

COMMENTARY

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Point / Counterpoint

Shaken but not stirred: Frats go dry

Decision improves living conditions

GUEST COMMENTARY

Anne
Leavitt

The University's greek chapters have historically been a good residential choice for University students who would like to live in a well-appointed house near campus as a member of a social or fraternal organization. In recent years, the quality and vitality of these living organizations has declined. Membership, resources and image have suffered. An emphasis on alcohol consumption has replaced legacies of community service and leadership in some chapter houses. High-risk behaviors accompanying this "partying" have resulted in increased citations for conduct code and ordinance violations.

The behavior of a few chapters is hurting the reputation of all. Some chapters have closed their doors. Others are struggling to improve their image, repair their facilities and recruit new "live-in" members. Some have elected to become alcohol and illegal-drug free as a way to strengthen and reinvigorate their chapters. These chapters are beginning to focus again on offering opportunities for fraternity, leadership, philanthropy, scholarship and an attractive living environment.

National research indicates that alcohol-free living organizations are cleaner, safer, and provide a better study environment. There seems to be less risk of hazing in chapters where alcohol is not permitted in the facility. There's reduced peer pressure to drink, less property damage and less risk of being the defendant of a lawsuit. Nationally, 20 percent of today's college fraternity men are in alcohol-free housing organizations and more than 30 colleges and universities have asked greek chapters to keep alcohol out of their facilities. These chapters are reporting improved public image and community relations. Alumni and parents seem more willing to support and make fi-

ancial contributions toward the house. Grade point averages for residents of "dry" chapter houses are going up; the chapters and their members report that they are earning more awards and receiving more positive community recognition.

Concerns about the decline in membership and in the quality and quantity of chapter houses have prompted University President Dave Frohnmayer to request that University's greek chapters renew their emphasis on the beliefs upon which they were originally founded. The president's announcement that next fall the University will endorse and support only those chapters whose houses are substance free does not "take alcohol away" from members. The organizations can still hold events with alcohol at different locations, where those who are at least 21 years of age may choose to drink.

The new expectation won't eliminate college-age drinking, nor will it solve the challenges of reducing high-risk behaviors that often accompany illegal or excessive alcohol consumption. The new endorsement standard does "level the playing field" in that it expects all affiliated chapter houses, not just the 14 who have currently elected to be alcohol-free, to maintain living facilities in which alcohol and illegal drugs are not present.

With a large number of students expected at the University next fall and in the future, the University urgently needs additional group living facilities that offer students the opportunity for more than just safe, affordable housing. University's alcohol-free greek chapters will be a welcome addition to the residence halls as alternative group-living organizations suitable for incoming students. As homes that will offer a healthier environment for living, studying and learning, these chapters will hopefully be an ideal location for students to live while pursuing their undergraduate studies in Eugene.

Anne Leavitt is the associate vice president for student affairs and dean of students.

Ban will aggravate alcohol problem

STAFF COMMENTARY

Jacquelyn
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I'm not involved with the greek system, but I realize the effects of University President Dave Frohnmayer's decision to implement alcohol-free housing for fraternities and sororities will extend far beyond greek houses. The ramifications of this misguided decision will negatively affect both students and community members.

The new standards for greek houses, which will go into effect this fall for all fraternities and sororities that receive school services, were approved by Frohnmayer on May 17. Among these is the controversial new rule requiring chapters to have alcohol- and illegal drug-free housing.

While Frohnmayer claims the new regulations are necessary to "fix" the greek system's social policy ills and reduce reckless underage drinking in fraternity houses, they only appear beneficial to the greek system and the University. The alcohol ban will merely serve to gloss over existing problems and even create new ones.

Are supporters of the ban really naive enough to believe this will alleviate underage drinking and related behavior in fraternity houses? Perhaps they lack the foresight to see that larger parties will simply move off campus, triggering a fresh flood of problems, including public intoxication and drunk driving. Instead of keeping alcohol consumption inside the fraternity houses, we introduce it into the community and put more people in danger.

It is common knowledge that the more you tell someone — especially a young person — not to do a certain thing, the more he or she wants to do it. The alcohol ban will likely do the opposite of what it's meant to, especially since Frohnmayer didn't involve students in

his decision at all. With the new ban, fraternity houses will play host to covert back-room parties where the drinking is even more "outrageous" than before. It's doubtful the administration will be able to enforce its new rule, unless it plans on performing extensive daily searches of every greek house.

Besides the possible difficulties of enforcing the alcohol ban and other new regulations, there is also the problem of how to implement the new rules in the first place. The administration simply sent Interfraternity and Panhellenic leaders letters notifying them of the changes and deadlines for written agreements, but so far it hasn't provided any guidelines to put the standards into action. It seems strange that administrators would be so involved in the decision-making process but not in the actual implementation of the regulations.

Aside from all the other issues surrounding the ban, the administration's sudden concern for greek chapters' sobriety seems strange since the "problem" has existed for years. The system has traditionally been host to parties where alcohol is present, so why push for stricter regulations now? Most college students, in the greek system or not, attend the occasional party, and a few students — gasp! — even become intoxicated once in a while. No rule or regulation is going to stop this from happening.

Consuming alcohol is not necessarily dangerous or immoral. The problem does not lie with students drinking alcohol; it's about the few who do it irresponsibly. This is not to say the greek system isn't notorious for catering to these individuals, but perhaps more programs on consuming alcohol responsibly would be a better alternative to administrators slapping down a list of "no-nos."

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Letter to the editor

Citizens can not give up privacy rights

America is under attack, but you can forget about Osama bin Laden this time. The real terrorists are the fascists in the Bush administration. The video that was presented on Thursday in Willamette Hall, entitled "The Truth and Lies of 9-11," gave substantial evidence that demonstrates President George W. Bush knew beforehand of the horrifying attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and did nothing to help prevent them.

The U.S. government has since been engaged in a propaganda campaign to elicit blind support from Americans for the "War on Terrorism," which is much more than dismantling al-Qaida.

Indeed, there is much more to 9-11 than is presented in the mass

media. To begin, a vast amount of oil reserves exist in South Asia surrounding Afghanistan, and the United States has had an interest in obtaining control of these reserves; it is now very convenient that we have a "reason" to attack the area, but where's bin Laden? In addition to this war, a different kind of war is being waged here in America. It is the attack on our civil liberties. Our constitution is being eaten away with the pretext of national security and patriotism.

Here's my message in this letter: We need to start a revolution. This may sound like a stretch, but the revolution I propose is simply an all-out effort to organize people to fight for our rights as citizens and change from being apathetic to being active. Spread the word.

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