

COMMENTARY

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

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

Thursday, March 7, 2002

Editorial

Politics of PFC: Abolition, moratorium or reform?

The ASUO Programs Finance Committee controls more than \$4 million in incidental fees every year and gives the money to student groups during budget hearings held winter term. But the group, led for the past two years by senior political science major and ASUO Student Senator Mary Elizabeth Madden, has made procedural mistakes and held illegal meetings — during the Emerald's hearing process alone — that bring into question the group's competence and its members' ability to handle their tasks responsibly.

It may sound like sour grapes on our part — because the PFC did not give us the full funding we requested — but we believe there are legitimate concerns with both the leadership of the PFC and the process it uses to fund student groups.

One problem with the process is the blatant disregard for adhering to Oregon Public Meetings Law, both in letter and in spirit. The group did not adequately publicize their meetings, a necessity under the law.

The PFC held at least one meeting without having a true quorum and without giving even 24 hours' public notice — a bare minimum for even an emergency meeting of a public board under Oregon law. "Adequate" may be a subjective term, but less than 24 hours is not adequate by any standards.

This illegal meeting occurred as the Emerald was appealing its original budget decision to the PFC and trying to get minutes from previous meetings to strengthen its case. After waiting three hours for someone in the ASUO office to locate those minutes, the Emerald filed an appeal form asking for a deadline extension of one business day after the minutes were found and photocopied. That night, Madden met with fellow PFC member Nadia Hasan at the student senate meeting. The pair talked, and they agreed the extension shouldn't be granted. They then reached another, as-yet-unnamed PFC member by phone who agreed with them. Madden said she believed this constituted a quorum (although it does not under Oregon law). Madden came to the Emerald office to speak to management about the decision they had reached. When she couldn't reach anyone at the office, she called Emerald managing editor Jeremy Lang at home about 10 p.m. to inform him of the decision. No formal notice was given to the Emerald of the PFC's decision, however, so management filed their formal appeal with the PFC the next day.

We have several issues with this process — including the fact that the PFC held an illegal meeting — but the main one is the PFC's back-room dealing. If the PFC made such major decisions about the Emerald's budget

outside of an actual public meeting and without giving public notice, who is to say they didn't do this to other student groups? We still have not been given any explanation or justification for the decision on our budget, and we have been derailed in every attempt to determine why.

Another issue concerns viewpoint-neutrality. PFC members are expected to examine every budget from a viewpoint-neutral stance, without letting their own biases cloud their decisions. But this often does not happen. One clear example of a PFC member's bias was evident during the Emerald's budget hearings. PFC member Joe Streckert did not disclose that he had applied and been turned down for a position at the Emerald in May 2001, but he continued to vote on budgets and voice his opinion that the Emerald's budget should be cut during the paper's appeals. And it was an evidently agitated Streckert who practically bounced back and forth on the balls of his feet as he vehemently (and successfully) lobbied the Student Senate to deny hearing the Emerald's appeal to that body. We heard much from Streckert and Madden about why the Senate should not hear our appeal, but nothing that would indicate why other senators at the meeting also voted not to hear the appeal.

It is both puzzling and frustrating to us that a student government body would have an appeals process in place yet become enraged when a student group attempts to use that process. We understand the PFC's desire to meet their deadline — our entire operation is deadline-based — but the board has a responsibility to ensure the process is fair and complete. Shutting programs out of the appeals process without even allowing them to present their case makes one question what the PFC has to hide.

The University administration has been a staunch supporter of the incidental fee-funding model, but we have yet to see high-level administrators checking in on the process. University President Dave Frohnmayer and representatives from the Oregon University System approve the total PFC budget. But the final numbers do not reflect the flaws in the process that the Emerald — and certainly other groups — have faced and continue to face each year.

On the surface, it sounds like a good idea — students deciding how to disburse student fees — but really, the current model is flawed. There needs to be more members on the PFC, more administrative oversight of the process and more students paying attention to where their money goes. There are simply too many problems when \$4 million is being allocated by four people.



Attack of the state budget monster

There was one unforgettable week during my sixth-grade year without television, Nintendo or computers. During that week, I learned to take part in the formal ceremony of raising and lowering the American flag, created my first tie-dyed shirt and

learned some lessons in ecology and environmentalism. It all happened at Outdoor School, an annual sixth-grade event for most Oregon students.



Rebecca Newell
 Columnist

Outdoor School was an event that the entire sixth grade looked forward to for the entire school year, and it was probably the only time that seventh and eighth-graders were actually jealous of those on the lowest rung of the middle-school food chain. We prepared by constructing name tags from pieces of wood strung on a necklace of colored noodles and learning songs that we would sing for meal times, the flag ceremony and at campfire.

Unfortunately for many Oregon students, the fun of Outdoor School may never be a reality. As the state continues to cut more and more dollars from the education budget, Outdoor School has been placed high on the list of programs to be cut. In the Multnomah School District, this will be the last spring that Portland's 12-year-olds will leave to spend a week in the outdoors with their peers.

And that's more than unfortunate. In this day of limited family interaction, Outdoor School is often the closest thing to camping many kids

will experience. Not all parents have the financial resources to provide their child with the opportunity of attend camp during the summer.

My own memories of Outdoor School are one of the things I remember most clearly from my awkward middle-school years. Not only were all of the educational activities and games such a contrast with what I had experienced in the classroom, but I also got the opportunity to spend time with older kids — college and high school-aged counselors — and as a 12-year-old, I looked up to them with awe and respect.

In fact, I so fondly reminisced over the five days spent at the camp in Eastern Oregon that I decided to sign up as a counselor through the University's Community Internship Program. I wanted to be on the other side of the experience, to utilize the opportunity to be a role-model for a group of young girls.

To take away that opportunity for kids is to take away an experience that is more important than a history lesson or mathematics test. Outdoor School provides a real experience for students to actively engage with each other and adults in a positive setting and in an environment they rarely have the opportunity to be part of.

So much has already been taken away from our educational system in the form of school sports and art and music programs. These programs are an integral part of helping our young people develop into well-rounded adults, and they allow school to be an interactive and, yes, even fun, experience. Losing Outdoor School is a blow kids shouldn't have to experience.

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

Letters to the editor

Negative attitudes spawn negative behavior

The Emerald ran a letter regarding rape culture at the University. The author complained all men are treated as perpetuating this culture solely because we have penises ("A penis is not guilt by association," ODE, Feb. 15). As a male student and a member of the Sexual Wellness Awareness Team, I find this argument ignorant of the real issues of sexual violence on campus. The majority of men don't rape, and it's wrong to classify all men based on the atrocious actions of some.

Rape culture isn't the result of all men raping, it's the result of attitudes like the one in that letter, of non-rapists who don't consider the fight against sexual violence their problem. Instead of confronting the objectification of women, many take part in it (calling someone a "pimp," for example) and think we're immune to criticism because we've never violated anyone. This attitude creates a society where men often see women as sexual objects; consequently, some men don't believe they need consent to get what they want from a woman sexually.

The attitude of some men that "it's not our problem" is why one in six college women will be sexually assaulted. As men who don't rape and don't want to be treated as assault perpetrators, it's our duty to join women in the fight for a society where women are treated as sexual equals.

This isn't to make sex better just for women, but to make it more enjoyable and healthier for both partners.

John Fillmore
 senior
 business administration

University needs to play fair with neighborhoods

Now that the University planning and housing departments have changed their proposed day care center site location to the homes of other students, do you think they will invite the families that were told to leave their homes for the first site back? I don't think so. That might interfere with University Housing Director Mike Eyster's plan to replace fifteen family homes with a new matching vinyl mega-complex. If most of the Moss Street homes sit empty until further notice, there will be far less opposition when the University rolls in to tear them down.

Congrats to University President Dave Frohnmayer for committing to turn over a new leaf on the University human rights record. A great start would be to allow University student families on housing department waiting lists to occupy twenty homes, most that have been empty for years.

Don't block affordable labor of historic preservation students from showing that 100-year-old neighborhood the respect it deserves.

Zachary Vishanoff
 Eugene

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.