

OUR VIEW

Program will help fuel ag engine

The new major created by Eastern Oregon University that focuses on agriculture entrepreneurship is not only a good thing — it is one of those innovative ideas that occasionally comes along with bright prospects for the future.

The four-year program will begin in 2022 and will mix pieces of agriculture science and business and include courses in marketing, finance and human resources along with farming and biology.

The idea is such a good one it is difficult to understand why it wasn’t developed before now. Such a program fits perfectly into the predominant economy — and culture — of Eastern Oregon, and it will also be a solid platform for other like programs in the future.

Driving the move was input from major agriculture businesses in the region — such as J.R. Simplot Co. — that communicated a need for workers with specific skills the program will be able to teach.

In a sense, the new degree is a mix of education and business and is exactly the right program at exactly the right time that will help students across the region who might not otherwise see college as a way forward.

That problem — finding a path for some students who are geared toward agriculture to higher education — isn’t just a local challenge. Across Eastern Oregon hundreds of students each year graduate and don’t choose college because they are don’t see it as a match for their skills or interests.

Yet this program can provide part of the answer.

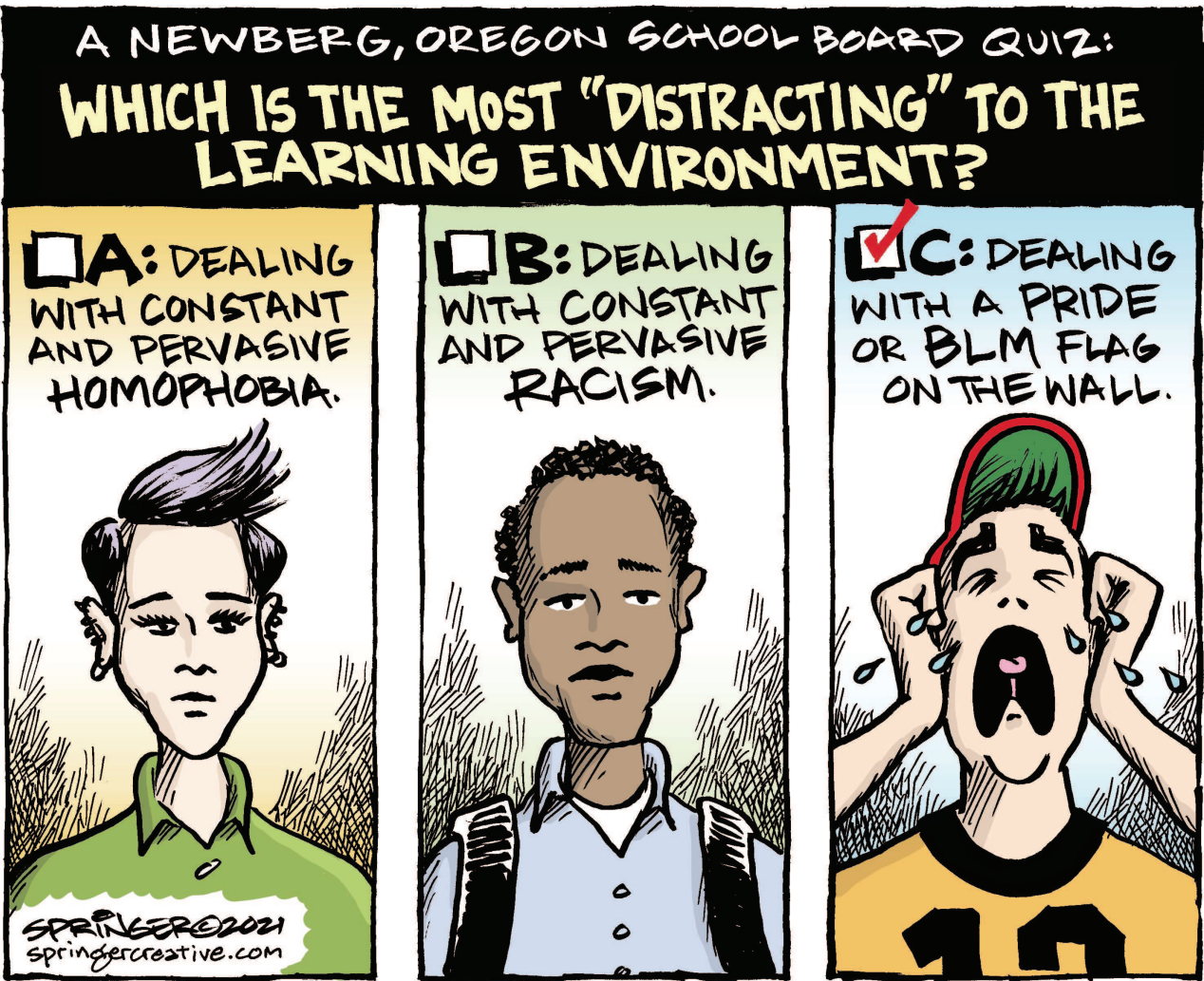
The program will provide students with a viable path toward higher education, and they will be able to enter the workforce with a specific set of abilities that match our biggest industries.

Agriculture throughout Eastern Oregon is the predominate economic engine. To ensure that engine continues to function at a high rate, we need more younger people who are interested in agriculture.

Another key element to the program is that agriculture has changed. Now, it isn’t enough to have a desire to farm or ranch or to move into an existing family business. Today, our farmers and ranchers need to have a good business background and know their science. This program will help develop those skills in students.

Agriculture, food and fiber account for 9.1% of Oregon’s overall economy, fueling 371,300 jobs. That’s a big footprint in our state and our region.

Eastern Oregon University made a wise choice with this new program, and we are excited to see how it will pan out in the future.



LETTERS

River Democracy Act authors have vision

I am writing to give voice to those who have none, our non-human relatives, and many other members of our community who support protections that would be provided by Sen. Ron Wyden’s River Democracy Act.

As a resident of Halfway — Nimiipuu Lands — I am happy to be joined in that support by many friends, neighbors and, importantly, the Nez Perce Tribe.

Clean, cold waters sustain rich aquatic habitats that produce fish and wildlife in diversity and abundance. That so many rural voices have nominated not just big iconic rivers but also smaller tributaries for protection bespeaks a collective wisdom in seeing our water cycle in a holistic manner.

Opposition to including these reaches is not unlike treating a cardiovascular problem by solely focusing on the arteries: a bad practice with a likely sorry outcome.

I invite readers to consider a case study I observed in the mid-2000s while working on salmon recovery with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Pendleton.

Studies of the Umatilla River demonstrated railroads and highways blocked the flow of surface and groundwater into the main channel. This disconnection prevented the mixing of cooler waters with the warming waters of the main stream, and degraded the habitat for cold water fish species.

The tribe’s salmon restoration strategy aimed to reconnect these flows by protecting headwaters and breaching barriers across the floodplain.

Thermal pollution is a leading factor impairing the quality of our surface waters. This is a problem for humans and nonhumans alike. If we genuinely care about protecting the values of our waterways, it would be irresponsible to exclude tributaries, intermittent streams and wetlands from the protections of the River Democracy

Act. I applaud Wyden and his river nominators for their vision.

Michael Beaty
Halfway

I am in charge of my own health

This is America — land of the free. I have a right to vaccinate or not, wear a mask or not. Because I don’t put on a mask or won’t subject myself to an unproven vaccine does not mean that I’m a bad person, nor am I guilty of any wrongdoing.

If someone is concerned about getting COVID or is compromised in any way, they should wear a mask (if masks work), social distance, get vaccinated. Take care of yourself as necessary for you. Don’t stipulate what I should do.

I’m not responsible for the general public’s health, nor are they responsible for mine.

Yes, the hospitals get crowded. It’s not necessarily the available beds, but the fact that there’s not enough staff. Once the vaccine mandate is enforced, there is a good possibility of a huge shortage of hospital care staff. I stand behind those that choose that route. No one should be forced to take a vaccine as a requirement for employment.

Our local economy has been devastated with this mask mandate and social distancing. Let the individual decide. They can go into that business or not. It is their choice. Don’t punish the businesses because they don’t mandate mask wearing in their store: They should not be “mask police.”

All we hear on the news is COVID, COVID, COVID, supported by advertising to get the vaccine. It’s odd to be so inundated with “vaccine rah-rah-rah advertising” when America’s COVID death toll is actually smaller than that of heart disease or cancer deaths.

According to news reports, COVID has claimed approximately 600,000-plus American lives. Of course, we need to consider “presumed and confirmed” COVID deaths (cdc.gov).

About 655,000 Americans die

from heart disease each year (cancer.org).

In 2020 there were 606,520 cancer deaths in the United States, and in 2021 the estimated cancer deaths are 608,570 (aha.org).

Drug overdose deaths in the U.S. in 2020 was an estimated 93,331, including 69,710 involving opioids, according to data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Am I supposed to interfere with people’s lives to keep them from getting heart disease? How about cancer? Should I run roughshod over drug dealers?

Nope. Everyone should take care of themselves.

Regarding masking and the COVID vaccine — I am in charge of my health. It’s my choice.

Lesley Neuman
Lostine

Please think of those you care about, not just yourself

Protesters demand freedom from mask and vaccine mandates, claiming personal choice. For most medical decisions, I would agree.

However, the coronavirus is highly contagious and the anti-vax community chooses to ignore this fact. When you become infected, OK fine, that resulted from a personal choice not to protect yourself. But then you will likely infect a few more people — who will it be? Someone you live with? A child? Your co-worker? Someone you sit behind in church? Someone in line with you at the grocery?

I am mystified by your version of choice, which could rob others of their choice to remain healthy. Please think of those you care about, not just yourself.

By the way, Oregon and Washington have consistently been in the top 10 states for lowest incidences of coronavirus cases as a percentage of population. Oregon is currently fifth best. Our governors and their expert advisers deserve credit.

Diane Alexander
Walla Walla, Washington

LETTERS

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