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## ■ In my opinion

# Take the corporation out of rejuvenation

It has been more than six weeks since Katrina devastated New Orleans and other coastal communities in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. People are returning to their homes, or what is left of them, to face an uncertain future. Many of those people have lost their livelihood. Schools are closed, city governments are broke and many small businesses have been completely destroyed. The Gulf Coast needs to start over.

This could be a good thing. New Orleans especially could use a clean slate. The public school system before Katrina was a disaster, with schools literally falling apart. The police force was plagued with corruption. There was widespread poverty. The giant cloud of Katrina's destruction was lined with the silver of rebuilding.

Only that silver lining won't necessarily help the people hit the hardest by the hurricane. President Bush assured America that the rebuilding jobs would go to people from the devastated areas, but that may turn out to be an empty promise. Immediately after Katrina, FEMA signed millions of dollars worth of no-bid contracts to huge corporations like Halliburton.

The new acting director of FEMA, David Paulison, assured the Senate on an Oct. 6 visit with the Homeland Security Committee that many of these contracts will go under review, and possibly be put up for bid to allow locals an opportunity to benefit from rebuilding. This is a step in the right direction, but as it turns out, only the four biggest no-bid contracts will be affected.

Even where there was competition, Gulf Coast companies were not always given a fair deal, let alone the advantage they deserve. For example, Sen. Carl M. Levin of Michigan noted that a Mississippi modular classroom builder (remember the portables in high school?) lost out on a contract with the Army Corps of Engineers to build 300 classrooms. The deal went to an Alaskan company charging twice as much.

To make matters worse, President Bush suspended the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931 in the affected areas. The



ARMY FETH  
RHETORIC CHECK

Davis-Bacon Act requires that government contractors pay workers the prevailing local wage. The effects of this act were almost immediate. Levin brought to light the fact that union maintenance workers at the Superdome and Convention Center were replaced with out-of-state workers. These new employees earn a lower wage and receive no benefits.

Davis-Bacon was there to prevent just such things from happening. The government overpays corporations for work those same corporations underpay their employees to do.

Another one of Bush's rebuilding proposals is the Gulf Opportunity Zone, which gives tax breaks to small businesses as an incentive for economic growth. This is a good idea, but the tax breaks will also be available to big business, including casinos. Mississippi has already backed down on some of its strict gambling rules and allowed formerly floating casinos to build on the coast. Now Bush is trying to give those casinos the economic incentives Mississippi has consciously denied them. Casinos may provide jobs and revenue to communities, but they also contribute to gambling addiction.

The advantage big business has in America is terrifying at times. A new bankruptcy law goes into effect Monday that makes it more difficult for citizens to default on debts. Just after this law passed through congress, United Airlines defaulted on its employee pension plan. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 4.3 million people have fallen into poverty since 2000. The Washington Post reported that CEO salaries increased 313 percent be-

tween 1990 and 2003. High gas prices for consumers mean big profits for oil companies.

Corporate interests have become more important than the interests of American citizens. The media do not report fully on this disturbing trend because they are part of corporate America. For example, in 2004, Sinclair Broadcasting Group, owner of 62 local TV stations nation wide, forbid seven of its ABC stations to air the April 30 episode of Nightline, where Ted Koppel read the names and showed the pictures of the then 721 American soldiers who had lost their lives during the invasion and occupation of Iraq. The special episode was a tribute to fallen soldiers. They gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country, and national recognition was appropriate. A statement from Sinclair read, "The action appears to be motivated by a political agenda designed to undermine the efforts of the United States in Iraq." A powerful corporation was allowed to make a moral judgment for citizens; this may be legal, but I cannot see how. The action of Sinclair here blatantly violates the Bill of Rights' guarantee of a free press.

An informed citizenry is essential to democracy. Equality of opportunity is essential to capitalism. Neither of these ideals is guaranteed in today's America. Now there is an entire city to be built from the ground up. It is the perfect environment to build a shining example of modern America, but it is also in danger of turning into a corporate playground.

So, as citizens, we must keep an eye on New Orleans. We cannot let the current corporate and political environment dictate the future of this unique city. It is the people of the Gulf Coast who make it what it is. After the Chicago fire of 1871, the displaced residents rebuilt their own city. The same should be done now. No one knows the land better, no one cares as much and no one deserves it more than the locals.

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## ■ Editorial

# Harassment policy update aids faculty and students

The relationship between a student and his or her professor is a key component of the college experience. Both parties must work closely together and, ideally, have mutual respect for one another. But what happens when this relationship becomes romantic or sexual?

Since 1999, an average of five sexual harassment cases have been reported per year at Oregon University System campuses, which are used by about 80,000 students and 12,000 faculty and staff, according to an OUS press release.

Many question whether a student and a professor should ever engage in a romantic relationship, and understandably so. Although college-age students are often as mature (and possibly as old as or older than) their professors, there is always the distinct possibility that adding sexual politics to an academic environment will result in power play.

Students are at risk because professors have control over their academic standing. Yet professors are at risk if a consensual relationship later is interpreted in a courtroom as a case of sexual harassment.

New OUS sexual harassment guidelines approved last month should help clear up some of the aforementioned touchy issues involved in romantic relationships between professors, students or any two University members with different levels of academic or administrative power.

By September 2006, the University must implement the new OUS guidelines, including a mandate that such "power differential" relationships be immediately reported to a supervisor.

The policies were created after a female Western Oregon University student sued a professor at the school, alleging he sexually harassed her. He claimed they had a consensual romantic relationship, an assertion she denied.

The new OUS regulations should prevent such situations from occurring because any romantic relationship between a professor and a student would immediately be reported. As long as such reports are filed and available, there will be significantly less confusion as to the consensual, or non-consensual, nature of a relationship.

This policy is a good mechanism for universities to tackle the potential problem of sexual harassment. Professors accused of sexual harassment will have some protection from false allegations, but students will be safer as well. University officials are now responsible for ensuring that students need not fear academic ramifications should a personal relationship with a professor turn sour.

Although some may suggest the new policy violates personal privacy, it is important to remember that the only time such a relationship report would be analyzed would be upon a sexual harassment report. Universities are expressly not allowed, for instance, to fire a professor if he or she reports a relationship with a student.

These reporting policies also are not unique to universities. Some businesses require employees to sign legal agreements before entering consensual relationships.

Thankfully, OUS policy-makers realized it is impossible to completely prevent romantic relationships between students and professors on campuses. Moreover, as long as both partners are making decisions as consenting adults, it is hardly the responsibility of any university to engage in such regulation.

The OUS policy does assist in creating an atmosphere where romantic relationships have less chance of influencing either a student's grade or a professor's reputation.

## INBOX

### Emerald free to reflect varied opinions

In response to Devlin Croal's open letter of critique ("Decision to run offensive cartoon misguided," ODE, Oct. 10), I propose the idea that a newspaper that doesn't create controversy from time to time is not worth reading. What is the value in reading what everyone agrees with? I concede that the Emerald's primary purpose is to inform and reflect the University population, but to charge the Emerald with Mr. Croal's values of ethical integrity does not allow the paper to reflect divergent views. This paper is reflective of the many views that work to create it. The Oregon Daily Emerald is not the keeper of one's singular mores but instead holds appeal in various ways to its many readers.

The nature of a university is to be exposed to alternative views and have the freedom to decide what you will receive and what you will reject, while respecting the rights of others to have varied perspectives. There will always be a veritable butt to

every joke, and no joke is by all means funny to everyone. This is not to say we have the right to stipulate that one's own personal opinions ought to be reflected in the newspaper he or she reads when that paper is meant to be a reflection of a multitude of opinions.

Brian Tuohy  
University senior

### An open letter to journalists of Eugene

Shame! Does the University administration have the Emerald editorial board so badly whipped? That is certainly how it appears. Since when did the University publication take a stand against student protest? Since when was objective journalism so flagrantly violated?

Brian Bogart has produced clear evidence of the weapons research that the Emerald editors "hope" isn't being conducted. He has much of that evidence available at his location across from Johnson Hall, open and available to journalists and the general public alike. Instead of comfortably

sitting in an institution that conducts deadly weapons research, Brian is trying to change the University he cares about. The field work that Bogart is doing is far more valuable and educational than reading texts and taking tests on a subject he is already an expert on (with multiple college degrees). But the Emerald editorial board, the body in charge of dispensing our school's public information, would rather we all sit blind and happy in our ivory tower. Wow. Great journalism.

The University of Oregon has the opportunity to be a great school, a leader in a new progressive movement. Brian Bogart's new organization, centered on strikeforpeace.org, has some very interesting new ideas and a lot of very well-substantiated information. I have one message for the University administration and the Emerald: The students are angry with the University's, state's and country's priorities, and as our public servants, we demand that you provide a fair forum for our dissent.

Julian Michels  
University student