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COMMENTARY

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Editorial

ASUO should grant access to vote count

The ASUO Elections Board made a major philosophical error when it barred reporters from witnessing the Feb. 22 primary election vote count. But the ASUO Constitution Court made an equal blunder when it refused to clarify the incident after a grievance was filed.

Oregon Commentator publisher Bret Jacobson filed the grievance after the primary election, arguing that the elections board is a public board and the counting would constitute an executive session, for which one representative from each medium is allowed under Oregon law. ASUO rules state that student government must follow applicable state laws, but Jacobson failed to cite this rule in his grievance, and the court dismissed the issue on this technicality.

After the vote-counting fiasco in Florida during the 2000 presidential election, the elections board should be trying even harder to ensure free and fair elections. The easiest way to do that is to involve reporters — by nature, the watchdogs of government.

The elections board denied media access to campus representatives reportedly because of personal problems against specific Commentator staffers.

The elections board first granted an Emerald photographer access before the tally began, but when he arrived at the ASUO office, he was turned away with the excuse that there was someone representing the Commentator that the elections board didn't want present, citing that person's "rude" demeanor.

Furthermore, the Emerald and the Commentator were told by representatives of the elections board that media members would only be admitted for the tallying if they could provide applicable state laws or ASUO rules that granted the media access to vote tallies.

The elections board has no business denying media access to the tally because of a personality clash or otherwise, and it should be the responsibility of the elections board to know the laws that pertain to the ASUO elections process. The excuse given is flimsy at best and obstructs the common duty of all media members at these events.

But the court did not clarify if media members are allowed to be present during vote counting. By throwing out the grievance, the court simply complicated matters further and let the questions go unanswered.

Despite the need for clarification from the court, we maintain that media members have a responsibility to students to be a watchdog for ASUO proceedings. No one should have been denied access during the tally, and it is especially unfair to deny everyone access — when they might normally welcome it — because the elections board dislikes representatives from the Commentator.

By circumventing procedure in favor of peace of mind, the ASUO elections board has compromised its integrity in the minds of voters, and the court in turn needs to clarify its position on the issue.

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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Better than a public school

With an \$8 million budget cut looming over the University, our leaders are frantically scrambling to find solutions. An increased enrollment figured to be pushing 20,000 means the University will be forced to do more with less. Generic ideas like cutting programs, putting a freeze on new hires and increasing tuition have all been put on the table, but even with these ideas, the University is in a dubious position of always receiving the short end of the stick. The solution is for the University to go private.



Jeff
 Oliver
 Columnist

There is no question that this school is the beacon of the Oregon University System, but it is at a crossroad. This campus continuously operates with a balanced budget,

has found alternative funding sources to expand facilities and recently completed the most successful fund-raising drive in state history. All this is done while other OUS schools keep finding their way into trouble. So while state dollars could be flowing to the University to make it one of the premier schools on the West Coast, this money is going to make other OUS schools nothing more than average.

Over in La Grande, anybody can attend the glorified community college know as Eastern Oregon University for the same in-state rate. During the budget cuts of the 1980s, there was talk of closing Western Oregon University in Monmouth and using the facilities as a correctional institution. Yet for some reason these schools and others continue to waste resources that could be best used elsewhere in the Oregon University System, like here.

Last year, the OUS set a goal of creating a top-25 engineering program at Oregon State

University, a school that has managed to go \$19 million in the red. When a college can't responsibly spend the money it already has, it doesn't make sense to give it more when the money could be better spent at another institution.

Just ask Mike Eyster, who, as the University's housing director, pays \$1.3 million per year toward a statewide debt pool. University Housing racked up only 17 percent of the pool but pays off 36 percent of it. The difference helped schools like Oregon State University build a new residence hall but prevents the University from doing the same.

As a private school, tuition would increase quite drastically, because it is a simple economic fact that a better product costs more — and a better product is what the University should be striving for. Creating endowments could offset some tuition costs, and the University has already

proven that it can raise money by itself. Increased tuition also means that enrollment would drop off because some students wouldn't be able to attend the new and improved University of Oregon, but this is fine. As the cost of tuition goes up, so should admission standards.

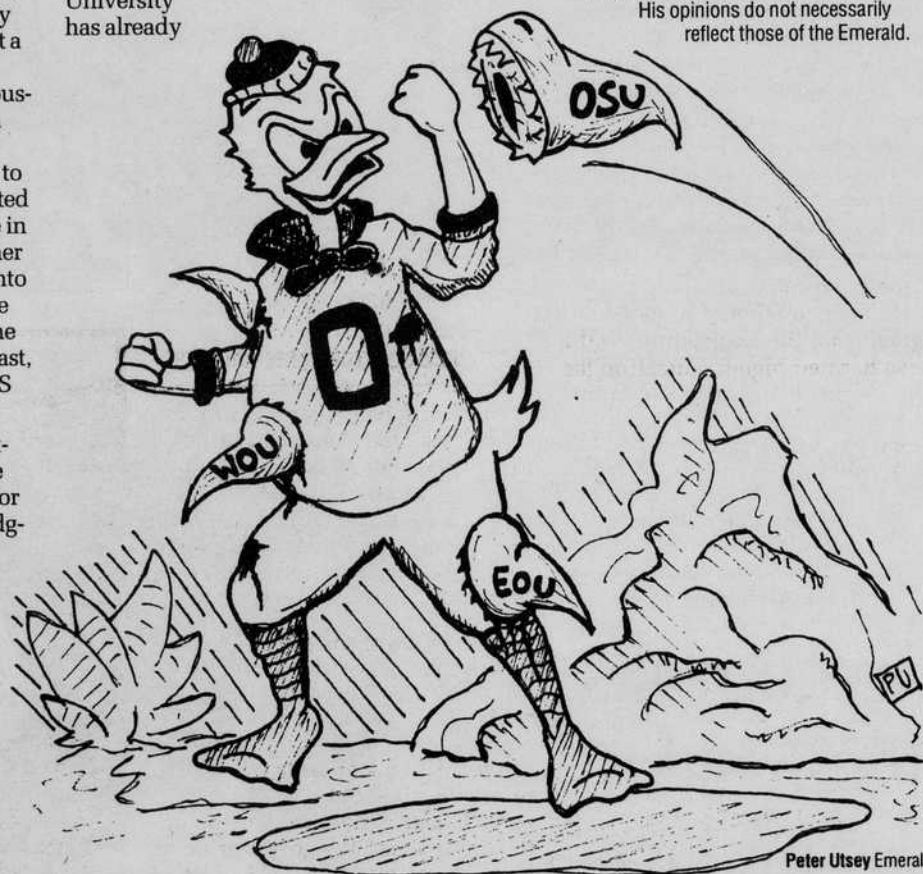
The top universities in the nation are those that have students whose primary purpose is more than just receiving a piece of paper with their name on it at the end. These are also the schools with well-paid professors, modern facilities and hundreds of millions of dollars in research grants. In U.S. News and World Report's most recent rankings of national doctoral universities, two-thirds of the nation's top 50 schools are private.

It is time we make the switch and join them.

E-mail columnist Jeff Oliver

at jeffoliver@dailymerald.com.

His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.



Peter Utsey 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:
 What is your favorite vice?

Results: 112 total votes

- Drinking — 20.5 percent, or 23 votes
- Online porn — 28.6 percent, or 32 votes
- Comfort food — 23.2 percent, or 26 votes
- Caffeine — 19.6 percent, or 22 votes
- Don't know — 1.8 percent, or 2 votes
- Don't care — 6.3 percent, or 7 votes

This week's poll question:

Who or what is this week's talk of the town?

The choices:

- Men's basketball Pacific-10 championship
- Alcohol sales on Sundays
- David Horowitz's anti-reparations speech
- Ralph Nader's environmental law keynote speech
- Don't care
- Don't know

Letters to the editor

No gun is a 'toy'

The recent incident involving a student in possession of a handgun (albeit "only a BB gun") did not leave me unsettled as much as it convinced me of the serious need for weapon education for the young people in our society ("BB gun may trigger judicial hearing," ODE, 02/28).

What did disturb me was Sung-Min Kim's reference to the BB gun as a toy. No gun, regardless of whether it is made of plastic, wood or metal should ever be considered a "toy," if it is capable of firing a projectile. No matter how small that projectile is, the threat of damage to its intended target still exists.

Kim readily admits his mistake, and I don't believe he should suffer extreme disciplinary action as a result of his poor judgment. It is obvious that he has an interest in firearms. College is not the place to pursue this interest, but as a gun enthusiast I would like to suggest that a class in handgun safety would be an appropriate way for Kim to pursue this interest and most impor-

tantly, learn about safety measures and the huge responsibility that each person who handles weapons must accept.

Carolyn Baker
 junior
 anthropology

Elections disrespect nature

Our University has become a desert. Storms have knocked down a number of trees; we cut and remove their trunks. We cut more trees in order to protect University Street (or to benefit the season's growth). No respect is given to the nature found about our campus.

Our University is finding itself in a barren desert and the elections reflect it. We lack desire for abundance of nature and replace it with non-satisfactory exercises of "democratic" technology. But it is not! This is a cry that replacing nature with technology is not a move in the direction we need. Recall the election! DuckWeb and the system are faulty! Place the power in the people.

Chuck Holding
 senior
 political science