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COMMENTARY

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Thursday, April 18, 2002

Editorial

200 nickels, 300 dimes — Students need financial aid to graduate

After four years of college, most students are broke. However, the University finds it necessary to nickel-and-dime its students right up to the very end.

Graduates who wish to participate in the commencement ceremony are forced to pay a \$10 participation fee, which doesn't seem like much until you add it to the additional costs incurred for the graduation ceremony. A \$40 graduation package provided by the University Bookstore includes the cap, gown, tassel, participation fee and diploma cover. Graduates who choose not to participate in commencement are also required to pay a \$2.50 fee, plus the cost of a diploma cover. These costs add up quickly, and undergraduates often end up shelling out more than \$40, which doesn't include extra fees for those who double-major. If the student wishes to purchase optional items, such as graduation announcements, the cost gets even more ridiculous.

It's unfair for the University to charge students a participation fee or ask them to purchase regalia. After all, every student pays a hefty matriculation fee upon entrance into the University — the fee has risen from \$150 for undergraduates entering into the University in 1998 to \$200 for those entering in 2002.

The University states the matriculation fee is intended to be a one-time payment to cover expenses such as orientation services, transcript requests, degree applications and changes in the student's schedule. However, the fee is large enough that part of it should be appropriated for graduation costs. Caps, gowns, diploma covers and the participation fee should all be paid for with money from the original student matriculation charge. After all, paper, ink and printing costs for transcripts are not likely to top \$200 over four years.

Students spend years pouring their time, energy and especially their money into the University. They show their appreciation for receiving a quality education by forking over thousands of dollars. The University can return the appreciation by helping graduates save money — even if it is only \$40.

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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CORRECTION

Steve Partridge, an acting supervisor for University Housing, had no involvement in the diagnosis or repair of heating systems in H.P. Barnhart as reported in Wednesday's story, "Residence halls lose heat during weekend."

The Emerald regrets the error.

Cell users: Politely turn off the ringer

GUEST COMMENTARY

Sara Hoskinson

In the last week, a cellular phone has rung in almost every class I have attended. Rather than chastising students for this intrusion, most of my professors simply cringe their way through the ringing, grateful when they can go on with their instruction.

As cell phone technology continues to develop and cheapen, hard-working, tuition-paying students will continue to be disrupted and disrespected by the inconsiderate few who must, for some reason, be reached via cell phone while in class.

I, for one, would never be caught dead carrying a cell because I'm one of a dying class of people who doesn't want to be reached at all times. But no one needs to be reached in the middle of class, nor should any serious student want to be.

But despite the lack of necessity for such a device, most people will argue that they "need" their phone with them at all times for reasons that vary in legitimacy. Needing to be reached by children is an acceptable justification, whereas needing to be in constant communication with the girl-

friend on whom you recently cheated doesn't really hold weight.

Since there are no laws against cell phone usage, I can not judge the validity of your reasoning. Therefore, I propose the following rules of cellular phone etiquette on campus:

1) Turn your cell phone off when you enter a classroom. At the very least, put it on the vibrate setting. Class is completely disrupted when your phone rings to the tune of "Big Pimpin'" six times before you find it buried in the bottom of your backpack.

2) Do not use your phone in an area where everyone is silent — except for you, who decided to have loud a conversation with your grandmother (you know who you are, Grandma's boy).

3) Do not make your private conversations public. Cell phone users often force others to eavesdrop on their weird conversations.

Furthermore, shifting focus to professors, I would encourage instituting a zero-tolerance policy on cell phone use in your classes, warning that the owners of ringing cell phones will be asked to leave your class for the day. Or perhaps you could start every lecture with a movie theater-style message asking students to turn off all electronic devices. Ridiculous times call for ridiculous measures.

With a technology as new as this one, it is hard to know where appropriateness lies, so I will forgive you cell phone junkies for your lack of respect for me, my peers and our teachers.

However, if we are to keep the lines of normal, face-to-face communication open and genuine, we can't continue to ignore the intrusion of these devices into our daily lives. I urge the University to enforce guidelines similar to mine in order to preserve its quality of education. For the time being, cell users, please perpetuate good will and academic success by using your cell phones politely.

Sara Hoskinson is a sophomore integrated teaching major.

Letters to the editor

Medical marijuana law needs expansion

We already know that Oregonians overwhelmingly support the right of seriously ill people to use marijuana for medical purposes, but a recent poll shows that support has grown since Oregon's medical marijuana initiative passed in 1998.

According to the poll, administered to over 1,000 adults by the Lucas Organization, 76.5 percent of Oregon voters "strongly support" or "somewhat support" the state law allowing "seriously ill patients to use and grow their own medical marijuana with the approval of their physicians." This is a big jump over the 55 percent of voters who supported the initiative in 1998. The poll was conducted in three other states with medical marijuana laws, and also shows increased levels of support since their laws were passed.

The poll results also indicate that Oregon voters would favor expanding the law to allow medical marijuana distribution by nonprofit medical clinics (69.1 percent) or the state government (64.4 percent).

An initiative to enhance the distribution of medical marijuana to the seriously ill could be on the ballot in 2004. Oregonians have already taken the first step by providing legal protection to people suffering from cancer, multiple sclerosis, AIDS, and other terrible illnesses. Making sure sick people can easily obtain their medicine is the next logical step.

Kristin Oechslein
 Marijuana Policy Project
 Washington, D.C.

Seniors have the right to pledge

I was disappointed that the Emerald is opposed to offering graduating seniors the opportunity to take a pledge to make environmentally and socially aware career choices ("University shouldn't hop onto pledge bandwagon," ODE, April 9). I was also confused about the reasoning behind this opposition.

I don't understand how offering seniors information about organizations they may encounter in the post-graduation job market undermines the Uni-

versity's promotion of diverse and varied perspectives. I'm also confused about the Emerald's suggestion that such a pledge, which will be offered by concerned students to graduating seniors before their ceremonies begin, is something that should be addressed "on their own time." After putting so much effort into a college education, if graduation isn't a senior's "own time," I don't know what is!

Graduation should be a time of pride, and about the celebration of accomplishment. If, in acknowledging

the work that has gone into reaching this point, individuals choose to further their commitment to themselves and their communities by taking such a pledge, they have the right to do so.

It seems to me that the elimination of this option, rather than the option itself, would interfere with the role of any University to encourage free thought and to respect individual choices and options.

Lea Goodrich
 junior
 environmental science

Steve Baggs Emerald

