

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

ASUO should defer to spirit of state law, open election results to media scrutiny

We're using this space to try to convince ASUO and the campus community that it benefits them to allow the press to observe while they determine election results. Allowing media oversight helps prove our government officials aren't hiding anything. In February's ASUO primary election, the press was barred from the room during the printing of results. One might ask, did barring the media make any difference in the outcome of the election? The answer is, how would we know if we weren't there to find out?

We could take into consideration the legalities of being barred from overseeing the results of the elections. For example, we could argue that the Oregon Public Meetings Law and the First Amendment justify our right to watch the process. And the ASUO could, as they did last year, argue that, technically, the law doesn't exactly apply to them in every detail.

Regardless of semantics, the ASUO cloaked the results-gathering process in secrecy. The results could easily have been altered or mistakes made when, to quote the ASUO Elections Board, "the e-board looked over a print-out of results... typed them up and posted them."

But we don't intend to argue legalities. We're not, as of yet, intending to file a grievance with the ASUO Constitution Court. However, new elections are pending, and a new ASUO Executive is in office, with a new elections board. Our job is to inform the community as soon as results are available, and we are now wondering if we will be allowed to oversee the processing of election results.

Elections are the cornerstone of our democracy, and the elections process at all levels has been under increasing scrutiny since the 2000 presidential election. In the March ASUO election, only 10.5 percent of the student body voted.

One way to increase participation is to increase credibility. By letting the press observe the gathering of results, student voters may be less likely to believe the ASUO has something to hide. The ASUO is under the same scrutiny as any other governing body, and with that we'd hope they would want to freely provide information and allow oversight.

Please, ASUO, don't repeat last year's mistake. We take our First Amendment rights seriously, and students have a right to be informed.

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. 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.

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To form a more perfect union

If you haven't already picked up on it, there is a growing divide between the "townies," those who live in Eugene, and the "gownies," the students. Yes, there is a problem with the relationship between those of us who attend class everyday, flitting about the University campus as if this was the only place in Eugene to go, and the general public who — gasp! — actually live and work here. Eugeneans at large are extremely supportive of our student athletes.

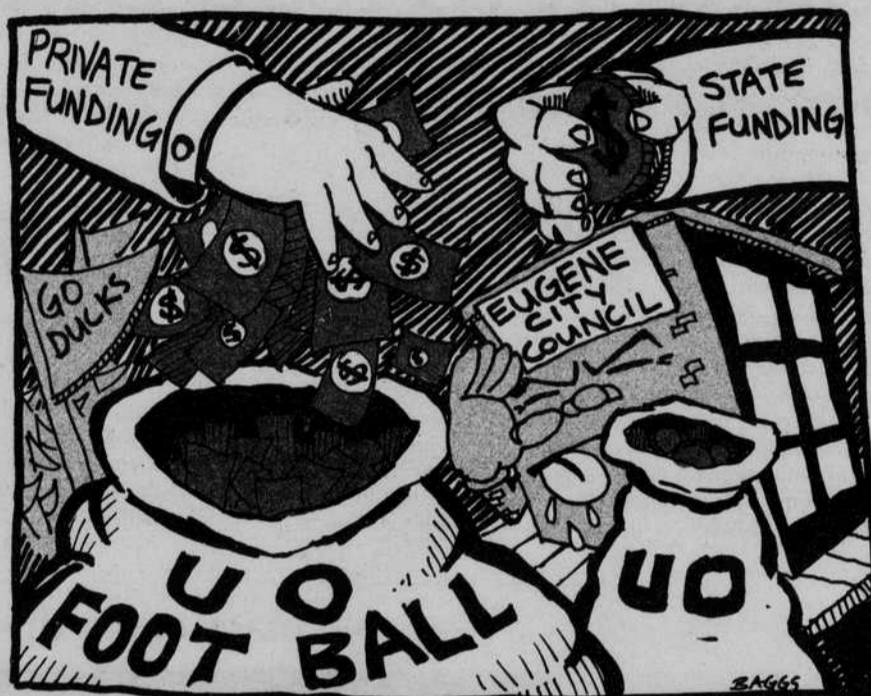
During football games, for example, Duck gear graces the heads, hoods, bumpers, windows, doors, chests and faces of many Eugeneans. They show up in record numbers, walking, biking and driving to Autzen Stadium to cheer on the Ducks. We entertain them. We take away some of the monotony that drowns out their otherwise boring days. Without the University, Eugene would be just another Springfield.

While this show of support (and the influx of money) to our sports programs is wonderful, and certainly well-deserved for our athletes, Eugeneans turn a blind eye when it comes to the rest of us — the students who do not provide an opportunity for tailgaters and drunken afterparties.

While I deny nothing to University athletes, Eugeneans write the rest of us off. OK, I know the fabulous paper I wrote in an English class cannot compare in interest to a 50-yard touchdown pass. However, students do far more for this community than we are given credit for.

As reported by the Emerald on Oct. 8, the EPD "party patrol" handed out more than 120 citations on Friday and Saturday. Of the recipients, 90 percent identified themselves as University students. Wow. Special police officers went out and found college students drinking. What a phenomenon!

To quote the old saying: "Look and ye shall find." Undeniably, parties can become a problem, but party patrols are a ridiculous infringement on college students' ability to function out-



Steve Baggs Emerald



Meghann Farnsworth
 Just think about it

side the campus. Here's a wake up call to everyone: This is a college town!

Does EPD send out extra police patrols to make sure the tailgaters stay under control? Of course not. But let's look further. According to the National Center for Public Policy and Education's 2002 independent report, Oregon's higher education went from a D- in 2000 to a giant F. The report states that only 25 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds are able to go to college, compared with the 41 percent national average.

According to OSPERG's Web site, students graduate with more than \$19,000 in debt, and low-income students work more than 35 hours per week. Making college an affordable endeavor is simply not high on Oregon's list of priorities.

Remember Measure 5? I don't, because I was still in California at the time, but any Oregonian on campus will. Voted into law in November 1990, Measure 5 reduced property taxes over several years. Oregon does not have a sales tax, and anyone with a head on his or her shoulders should realize that the burden of funding state schools will come from somewhere else. And it gets better.

Oregonians passed Measure 47 into

law in November 1996, which further limited property taxes. In a 1996 speech before Measure 47 was passed, President Frohnmayer gave a jarring statistic: "During the past six years, Oregon slashed public support for higher education more than any other state in the Union."

Just think about it. Oregon, the progressive, liberal and open-minded state is worse than, say, Texas, Utah and Nevada. Since our football team is funded largely on private donations (how convenient), they can plaster Joey Harrington's picture all over the country.

Yet, regular students graduate with heavy debt — or do not go to college at all. To simply support an athletic side of the University is denying the majority of students the credit they're due. With the impending 10 percent increase on every academic credit winter term, "townies" and "gownies" need to put their differences aside for the betterment of higher education.

Contact the columnist at meghannfarnsworth@dailyemerald.com. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

But there never seems to be enough space

Guest Commentary

Last year, the ODE stated there were 1,500 parking spaces for students. Being a driver, I wondered where those spaces were because I didn't see them when I was looking for a place to park.

During the winter break of 2001, with the parking map, I went out to count these supposed parking spaces. Including parking not on the map, and spaces at Autzen Stadium, there are 1,664 total student spaces. Keep in mind there will be at least five times this many parking permits sold — not very good odds — and all student parking is shared with faculty and staff. But faculty/staff lots are not accessible to students. Not to worry, it gets worse.

Upon closer inspection, let me point out some details in order to get a better feel for the parking situation. There are more than 100 spaces for disabled, reserved, service vehicle and some 24-minute limitations.

Outside the residence halls on Columbia Street and Moss Street (119 spaces), the spaces are used by the students living in the dorms. They're not supposed to occupy a space on a permanent basis or even a 24-hour period, but rarely have I seen a vacant space.

There are a few student spaces across the Eugene Mill Race. How many students know that? Who do you think uses these? Faculty and staff. At a lot next to Looking Glass (41 spaces), more than 50 percent are reserved.

Another lot is on East 15th Avenue, next to the artificial turf field — don't blink or you'll miss it. There are supposed to be eight student spaces, according to the parking map. There are seven reserved and one disabled. Why is this called student parking?

Parking on University Street competes with events at Mac Court. Events take priority over students. Before an event, meters are covered to prevent parking a day or more before the event and a day or more after an event, leaving the space empty and unused. There are 87 student spaces along Uni-

versity Street and for them, or a big majority of them, to sit there unused when they are desperately needed doesn't make sense.

Considering all this, spaces available to students amount to about 1,092. Public Safety's parking philosophy has been that students only occupy a single space for a short time, then vacate, allowing someone else to use the space. Their philosophy doesn't work when there are five times the permits sold compared to the spaces available.

I live out of town and use a space from four to 12 hours per day. How many of those 1,092 spaces, do you think, will be used by people needing to be on campus all day or a large portion of the day? Maybe in 1988, people weren't interested in a parking structure, but that was 14 years ago. I find it offensive that this school can't bear to live without a new football stadium but is unable to find the funds for something as fundamentally basic as parking.

Susan Johnson is a senior sociology major.