

COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:
 Michael J. Kleckner
 Managing Editor:
 Jessica Richelderfer
 Editorial Editor:
 Pat Payne

Tuesday, January 28, 2003

Editorial

University donors need to focus on true charity, not name recognition

With the state budget in free-fall and further cuts looming, the University has undertaken an ambitious plan to stem the hemorrhaging of money. The campaign aims to raise hundreds of millions of dollars through an aggressive round of passing the hat among wealthy alumni and other donors. "Wish lists" of necessary — or desired — funding are being drawn up by all the academic departments to be presented to prospective donors.

We are fearful that this may reward legislators and taxpayers for refusing to support higher education. If the University is successful at raising private money, the state could cut more and more — and it would become a private university. At the same time, we are heartened that in this time of severe budget meltdown, the University is doing something — anything — to help keep itself running financially.

But we have a request for the potential donors. There is an enduring perception that one of the main reasons donors give to the University is because if they give enough money, they, too, can have a building named after them.

It's sad that someone would donate money to an institution as an ego-booster and mark of recognition rather than from the simple desire to give back and to aid the students attending. Charity, if it's truly charitable, should be anonymous.

We also can't help thinking, in this same vein, about Grayson, er, McKenzie Hall. This increased reliance on private benefactors, while it may be politically necessary, could conceivably open the University up to another scandal like the one weathered last year when it was discovered that some \$850,000 donated by University alum Jeffrey Grayson was actually stolen.

We were heartened to see that students have a voice in the process — on the wish list committee — and that some items on the wish lists include additional student scholarships and endowed chairs to help boost the salary of select professors. But given the ever-increasing cost of attending the University and the ongoing brain drain of some of our best professors to better-paying jobs, these wishes aren't enough.

Rather than constructing another building that accommodates over-enrollment, just so there's a place for a donor to plunk his or her name, why can't the University find real charitable souls who will help fund the education of the students directly?

We'd like to see money raised to directly subsidize the most popular majors — or the least popular, for that matter — by increasing professor salaries, providing additional classified staff support and offsetting the cost of tuition in those programs.

In Portland, when it looked like after-school sports programs were going to be cut for lack of funding, a number of well-heeled donors stepped in and donated enough to keep the programs running. They didn't donate for recognition, and no buildings are named after them. Their monument is in the children who now are playing sports because of them.

Donors to the University's comprehensive campaign should follow the Portland example.

Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailymerald.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.

Long-legged lies

With a war looming on the near horizon, troops being shipped out around the state and the fate of Measure 28 being thrust upon us, I have decided instead to devote this space to a topic that isn't at all serious.

Urban legends have been around longer than the written word. As stupid and illogical as most may seem, they spread like wildfire and are believed as truth by many.

The legends usually start simply enough. And in this day and age, they're spread not only by word of mouth, but by e-mail as well.

For instance, I was sent an e-mail that was an online petition "for women against war." I was given the fascinating story of 25 congresswomen who walked out of the House chamber in disgust during a session, refusing to participate in the vote to give President Bush powers of war. The e-mail claimed that the walk-out was led by Barbara Bell of California. I'm not too sure what online petitions actually have the legal power to do, but I dutifully "signed" my name anyway and forwarded it to my female friends.

Afterwards, finding the story intriguing enough to check out for myself, I looked online and discovered that California is represented in Congress by Sen. Barbara Boxer and Rep. Barbara Lee. Apparently, Barbara Lee got the same e-mail that I did and didn't like it. On her Web site (<http://www.house.gov/lee/Internet.scam.htm>), Lee makes it clear that she never participated in any walk-out, nor was there one — the petition was fiction.

Another favorite that I found clogging my e-mail box was the warning about smelling "discounted perfumes" in mall, grocery store, gas station and bank parking lots (as a side note, I don't see myself actually being interested in buying discounted perfume in a parking lot anyway, but whatever). The tale is that robbers across the country are looking for



Kathryn Petersen
 In other words



Steve Baggs Emerald

single women to rob. Their method is to have you smell the perfume, which is actually ether, and once you're knocked out, steal all of your belongings, including the car you're driving.

This story was also cooked up. There are no cases in America that resemble these crimes, except for one in 1999, and that story is said to be false because no evidence was ever found to verify the story. Also, it would take more than a few whiffs of ether to knock someone out.

People love free stuff. Who wouldn't want free clothes from The Gap, free shoes from Nike, free computers from IBM, free cars from Honda and — my favorite — free money from Bill Gates? Nobody. That's why everyone seems to forward me these dumb messages telling me to forward to however many people so that they, and I, can collect the prize.

As lovely as these offers sound, they're all crap. Bill Gates would never fathom sending you money and Honda will never deliver you a car. The stated reasoning that these e-mails offer behind the companies and individuals

sending you free stuff is that they're keeping track of everyone's e-mails to use for advertising and marketing. One problem — no one has the technology to do that. When in doubt, refer back to the old adage, "there's no such thing as a free lunch."

The list goes on and on. Just to clear a few more things up, the Pop-Rocks/soda combination won't kill you, no school in the country will give you straight A's if your college roommate dies, you cannot "cook to death" from going tanning (but, you can receive fatal burns) and chewing gum does not take seven years to digest when swallowed. For those of you who don't believe me, check it out yourselves — and for that small percentage of the population (mostly just my Mom) that loves to send me "perfume is really ether" type warnings, don't, unless they're to make me laugh. I won't read them for any other reason.

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

OSPIRG will misuse student funds

Guest commentary

Every year, the Programs Finance Committee decides how to distribute millions of dollars in incidental fees. For the past two years, because of the Southworth v. Board of Regents Supreme Court case, the Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group has been required to follow PFC procedure in order to be given fee money at the University.

OSPIRG, according to a story published Jan. 10 in Portland State University's Daily Vanguard, is planning to ask for a \$30,000 increase in its operating budget at University of Oregon. It requested the same increase at PSU, if granted this request will raise the operating budget for OSPIRG at both schools to \$150,000. OSPIRG's intention for the large increase in funding is to open a new office at Oregon State University.

This new office would be an egregious misuse of our fee money. According to the Clark Document, the incidental fee must "provide for the 'cultural and physical development'" of students. By removing \$30,000 from our campus, OSPIRG does not further any goals at the University, but rather diverts mon-

ey that could be better spent here. The usage of student fees to build an office at OSU should incense any fee-paying student. \$30,000 could be well used on campus. To put things in perspective, \$30,000 is twice the annual budget of the Oregon Commentator, \$12,000 more than the Crisis Center, about twice the budget of MEChA, \$6,000 more than the annual allocation for the Debate Team, and about half the budget of Project Saferide. Already the 12th largest, OSPIRG's annual allocation will jump to eighth largest on campus if a \$30,000 is granted.

A \$150,000 allocation, most of which is not spent on this campus, exceeds the individual allocations for Legal Services, Recreation and Intramurals, the Women's Center, and many other prominent campus organizations. These groups, regardless of their function, spend their money here for the benefit of University students. OSPIRG is simply a front organization for the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group. The Student Pirg's money filters up to the State Pirg to fund offices in Portland and Salem as well as lobbying on behalf of the State Pirg's agenda. The Student Pirg's Web site is even linked

off of the State Pirg's (www.ospirg.org).

A quick perusal of OSPIRG's Web site shows that they are using our money to accomplish what amounts to nothing. For instance, they have an "Enron Fact of the Day." The saddest part about the Enron "facts" is that many of them are misleadingly stated, flat-out wrong, or are provided by blatantly anti-corporate sources such as United For a Fair Economy. The other sections of the OSPIRG Web site provide similar results. Thusly, student money is being taken from campus and used to further the political agenda of a particular group. This is reprehensible, morally bankrupt and most certainly illegal.

It is time for OSPIRG to lose its place at the table of student funding, the PFC needs to step up to the plate and finally force OSPIRG to comply with the regulations that all other student groups must follow. If OSPIRG is allowed to subvert the proper procedures again, the case for removing incidental fee control from student hands will be closed.

Timothy Dreier is an economics major and managing editor of the Oregon Commentator.