Oregon Daily Emerald

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COMMENTARY

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Wednesday, June 26, 2003

EDITORIAL

W.U. Task Force ideas don't do much to solve recurring riot problem

In the last editorial, the board unintentionally referred to the campus as "Nike U." We regret the error. We meant to call the school "Riot U."

Going back to a time that only faculty members will likely remember — 1997 and 1998 — riots occurred over the Halloween weekends. Rioter took to West University area streets twice in 2002. Just this month, another small-scale, riot-like incident transpired.

So, spanning back to last June, that means the area is averaging a riot once every four months. We'd safely bet such a statistic is the highest in the nation.

After the September 2002 riot, in which more than 1,000 student-aged people participated, the City of Eugene called out and called upon the University to control its students.

"This activity happened because of the University of Oregon," Interim City Manager Jim Carlson said days after the riot. "We need to work with them to make sure they help us in preventing this in the future."

Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey said he intended to press the University for a partnership and, perhaps more importantly, the finances to help repair the tattered neighborhood.

"At this point, we haven't received any funds," Torrey said this past September. "We haven't received any commitment of funds. But I can assure you, (the University is) going to be working very strenuously to see how we can spread the cost of these activities."

A partnership did in fact form, something called the West University Task Force. Ironically, the group presented its recommendations to the Eugene City Council just days after the latest riot. These suggestions were aimed not just at alleviating rioting, but at improving the community.

While students should certainly welcome any forum that speaks to cleaning up the West University Neighborhood, the Task Force was off-base.

Yes, more lighting would enhance the neighborhood, maybe even make it a safer place on any given night. More lighting won't result in fewer riots.

Yes, changing the student conduct code to include repercussions for serious misdeeds off-campus could result in a greater student awareness. But ultimately it would lead to hypocrisy.

Would the severity of the crime be determined by the University? Would misdemeanor crimes be considered one way, felonies another? Would these students be kicked out of school? Would the University accept convicted felons into the school, but expel those whom commit crimes as students?

Clearly, changing conduct codes could open a floodgate of problems to decent students who make small mistakes, over which the University should have no authority. And, we point out, it wouldn't result in fewer riots.

Educating freshmen preparing to move into the West University Neighborhood is another good idea. But when students drink, how many actually remember what they've been taught? Giving students a broad overview on legal culpability will likely only lead to more trouble for drunken college kids. Riots won't occur less frequently, either.

The only recommendation that makes sense to us are increased Eugene Police Department patrols, which the University is willing to do — sort of. The University and city will split the cost of one officer to patrol the neighborhood by foot, Carlson said. The other recommendation is EPD "knock-and-talks," where officers visit the houses with registered kegs to explain responsibility on the day of parties.

As students, we hate to say the answer is a greater police presence, but it is. Kids will be kids, the saying goes. We believe this is OK, too. Simply, a policy needs to be adopted that sets new guidelines on partying.

We don't want the "party patrol" to bust every gathering every weekend; it's too expensive and excessive. But waiting until a problem occurs and then taking such action is the current solution, and that doesn't work.

We suggest parties with over 35 people be subject to a "zero-tolerance" rule that punishes all who break the law. Parties with fewer individuals should fall under officers' best judgment. EPD should include another officer, along with the aforementioned, to aide in the effort. These two officers could affordably provide effective riot prevention while being fair to the student body.

The other option, of course, is for EPD to seriously injure and arrest a vast majority of rioters. In our minds this is equitable and reasonable; other cities take this course of action and it seems to discourage rioting altogether.

We'd prefer our first suggestion, obviously. But something needs to be done. Now.

Three months and counting.

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.

Affirmative re-action

Travis Willse
Knowledge Crystals

The Supreme Court handed down a motley pair of rulings on Monday that pundits dubbed the most important affirmative action decisions in 25 years. Naturally, the split decision prompted both sides of this issue to declare a probably premature victory.

The Court churned out a narrow 5-4 ruling upholding the University of Michigan law school's admission policy, citing a qualitative process that considers race as one factor among many.

But the ruling fell far short of a total victory for affirmative action proponents: The Court jettisoned that university's controversial — and unconstitutional — undergraduate admission system that handed 20 points on a 150-point scale to "underrepresented minority" applicants. (By contrast, the system awarded only five points for national-scale "personal achievement" and an "outstanding essay" netted strong writers only three points). Chief Justice William Rehnquist observed in the majority opinion that the "automatic distribution of 20 points has the effect of making 'the factor of race ... decisive' for virtually every minimally qualified underrepresented minority applicant."

But this ruling shouldn't have surprised anyone. Long ago the Court ruled in the landmark case Regents of the University of California vs. Bakke that numerical racial quotas were constitutional no-nos. The Court was bound to find that a system that slaps a number on minority status was tantamount to using those quotas and would reject it accordingly.

Jennifer Gratz, a white plaintiff in the eponymous undergraduate case who had been denied admission to Michigan, hailed the 6-3 decision: "I'm happy the court recognized the inherent unfairness of the undergraduate admissions system. I believe this decision will make it harder for schools to use race-based preferences." But this optimism is overzealous at best, as this ruling more likely just foreshadows a less legally tractable resurgence of the same dilemma that the Court just tried to hash out.

Part of the Supreme Court's motivation for shutting down California's quota system and Michigan's point scheme are the same: They both use numbers. People — Supreme Court justices included — don't like being reduced to figures. Assigning people different numbers for reasons like race and for purposes like deciding who gets into college is clearly justifiable cause for nixing that system on the grounds of the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause.

So, the Supreme Court says numerical systems and affirmative action don't mix. But in the law school ruling they left fuzzier, "holistic" systems like Michigan's law school admissions alive and well to accomplish the same thing as their quantitative cousins: using race as a factor in deciding who gets to go to school where they want and who doesn't. The Bakke and Michigan cases therefore set a new and dangerous precedent, pushing admissions further from the daylight of the transparent and the quantitative into the dark alleys of the subjective, hidden and unverifiable. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg opined in the undergraduate case's dissent that, "If honesty is the best policy, surely Michigan's accurately described, fully disclosed college affirmative action program is preferable to achieving similar numbers through winks, nods and disguises." And while the Court's undergraduate ruling sets a good standard, Ginsburg's partially right: Good policy here encourages bad behavior.

These "disguises" will probably darken the admission process as long as affirmative action is around. And while Congress unfortunately won't outright ban affirmative action in college admissions anytime soon, the deepened qualitative mush that the recent Michigan decisions will create needn't haunt American colleges forever. Congress should pass legislation that requires schools to create, for public review, a report detailing numbers of applying and accepted students, broken down by race and whatever else that school's affirmative action policy uses to discriminate among applicants. The report would also list the average GPAs and SAT scores of the incoming students, again for each of the same categories as the raw admittance numbers. Such a mandate would bring much-needed transparency to programs that threaten to become less objective than ever.

While critics might deride such legislation as divisive, the reports would just reflect facts: At worst, they'd be no more divisive than the affirmative action policies themselves.

Contact the copy chief at traviswillise@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

PGA Tour standards sub-par

GUEST COMMENTARY

Once again double standards are hurting the true idea of equality. I'm sure you might have heard the PGA tour recently featured a new face at the Colonial Tournament a few weekends ago, Annika Sorenstam. Since then many have been wondering why a woman was allowed to compete in a PGA tour event. Many tour players have spoken out on this issue, which many see as nothing more than a publicity stunt. I find myself asking why a woman is playing on the men's tour when the women have their own tour. Why isn't there a man playing on the women's tour then? Ms. Sorenstam didn't even have to go to qualifying school, where all — yes all — players are supposed to go to in order to compete in any — yes any — tour event. Why is it that Annika doesn't have to qualify?

How is this fair that men such as Vijay Singh have to endure years of prejudice and determination just to make it to the qualifying school; all the while Annika can completely skip it and take the spot of someone who has paid his dues? And, at the same time, sending the LPGA the message that it just isn't competitive enough for her and that she has to play elsewhere to be challenged. Sadly enough, it seems that once again fairness is being tossed aside in favor of a political correctness, so that a woman can try to make a statement about nothing. What is this going to prove? Why is it that if men and women are so equal, a woman can play in the men's tour, but it would be bloody murder and unfair if Tiger Woods was to compete in the next LPGA tour event.

Now I'm sure that every feminist is probably up in arms ready to lecture me on equality and why women should be able to play in leagues specifically for men. I think that equality and fairness should work both ways and I'm becoming sick and tired of all these double standards that give women the right to infringe on men's sports, while if a man did the same thing that just wouldn't be fair. In high school girls are allowed to play football while guys cannot play volleyball or lacrosse if they so desire. How is that fair? Obviously equality is an idea that can be used at the viewer's discretion. So I would like to give a simple warning of "FORE" to all those who would believe that true gender "equality" actually exists in today's society, when a woman can play on the men's tour and men cannot do the same on the women's tour.

Anthony Warren is a sophomore majoring in political science.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Column, headline offend reader

The Mason West article ("It's time to say 'fuck,'" ODE, June 9) was revolting, totally stupid and with no redeeming values, which is the best I can say for Mr. West.

For your paper to allow such filth, and to then headline the "F" word, as well as its continued use in the column, was ridiculous. So much for institutions of higher learning.

Mr. West only has the "guts" to use that word in your newspaper where he can hide.

If he ever used that word in front of my office staff or my wife and family members, even though I'm pushing 75, I would advise Mr. West to close his filthy mouth.

Wayne L. Johnson
Eugene