

student consider as maligned a minority on the UO campus as any other).

Someone offers Femi-Nazi Appreciation Day. (Warning: The notes on these meetings read much like an Archie Bunker monologue. There's a feeling of an old boys' club, only there are also Republican girls who blithely refer to themselves as such — girls.) "Yeah, we could have Margaret Sanger Appreciation Day," says veteran CR member and grad student Scott Austin. "She believed African Americans should be sterilized ..." (His logic, he later explains to me, is that Sanger was both a feminist and someone who advocated for eugenics, showing that all things feminist do not necessarily equal all things good.)

There is just one awkward beat before CR chair Jarrett White groans, "Aw, geez ... Does anyone have anything else?" The group eventually decides to rally behind a Cold War Appreciation Day, with visions of reconstructing a segment of the Berlin Wall to destroy in celebratory recognition of communism's fall.

As chair of CR, White carries a gavel at most

but that schedule conflicts this year have limited their participation.)

Eugene born and bred, as well as a grad of North Eugene High School, White is the youngest of four children born to his businessman father and UO-employed mother. He wouldn't describe himself as a necessarily flawless academic type. In fact, he concedes, his grades played a factor in changing his major recently after three years of study from business administration to political science. "I just had too much on my plate," he says. "I'll be the first to admit that my grades weren't cutting it. But I do still want to go to graduate school and get a business finance degree."

With regards to how White describes his values, he says, "I've just noticed I was always a little more hard-nosed about things. Not necessarily less empathetic, but having more focus on individualism, that people don't have a responsibility to society necessarily — we have a responsibility to ourselves and to our families; if we can take care of that, then we shouldn't have to deal with society because then everything takes care of itself."

ous political ambitions, White says, "I started out wanting to change the system. I see now that I can inspire people to an extent, but politics is really my passion, not my work. I just love to challenge people. I love to make people mad."

CR is vice-chaired by Gabrielle Guidero, a 26-year-old geology major. She and her husband, Michael (also 26 and an LCC student), are both active members of CR. She is the picture of professional pretty, with fair skin that glows next to neatly bobbed dark hair. Her fine features, however, belie a shrewdness and mettle that are dedicated to her conservative values.

Having been born in Eugene and later moving to Bend, she does not believe that Eugene is really a cross-section of political beliefs. "People in Eugene think they're a cross-section but it's taboo to call oneself conservative here."

She explains, "After 12 years in central Oregon, my political beliefs really got clear on returning to Eugene for college. I wasn't terribly active until I came here. In fact, I thought fairly differently in high school, and I attribute a lot of that to teachers pushing beliefs on me, stating

conservatism doesn't just dress in khakis and polo shirts, pearls and shoulder-padded suits anymore. In his heavy black hooded sweatshirt, dark jeans, and style-y black eyeglass frames, Szabo still looks the part of his alterna-punk days. And Phillips, raised in an "incredibly conservative" and religious home, seems quite the bohemian in vintage clothes, bobbed curls and stylized make-up touches. I was shocked when I saw them with CR, thinking, "Is this what conservative looks like?" (On a related note, neither Phillips nor Szabo listens to country music or Christian rock. She loves Elvis, and his musical tastes still tend toward the obscure. Out of about 20 students I talked to for this story, three expressed a distinct preference for country music — Toby Keith is considered "the man," and only one mentioned Christian rock as a favorite.)

Within the Campus Republicans, there are a few students who have taken political involvement past the club stage to the next level — running for public office. In 2002, at the suggestion of Lane County Republican's Bob Avery, strapping senior and brother of the Delta Upsilon fra-

'Any time revolutionaries, like, win anything, things don't get better; they either stay the same or get a whole lot worse.' — Lucas Szabo

meetings. With his dark hair and eyebrows and the angles of his face, he is reminiscent of a young Tom Cruise — the comparison is even more apt given the ease he seems to enjoy being at the front of the room and his skill at holding his audience's attention. He keeps the CR meetings running at a snappy pace, shooting sarcastic zingers at members for a laugh, and pounding the gavel when he feels the meetings have become too loose and unwieldy. He insists on individual member participation on all projects, but is able to do so in a manner that is part camp counselor, part dictator.

On more than one occasion, statements that could easily be construed as slurs against women or people of color fly stealth through meeting discussions. When I ask White about this one-on-one, he says, "We don't take ourselves too seriously. We are not PC, and [the idea is] not to be afraid that we're not PC. I might say stuff, but I expect and can take this stuff coming at me, too." (It should be noted, there are no students of color in the College Republicans to send zingers in response, though the makeup of the club meetings I attend includes one-third to one-half women. I am assured more than once that CR did, at one time, have African-American members,

From a very young age, White says jokingly (or ironically, depending on your leanings), "I was brainwashed by my brother." Twelve years older, this brother, White explains, has been "talking to me about politics since I was, like, 5." It all started when White was in kindergarten. "I went up to my brother and said, 'You know John, I'm mad. I don't think that it's very fair that some kids at school get free lunches, and some people have to pay for it.' And so, that was my first real conservative thing."

This is White's second year as CR chair. Like many other students in CR, he sought out the club almost as soon as he arrived on the UO campus in hopes of finding conservative cohorts in an academic culture of popular liberalism. He has had his share of run-ins with professors and classmates over differing political views, even, he says, having been called a fascist outright by one teacher. "There's elitism on both sides," he says, referring to the common conception that Republicans are only rich, older, white males, and that liberals accept all views.

When I ask about whether or not he has seri-

them as facts rather than beliefs. I think it took becoming a adult to realize that other adults don't know everything."

Guidero is not the only convert to conservatism: Twenty-three-year-old political science major and Clackamas Community College transfer Lucas Szabo (who in the ultimate irony looks the tiniest bit to me like George Stephanopoulos) would have characterized himself at one time as part of the "anti-capitalist/anarchist scene."

"But," he explains, "as time went on and going through classes and you know, having life experiences, I kind of rejected, like, the whole revolutionary framework. A professor I had pretty much hit it on the head one time: We were talking about the Khmer Rouge, this was a class on Vietnam and foreign policy stuff, and he said, 'If anyone comes along preaching the utopian ideal, watch out.' I started to read more about communism and radicalism and stuff and it's just based on a bunch of false pretenses. Any time revolutionaries, like, win anything, things don't get better; they either stay the same or get a whole lot worse."

Szabo and his girlfriend Adrienne Phillips are visual proof that

ABOUT THE BENJAMINS

Conservative student groups find support, including in some cases support of a financial nature, from organizations such as The Collegiate Network, The Heritage Foundation and The Leadership Institute. Such organizations offer ways for student groups to network with conservatives on both regional and national levels; in the case of organizations such as The Collegiate Network and The Leadership Institute, students may receive funding to back such projects as conservative student newspapers or sponsoring conservative speakers to make appearances on campus. (According to *The Washington Times* article "Rebels on the Right" by Steve Saxton, as many as 10 conservative publications have sprouted on campuses across the nation, bringing the total to something like 70 conservative publications nationwide. The UO's *Oregon Commentator* has in the past received funding through The College Network, but they rely now, like other UO groups, primarily on their cut of funds from the ASUO Incidental Fees pool.)

Phil Palisoul, a recent graduate of UC San Diego (after transferring there from the UO), currently works out of La Jolla, Calif., as West Coast coordinator for the Campus Leadership Program. His job is to visit conservative campus groups up and down the West Coast and offer support through the Leadership Network.

During one College Republican meeting I attend, Palisoul is courting the UO CRs with opportunities for the group to learn how to improve outreach skills to grow the CR club, as well as how to use grassroots strategies to mobilize that club and continue getting the conservative message out to the masses. Palisoul says that he's seen growth in conservatism up and down his West Coast beat, and that he's seen particular growth and activity in the UO club since his days in Oregon. The Leadership Institute could be a way for UO to plug into this bigger college movement toward conservatism.

In the end, the money flows both ways between student groups and support networks: A November 2003 article by Meghan O'Donnell for The Center on Public Integrity shows that the College Republican National Committee, a group made up entirely of college students and recent graduates, has become one of the most successful youth-oriented fundraisers in the country, spending more than \$10.6 million during the past two years to promote Republican candidates and issues.



Meeting of the
UO College Republicans.