

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

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

COMMENTARY

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EDITORIAL

Lillis Complex brings prestige, myriad benefits

During his freshman year, one of the members of the Editorial Board had a class in the bridge that connected the two halves of Gilbert Hall (a bridge that present freshmen and sophomores won't remember). The cramped wooden desks left backs sore, and harsh light torched the length of the tunnel-like classroom. All in all a poor learning environment by modern standards.

But in recent years, contractors have torn down most of the aging building and replaced it with the new, state-of-the-art Lillis Business Complex which is set for a Friday christening. Boasting sleek but functional architecture, several hundred more seats than the replaced structure and an array of energy-saving and other Earth-friendly features, the business school has catapulted into the 21st century. And in a few years that have seen slashed higher education budgets, the new business complex is in many ways one of the best things to happen at the University in recent memory.

The \$41 million glass-and-brick structure's architecture is impressive, but its clean, green features are certainly its most important accomplishment. They continue the University's fine tradition of pursuing environmental protection in its day-to-day operations.

"The sustainable and environmental concern on this project has been incredible," Lillis project manager Matt Pearson told the Emerald in 2002.

Indeed, the design can make use of many hours of natural daylight each day to minimize the need for artificial lighting. To better regulate temperature, windows are well-shaded, and the building's top will be covered with a so-called green roof, which prevents some heat from entering the building on warm days. The roof filters and reduces run-off water as well. Even the building's frame includes recycled materials.

But the benefits of the well-planned Lillis go beyond solidifying the University's reputation for environmentally conscious policy and making learning spaces much more livable: The net gain of some 600 seats will grant much-needed relief from the overcrowding burdening a university that has swelled to over 20,000 students without adding any major facilities in the past few years.

The building's aesthetics, too, particularly in conjunction with East 13th Avenue's so-called "pedestrian refuge," will make walking to off-campus businesses and classes at campus's west end just a little nicer.

Finally, having a new, technologically advanced building should draw more applicants, and even professors, to the school, increasing the quality of the accepted students and culling all the more prestige for the University.

In light of these multifarious benefits, the University owes a debt of gratitude to the many private donors who funded about nine-tenths of the project (including the building's namesakes Chuck and Gwen Lillis). The rest of the money came from bonds.

If the University continues to expand while building academic facilities as modern and eco-friendly as Lillis, it should arrive at a bright and prestigious future.

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.

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DEADLY LIES

A friend from Kenya once told me that she was writing a book about Africa specifically for American readers entitled: "Send Money and Shut the Fuck Up."

That always sounded like sage foreign policy advice to me.

Unfortunately, the Bush administration is following the exact opposite doctrine, a fact that was made painfully clear last summer during the president's "historic" five-day, five-nation African tour.

Bush was the stereotypical tourist: According to the New York Times, he spent three of his four nights at a luxury hotel in South Africa, visiting Botswana and Senegal for six hours each and Uganda for only three.

On the first day of his trip, Bush took 15 minutes to visit Goree Island, once the center of the West African slave trade. Eschewing my friend's "Shut the Fuck Up" doctrine, he delivered a speech carefully crafted to denounce slavery without actually apologizing for America's rather significant role in the enterprise.

Bush also managed to find the bright side of the slave trade when he insinuated that God allowed it to happen so that America's racial conscience could be awakened. God sure has a funny way of teaching white people life lessons! Mysterious indeed.

At almost every stop during his whirlwind tour, Bush repeated a pledge to provide \$15 billion over the next five years to assist Africans in their ongoing fight against AIDS. He urged Congress to "fully fund this initiative for the good of the people on this continent."

It didn't take Bush long to betray the expectations of a continent. His administration requested only \$2 billion for fiscal year 2004 and then pressured congressional Republicans to defeat a bill that would have added the extra \$1 billion needed to fully fund the initiative. A second bill to add \$300 million was also killed in committee by Republicans.

Bush decided to clarify his position, saying his plan was to provide gradually increasing assistance over the next five years.

Sounds good to me. I mean, what's the hurry? There are only 8,500 AIDS-related deaths per day.

The administration's justification for using a gradual approach is that "money is not the issue" due to a lack of infrastructure to absorb it.

That is simply untrue, says Asia Russell of Health Global Access Project. Drawing on research from UNAIDS and the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, Russell said in a press release, "Annual spending on AIDS in poor countries needs to reach \$10.5 billion by 2005 just to utilize poor countries' existing infrastructure alone."

While Bush is quietly underfunding his own program, he is actively sabotaging international efforts to deal with the AIDS pandemic.

On Aug. 26, he stopped financing to a respected health program after accusing one of the member groups, Marie Stopes, of involvement in forced abortions in China; the administration admits it has no actual evidence to support the accusation.



David Jagernauth
Critical mass

And currently the White House is trying to kill an effort to commit \$1 billion next year to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, despite the fact that Bush promised this money in May. The multilateral Global Fund has been chronically underfunded since its 2001 inception. As a result, it has been forced to downsize and finance fewer proposals.

None of this surprised me. Bush has always used the AIDS crisis as a means of scoring cheap political points with his right-wing constituency. Early on, Bush nominated Jerry Thacker for his President's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS, a man who called homosexuality a "deathstyle," referred to AIDS as a "gay plague" and advocated curing homosexuals through religion. Bush eventually withdrew Thacker's nomination after public outrage.

Bush's pick to head his U.S. Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief raises different, but equally troubling questions. Randall Tobias was the CEO of Eli Lilly, a member of a pharmaceutical coalition lobbying Washington for increased intellectual property rights, which would hinder developing nations' access to generic anti-retroviral drugs.

Pharmaceutical giants like Eli Lilly are also huge Republican campaign contributors, but I'm sure that's just a coincidence. Although he has no actual public health

experience, Tobias parrots the administration's rhetoric about the effectiveness of abstinence-only education. One-third of the president's AIDS package is earmarked specifically for these programs, which the American Medical Association, World Health Organization, National Institutes of Health and many other expert groups claim to be less effective at preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS than the alternative: comprehensive sex ed.

Bush touts Uganda as the poster nation for the success of abstinence-only policies, when they actually used the ABC educational model — Abstinence, Be faithful, Condoms. The most significant factor in Uganda's success was the enormous jump in condom use, according to the Allan Guttmacher Institute, a family planning research group.

What is sometimes overlooked in this discussion is that \$15 billion over five years is not nearly enough to get the job done. One relatively easy solution that should be discussed more is debt relief.

Sub-Saharan Africa, where 70 percent of the 43 million people living with HIV worldwide reside, squanders about \$15 billion each year in debt payments to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, according to figures compiled by Health GAP.

Bush has refused to pressure international financial institutions into canceling these crippling debts. For Nigeria, debt erasure would mean relief to the tune of \$30 billion. When Uganda saw limited debt relief, it increased its health spending by 270 percent. So far, the only country whose debt the Bush administration seems willing to forgive is Iraq's.

Progressives use the word "evil" to describe virtually every action by the president, from tax cuts to environmental roll-backs. While these are bad policies that often involve misleading the public, they are far from acts of evil.

Bush's litany of unkept promises, deceitful rhetoric and cynical opportunism in the face of a growing AIDS pandemic, however, is evil.

Pure evil. I fear that the future will look back on our generation as monsters for our relative silence about this holocaust. It is time for all good-hearted Americans from all sides of the political divide to make our feelings known:

Send the money, Bush, and then shut the fuck up!

Contact the columnist at davidjagernauth@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.