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■ In my opinion

No tact in the Citi

As I was daydreaming my way down East 13th Avenue earlier this week, my thinking was interrupted by a well-dressed young man handing out fliers. I accepted one of the yellow handbills. It featured a Subway logo and the following beseechment:

"STUDENTS
FREE 6-INCH SUB!
13TH AND HILYARD

Participate in a 2 minute student promotion
Student ID required"

A few hours later, when my stomach began to grumble, I walked to the Subway to get my free sandwich. Inside the door to the right sat a professionally dressed man. The table at which he sat bore a banner with a prominent logo: Citi.

Recognizing the logo of the credit card company, I turned and walked out the door, deciding a six-inch sub wasn't worth the credit card leeches sucking me dry of personal information and sending piles of junk mail for months to come.

Credit card companies make a special point of targeting college students, who have loose spending habits and a lifetime of earnings ahead of them — possessors of a bachelor's degree can expect to earn an average of \$2.1 million over the course their working lives, according to the Census Bureau.

The companies' efforts have been highly successful. Three-quarters of 18- to 24-year-olds carry credit card debt from month to month, Knight Ridder reported. Incredibly, people in that age group spent nearly 30 percent of their 2001 earnings paying off debt.

Credit card debt tremendously impacts students, who often have college loan debt as well. This debt



CHUCK SLOTHOWER
TAKING ISSUE

pushes back the achievement of the American dream for many young people by delaying when they can buy houses and cars.

On top of that, credit cards push up prices for consumers. Credit card companies charge retailers every time a customer uses a card to make a purchase, and retailers pass on the increased cost to their customers.

Debit cards provide nearly all the benefits of credit cards without the usurious debt that piles on month after month. The only thing credit cards are good for, really, is spending money you don't have. And that's a bad thing.

The University has policies that regulate what credit card companies can do on campus. To reserve space on campus, they must go through the Scheduling and Event Services office. That department makes them pay for space — \$400 a day for a 10-by-10-foot spot at the intersection of East 13th Avenue and University Street or \$200 to \$300 for space in the EMU (the department charges nonprofit and information-only groups less money).

The University also forbids credit card companies from copying or photographing student IDs in an effort to protect students' privacy, EMU Director Dusty Miller said. He added that credit card solicitation on campus is "a huge issue."

"Honestly, it's a concern, and I think that's why we have established some safeguards that a vendor must sign to come on campus," he said.

However, what Citi has done is really quite clever. By standing on campus and handing out fliers that direct students to an off-campus location, the company doesn't have to pay the EMU. Then, when students go off-campus to Subway as the flier directs, all the little niceties and protections the University provides fall by the wayside.

It occurred to me that I might want to speak about this with our friendly local Citi representative. So I wandered back to Subway.

The friendly local Citi representative — his actual relationship to Citi-group, the world's largest financial services company according to the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, isn't clear — was inside the sub shop talking on his cell phone. He hung up.

"You want a free sub?" he said, pointing to the table with a stack of credit card applications.

I identified myself as a journalist, and he clammed up faster than a bowl of Mo's chowder.

"I'm not really allowed to discuss what I do," he said. "I could lose my job."

When my eyes wandered down to his photo ID tag, he stuffed it into his shirt faster than I would have presumed possible. But if you want to talk to him about why he's participating in a scam to get students hooked on credit cards — or if you want to sign up for a Citi card and a free sub — he, or someone just like him, will be at the Subway on 13th and Hilyard today from noon to 7 p.m.

chuckslothower@dailyemerald.com

■ Out loud

"That is a fucking landslide." — Future ASUO President **Adam Walsh** on April 15, after learning that his ticket won by 317 votes.

"I'm saying to the University, the larger campus, I can no longer have students pay for your land bank." — University Housing Director **Mike Eyster**, on using University Housing funds to purchase property for a non-housing purpose.

"Housing is trying to get the institution's attention about a real imperative — the need to improve our housing stock." — Vice President for Student Affairs **Anne Leavitt**, who oversees the housing department, on the issue of modernizing the residence halls.

"I'm so dirty now, but it's worth it, helping out a good cause." — Sophomore **Lauren Skansgaard**, after volunteering during Ben & Jerry's "Free Cone Day" on Wednesday, which helped raise money for charity.

"When a company wants students to go to Cancun and get drunk on film I certainly don't help them." — University EA company representative **Nick Stoolman**.

"I feel awkward from my interaction, but I value what he has brought to the community." — Graduate **Toby Hill-Meyer** on Wednesday, discussing a Eugene man discovered to have been impersonating a professor on campus.

"I promise they will eat something (they have) never tasted before. ... People will be surprised when they peel off the chocolate cover." — **Ryan Vise**, spokesman for the International Student Association, about his International Week event, "Food Factor," scheduled for today.

"The University of Oregon is an environmental leader nationwide and so it's fantastic that on Earth Day we were able to make a bold new initiative." — University Sustainability Coordinator **Steve Mital**, commenting Wednesday on the future of a wind-powered EMU on.

"Disadvantaged students really need all kinds of encouragement to get them involved in their own education and get them into higher ed when they're not likely to be able to pay for it." — Hillsboro **Sen. Charles Starr**, reacting favorably to Senate Bill 300 on April 13. The bill allows high school students to take post-secondary courses for college credit.

"The current medical leave policy is outdated and does not represent best practices for responding to students' need for medical leave to deal with serious health conditions." — A **notice** concerning changes to the University medical leave policy, which will be discussed April 25 in the EMU.

"How long will we have to go this alone?" — Human rights and environmental lawyer **Jerome Verdier**, speaking April 14 to the need for worldwide focus on Liberia's road toward democracy.

"It's a chance to be outside and get fresh air before I lock myself in my office all day." — Graduate student **Sarah Mazze** on Wednesday, discussing Earth Day and the benefits of alternative transportation.

— From Daily Emerald news reports

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■ Guest commentary

Liberalism in classroom produces a constructive look at 'objectivity'

Nicholas Wilbur's guest commentary, "Producing constructive liberalism" (ODE, April 8), effectively localized the phenomenon of liberalism in academia by discussing his personal experience at the University of Oregon. While I admire Wilbur's courage and thought in undertaking this loaded topic, I felt the commentary failed to address key issues surrounding this not-so-new trend of university liberalism.

First, I would like to make clear that when it comes to popular images of Bush-bashing, tree-hugging or plainly "liberal" professors, perception does not always equal reality. Still, the idea of the "academic left" reflects some degree of truth; an important question to ask, however, is "so what?"

It is not, as Wilbur so strongly put forth, an "injustice" that public universities are frequently politically charged environments. Political activism on college campuses, regardless of ideological affiliation, can be seen in part as a testament to professors' success in challenging students

to think critically about the world around them. While I admit that instructors (usually poor ones) may heuristically promote a "liberal" atmosphere toward these ends, championing a false sense of classroom "objectivity" is a far greater disservice to the student than taking a few jabs at George W. Bush. An obvious paradox of attempting to take the politics out of education is that it inevitably and unjustly thrusts the government into academia, constituting a major threat to free inquiry and expression.

Education should not necessarily, as Wilbur implies, function to "balance what is commonly known" with "critical liberalism" as much as it should work to prepare students for citizenship in a world that is complicated and ever-changing. Stimulating and promoting students' critical thinking skills is paramount to achieving this goal.

Perhaps most central to understanding the "dilemma" of university liberalism is a rejection of the assumption that students are passive, impressionable receptors of their professors'

"liberal" opinions. In fact, "liberal bias" in academia has a way of reinforcing and proliferating the views of conservative students just as it has a way of "disseminating" liberal ideology. To substantiate this assertion, one need not look further than the eye-rolling and frustrated devil's-advocating that represent daily acts of resistance to liberal idealism, anti-Bush diatribe or "political correctness" in the college classroom. My own experience, no less subjective than Wilbur's, leaves me questioning popular media images of the university freshman becoming politically "enlightened" or "corrupted" by leftist professors.

Finally, one cannot help but find humor in recent conservative attacks on liberal academia ostensibly trying to protect students while in reality belittling their own intellects. In order to reasonably discuss university liberalism, perhaps we must first abandon the romantic quest for true "objectivity" in the classroom.

Joe Feldman lives in Eugene