

COMMENTARY

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Editorials

UO Senate gets kudos for 'yea' vote on privacy

The University's Faculty Senate deserves a hearty round of applause for passing a resolution at last week's meeting that requires the University to tell the community when the federal government comes snooping.

Under the USA PATRIOT Act, federal agents can demand, without a warrant, private information about students, faculty and staff at the University. In the event such information is requested, say from a University librarian, the agents could forbid the librarian from telling anyone he or she had released the information.

The Faculty Senate's motion instructs the University to provide an annual report disclosing what, if any, information has been released to the federal government, and any policies and procedures that have been put in place to control the process.

While we would have liked to see the full University Assembly vote on an anti-war resolution in early March, this step, which also contains political overtones, is by far a more productive action. According to the Bill of Rights Defense Committee, the state of Hawaii and more than 109 cities, towns and counties have passed resolutions opposing the PATRIOT Act. The states of Alaska and New Mexico currently have legislation pending to oppose this degradation of civil liberties. Some communities even have banned local officials from complying with the act.

The Faculty Senate's resolution doesn't go that far, but it gives the community important tools — knowing what the federal government is asking for and how the University is responding. University general counsel Melinda Grier told the senate that the library, the admissions office and others would consult with her office before releasing any information.

It is unclear how this would work in practice. Theoretically, agents could simply demand information from personnel and not allow them to consult with anyone or tell anyone. That shouldn't be allowed to happen; in the hunt for terrorists, the public ought to be informed when their privacy is being breached.

ASUO should show students the money

The ASUO elections ended on April 23, but they're not quite over. A last round of campaign expenditure forms for the candidates were due May 2, but some 10 days later, they still hadn't been completed for all candidates. This may seem like a small detail, but there's no way to know whether it's a big deal or not, unless the forms are turned in and a final accounting is done.

As reported in the Emerald on May 12 ("Alleged campaign errors surface"), some campaign forms for ASUO Executive candidates Christa Shively and Greg Bae, as well as a final form for ASUO President-elect Maddy Melton and Vice President-elect Eddy Morales, were not to be found. This situation needs to be corrected.

Embezzlement, fraud, vote-buying, large contributions — anything, in short, that violates election rules could have occurred and no one would know. Let us be clear: We are not accusing anyone of improprieties. We have no reason to believe that every campaign dollar wasn't spent properly.

But until a final tally is done (and until the Elections Board clears up its embarrassing snafu and begins using standard accounting procedures for donations-in-goods — namely, counting them on both the contribution and expense sides of the ledger), students are kept in the dark about fair play during the elections. Why is this allowed to continue?

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.

MARTYRDOM IS FUN!



Steve Baggs
Emerald

Nontraditional students deserve respect

Guest commentary

I would like to express my extreme disappointment with the staff of the Oregon Daily Emerald. A recent commentary written by DJ Fuller ("Countdown to graduation," ODE, May 6) lists gripe No. 10 as nontraditional students. Fuller's article shows a lack of understanding for nontraditional students.

I am a graduate of the University, and both my wife and I are/were nontraditional students. I did not return to college after spending many years in the workforce. I did not ask "stupid" questions, at least not compared to many of the younger students in my classes.

In fact, many of the students asked me about my experiences and took the stories I told as the life lessons that they are. I spent four years serving my country in the military, including six months in Operation Desert Storm. During my time as a student at the University, I not only maintained a 3.4 GPA as a full-time student, I worked full-time and raised a family with my full-time-student wife.

Many of my co-workers who have known me almost all of my academic life have marveled at the work and time management and devotion to education we have put in to achieve our education while maintaining a healthy family and social life.

I am proud of my accomplishments

and the degree I have earned. I am proud of the fact that I took the time to learn who I was before I leapt into college. I am proud that I worked to earn my degree from the sweat of my own brow; nothing was handed to me.

I am not proud to say that such an insensitive person as Fuller will also have a degree from the same University, as obviously he has learned nothing of tolerance or respect for others, regardless of their backgrounds.

The University failed him, and the Emerald has chosen to showcase his and the University's failure on its pages.

Stephen Venneman is a member of the Class of '02.

We can't fight homophobia until it shows itself

Guest commentary

I'm writing in support of your decision to print Vincent Martorano's May 9 commentary ("Homosexual men should hide their disgusting acts"). I feel that, in a strange way, his letter of ignorance and hatred does a service to those of us in the GLBT community.

As he pointed out, this campus seems to pride itself on being "liberal." Compared to other universities, perhaps it is. The overwhelming consensus among my liberal friends is that, for the most part, homophobia is a distant problem, some unfortunate chapter of our past that has been left behind.

It's easier for some to assume that such attitudes don't exist when they don't receive the direct insults so many of us do. And then along comes proof of the opposite.

Bigots like Trent Lott, Rick Santorum and our very own Vincent Martorano do more good for the GLBT cause than all the mushy moderates in the world. As long as they "tolerantly" stay quiet in classrooms because they lack the spine to stand for up for their beliefs out of fear of criticism, the rest of the world is fooled into believing they don't exist.

Every time some compassionate conservative compares me and my life to incest, kleptomania or the mentally deranged, I have yet one more piece of

evidence for those who would describe our society as progressive. Leaving aside, for the moment, Martorano's very real right to voice his opinion, I say, "Keep the homophobic tripe coming!"

I don't fear Martorano's disapproval of me (of course, he didn't mention that he disliked seeing women "make out" — the usual hypocrisy of homophobic men), or the fact that his hatred might embolden others to raise their voices as well. I welcome it. Opponents are difficult to engage when they sit in the back of the classroom like cowards.

Danielle Haraburda is a second-year law student.

Letter to the editor

War debate challenges the constitution of faculty

I recently read a guest commentary ("UO's war debate must be remembered," ODE, May 14). Although I agree with the sentiment expressed in the title, I disagree with the way in which the author, Henry Crimmel, suggested we remember that debate.

First, it wasn't just a "political" issue that Professor Stahl (joined by hundreds of faculty and thousands of students) was advocating a stand on. It was war, a war of aggression;

the systematic murder of tens of thousands of human beings in their homeland.

Second, even if the University community had voted to take a stand against the war, it would've been done via a democratic process (though a somewhat tainted one, see my fourth point), unlike the process used by the Bush administration to start the war.

Third, although he may not have taken an overt stand at the meeting itself, University President Dave Frohnmayer did take a stand on the issue, and he made his stand very well known in the weeks leading up to the calling of the assembly.

Fourth, many of those members who

did not attend the assembly meeting (thereby depriving it of quorum) were either staff whose livelihood could be affected by the administration's decisions on any number of issues (including budgeting and personal performance records) or faculty who, due to sabbatical or emeritus status, were not even residing in Oregon.

This raises serious questions about the integrity of that meeting and the constitution of the body that was supposed to attend it.

Paul Griffes
senior
geography