

■ Guest commentary

Quit kidding: Public relations does not belong in J-school

Tim Gleason, dean of the School of Journalism and Communication, and the Eugene Weekly have gotten into a published debate about the misplacing of public relations courses in the J-school. I comment on it because of my long personal experience in both fields. Though I earned a journalism degree from Northwestern University, I squandered that education as a public relations man for intercollegiate athletics, first at Northwestern, then at the University of Oregon.

My views on the debate may therefore have credence. My work as a sports information director was a benign version of the real travesty. My lies added an inch or two to a player's height, or 10 or 15 pounds to his weight, or withheld information about a key player's injury. Coaches insisted, thinking the spin could give them some hidden advantage. I loyally, and foolishly, complied.

That was petty. It's not petty when your government hires a public relations firm to change its image, as corporations and politicians long have done. Now it hits close to home with word that the University will start a "journalism" program away from the Eugene campus, at the University's Portland Center, focusing at the start on a program in public relations. That's playing a dangerous word game, as those entrusted with developing journalists

suggest that the two antithetical disciplines are synonymous.

A capable administrator and talented journalist, Gleason disregards principle to defend the indefensible in his letter to the Eugene Weekly (July 28). He claims teaching PR in a journalism school is part of "a clear statement of our commitment to journalism."

The hypocrisy — shared with most journalism deans nationally — is compounded by calling PR "communication management," then claiming that a public relations program in Portland sets the stage for a "much broader vision" of journalism.

Most journalists define their profession as getting facts on matters of public concern and presenting them in a straightforward, honest way. Public relations, by contrast, operates in behalf of a client, using facts selectively to paint as attractive an image as possible.

The very name of the educational program reflects an identity crisis. Most schools now are listed as School of Journalism and Communications. How very sly. Just add a word to the name and you justify being able to lump public relations, advertising, promotions, et al with journalism.

Most journalism administrators feel forced into the sham by budget needs. Some told me putting PR into journalism is dictated by money state

schools get from the number of students enrolled. Since PR has the reputation of paying better, most students enroll in public relations.

Significant journalists reinforce my contention. The late Fred Friendly, who was valued assistant to Edward R. Murrow decades ago, told me that it was a tragedy journalism education and public relations had to be connected at all. During my visit with NPR's Daniel Schorr, he said the same thing. Recent Northwestern Dean Ken Bode met with me during his short time in the dean's chair; my impression was that he agreed with separating journalism from PR, but did not want to rock the boat in such a sensitive matter.

The identity problem will persist as long as our public funding for education falls short, and journalism educators choose to use naming solutions for larger problems. That choice keeps journalism headed down a slope to meaningless identity.

The University could start a corrective effort by choosing to teach journalism, not public relations, at its Portland Center. All schools could help by following one of their basic guidelines: conciseness. Drop that unnecessary word, Communications.

George Beres is a 1955 graduate of Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism.



Treatment Services for the Chemically Dependent

541-343-2993

687 Cheshire Ave. Eugene OR 97402

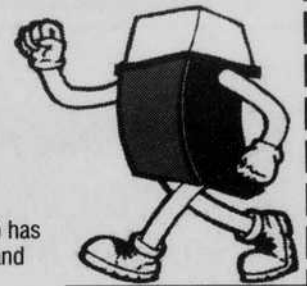
Strengthening
Our Community
One Family at a Time

- Men and Women
- Teen Start (Girls 12—18 years)
- Child Development Center
- Alcohol and Drug Treatment

Call for an Assessment

This coupon is worth \$3 off the purchase of any remanufactured inkjet or toner cartridge

**CARTRIDGE REFILLS
SAVE \$3.00**



- Cartridge City (formerly Redundant Cartridge) has been serving the UO community since 1989 and we're locally owned!
- While-U-Wait service, usually in about 20 minutes.
- 100% Money-Back Satisfaction Guarantee
- If we can't beat the lowest price in town, it's FREE!
- We'll accept ANY other competitors' coupon or offer.

Open 7 days
Mon-Fri: 8-5
Sat & Sun: 10-3

We're directly across from the UO Bookstore, so you get fast service!

Cartridge City
Fast...
Cheap...
Reliable...

541.284.5680 844 East 13th Avenue

Offer expires March 31, 2006 / Good only at UO campus store / Some restrictions may apply

OREGON DAILY EMERALD your independent student newspaper

UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER

WELCOME
LAW/NEW/RETURNING STUDENTS

**WE KEEP DUCKS HEALTHY
IN BODY AND MIND.**

HERE'S HOW WE DO IT:

- ONSITE PHYSICIANS & NURSE PRACTITIONERS
- FREE FPEP WOMEN/MEN'S HEALTH CARE
- LOW COST PHARMACY
- PHYSICAL THERAPY & SPORTS MEDICINE
- BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING
- COUNSELING
- TRAVEL CLINIC
- FREE CHOLESTEROL SCREENING LAB
- TOBACCO CESSATION SUPPORT
- DENTAL HEALTH CLINIC
- ...AND MUCH MORE!

SUMMER HOURS

MWThF: 8 A.M.-4:30 P.M.

Tu: 9 A.M.-4:30 P.M.

Sa-Su: 10 A.M.-2 P.M. FOR URGENT CARE

TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT, OR AFTER HOURS, CALL 346-2770

**OPEN DURING
UPCOMING
REMODEL**



UNIVERSITY
OF OREGON