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EDITORIAL

Ending sales of tobacco on campus is right move

A campus anti-smoking group has made concerted and reasonable efforts recently to make it harder for smokers at the University to buy and smoke cigarettes on campus.

The Campus Advisory Board approached the EMU Board to lobby for a ban on cigarette sales at Erb Essentials, the EMU convenience store. The group is also seeking more strict enforcement of the University's 10-foot rule, which states that smokers must be at least 10 feet away from a building when lighting up (the stricter rules allow for the possibility of expanding the distance to 50 feet).

For smokers, the idea of impeding the habit would clearly be an abuse of the University's power. For anti-smoking activists, the idea would mean a cleaner campus environment and a step toward better health standards.

But for the rest of us, does the smoking issue really matter? It should, for several reasons.

At first glance, the anti-smoking effort may seem like a suppression of freedoms, and one could argue that banning cigarettes from the campus marketplace would restrict the legitimate right of smokers to purchase tobacco products at the University.

But as University Health Center Health Education Director Paula Staight told the EMU Board, the debate is "a bigger issue than the freedom to buy a cigarette."

Not only could student smokers make the trek to 7-Eleven, located just off campus, to buy cigarettes, but the University is in a position to do its part in saving a portion of the student body from future health problems. According to <http://www.webmd.com>, smoking can increase the risk of lung cancer, throat cancer, emphysema, heart disease, high blood pressure, ulcers, gum disease and asthma complications. Smoking also results in coughing, poor athletic ability, sore throats, face wrinkles, stained teeth, dull skin and damage to sense of taste and smell.

Furthermore, recent studies have shown a dramatic link between smoking in college and the chance of smoking later in life. According to Health Psychology magazine, more than 90 percent of college smokers who light up on a daily basis will continue smoking for at least four years after college. Disturbingly, 50 percent of college students who smoke even occasionally run the same risk.

Nearly 33 percent of college students in America use tobacco products, according to the University, and a University Health Center survey released in spring 2003 showed that 22 percent of students at this campus identify as "regular or casual smokers."

In fact, the University is currently part of a national study to test the success rate of tobacco control programs, according to a University press release. What better way to get started than stopping the sale of those products on campus?

That's not to say that all the Campus Advisory Board's arguments are sound. One argument, voiced at the EMU Board meeting, is that selling tobacco products on campus violates the University's and EMU's respective missions. But no specific mention of a duty to ensure the health of students is included in the EMU's mission statement, which reads "The Erb Memorial Union. ... with a commitment to the involvement and development of students, shall serve its diverse campus community by providing high quality programs, services and facilities that complement the mission of the University of Oregon." Similarly, the University's mission statement makes no specific mention of a responsibility to physical health of students.

Regardless, it seems to be an implied duty of the University to do everything in its power to influence the good health of students. While it's clearly not the University's job to preach life habits, banning the sale of tobacco products on campus will send a clear message that using tobacco products has scientifically proven negative health effects and is not endorsed by this institution.



Eric Layton Illustration

IDOL worship

But did America care? Not really. Instead they felt tricked, because they hoped to turn on their television and find Paula Abdul, but instead got the leader of their country.



Marissa Jones
 Cry me a river

People love watching "American Idol," because it gives them the ability to make someone a celebrity — and doesn't everyone long to be famous themselves? Television is filled with shows like VH1's "The Fabulous Life," which showcases their pimped-out cars and calculates how many Louis Vuitton bags Jennifer Lopez could buy with her last paycheck. Even A&E's "Biography," which used to tell the stories of historic figures, has graduated to talking almost exclusively about celebrities. For the month of April, David Koresh is the only non-celebrity being featured.

So our country enjoys hearing about the private lives of pretty people. Big deal, right? The problem is that this phenomenon is slowly seeping into our political system. We elected a professional wrestler to govern a state and now have extended the title to an action hero. Although Arnold may have some good political views, I wonder if this trend of electing inexperienced celebrities into office will continue.

If celebrities themselves don't run, they are always there to support their favorite candidate. Celebrity endorsements have become more important than ever as candidates fight for coverage in the press. Personally, the political opinion of someone who starred in "A Pyromaniac's Love Story" doesn't mean much to me, but who knows what his appearance did to sway the votes of "Backdraft" fans.

Celebrity political intervention even extends overseas. Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston are trying to stop the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in between movies and magazine shoots. That's really sweet, but maybe they should try just sticking to their day jobs. Celebrities need to wake up and realize being Hollywood royalty doesn't grant them ambassadorial powers, and Americans need to vote because of their own feelings on the issues, not because of the opinions of a good romantic comedy's star.

Just imagine if we all talked about world politics as much as we do celebrities or watched as much news as we do reality shows. Maybe then we would all start to be educated about the issues and actually begin to make progress on the problems affecting our country. Maybe if we made it as easy to vote for the presidency as it is for "American Idol," people would actually vote. Until then, I will go to sleep every night hoping when I wake up the phrase "Diddy Runs the City" still refers to his participation in the Boston Marathon. Cross your fingers, America, and maybe once in a while turn off your televisions.

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ONLINE POLL

Each week, the Emerald publishes the results of the previous poll and the coming week's poll question.

Visit <http://www.dailyemerald.com> to vote.

Last question: What should the U.S. military's next steps in Iraq be?

Results: 55 votes.

- Ask for more assistance from the United Nations: 54.5 percent or 30 votes.
- Surrender: 20.0 percent or 11 votes.
- Send more troops and continue with current strategies: 16.4 percent or nine votes.
- Pull out ground troops and use long-range tactics like bombing from the air: 5.5 percent or three votes.

- Negotiate with insurgents: 3.6 percent or two votes.

This week: Do you feel safe walking on campus at night?

Choices: Yes — The campus is well-lit; Yes — Public safety is present; No — Recent crimes have made me avoid campus at night; No — Campus is poorly lit.