

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

DPS shouldn't receive more police powers

In January 2001, the Department of Public Safety announced that it would commission some of its officers for probable cause arrests and stop-and-search powers — essentially, it gave them introductory police authority.

At the time, the Emerald editorial board opposed the commissioning, arguing that the decision was made with little student input and served little legitimate interest.

DPS Director Tom Fitzpatrick told the Emerald at the time that officers needed the right to apprehend and cuff a suspect because it could be dangerous for an unarmed DPS officer to wait around for the Eugene Police Department. Somehow, we were supposed to believe it was safer for an unarmed DPS officer to try to make contact with a suspicious person than to wait for the appropriate authorities.

We bring these arguments up because DPS is making the same case again — only this time it's for expanding its powers.

On Wednesday, the Emerald reported that DPS has been working to give officers the right to issue citations for MIPs, possession of less than an ounce of marijuana and other common violations.

And the argument from DPS in support of such changes is the same: To improve officers' safety.

However, it is unclear how giving more enforcement powers to unarmed non-police officers makes anyone safer.

The city has a legitimate police force, and these are highly trained individuals who have had the appropriate background checks and education to enforce the laws — with violence, if need be.

We are not suggesting that DPS officers are somehow bad individuals, or that they are untrained. We're sure there are good personnel at DPS. It is, however, a simple fact that they are not police officers.

And it is unwise for a college campus to have non-police officers enforcing anything other than campus rules. If physical enforcement is needed, then campus security should contact the appropriate authorities to handle the situation. It is also unwise for a city to delegate its police authority to a non-police force.

DPS has done some of the footwork necessary to implement the expanded powers without formally approaching the City Council or publicly involving the student body. That is also unwise.

A decision of this magnitude needs input, discussion and debate. While the probable cause arrest and the stop-and-search powers seem to have been handled relatively well by DPS over the past two years, more powers mean more opportunities for direct enforcement, which could lead to more involved and more dangerous altercations.

And the more involved DPS officers get in enforcement, the more likely it is they will request guns — for everyone's safety, of course. At that point, why wouldn't the University just have police patrolling campus? At least then the campus officers would have the same training and background as the other city officers.

If that's where the University is headed, every stakeholder in the campus community needs to be involved in the discussion. Such discussion can't happen when officials wait until the end of the year to bring up an issue — which gives us little confidence in the system or the likely outcome.

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.



Peter Utsey Emerald

Are your words kind, helpful, necessary?

Guest commentary

On May 9, a commentary in this paper expressed disgust for male homosexuality ("Homosexual men should hide their disgusting acts"). Violence was not advocated, and the author made it clear his opinions were his own. This is clearly protected free speech. In addition, it encouraged that most precious university event: open dialogue.

But while we're discussing free speech, sexual morality and access to public forums, it's important to understand that there are people for whom this dialogue is not merely an academic exchange of ideas.

For those of us who are gay, every day is another opportunity to decide whether we will respond to societal messages with pride and hope, or with fear and depression. Many people have said that they will not be silenced, that they will be more out and proud than ever.

I, too, share this sentiment, but I am acutely aware that many in my community are not yet ready to make that choice. Very few have the fortune to go through the coming out process without

emotional trauma, and the suicide rate for gay youth is very high.

What role, if any, do legally protected discussions play in this? Consider a more familiar scenario for a moment. African American students and faculty leave this campus (or choose not to come) regularly because of the racial environment. Rarely is actual violence and outright discrimination cited.

Instead, a subtle but consistent social discrimination is the most common complaint. We hear about stupid questions in stores, ignorant comments in classes and hateful looks walking down the street. Gay students face the same daily challenge, despite Eugene's reputation as a "really liberal place, dude."

In addition, it is entirely legal to discriminate in housing, employment and public accommodation in many places. It may not be easy to be a conservative here, but it's not easy to be queer anywhere.

The effect of protected speech can be devastating. Take a moment and imagine that everywhere you went, every day of your life, you were subjected to disgust for being conservative. Your parents weren't conserva-

tive, and you never heard conservative opinions on the radio. Some conservatives formed student groups, but then people broke in and burned posters on the walls and "allies" criticized you for making your conservatism a big deal. You can probably imagine the effect a debate about conservatism in the school paper might have. It might feel very personal.

Working on a doctorate degree has taught me that deconstruction is easy. It's coming up with solutions that are challenging. How do we protect free speech while being sensitive to the impact it can have on people?

Let's go back to the basics. In kindergarten, we are taught to ask ourselves three questions before speaking: Is it kind? Is it necessary? Is it helpful?

If what you are considering saying is not kind, then it should be both necessary and helpful.

Even if you feel it is necessary to campaign against homosexual equality, please try to do so in a responsible, mature manner. Expressing your disgust publicly helps no one, isn't necessary — and it can hurt a great deal.

Shasta Willson is a graduate computer and information science student.

Letter to the editor

Tree-hugging hippies are straight-A students

In Salena De La Cruz's May 28 article, "Bye, not-so-great state," she expressed her distaste regarding five characteristics of the state of Oregon, and specifically, this University. I have to take issue with two of the five, the first of which involves the peace movement, to which she commented: "Enough with the peace rallies already! I get it."

Just a quick note: anyone who uses

the word "enough" in conjunction with the word "peace" does not, in fact, "get it." And if they don't understand why this is the case, then they really don't "get it."

On a more personal note, De La Cruz attacked "tree-hugging hippies" as contributing to the (negative) image of the University. Although I seldom smoke pot and have never been a huge tie-dye fan, I am the biggest "tree-hugging hippie" you'll ever encounter: I'm vegetarian, I have hemp shoes, I occasionally hug trees, I often walk barefoot, I wouldn't kill a bug to save my life, I have dreadlocks, I listen to Bob Marley, I

play hippie songs on my guitar, I meditate daily and I'm committed to improving the life of every being I encounter.

Moreover, I'm a straight-A student. Now I know this may be alarming, but these characteristics are not limited to me; the most friendly, compassionate and intelligent people I've had the pleasure to experience would fall under De La Cruz's category of "tree-hugging hippies."

Now, why exactly should the University of Oregon not reflect these characteristics?

Tim Redmond
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