

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

COMMENTARY

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

Thursday, February 21, 2002

Editorial

Don't let costs overshadow campus safety

Campus safety has been a recurring issue at the University for years. Nearly all of this year's ASUO Executive candidates have mentioned the need for better campus safety precautions, especially after last spring's series of attacks and the Jan. 30 attempted rape behind the Knight Library. Perennial gripes about campus safety are valid, and the administration should be taking steps to make people feel safer while at school.

One way to create a safe atmosphere would be to brighten up the campus. Although installing lights may not solve all of the safety issues plaguing campus, nighttime visibility is an option that can help solve the bigger problem. More lighting for safe paths at night is an option that the University has seriously been considering for a number of years. It is time to stop talking about installing more lights and start the process. Conservation is an important issue for students and the ASUO, but these efforts should not overshadow campus safety. Lighting may be a small step toward solving the problem, but it will make a big difference to those afraid to walk through campus in the dark — especially since there is a rising number of night classes.

Last spring, the ASUO allocated \$150,000 from the overrealized fund to install lights on campus to increase safety. Last fall, the Campus Planning Committee began taking tours of campus at night to decide where the lights would be best placed. Eugene city lighting codes changed shortly after the committee began planning, while the installation of the lights conflicted with the ASUO's new energy conservation campaign — and the project has been stalled ever since.

The undertaking has gone through a lot of red tape and now the ASUO's "Doin' it in the Dark" campaign members are researching alternative options to both enhance safety and save energy. Campaign members want to weigh lighting efficiency against expenses in order to keep the student energy fee from going back up. Other student groups are contributing to the research, although the project was only handed over to the ASUO's conservation committee last week.

Aside from increased lighting, another safety option would be to have philanthropic student groups work with the Department of Public Safety to increase the number of walking escorts on campus. According to DPS Associate Director Tom Hicks, the department receives a small number of calls per night and DPS can only take students to the campus boundaries. If student groups became involved with the effort, the walking escorts could increase their radius beyond campus, much like Project Saferide vans shuttle students beyond the streets of the University. With time and commitment, a walking program has the potential to be just as popular as Saferide — and it would be a concrete step toward making the campus community safer.

The bottom line is some men and women on campus feel unsafe, and the University needs to be taking precautions to create a secure environment for everyone. By acting quickly to create a walking service, coupled with the overrealized fund dollars to install lights around places like the cemetery area, the EMU to the Knight Library route, and the Fenton Hall courtyard, to name a few, the University can begin make everyone feel a little safer.

This editorial represents the opinions of the Emerald Editorial Board.

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Politics needs some R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Several weeks ago while at work, I had the television tuned to President George W. Bush's State of the Union address, until one of my customers requested we watch "anything but that." I waited for another customer to protest for our country's sake, but the handful of customers at the bar only nodded in quiet agreement or offered no opinion at all.



Rebecca Newell
Columnist

And with the exception of my political philosophy class, I heard little else about the speech. I began to wonder why the latest reality-based television show received more attention and debate than the State of the Union address. Or why the entire country seems to center their week around the "Super Bowl" but not one of the most important political speeches of the year.

Presidents Day, on Monday, seemed like just another school day, with the added annoyance of a closed bank and post office. At what point did honoring the highest office in the country become of so little consequence in our everyday life?

I've pondered over my 22 years in this world as an American citizen, and I've asked myself how the political attitude has changed to the disgruntled inactivity that I see today. Then I realized, I don't remember a time in my short life that it seemed much different.

The stories my parents tell about the fascination with the Kennedy family and the reactions to JFK's assassination seem foreign to me, as we spend much more time addressing the incompetence of our president than any positive traits. Presidents were role models and national heroes. What happened to the



Steve Baggs Emerald

days when citizens knew more about policy issues than the sadly comical story of our president choking on a snack and passing out? We no longer view the leaders of our country as role models, and it's pathetic that our generation can't name three out of the last five vice presidents — but they can list the top hits of the band Matchbox 20.

I don't believe we can blame our criticism and distrust of our nation's leader on Richard Nixon's Watergate debacle or even Whitewater. Perhaps we just know too much. Is it really important whether Clinton inhaled or what Bush Jr. received in a college class eons ago? No, because a little experimenting or one less-than-stellar grade in college is unlikely to dictate our beliefs and actions throughout the rest of our life. If it did, a lot of us would be in trouble.

And I don't believe that today's leaders are really that horrendous compared

to the ones we continue to revere. It's no secret that many of our founding fathers were slave owners, had affairs and drinking problems. A president isn't inhuman. Their job isn't an easy one. And if we're looking for a role model — for a hero — we need to change our perspective. Start reading the paper instead of getting your political information from Saturday Night Live.

It's easy to complain about how the system is falling down around us, and the president is the easiest one to point fingers at, but we need to have a little faith. Be ready to recognize when they do something that will benefit us all. Whether we like them or not, they are the reflection of our country, and it's time we cared a little about how we look in the mirror.

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

Tension spreads about campus safety

GUEST COMMENTARY

Amos Nadler

Following the Emerald's exposure of the attempted assault ("Are students safe from a 'rape culture'?" ODE, Feb. 12), I have felt increasingly uncomfortable on campus, especially when it is dark and particularly near the site of the incident.

As a male, I now feel a sense of tension when I am on campus and am near a single female past sundown. I feel as though there is now a sense of distrust, of uncertainty between the genders. Even though I was not involved and have no intention of inflicting harm on anyone, I perceive a sense of uneasiness that women may be feeling in the presence of males in certain situations.

Perhaps this feeling is similar to that which those who appear of Middle Eastern descent and live in America have had to endure since Sept. 11, by having an awareness of their affiliation with a group that is faulted for causing harm. I may be mistaken on both counts and neither group (women or people of Middle Eastern descent) may feel what I think they do, but whether this perception actually represents oth-

ers' thoughts and feelings, I dislike feeling the tension.

When someone in the community has been attacked and dehumanized, we collectively feel the impact and have a responsibility to ensure that it does not occur again. Women and men alike are born free and with inalienable human rights, which include the right to conduct their lives without the feeling of impending harm. Rape, assault and abuse are not "women's problems," they are community and individual problems.

Though I was not directly involved with the incident that took place near the Knight Library two weeks ago, I have been effected by it. My sense of uneasiness did not appear out of thin air and probably will not disappear that way, either.

My question is: Why are we taking the steps to raise awareness now that an incident occurred in a public

place, yet not a peep is heard following any of the many incidents that take place daily in people's homes and work? Why only when assault takes place on the grounds of a university does it arouse attention? Are the women who suffer from abuse in other times and locations undeserving of collective attention?

On the other hand, maybe levels of awareness will rise as a result and proactive measures will be taken now that attention has been drawn to the issue.

My deepest sympathies go to the woman who suffered the assault directly, as well as to those who feel that their sense of security and freedom has been reduced as a result. I hope that my perceptions are wrong, that women do not actually feel what I perceive they feel, and that their sense of freedom and safety has not been affected adversely.

This incident should serve as a catalyst for community improvement and individual reflections on our respective roles as human beings and what it means to respect one another.

Amos Nadler is a junior math and economics major.