

COMMENTARY

Tuesday, July 20, 2004

EDITORIAL

ASUO Exec on right track to responsible financial term

Whether it reflects smart politics or a genuine concern for student money, recently installed ASUO President Adam Petkun looks to be getting off on the right foot by distancing himself from the 2003-04 Executive's fiscal irresponsibility.

At a July 8 Student Senate meeting, Petkun asked for more than \$1,600 in transfers to cover office supply and telephone fund deficits left by the administration of former ASUO President Maddy Melton and former Vice President Eddy Morales.

Senators bombarded him with questions about how the deficits came about. While Petkun said he couldn't answer the questions because he wasn't a member of last year's Executive, he said one of his goals is to ensure that overspending doesn't happen this year.

"I am very committed to making sure that the ASUO Executive office is fiscally responsible and is an example for the rest of the ASUO," Petkun told senators.

If Petkun and the rest of the Executive follows through, the student body will be in for a much-needed breath of fresh air.

Petkun's administration has already succeeded in areas where last year's Executive faltered.

Last year, Melton and Morales failed to account for missing money on their campaign and expenditure forms. But Petkun and Vice President Mena Ravassipour submitted all of their campaign expenditure forms, and the numbers added up. Petkun also pulled off the difficult task of finding law students—while the law school is out of session—to appoint to open Constitution Court seats. He missed the 30-day June 25 deadline, but with help from the president of the Student Bar Association, he appointed two justices within two weeks of the deadline.

Last year, Melton failed for more than half a year to find a Constitution Court justice, prompting the court to summon her and call her "unfit for office."

Admittedly, it's still too early to say how well this year's Executive will face the challenges of the school year, but if the first two months are any indication, Petkun and Ravassipour's administration might be the first responsible one that students have seen in a long time.

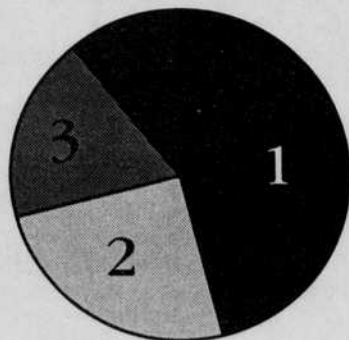
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ONLINE POLL THIS WEEK'S POLL RESULTS



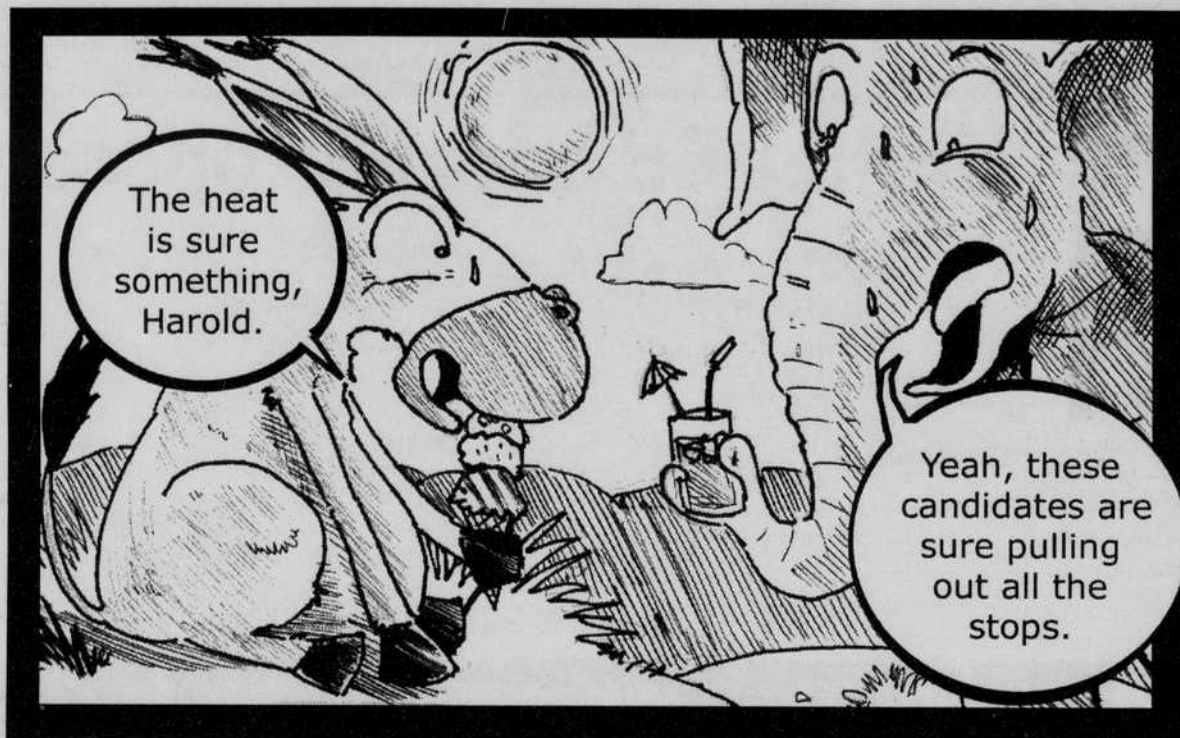
The Oregon Country Fair: Love it or hate it? (28 votes)

1. Love it! — Art, music, culture and community galore! 46 percent
2. Hate it! — It's dirty, dusty and disjointed ... and the people are, too. 25 percent
3. Hate it! — It's been hijacked by capitalism. 18 percent
4. Love it! — Let your hair down and free your mind. 11 percent

NEXT WEEK'S QUESTION

Which summer movie have you most looked forward to? Visit www.dailyemerald.com to vote.

- "Anchorman"
- "The Bourne Supremacy"
- "The Clearing"
- "Fahrenheit 9/11"
- "I, Robot"
- "Spiderman 2"
- "Super Size Me"



Aaron Sullivan Illustrator

Education reform bill is misguided

Cheaters never win. Or at least that's how the old adage goes. But what happens when a paltry piece of legislation serves to place such an egregious burden on a person or group that cheating becomes a necessity at some point?

Fox News reported that some 200 teachers in California were caught helping students cheat to perform better on the newly required standardized tests. This problem wasn't isolated, and experts claim that the No Child Left Behind bill has placed an enormous amount of pressure on teachers.

GUEST COMMENTARY

While such behavior must not be tolerated, sometimes, when the amount of insubordinate behavior is this great, there is a need to investigate a possible source aggravating this problem.

The NCLB bill sailed through both houses of Congress, garnering a majority of support. Now that the implementation phase has ventured into the spotlight, problems have arisen, eluding that this piece of legislation is doing the exact opposite of its intended purpose. Not only is it leaving children behind, it is destroying entire school districts and their integrity.

The bill expands the federal government's role in education. That is, if states opt to take federal dollars to aid public schools, strings are attached.

For example, annual testing that places significant emphasis on math and reading

is required, with an overall goal of bringing all students up to the state-set proficiency level by 2014.

Such is a task that Forbes Magazine dubbed "insane" because "no amount of accountability, incentives and super duper teaching can possibly get all kids in any sizable school up to 100 percent proficiency by 2014."

This also means schools that have a high level of students not only passing the tests but scoring exceptionally well, can still be labeled as failures even if five percent of the students fail.

A school failing to meet the requirement two years in a row must offer students the choice of attending other public schools. Schools failing the requirement three years in a row must provide private tutoring to students, and schools perpetually failing face a governmental takeover.

Rightly so, the bill also requires every teacher in core content areas to be "highly qualified" in the subjects that he teaches.

It doesn't matter how "highly proficient" a teacher is. He could be a miracle worker hold a doctorate degree in the subject he teaches and still a portion of students would fail the standardized tests.

Should such failure signify a teacher is not doing his job effectively? No, but under the NCLB bill it does.

Instead, it should illuminate that many children these days, especially those unfortunate few from lower

socioeconomic classes whose parents could care less about their child's success, have no desire to perform well on these tests. Why should they? Without proper parental guidance they will continue on the same dilapidated path leading to a disenfranchised life.

Teachers cannot be required to instruct uninterested students and assume the role of quasi-parent to ensure that test scores rise. As it is, teachers are underpaid for their labor, and many already dip into their own salaries to ensure their students have the proper supplies to complete their lessons.

If an education bill stacks the deck against teachers, something must give. When test scores are the gold standard in measuring success and the requisite for allocating school funding, the measurement will usually be met. If that means breaking a few rules along the way, that's precisely what will happen.

So before subjecting these busted teachers to jail time or hefty fines, perhaps the media should focus on the bill fueling such debauchery.

This affront to the education system displays one thing: Americans need statesmen as representatives, not self-interested power-hungry actors willing to pass legislation, without reading it fully, simply because they long for another chance to get their name or face on TV.

Nicholas Davis is a columnist for *The Battalion* (Texas A&M University).

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

'Book smarts' remain most valid in evaluating students

The system used in educational institutions today to grade students has been questioned greatly by teachers, parents, and students alike. I am referring to the very raw form of rating students against their peers based on certain criteria. The system is being questioned because good grades are detrimental to students' futures, making their accuracy very important. Students believe that the grading could be skewed toward students that are favored, and others feel that it should be changed to not be so book-smart oriented, and be more based on character and

other qualities. I believe that the grading system that we have should not be changed away from book smarts, because that is the most efficient way to monitor and document a students abilities.

Students, parents, and teachers may find the grading system that we have now to be inconsistent. Because students can persuade teachers, or that it is too easy to cheat. But, before they jump to conclusions, they must understand that these students are not getting ahead in their education, but that they are hurting themselves by not doing the full work and taking shortcuts. In the "real world" employers are not going to let these people who try to get by the easy way just get by. It will be harder for these students to get and or hold a job if they think

that they will be able to sway the "boss man." The grading system is not to blame for this; it is on the student that takes those shortcuts.

Even though some will still see this as a fault it really is not. The saying that "cheaters will never prosper," holds true here and the grading system that we have today is the most efficient way to teach our youth how to follow directions and how to respect and handle authority. That is why the grading system should not be changed to lean more in the direction of character. It needs to stay based on book smarts so that students can learn these valuable lessons for their future.

Jeremy Scheid
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