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COMMENTARY

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Thursday, March 14, 2002

Editorial University's bike fee plan needs to hit the dusty trail

The University is doing a great job of nickel-and-diming its students with a barrage of proposed new fees. The latest proposal comes courtesy of the Department of Public Safety and would create a nonsensical \$5 bicycle registration for all bikes on campus. The proposed fee contradicts every green-friendly transportation message the University has been pushing for the past few years and is a complete waste of the Department of Public Safety's time.

The threat of constant fees, coupled with rising tuition, makes it appear as though the University is taking measures designed to wring our wallets dry.

Students, faculty and staff who choose to ride bikes to campus shouldn't be punished with fees for their environmentally conscious decision. By raising the cost of riding bicycles on campus, students will be discouraged from cycling to school and may be forced to find alternate modes of transportation.

Patrons of the bus system, walkers and bikers are all doing their part to help keep traffic congestion away from the University and pollution at bay. Using bicycles is a pollution-free alternative to driving and taking the bus. Forcing students to register their bicycles for a fee discourages environmentally sound transportation.

Another pitfall of the proposed fee is that DPS officers will have to take the time to enforce the bicycle registration fees. That regulation will take manpower away from other, more important DPS duties, such as keeping our campus safe and issuing parking tickets. DPS will either have to hire more people to keep tabs on bike registration scofflaws or else force current officers to add the duties to their already busy schedules.

If DPS so desperately needs the revenue from the bike fees, it should take it up with the administration and not try to push the burden onto the backs of the already over-taxed students. Although the bicycle registration fee is small in itself, combined with all of the other proposed increases, it adds up fast.

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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Cats need only nine lives

I'm a cat person. I don't carry pictures of my cats in my wallet, and they don't have their own rooms or anything. But I have been known to chase the occasional stray kitten around the parking lot, crooning, "Heeere kitty, kitty." But, when I heard about "cc", the cat scientists recently cloned, I recoiled.

Sure, "cc" looks like a regular kitten, but the possibilities emerging from pet-cloning technology creep me out in a freaky, "Pet Cemetery" sort of way. They also open a messy can of ethical and moral worms.

It's like a science fiction movie. Companies with cutesy names like PerPETuate and Genetic Savings & Clone have already been processing and storing pet

DNA for years, with hopes of cloning them for their owners someday. Even weirder, according to the U.S. News & World Report, one out of 10 pet owners would clone a pet and "designer pets could tap into a huge market." Companies could use cloning research not only to create genetic copies of beloved pets, but also produce specialty animals, like hypoallergenic cats



Jacquelyn
 Lewis
 Assistant Editorial
 Editor

and even pets that glow (a French lab has already created a fluorescent rabbit).

The Humane Society has argued that it's unwise to consider cloning animals when so many cats and dogs already need homes. What will happen to the millions of stray pets if we start producing made-to-order animals? But those mourning the loss of their favorite pets probably won't take much comfort in that argument. A Texas man had his white steer, Chance, cloned after it died last year. His new steer was appropriately named Second Chance.

Grief after the death of a pet is understandable, but trying to bring that animal back to life in the form of a clone is not. Companies like Genetic Savings & Clone



Steve Baggs Emerald

appear suspiciously as if they're about to make a profit from grief, although they claim that's not their purpose. People who have recently lost a pet need time to grieve over their losses. Then, if they decide they want a new pet, they should adopt one from their local animal shelter or Humane Society.

A common reaction for parents is to replace a child's pet as soon as it dies so the child never knows what happened. That would be much easier if the pet could be cloned. But the death of a pet teaches children important lessons about grieving. Parents would be hard-pressed to clone Grandma.

Donna Schuurman, from Portland's Dougy Center for Grieving Children, told U.S. News & World Report, "One of the dangers of cloning a pet for a child is simply to say, 'Here, let's replace this,' as if you don't grieve for the loss. How does that translate when Dad dies?"

Still, others claim the benefits outweigh the costs. Cloning projects could bring back endangered species and cre-

ate helpful animals like specialized guide dogs. Most companies claim their interests lie more in these areas, rather than pet cloning. But we already have expert breeders and methods for re-vamping populations of endangered species. We don't need to add cloning to the mix, since it is expensive and risky — it costs \$20,000 to clone a single cow, and cloned animals have exhibited health problems such as a short lifespan, obesity and arthritis.

Most importantly, we should remember that we are dealing with living creatures. Cloning research is valuable but it should be confined to creating cells and tissue dedicated to causes such as curing diseases and possibly creating "spare parts," but never, ever to create whole beings.

Wealthy pet-owners will just have to forgo the possibilities of resurrecting "Fifi" or bragging about their glow-in-the-dark poodles. The stakes are just too high.

Email assistant editorial editor Jacquelyn Lewis at jacquelynlewis@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

Letters to the editor.

Old sports story is pathetic

Regarding the article on the back of the March 6 Emerald, "Debate ensues over No. 1 Conference" — why on earth would you print an article written before the college basketball season? I mean seriously, this is just pathetic.

Please start caring about what you print, unless you really think we won't notice.

Raman Sposato
 senior
 journalism

Close the campus to private autos

The University is patting itself on the back for being "green" just because it was rated exemplary in four out of 17 categories in a recent study by the National Wildlife Federation ("University ranks high on national green-friendly study," ODE, March 7). But what really separates the green from the non-green is where the rubber hits the road, and we don't see transportation listed here as one of the categories where the University shines. Not surprising when you look at how many University faculty, staff and students drive to campus. From where we live, campus is a 20-minute walk, a 10-minute bike ride or a half-block walk to a direct bus

line, yet we see our student neighbors driving to class most of the time.

Homeowners in our neighborhood are arguing about where we should build structures to redirect traffic flow instead of looking to the source of the problem. With increasing enrollment, it's time for the University to get serious about developing a plan that gives people incentives to leave their cars at home.

Close the campus to private autos. Restructure parking fees to reward each car-free commute. Provide additional covered bike parking and a fleet of campus bikes and electric vehicles for getting around on campus and running lunchtime errands. For more transportation solutions, check out the University of California at Davis (www.taps.ucdavis.edu/LRP.htm). Their much larger campus has been car-free for more than 20 years. That's what we call green!

Jim and Sharon Blick
 Eugene

Need-based financial aid must have funding

Students are currently facing many problems concerning higher education. Budget cuts, declining services and increased tuition are some of these problems. Employ-

ment is especially difficult to find as well. These factors contribute to the difficulty of financing a higher education.

Unmet need for students of higher education has devastating effects on Oregon students. In response to much-demonstrated financial need in Oregon, the Oregon Opportunity Grant was created. This grant is designed to provide financial assistance for tuition, books and other higher education-related costs.

Currently, the grant covers a minute 11 percent of the total cost of education. Furthermore, it does not reach all eligible students. Nearly 10,000 eligible students are denied funding each year. This is due to the poor funding of this need-based program. With the proposed budget cuts, at least 1,700 and possibly 3,000 students will lose their grants.

Students rely on the grant to attain a higher education. Without it, these students will not have the financial means to afford post-secondary education. It is imperative that funding for programs similar to and including the grant be prioritized. These programs provide the skills necessary for people to successfully enter or return to the workforce.

Mike Martelli
 pre-business administration