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## ■ In my opinion

### A complicated, expensive, rubric-ridden **farce**

Every once in a while, a government body realizes it has done something stupid and reverses course. We may be seeing the beginnings of such a reversal in the Oregon House of Representatives, which is considering five bills that would kill the Certificate of Initial Mastery, the Emerald reported Wednesday.

Oregon awards the CIM to high school students who meet certain standards in math, writing, science and speech. This useless education-standards regime was enacted by the Legislature in 1991 and has been ignored by everyone except professional educators ever since.

The CIM began with good intentions. Legislators sought to raise the quality of high school education and ensure that students who graduated from an Oregon high school would arrive at college prepared for what awaits them. In practice, however, teachers placed little emphasis on the CIM, which partially explains why fewer than one in three high school students earned a CIM this year. Instead, most teachers decided to spend their time teaching.

At my alma mater in Corvallis, teachers took the CIM somewhat seriously, meaning they'd occasionally dedicate one class period to meeting some CIM-related deadline. This typically resulted in students fabricating bullshit explanations for why a certain paper met a CIM requirement while the teacher pulled her hair out in the paper-strewn classroom in which 30 students tried to share one stapler.

The CIM wouldn't be so much of a joke if anyone actually used it, but no one really does. The University's Office



CHUCK SLOTHOWER  
TAKING ISSUE

of Admissions considers CIM scores as part of alternative admissions standards for students who did not complete 16 college-preparatory credits with a GPA of at least 3.25. But the CIM is only one of many factors admissions officers consider, and it doesn't seem to carry much weight — University Director of Admissions Martha Pitts told the Emerald the CIM's "main role is really in high school as a counseling tool."

While the Office of Admissions may use the CIM in some cases, employers don't use it all. Of all the jobs and internships for which I have applied and interviewed, not one potential employer has asked whether I earned a CIM (I did, dear reader, lest you suspect I have an ax to grind).

The CIM is a solution in search of a problem. Long ago, teachers invented these things called "grades." They rated students based on their performance in class, and if students passed they graduated to the next grade level.

After 12 of these grade levels, students who did well enough earned a "diploma," which meant they had completed their basic education. Students who sought to further their learning then applied to colleges, which determined based on their own criteria whether these students were ready for their institutions.

What a brilliant concept!

I suspect grade inflation played a role in the CIM's creation. Educators and legislators may have believed grades no longer provided an accurate picture of student achievement and that something additional was necessary. Hence the CIM, which at least has the advantage of showing whether students can write intelligibly and do basic math.

However, grades should matter and can matter if people care enough. The University's Charles H. Lundquist College of Business, for instance, instituted grade distribution guidelines in 2002 that sought to curb grade inflation. More drastically, Princeton University this year decided to cap the proportion of students who can earn A grades at 35 percent in each department, The Associated Press reported.

While those initiatives were undertaken at the university level, there's no reason high schools couldn't take similar measures. An even simpler way to deal with grade inflation would be to grade tougher and to make assignments more difficult. A complicated, expensive, rubric-ridden farce wasn't a good solution in 1991, and it isn't now.

Evaluating student performance is one of the most important and tricky aspects of a high school teacher's job. The Oregon House would only help the education system if it passed a bill eliminating the CIM, a move that would also save the state millions of dollars each year. And Democrats, who control the Senate and the governor's office, should recognize a good idea when they see one — even if it comes from a Republican-controlled chamber.

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## ■ Guest commentary

### Editorial reaming pope misleading

To the five members of the Emerald editorial board: Your opinion piece on the politics of Pope Benedict XVI ("Pope's life doesn't fit his 'special greeting,'" ODE, April 27) was shameful, disgraceful and pathetic. Attempting to pass off your ideas as enlightened, flawless truth is a disgrace to all writers. Your piece was extremely misleading, ignorant and unethical.

Before I correct your uninformed thought processes, I would like to just remind you about something the American media seem to forget: The issues discussed in your article and those surrounding your disdain for the new pope (abortion, gay marriage, the sex abuse scandal and salvation) are not open to change simply because the laity doesn't like them. The Church is not run the same way Hollywood is, in that whatever is popular and feels good is in. You non-Catholics should check yourselves before attempting to inform we, the faithful, on what our pope should be teaching.

You stated that the Pope's attempt at reaching out to Muslims was sad because he "barely" mentioned them

in a special greeting to other faiths. I recall a New York Times article in which the opening paragraph records Benedict XVI as being "grateful" for a Muslim presence at his investiture ceremony and hoped for a "growth of dialogue between Muslims and Christians" at local and international levels.

Later in your piece you claim the pope "denied the reality of ongoing sexual-abuse issues, calling the scandal a U.S. plot to degrade the Catholic faith." Again you are wholeheartedly incorrect in your assertion. Pope Benedict publicly decried the sex abuse by priests when he was quoted as saying, "How much filth there is in the church, and even among those who, in the priesthood, ought to belong entirely to (Christ)." He then scolded the media for focusing solely on the 1 percent of "filth" in the Church and never giving credit to the countless number of righteous deeds done in the Church. I find it funny that the media seem to forget who is the world's largest provider of private health care and education.

I will save readers time by skipping over the other factual errors that hit

on Benedict's history with the Hitler Youth movement. Anyone with a working knowledge of history understands that virtually all male German youths were in some way or another forced to join. With this in mind, you wrote, "It certainly seems anachronistic that Pope Benedict XVI should be working on such (interfaith) relationships considering his former position as a member of a hate organization."

This is not only trivial, it is asinine. Where is the logic in that statement? Are you actually suggesting that the leader of a 1.1 billion-person religious institution not work toward interfaith dialogue?

As my frustration continues to grow over the complete lack of respect on the part of five ignorant writers, I must remind myself of where you get your information: from the same ignorant American news media that report on issues unknown to themselves. I am sorry you do not have enough faith in your readers to allow them to decide issues for themselves.

Michael S. Tarascio  
is a University senior

## ■ Out loud

"It's not the main theme of Cinco de Mayo, but it's a fun party." — Victor Bostida, JR's Taqueria Street Faire vendor, discussing on Wednesday the American tradition of celebrating Cinco de Mayo with parties.

"I'm the luckiest man on Earth that I survived." — Holocaust survivor Les Aigner, speaking Tuesday night at a Holocaust Awareness Week event.

"It's a type of meth, speed pretty much. ... You want your good grades at any cost, and my grades have improved a lot since taking Adderall." — A University freshman on using the prescription drug Adderall.

"I actually need mine. ... I need it to get normal grades." — Freshman Elizabeth Wallace, explaining her position as a legal user of Adderall.

"Is it just because the squeaky wheel gets the grease? It is like one person votes 'no' and it all goes to shit." — ASUO Vice President Mena Ravassipour on Wednesday questioning why Senator Mike Sherman, who threatened to vote against the overall Senate rules changes because he said they were flawed, had the power to cause them to fail.

"The whole thing is still very surprising. I'm just kind of speechless." — Designated Driver Shuttle Co-Director Katy Lang on Monday discussing the two DDS dispatchers caught drinking on the job.

"A black student was telling a story, and the professor said, 'That's not the perspective we're looking for right now. It doesn't have any bearing to what we're talking about.'" — A College of Education graduate student, who asked not to be identified, during a rally Wednesday to shed light on allegations of discrimination within the COE.

"I think everybody knows this system doesn't function as it was intended to." — House Representative Linda Flores in a press release concerning a bill to abolish the Certificate of Initial Mastery.

"Novelty is having an Elvis Presley ID in your wallet. These Web sites make it easy for students to get sucked into committing a felony without realizing it." — Eugene Police Department officer Randy Ellis discussing the availability of fake IDs on the Internet.

"The Club team is a self-help organization. These runners compete because they really enjoy the sport. ... Club athletes are passionate about their sport on a different level than an intercollegiate athlete. It is the pure reason Club sports flourish." — Oregon Club running team coach Tom Heinonen.

"The next time someone makes a racist comment and you don't say anything, you aren't part of the problem, you are the problem." — "TJ" Leyden, a former neo-Nazi who spoke in the EMU Ballroom on Wednesday.

"In the end, calling something different is a separate but equal solution. If we are equal under the law, then why use a different word?" — Tim Smith, a plaintiff in a Basic Rights Oregon lawsuit that challenges the constitutionality of Measure 36.

— From Daily Emerald news reports

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