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EDITORIAL

Journalism school shows bad judgment with workshop

If students coming out of the School of Journalism and Communication played pass-the-buck as well as the dean, none would need to worry about finding a job. They too could have a career in higher education, where keeping big-name alumni happy is the name of the game, and neglecting administrative duties is commonplace.

Alumnus Dan Wieden, president of nationally known advertising agency Wieden + Kennedy, is teaching a workshop offered through the journalism school. Wieden assigned students to creatively overcome various "fears."

"Taken out of context, it could appear as if the students are being asked to engage in potentially illegal or unethical behaviors," journalism Dean Tim Gleason wrote to the Emerald in a May 28 guest commentary.

One student was asked to go streaking, which is a misdemeanor. It was suggested that another student steal a present from a wedding, which, depending on the value of the present, could be a misdemeanor or a felony. One person was asked to lie to family members, professing an untrue sexual orientation. Another was asked to lie to a stranger, carrying on a conversation as though the two were friends.

Taken out of context, it would indeed seem that students are being asked to break the law or, possibly, their own moral code. But the course is intended to present students with difficult challenges, Gleason argues, ones that require them to creatively complete the tasks.

The problem, though, is that not all students will find innovative ways to accomplish the assignment, as was shown by senior Joe Leineweber's naked prance through a local golf course. Leineweber never had any intention to go streaking. He was assigned to go streaking by Wieden. Gleason urged the student to find a creative way to complete the task. Leineweber thanked the dean for the advice and told him he would consider it.

And then Leineweber did exactly what he was assigned. He broke the law.

The journalism school can spend the rest of eternity arguing that students weren't assigned to do anything wrong, that they were instead assigned to find ingenious ways of getting around the tasks. But look at what happened: A student broke the law because of a class assignment. There's no way to get around that!

The journalism school — which is offering credit for the course and is ultimately responsible for what is being assigned — needed to intervene. Gleason needed to change students' assignments, even if they were intent on completing the tasks. Students should not be assigned duties that involve breaking the law or lying, no matter the context. Clearly, some students are dumb enough to do it, and the school should have known better.

But the larger issue is how a student could even be assigned to break the law in the first place. Vice President for Academic Affairs Lorraine Davis said there is no provision in University policy that states teachers shall not assign students to break the law — it just seems obvious.

"It would make sense that illegal activities would not be promoted," she said. "If we got a direct report or grievance, we would look into it."

Well, the Emerald ran a front-page photo Friday of Leineweber at the golf course, unclad. In case our administrators missed it, take this opportunity to let them know how you feel. Gleason can be reached at 346-3739 or at tgleason@oregon.uoregon.edu. Davis can be reached at 346-3081 or at lgd@uoregon.edu. University President Dave Frohnmayer can be reached at 346-3036 or at pres@uoregon.edu.

Before Leineweber broke the law, he had a friend write on his back, "I am in no way affiliated with the UO School of Journalism & Communication." The truth is, we all are affiliated with the University, and what's going on is wrong. It's time for someone to intervene, to fix what's happened, and to prevent it from happening to students in the future.

It's a sad day when the University needs to create a provision in its Faculty Handbook to explicitly state that instructors are prohibited from assigning students to break the law.

Much to the discredit of our administrators, that day has come.



Steve Baggs Illustration

Ignoring the warming signals

American moviegoers spent an estimated \$86 million over the weekend to watch Dennis Quaid battle the effects of global warming in "The Day After Tomorrow." The film has faced strong criticism for over-dramatizing the consequences of global warming, but most viewers understand that it's a work of fiction.

Despite the fact-stretching, anything that brings global warming to the forefront of public conversation is a welcome development. Global warming may be the most under-addressed issue in contemporary politics.

Global warming, as even President Bush admits, is real. A 2001 National Science Foundation study said "overwhelming odds" point to a rise in global temperatures of four to seven degrees over the next century. Such an increase would dwarf the less than one-degree rise in global temperatures during the 20th century.

An increase that severe could cause flooding in coastal areas. This represents a potential disaster because 53 percent of the U.S. population resides in coastal areas, according to NASA.

A dramatic increase in global temperature could also cause significant problems for national security, warns a frightening report commissioned by the Defense Department. In the event of a sudden shift in climate — which has happened in the past — border skirmishes, invasions and wars could break out over dwindling water and energy supplies, the report says.

While the report imagines a worst-case scenario, it has garnered attention because of the source — one doesn't usually equate the Pentagon with "the sky is falling" environmental scenarios — and the Bush administration's head-in-the-sand approach to global warming. While the Bush



Chuck Slothower
Taking issue

administration may believe ignoring global warming means good politics, the attitude also makes for horrible policy.

The tactic is clearly intentional, as revealed by a memorandum from the prominent Republican strategist Frank Luntz, which has received well-deserved and widespread publicity. In the memorandum, Luntz urged Republicans to continue questioning the scientific basis for global warming because, "Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled, their views about global warming will change accordingly."

The Bush administration's policy calls for endless study and inadequate action. President Bush, in a June 2001 speech, detailed how his Cabinet-level working group is "recommending a number of initial steps." He directed the secretary of commerce to "set priorities for additional investments in climate change research" and promised to "enhance partnerships in applied research."

Of course, Bush doesn't call global warming by its name. It's "climate change," another suggestion from Luntz. "Global warming," Luntz feels, gives impressionable voters a negative connotation of rising temperatures.

While Bush has called for reduced

emissions, increased scientific funding and tax breaks for consumers who buy hybrid cars, his proposals fall far short of what the situation demands. Rather than recommending, setting priorities and enhancing partnerships in applied research, the president needs to immediately launch a major effort to combat global warming. A JFK-style send-a-man-to-the-moon-scale effort would demonstrate that the president takes global warming seriously.

Don't hold your breath. Bush has treated global warming as a non-issue since he broke a campaign promise only two months after his inauguration to regulate carbon dioxide emissions at power plants.

A Senate bill introduced by two notable moderates would take a significant step in the right direction. Senators John McCain, R-Ariz., and Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., introduced the Climate Stewardship Act. The legislation would impose reasonable caps on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions, requiring manufacturing, energy and transportation firms to cut emissions to their 2000 level by 2010.

On Oct. 30, the Senate defeated the bill 55-43, but the surprisingly narrow margin raised hopes that politicians may soon gather the political will to deal with global warming earnestly.

Americans produce more of the world's greenhouse gases than people of any other nation. A sweeping campaign could have the potential to significantly reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. We need to take immediate, significant steps to stem the rising temperatures.

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