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In my opinion

Carry guns with caution

When I first heard about the shooting, I had just left the Indigo District. I didn't really believe that anyone could get shot there. I put faith in the people who were telling me the story. I knew it wasn't just gossip, but it didn't seem that something like that was possible — here.

Eugene is a safe place to live. I feel safe walking around at night. But for all the students new to the University, their first year in Eugene began with a shooting.

To be clear, the shooting was an accident. An unruly patron refused to leave the bar at closing time, prompting a scuffle with the bar staff. What makes the story frightening is that the patron, Matthew James Hangsleben, then pulled out a 9 mm pistol. The staff wrestled him to the ground, trying to get the gun out of his hand when it accidentally fired. Hangsleben is in jail now, and charges are being pressed by the man whose head was grazed by the stray bullet.

But the issue here is not crime and punishment. What makes someone think that pulling a gun on a bouncer will really allow them to stay after last call? Why would anyone bring a gun to a bar in the first place? Most importantly, how will our community react?

Hangsleben's actions do not seem to make any sense at all. This may be because he was in violation of just about all of the National Rifle Association's guidelines for safe gun use, including the three fundamental rules: "Keep the gun pointed in a safe direction, keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot and keep the gun unloaded until ready to use." If Hangsleben had abided by these fundamentals, an innocent bystander would not have been injured.

The NRA also disapproves of the idea of taking your gun out with you for a night of drinking: "Alcohol, as well as any other substance likely to impair normal mental or physical bodily functions, must not be used before or while handling or shooting guns."

The man at Indigo was obviously irresponsible in carrying and using a 9 mm weapon. His carelessness led to hu-



ARMY FETH
RHETORIC CHECK

man injury and damage to a beloved local business. But, according to The Register-Guard, Hangsleben was issued a concealed weapon's license by Lane County two months ago. Receiving this license is no easy task. Background checks are run by Lane County, state and FBI officers, according to records officer Richard Trimble. The local records officers are also in charge of processing fingerprints, federal firearms and explosive applications, and registering sex offenders.

With so many people looking in so many places, a person has to have a pretty clean record to receive a license. So what happened to this guy?

There are currently 8,972 concealed handgun license holders in Lane County. In addition to the background check, applicants must also prove competency with a firearm. This can be proven by completion of safety and training classes through the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the NRA or law enforcement training. Competency can also be proved by providing evidence of experience in organized shooting or military experience.

Something must have happened to Hangsleben to make him act the way he did Sunday morning, and someone should have caught it. Sadly though, there is room for error in the concealed weapon licensing process.

When applying for a concealed weapon license, an automatic rejection results if a misdemeanor or felony is discovered during the background check. The applicant will also be rejected if they have been found mentally ill or have been committed to a mental health institution. If the applicant pleads insanity to misdemeanor or felony charges, that does not necessarily warrant a re-

jection from Lane County, according to Concealed Handgun License Requirements ORS 166.291.

This is a strange loophole. A person's mental state has an immeasurable impact on how he or she acts. If someone has previously blamed his or her socially unacceptable actions on insanity, is it safe to allow him or her to carry a gun? Of course each case is different, but the possibility of a gun slipping into the wrong shoulder holster is there. Even if someone has never publicly declared insanity, his or her mental state could be suffering. Take into account road rage and general bad days, and it begins to sound like no one should be allowed to have a concealed weapon.

I do not agree with this. Much as the NRA rubs me the wrong way, I kind of like their minimal rules attitude. This is America, and we have the right to bear arms. I don't think the average person needs an AK-47 or a machine gun, but I think that if you want, and are responsible and well-behaved enough, you should be able to carry a weapon. The NRA loves to stress the point that a criminal's number one deterrent is the thought of an armed victim. They cite FBI data that shows states with right-to-carry laws, like Oregon, have 24 percent lower total violent crime, 22 percent lower murder rates, 37 percent lower robbery rates and 20 percent lower aggravated assault rates.

I hope this incident at the Indigo District does not prompt too many people to shake their fists and yell, "There ought to be a law!" Most gun crimes are committed by criminals, not licensed citizens. What happened this weekend is terrible, but I doubt it will start a trend. Gun control is not the sole responsibility of the government — armed citizens must do their part too. If you do own a gun, you should be a role model and an exemplary citizen. When the line between armed citizens and criminals begins to blur, the right to bear arms will too.

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INBOX

Student government rallies for education budget

Budget reconciliation is a special process that Congress uses to swiftly approve tax cuts and administer changes to the funding of entitlement programs. In April of this year, Congress suggested to several committees that it was necessary for them to cut \$34.7 billion over five years from entitlement programs such as Medicaid, Social Security and student loan programs.

The suggested cut from students loan programs amounts to around \$9 billion. That cut would not only drastically affect the way in which students consolidate their loans, but it would for many students eliminate even the thought of pursuing a higher education.

Access to higher education is of the utmost importance in an economy that rewards merit and experience; without the opportunity of school, many citizens would not have a means to gaining the

success that is so valued in our society. Join USSA (United States Students Association) and the ASUO in our fight against budget reconciliation.

Kyla Coy
ASUO Vice President

A call for open scientific debate on intelligent design

I went to the University Convocation on Sunday to hear Sylvester James Gates Jr. speak about string theory. It was a disappointing presentation. There were two things that were disappointing: 1) Gates didn't spend more time speaking about his area of expertise, and 2) Gates spent too much time speaking about something he apparently has not researched.

Gates implied that the percentage of scientists who believe in intelligent design is about the same as the percentage of ordinary people, of the general public, who believe in the flat

earth. This is not accurate. Nature, a scientific journal, reported in 1998 that there are a number of scientists that believe in intelligent design. Additionally, Nature reported that between 35 and 40 percent of scientists believe in a God that communicates to people.

I do, however, agree with Gates' opinion that it is certainly time for the scientific community to openly debate the intelligent design theory.

Brian Michaels
Science teacher, Springfield

CORRECTION

In the Sept. 28 Emerald article "Eugene's named theories discussed at Convocation," the Emerald should have defined Einstein's theory of special relativity as dealing with what happens to time and space as one approaches the speed of light.

The Emerald regrets the error.

Editorial

Diversity plan still proves its deficiency

Spring term, less than 13 percent of University students identified themselves as ethnic minorities. Around the same time, the Oregon Students of Color Coalition reminded our campus that there are five University departments with no tenure-track faculty members of color.

Most agree that the University has some serious work to do in the quest for racial diversity. Unfortunately, most solutions produced thus far have been ineffective.

In at least one instance, the University used legally questionable means to foster diversity in lower-division English and math classes. Classes taught through the Office of Multicultural Academic Services reserved spots for students registered as ethnic minorities, thereby making those classes unavailable to non-minority students until the first day of class.

University administrators changed that policy this summer, allowing students involved in any OMAS program priority access to the smaller classes.

The Emerald applauds this decision. Holding class spaces for racial minorities to ensure a level of diversity may provide a comforting environment for students who feel marginalized, but such a policy is unfair.

As pointed out by non-minority students, the law says that discrimination based on race is discrimination based on race, even if that race is white. A University that engages in racially charged administrative decisions is just setting itself up for trouble, and it should come as little surprise that the U.S. Department of Education is now conducting an investigation.

Regardless of this change, the time has certainly come to critically evaluate how our University deals with diversity.

As explained by the Emerald Editorial Board last spring, the University's Five-Year Diversity Plan simply is not feasible. Greg Vincent, then vice provost for institutional equity and diversity, provided the University with a series of good ideas rather than a solid guide for future action.

The diversity plan was even called "frightening and offensive" by some University faculty members. Vincent's document was strong in its promotion of the term "cultural competency," especially when evaluating faculty seeking tenure. When the diversity plan fell short of defining cultural competency, faculty members understandably took a stand to protect themselves from judgment based on such abstract, subjective criteria.

After the administration rejected the first draft of the plan, Vincent himself admitted that many of the plan's recommendations needed to be "revised and refined."

A university is an institution dedicated to education and fostering cultural and worldly awareness. In such an environment, it is key that everyone involved has an equal opportunity to achieve. Answering potential racism with a series of policies that are either impractical or possibly illegal and racist in themselves, is no way to create diversity.

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