

COMMENTARY

Tuesday, July 27, 2004

EDITORIAL

Legislators should approve 2005-07 budget for students' sake

Dear Oregon Legislators,

You may have read in the papers, or maybe in a briefing from an aide, that the Oregon State Board of Higher Education recently proposed a \$710 million budget for the 2005-07 biennium. While the "Essential Budget Level" proposal includes a 5 percent tuition increase for students already cash-strapped by years of dramatic increases, the increase is a modest one, and one that won't unduly hurt students. (Resident undergraduates at the University — the most expensive of schools in the Oregon University System — paid only \$3,258 for a full year's tuition and fees a decade ago; by contrast, students this year will pay a comparatively exorbitant \$5,670.)

So, we humbly suggest that you approve the recommendation: Doing so would allow OUS schools to continue to educate students with the same levels of program funding, allowing for increased expenses, and help better educate the state's populace. Indeed, a more highly skilled and informed public makes easily for a more competitive and vibrant state economy. (Regrettably, the funding maintained by the proposed budget allows for only a relatively threadbare higher education program, one left in dire operational straits by slipping legislative support in recent years, and does not portend a path to increasingly needed reinvestment in the system.)

More to this end, we further suggest that legislators approve a \$20 million so-called policy package requested by the Board to further alleviate the financial burden of current and incoming students, by reducing the net tuition increase to 3.6 percent (the projected increase in median family income over the same period), as well as introduce bills designed to improve the funding of an increasingly emaciated system, and to broaden access to that system for the betterment of the state's quality of life.

Regards,
 The Emerald Editorial Board

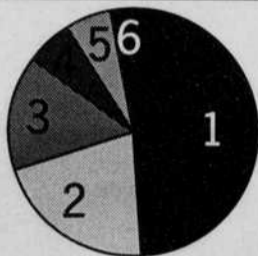
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ONLINE POLL THIS WEEK'S POLL RESULTS



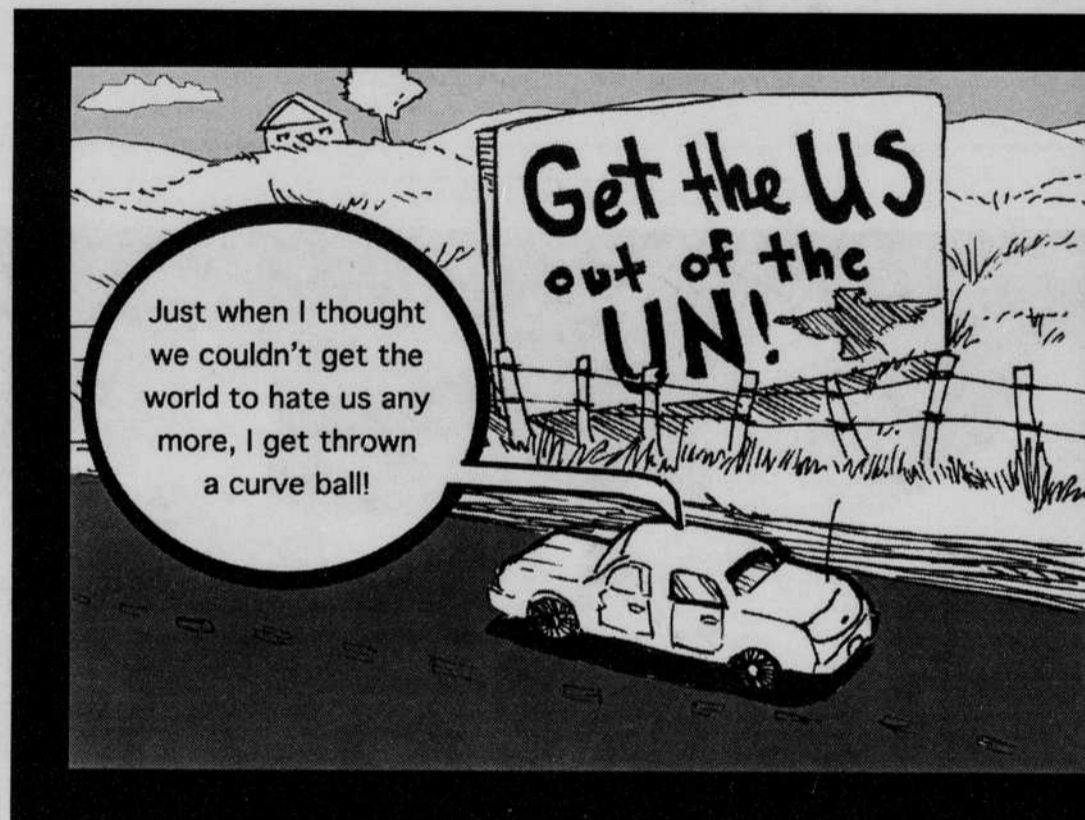
Which summer movie have you most looked forward to? (33 votes)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Fahrenheit 9/11: 49 percent | 5. Super Size Me: 6 percent |
| 2. Spiderman 2: 21 percent | 6. I, Robot: 3 percent |
| 3. Anchorman: 15 percent | 7. The Clearing: 0 percent |
| 4. The Bourne Supremacy: 6 percent | |

NEXT WEEK'S QUESTION

Are you a carnivore or a vegetarian? Visit www.dailyemerald.com to vote.

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Carnivore — It's natural for humans to eat meat | • Vegetarian — Eating meat is cruel. |
| • Carnivore — Meat is a good source of protein and vitamins. | • Vegetarian — For environmental reasons. |
| • Carnivore — Meat tastes good! | • Vegetarian — For health reasons. |



Aaron Sullivan Illustrator

What's for dinner?



JARED PABEN
 HELP WANTED

More than seven years ago, neck-deep in the rebelliousness of my early high school years, I decided to make the switch from the realm of meat-eaters to that of vegetarianism. As a pimple-faced freshman, the change was probably more about rebelling against the overabundance of hamburgers and hot dogs at home or trying to find an identity in the culture of small-town Creswell, but, I feel I've made the right choice.

The agonizing problem is: To this day I've had to explain that choice, again and again, and each time the explanation becomes shorter and weaker.

The problem is not that genuinely curious carnivores keep inquiring, but that I've slacked off in my explanations.

So here it is: the super-sized argument for joining vegetarianism.

First, the health benefits are obvious. Now, I'm all for drinking beer and eating potato chips for dinner (and have many times), but I try to shy away from the steroids, chemicals and hormones polluting our country's animal meat supply.

According to Dr. Michael Lam, a specialist in anti-aging medicine who also holds degrees in public health and medicine, the meat industry commonly feeds cattle hormones that can eventually cause cancer in humans. The industry also feeds cattle antibiotics — more than 5,000 tons of them every year, or about half the amount manufactured in the United States — to increase the animals' body weight, according to Lam. These antibiotics kill favorable intestinal bacteria in humans, leaving us vulnerable to disease. Also, the overuse of antibiotics leads to resistant strains of bacteria in these animals, such as some strains of salmonella. These bacteria ravage animals and, eventually, beef-eating humans alike.

Chickens are also fed antibiotics in an often-failed effort to keep them healthy, according to Lam. Because chickens are forced to live in cramped coops without fresh air and are sometimes fed disgusting substances that can include cardboard, sawdust, used newspaper and animal feces, they often develop tumors and other

deformities. Farmers kill more than 14,000 tons of cancerous-tumor-infected poultry every year, often reprocessing the animals into feed for other animals, which humans eventually eat. Chickens are also fed pesticides and fungicides that poison our body and weaken our immune systems.

Eating meat also exposes humans to chemicals not intentionally added to animals' diets. Dioxins — which enter the environment from many sources, including vehicle combustion and garbage burning — are generally understood to increase the risk of cancer and cause serious health problems. Most enter our bodies through eating meat and animal products, according to an Environmental Protection Agency report.

Waste from cattle also poses a direct threat to humans' health, according to a Time magazine article. Cow droppings have, in recent years, been implicated in the "outbreak of such diseases as Pfiesteria, which causes memory loss, confusion and acute skin burning in people exposed to contaminated water."

The next big argument for not eating meat is the inhumane manner in which the animals are often slaughtered. According to an April 10, 2001, Washington Post article, slaughterhouses repeatedly violate the Humane Slaughter Act by butchering conscious cattle. Under federal law, animals must first be stunned and rendered unconscious with a blow to the head or electric shock, but, at plants across the United States, processes fail and conscious animals go down the assembly line while workers cut pieces off and skin them alive.

"... the government took no action against a Texas beef company that was cited 22 times

in 1998 for violations that included chopping hooves off live cattle," the article stated. "In another case, (U.S. Department of Agriculture) supervisors failed to take action on multiple complaints of animal cruelty at a Florida beef plant and fired an animal health technician for reporting the problems to the Humane Society. The dismissal letter sent to the technician, Tim Walker, said his disclosure had 'irreparably damaged' the agency's relations with the packing plant."

Again, the same goes for the treatment of chickens. According to a New York Times article, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals released videotapes taken by an undercover member of the group of acts of cruelty in a West Virginia slaughterhouse that supplies Kentucky Fried Chicken. In the video, an employee tore the head off a chicken to write graffiti and squeezed birds until they exploded, according to the article.

A third reason for not eating meat is the impact meat consumption has on the environment. According to the Time article, it takes 7,000 pounds of water to grow seven pounds of feed, which produces one pound of feedlot beef. Around the world, wells are going dry producing crops for animals, instead of direct consumption by humans, according to the article. Also, the drive to produce more beef is one of the biggest reasons for deforestation.

According to the National Audubon Society, "Nearly half the water consumed in this country and 70 percent of the grain grown is used for livestock, mostly cattle. It takes almost 16 pounds of grass and grain to produce one pound of beef. If the land on which grain is grown were used to grow, say, black beans instead, it would generate 10 to 20 times as much protein."

There you have it: my reasons for turning my back on the consumption of animal flesh. So, if I roll my eyes and explain to you curious carnivores that I simply gave up meat because I don't like the taste, don't take offense. I'm not lying, and I certainly don't have a beef with you, I'm just being lazy.

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