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COMMENTARY

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Monday, September 23, 2002

From the editor

Even if you're wrong, we want to hear from you

Welcome (or welcome back) to college life. I'm appearing in this space today to tell you a little bit of what we have planned.

Ordinarily, this strip will be filled with an editorial, written by a member of the Emerald's editorial board after a discussion of whatever issue is at hand. There are certainly plenty of topics to write about as we head into fall 2002:

- The Bush administration is arguing desperately with the rest of the world about going to war with Iraq.
- The state of Oregon can't afford the schools and state services Oregonians say they want.
- Pepsi has cornered the University soda market.
- A group called the National Student-Athletes' Rights Movement is pushing the NCAA for a "Bill of Rights" for student athletes.
- Nevada is on the verge of seriously legalizing (and selling, and taxing) marijuana.
- An election for governor and senator (as well as many interesting and important ballot measures) is nearly upon us.
- Fans are still waiting for the new Harry Potter book.
- College students are deeper in debt to credit card companies than ever before.
- Oregon university presidents are asking the State Board of Higher Education for nearly autonomous powers.
- The city of Eugene is considering a living wage for city employees and contractors.
- There are fewer mainstream gay characters on network television this year than in recent years.
- Public interest advocacy group OSPIRG turns 30 years old in October.

My role in presenting these issues to you will be somewhat reduced than in years past, when I was a columnist and editorial editor. My voice will be one of five on the editorial board, and, with rare exceptions, I won't be writing a regular, opinionated column about the many things that burn my britches.

I will be writing a semi-regular new feature for the editorial page. What I have in mind is sort of an "ombudsman" type of column, where I will take reader concerns, complaints, compliments, commendations, comments and criticism, and respond to them with a sense of what the Emerald was trying to do, where it went wrong (or right), and what we might do better or different in the future. So feel free to send me feedback; I don't have to use your name in order to represent your comments in the column.

The paper has other new things planned, as well: an advice columnist, a new Pulse section on Tuesdays, national and international news, extended online coverage with e-mail updates about breaking news, and in response to public demand, the weather will return to the front page — packaged with teasers about upcoming stories.

So enjoy the paper, and tell us what you think. We may argue with you (especially if you're wrong), but we'll always listen.

Contact the editor in chief at editor@dailymerald.com.



Michael J. Kleckner
 Editor in chief

Goodbye groupthink, hello heated debate

It's time again to open books and minds into a new year at the University and the Oregon Daily Emerald. With that, I would also like to introduce myself as co-editorial editor for 2002-03 school year.

I transferred from Clackamas Community College in Oregon City and will be completing my bachelor's degree in journalism here at the University. While at Clackamas, I held a number of positions on its paper, The Clackamas Print, including sports co-editor, opinion editor and design editor.

I hope to impart some of my knowledge and experience to help, along with my co-editorial editor Pat Payne, in making the Commentary section of the paper a standing force with a positive voice for the entire campus. My vision for the Commentary section is to be the voice of the students, faculty and the campus. I want to sound off about things of importance to our readers.

I will be saying it loud and



Salena De La Cruz
 Editorial editor

proud and making my statements heard throughout this school year. I'm very opinionated and hope you will come to read my columns and even look forward to them.

I don't expect to always say what you want to hear, but I do hope if you have thoughts or questions about my columns or anything in the Commentary section, you let myself or Pat Payne know and we can address them.

I trust you will disagree with me sometimes — and am optimistic in that respect — because some of the most honest writing and debate come from divergences. As always, we will feature the editorial board's editorials, as well as guest columns and letters to the editor (see below for guidelines on submitting your own thoughts).

I look forward to a great year of opinions, heated debate and yes, even some fun while we're at it. Welcome to a new year at the University.

Contact the editorial editor at salenadelacruz@dailymerald.com.

It's Pat Payne again, this time writing as the other half of the duo serving as co-editorial editors for this year. I'd like to share with you my vision of the opinion page for this year.

Civil debate was once an exchange of ideas that often illuminated issues and may have once in a while — horror of horrors! — changed someone's mind. Now, it's all too often an ideological spitting match. The spread of "groupthink" in politics has started to make political actors and activists see themselves as heroes, fighting for the truth, the way, and the light, while all others' beliefs are not merely wrong, but must be extinguished.

Under the pretense of religious fervor, or a misplaced sense of political correctness, both sides have tried to suppress debate that runs counter to their beliefs. The burning of "Harry Potter" books in the New Mexico desert by a Fundamentalist preacher earlier this year, and the thefts of newspapers on college campuses when articles do not hew closely to political ortho-



Pat Payne
 Editorial editor

doxy show that the misguided "culture war" rages on. Anyone who even appears to be on the opposite side is labeled a "racist," a "Satanist," a "sexist" or worse.

That sort of ideological warfare gets us nowhere. It does not further the search for solutions. Rather, it just furthers the polarization and entrenchment of the public, making common ground that much rarer.

We're not going to be playing that game. Our opinion page is a forum for rational discussion and dissent, but not for puerile name calling. In short, it is not yet another battlefield in the "culture war."

Rest assured, however, that if there's someone out there in public life who truly deserves any of those labels so casually tossed about, we'll make no bones about calling them that in as many words. But, as always, you, the readers, are encouraged to give us your point of view.

Contact the editorial editor at patpayne@dailymerald.com.

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries policy

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

Editorial board members

Michael J. Kleckner
 Editor in chief

Salena De La Cruz
 Editorial editor

Jessica Richelderfer
 Managing editor

Pat Payne
 Editorial editor

Student representative
 To be announced

Correction

The Law School Special enrollment article ("Fewer women, more minorities enter law school," ODE, Aug. 21) incorrectly identified the demographic breakdown of the new law school class. It should have said that of those who matriculated, 36 percent were women, 64 percent were men and 54 percent were nonresidents. The Emerald regrets the error.



Steve Baggs Emerald