Duzha  
freshman  
international studies