

Newsroom: (541) 346-5511
 Suite 300, Erb Memorial Union
 P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403
 E-mail: editor@dailyemerald.com
 Online: www.dailyemerald.com

COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:
 Brad Schmidt
 Managing Editor:
 Jan Tobias Montry
 Editorial Editor:
 Travis Willse

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Investigating, protecting self helps to prevent common issues

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Students, like other members of the community, need products and services of all kinds. Below are a few protective measures you can take before engaging in transactions that seem to provide a fair share of problems for students: car purchases, hiring contractors for home or appliance repairs, and Internet purchases.

Buying a used car

When buying from a dealer, get a written warranty covering 100 percent of repair costs for at least thirty days.

When buying from a private party, the car is typically being sold "as is." This means that if the car breaks down on your way home, that is your problem.

The seller cannot, however, make affirmative misrepresentations about the condition of the vehicle. Therefore, ask as many specific questions as possible, i.e., is anything wrong with the transmission? In addition, ask the following general questions:

- What kinds of repairs have been necessary?
- Are there any defects that aren't obvious?
- Is there anything you haven't told me?
- Why are you selling the car?

If the seller lies about anything specific, you may be able to pursue a fraud case against them.

In addition, take the car to your own mechanic for an inspection and diagnostic test.

Repairs to home and appliances

Before spending a lot of money on a plumber, contractor or repair person, do some investigation. First, make sure you can find a street address; it often will not appear in the phone book advertisement, but may be included in the actual listing. If anything goes wrong and you need to pursue legal remedies against an individual or business, it helps to have their physical location. You cannot serve legal papers on a post office box.

Second, check with any regulating board or agency and the Better Business Bureau to determine whether complaints have been lodged against the provider. Construction contractors and plumbers are regulated by the Construction Contractors Board (www.ccb.state.or.us), which can tell you whether the provider is currently licensed and about the provider's complaint history. Licensed contractors should also be bonded and insured.

Internet purchases

When making a purchase online, you should always become familiar with the seller. Check with state and local consumer protection agencies and the Better Business Bureau for information on the seller. In Oregon, the State Attorney General's Office operates a consumer information hotline: (877) 877-9392 (toll free) or consumer.hotline@doj.state.or.us (e-mail 24 hours).

Once you have decided to make a purchase, use a credit card. Never use a debit card. Although online payment services can be convenient, they generally do not get involved in disputes between buyers and sellers; in other words, if you never receive the goods you ordered, you will not get a refund from the payment service.

There is a wealth of excellent information on these topics available on the Internet. Some good starting points are the Federal Trade Commission (www.ftc.gov), FindLaw (www.findlaw.com) — see the "Public and Consumer Resources" section), Consumer Reports online (www.consumerreports.org) and Internet Fraud Watch (www.fraud.org).

Nicole Miani is an attorney at law for ASUO Legal Services.



Eric Layton Illustrator

Trademark stifles free speech

Fearing infringing the University's trademarks and subsequent cease and desist requests, this piece is eschewing using the alphabet's fifteenth letter.

Well, well, it seems that, yet again, the University has pushed an absurdist agenda that squelches free speech while unsuccessfully establishing undue influence regarding student statements. Last year, University marketers charged student clubs with printing the new, pre-affirmed University insignia with every pamphlet, business card and all printed material that the clubs distribute.

Student interests lambasted the University executives, claiming that they were illegitimately infringing First Amendment rights while burdening clubs with large reprinting expenditures; the clubs rallied, seeking the embattled guidelines' reversal. Students triumphed, and using the University's hues and ideas linked with its image was safe again. Briefly, anyway.

During the last several weeks, Zach, a Lundquist business graduate, started selling self-made calendars depicting twelve fair University girls cuddling in Jacuzzis, leaning in a bathing area, washing sudsy cars and the like.

The texts supplier at Alder Street and

13th Avenue that bears the University's name briefly carried the calendar, and a representative there said Zach had cleared the item with the University's trademark management department. Zach denied telling the retailer that the department had rubber-stamped the calendar.



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Recently, the University's trademark management department sent Zach a letter, requesting that he cease selling the calendars. Apparently, Zach using the University's hues, students and defining letter laid unacceptably near infringing the University's half-defined identity.

Zach pulled the calendars, but his lawyer suggested that the trademark management department lacked a sensible legal basis, and he was back vending them just a few days later.

While he isn't in a legal bind yet, the calendars' revived sales might yet incite a lawsuit.

That the University wants nary a link with the calendar makes sense. A bureaucrat might find it challenging answering a parent's angry inquiry regarding their daughter's presence in a green-and-lightning calendar featuring girls in garments that are at best skimpy. But that needn't interfere with a private businessman selling a clearly legal item.

In fact, any legal act against Zach and his calendar business breaches the University's design and just cause alike. The University graduating a business student, and less than a term later needlessly curtailing his legal business activities in misguided self-interest, sets a bad precedent.

Likewise, the University hasn't any trademark claim with its students, hues and alphabetic letters, and Zach likely hasn't unfairly used any blend that weds the emblems.

As it stands, the alphabet's fifteenth letter might terminate its Sesame Street backing, lest partisans at the trademark management demand that PBS pull a green Kermit and a canary Big Bird.

Contact the editorial editor at traviswillse@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Men go too far with Saferide request

I know I'm going to face some reactionary backlash for this, and may even be purged from College Republicans, but it needs to be brought to people's attention that projects like Project Saferide are necessary in a society where one-fourth of women are sexually assaulted in their lifetime (according to a commonly quoted FBI statistic), and where women are under threat of sexual violence from men. Much of the controversy seems to stem from a lack of "equality," which I find amusing given that we men sometimes complain about the lack of "sex equality" when we don't get something we want or when women get something that we don't.

We men run nearly everything: the UN, punk rock, the military, capitalism (and in

socialist countries, socialism), the church, both ends of the political spectrum, most of the House, Senate and administration, and quite a bit of other stuff. Yet, when women want or need something like a shuttle service to keep them safe from our more predatory brethren, we throw a fit. It's now illegal, which is a different issue, but quite a few people I know have complained about its very existence (not funding issues, legality, or anything like that — just the idea of a women-only shuttle). Saferide (to my knowledge) existed for women who weren't comfortable with men in certain situations for whatever reason — a bread crumb where we own the bakeries, but we were pissed off at that because we didn't get to control that, too.

As for the \$2.31 we men spend on Saferide through our fees, so what? It's 69 cents less than what I pay for a Heineken at Max's, or about the cost to see Tear It Up play live.

Some may cite the state taking money through force, but we don't have to come to school here, so it's not exactly coercion. Maybe we men should have to pay it, though, sort of like a "man tax" to make up for all the rapes, disrespect, beatings, cat calls, harassment, gropings, coerced abortions and all-around bullshit our gender has inflicted on women for the past few thousand years.

Saferide is now illegal, and "equality" prevails (another example of how we need to do things ourselves, and not depend on the welfare-state). I don't mean to sound like a radical feminist or anything, but maybe we should give up our male privilege and not get so pissed, offended and defensive every time women want something or do something that doesn't include us.

Lucas Szabo is a junior in the political science program.