The Portland Spectator, May 2011

Portland State University. Student Publications Board

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/spectator

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/spectator/1

This Book is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Portland Spectator by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.
The Portland Spectator serves the student body by providing fact-based and well-researched conservative arguments alongside in-depth news coverage of issues important to the student community. We encourage and co-facilitate a diverse marketplace of ideas filled with thought-provoking discussions.

It's been another great year at the Spectator. We've increased our readership, as well as the news content of our magazine. I happen to think that those are positively correlated events. Because we are a student-funded publication, we have an obligation to provide a service to the entire student community. In order to do so, the Spectator has increased its news coverage and drawn a distinct line between news and opinion pages. Our job is also to fill the niche of conservative thought on campus—our opinion pages clearly reflect conservative values, but, this does not mean that we have to cover student news through a conservative lens.

We have received some sharp criticism for not being conservative enough, or not fulfilling the obligation of being the conservative voice on campus. Well, no one promised that we would be. If you read our mission statement, you will find that we offer "well-researched conservative arguments alongside in-depth news coverage." As the editor this year, I feel that we have live up to this promise, and have raised our profile on campus in doing so. However, if you still hate the direction the Spectator has taken over the past year, be comforted by the thought that a new editor has been hired. Next year, our own writer Sasha Chedygov is taking over the magazine with plans to continue improving the best publication on campus.

To those who have enjoyed reading the Spectator this year, it has been our pleasure to provide you with thought-provoking content. For those who rather the magazine was something different, Sasha's hiring for next year.

Thanks for a great year.

Jonathan Miles
Editor-in-Chief
Dear Editor,

I picked up a recent issue of the Spectator—largely because of the new look. However the disappointment with the content that caused me to set down an issue long ago, remains.

I do not understand why the magazine identifies itself as “conservative” as I’ve yet to read a single article in the years of its’ [sic] existence that bespeaks itself to anything remotely identifiable as conservative.

Indeed, there is little to distinguish its’ [sic] content from that of many articles and opinions ventured forth in other campus publications except a lack of profundity. The articles themselves provide little in the way of information or enlightenment. As any information provided within the Spectator is either already widely known or readily available through any other campus periodicals, I can find no reason to pick up the magazine (apart from its’ [sic] “new look”).

If my words sound a bit harsh, please do not take them as such. I am in the habit of speaking openly and honestly and am endeavoring to do so now.

If it is increased circulation that you seek for the magazine, then I would recommend either being what you claimed to be, i.e. a conservative voice on campus, or abandon the pretense of being a conservative publication entirely. Either will do much to improve readership and be better received than the current muddled impression given now.

Regards,
Will Palumbo

---

ASPSU Grade Book

Each month, the Spectator will be highlighting and grading ASPSU’s actions, culminating in a final grade at the end of the academic year. After all, we are in an institution of higher learning, and there isn’t a Pass/No Pass option for ASPSU.

Danielle Kulczyk

Student Voice in Restructuring: B-

ASPSU continues to lobby and talk to students about restructuring, said ASPSU President Katie Markey. ASPSU also participated in a rally at the state capitol with the Oregon Student Association on April 25.

“Marcus [Fox, University Affairs director] and I testified at a hearing [in April] in support of SB 242 and the new amendments that are being finalized,” Markey said.

Despite ASPSU’s plan to hold a minimum of one town hall every month to talk about restructuring and ASPSU’s goals, per Markey, there was no second town hall in April. ASPSU is planning the second town hall this month.

Student Dignity: B

Food Pantry – Last month Markey said that ASPSU was finally able to purchase the correct ID swipe lock for the door of the food pantry in Smith Memorial Student Union, but it still has not arrived. Markey is calling it a “waiting game.”

Without a lock for students to access the food on their own, ASPSU has added more volunteers and more office hours to keep the food pantry open and available. They’re also soliciting donations wherever possible.

“We also have had numerous areas of campus request donation bins, and we are starting to distribute them,” Markey said. “We are also discussing a spring carnival in late May to help bring in donations.”

Inclusive Spaces – According to Markey, ASPSU is sponsoring part of the Queer Resource Center’s first Students of Color Conference this month. ASPSU’s Equal Rights Advocate Jessica Mease has been working closely with the QRC in planning the event, said Markey. Additional details were not available by press time.

Access to Student Fee-Funded Services: A

It’s a slow process, said Markey, but the SMSU 2020 committee—which was formed to look at the possibility of building a new student union—is still making progress. Markey said a portion of the funding for the feasibility study has already been secured, and the committee will begin interviewing architecture firms for the study this month.

---

Tuition Update

The Tuition Review Advisory Committee’s role is complete. The Oregon University System board will be discussing tuition at a meeting in June, Markey said.
Website and Staff — ASPSU unveiled a new website theme and design last month, and it’s still under construction. Rachel Richardson, who was hired as ASPSU’s website and social media coordinator in January, accepted a job outside of ASPSU, so Markey is the primary staff member making updates to the ASPSU website.

“The elections page is up to date and running which has been my priority,” Markey said as voting for elections was getting underway. “I am now working on updating the side navigation bars that have all of our documents. From there I will add pictures and an interactive calendar.”

Markey added, “I am asking that everyone have patience with me—I am having to teach myself website code as I go.”

Editor’s note: See page 9 for information on the ASPSU elections winners and constitutional amendments. May grades do take into account the elections process.

Even nearing the end of their year in charge, this year’s ASPSU staff is still invested and trying to see their commitments through—they should be commended for that. Stay tuned for the June issue to see ASPSU’s final grade for 2010–11.

April grade: B
March grade: C
February grade: B
January grade: B–
November grade: C–
October grade: B–
Several groups of people were gathered around drums in the gymnasium and people began to sing. Something about these songs was different. It felt like there was more meaning to them—they felt peaceful.

On April 9, Western Oregon University held its 18th annual powwow—one week before the United Indian Students in Higher Education’s 3rd annual Naimuma Pow Wow at Portland State. Different faces were presented in the gymnasium and people of all nationalities and ethnic origins were treated with respect.

Braided hair was seen all over the gym. Braided hair simply means that the spirit lies in between the braids. This helps the individual in life, showing that there is balance coming from the braid. Some women would wear jingle dresses. The jingle sound that came from the dresses is made from tobacco cans. Each jingle on her dress represents a day in the year.

Besides the different types of attire that were presented, powwows are famous for the different types of dances. Each dance has a different meaning, but in every dance, the idea of getting rid of bad spirits is addressed. One of the most popular dances, demonstrated in the beginning of the festival, is known as the intertribal dance. The intertribal dance expresses the idea of unity by allowing everyone from various tribes to dance together.

Before they started the dance, Native Americans from different tribes lit incense and walked around to get rid of bad spirits. Then different tribes gathered in a group, and with a drum placed in front of them, they began singing a song to Mother Nature.

The older dancers even inspired the youth to participate and learn the different dances. Teresa Heidt, Cherokee, has been dancing for the last five or six years and has taught her grandson, 7-year-old Skyler Loomis, the grass dance—dancers dance in an area with long grass in an effort to flatten the grass and make a new campsite. Loomis has been dancing for the last three years and said he enjoys every second of it.

His cousin, seven-year-old Jaden Johnson, is also a grass dancer. Loomis and Johnson said that the sound of the drums helps them dance better, and the way they learn and memorize dances is by watching the elders.

“I want to keep dancing until I’m a thousand years old!” Johnson said.

Some powwows can last for two days.

On April 16, UISHE held a powwow at Portland State. There were a few similar faces from the powwow at WOU. The powwow held at PSU had a larger gathering of people from different tribes, and elders spoke about their history and filled young minds with stories. Like WOU’s, the Naimuma Pow Wow started with the intertribal dance. Many guests participated, showing their love and respect.

Bill Young, of the Charbono tribe—which was founded by Sacagawea—joined in the singing and drumming. Young is a PSU student working on his Ph.D in civil engineering. He learned a lot from the elders and proudly carries his Native American culture with him.

Young said hospitality and respect is a huge aspect of Native American culture, and that powwows are not only festivals, but also a time for honoring community and staying connected to family.

The next powwow in Portland, the 41st Annual City of Roses Delta Park Pow Wow and Encampment, is June 17 to 19 at East Delta Park.

On April 9, Western Oregon University held its 18th annual powwow—one week before the United Indian Students in Higher Education’s 3rd annual Naimuma Pow Wow at Portland State. Different faces were presented in the gymnasium and people of all nationalities and ethnic origins were treated with respect.

Braided hair was seen all over the gym. Braided hair simply means that the spirit lies in between the braids. This helps the individual in life, showing that there is balance coming from the braid. Some women would wear jingle dresses. The jingle sound that came from the dresses is made from tobacco cans. Each jingle on her dress represents a day in the year.

Besides the different types of attire that were presented, powwows are famous for the different types of dances. Each dance has a different meaning, but in every dance, the idea of getting rid of bad spirits is addressed. One of the most popular dances, demonstrated in the beginning of the festival, is known as the intertribal dance. The intertribal dance expresses the idea of unity by allowing everyone from various tribes to dance together.

Before they started the dance, Native Americans from different tribes lit incense and walked around to get rid of bad spirits. Then different tribes gathered in a group, and with a drum placed in front of them, they began singing a song to Mother Nature.

The older dancers even inspired the youth to participate and learn the different dances. Teresa Heidt, Cherokee, has been dancing for the last five or six years and has taught her grandson, 7-year-old Skyler Loomis, the grass dance—dancers dance in an area with long grass in an effort to flatten the grass and make a new campsite. Loomis has been dancing for the last three years and said he enjoys every second of it.

His cousin, seven-year-old Jaden Johnson, is also a grass dancer. Loomis and Johnson said that the sound of the drums helps them dance better, and the way they learn and memorize dances is by watching the elders.

“I want to keep dancing until I’m a thousand years old!” Johnson said.

Some powwows can last for two days.

On April 16, UISHE held a powwow at Portland State. There were a few similar faces from the powwow at WOU. The powwow held at PSU had a larger gathering of people from different tribes, and elders spoke about their history and filled young minds with stories. Like WOU’s, the Naimuma Pow Wow started with the intertribal dance. Many guests participated, showing their love and respect.

Bill Young, of the Charbono tribe—which was founded by Sacagawea—joined in the singing and drumming. Young is a PSU student working on his Ph.D in civil engineering. He learned a lot from the elders and proudly carries his Native American culture with him.

Young said hospitality and respect is a huge aspect of Native American culture, and that powwows are not only festivals, but also a time for honoring community and staying connected to family.

The next powwow in Portland, the 41st Annual City of Roses Delta Park Pow Wow and Encampment, is June 17 to 19 at East Delta Park.
PORTLAND STATE STUDENTS SHOW OFF AN ART PIECE IN SMITH MEMORIAL STUDENT UNION, PROTESTING THE ARREST OF CHINESE ARTIST AI WEIWEI, A POLITICAL PRISONER AND RECIPIENT OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE.

Photos by Bethénye Hansen
2011 ASPSU ELECTIONS

Athena Tran

Less than 4 percent of Portland State’s student body voted in last year’s ASPSU elections. This was a major concern for the ASPSU Elections Board, who made their goal for turnout in this year’s elections 10 percent of the student body, or about 2,800 students. E-Board member Anthony Stine, who is working on his master’s degree in political science, said that last year’s E-Board focused on “the nuts and bolts” of elections.

“We’re trying to reach out to more students on campus,” Stine said.

The E-Board aimed to expand demographics and further publicize this year’s elections, in hopes of achieving a turnout five times higher than usual. With such a large student body and low voter turnout a norm, the E-Board was definitely challenged to figure out how to get students to care more and be more engaged.

“We’re aware of some of the mistakes that were made last year,” Stine said. “For instance, there was an error in the system where some of the students’ votes were not being counted, and we’re trying to make sure those kinds of mistakes won’t happen this year.” [“Ban Banner Voting?” Spectator June, 2010] Stine said even one invalid ballot is one too many and the E-Board took preliminary measures for this year’s student elections.

“One thing we’re trying to do is make it easier,” said Ari Wubbold, E-Board chair and a graduate student in political science. “Because voting is done online, we’re going to have plenty of places all over campus.”

During the week of voting, every computer lab had computers display desktop backgrounds reminding students to vote with simple instructions directing them to Banweb.

“We’re taking a two-prong approach,” stated Wubbold before elections started. “We’re trying to target people who are already on their computers, making it as easy as possible for voters to get to the voting site, but also have booths outside in high traffic areas.”

Wubbold said that the E-Board tried to have a message to vote on to the main PSU website, giving the student elections more exposure to the campus community—however, the administration did not comply. Wubbold expressed this as a let down, but said that the desktop backgrounds were an effective plan.

CANDIDATES GET OUT THE VOTE TOO

During Portland State’s Earth Day event last month, students gathered in the Park Blocks to celebrate. Candidates for ASPSU president and vice president tabled and went to creative lengths to get students to vote for them.

Jenny Myrick and Nathaniel Buckner took the professional, conservative approach and dressed in business casual attire. Corrine Gilbertson and Steve Taylor had a tent setup and wore promotional red T-shirts. Gilbertson held up a sign that read, “Voting is Sexy,” as she sported her sunglasses during the nice weather.

Pearce Whitehead, said he and presidential candidate Adam Rahmlow used chalk to draw around campus for their campaign and printed informational brochures. They also had bright lime green T-shirts and a colorfully decorated display.

This year, the presidential candidates demonstrated a lot of enthusiasm and energy.

On April 25, the day before the ASPSU’s elections rallied, Wubbold shared his excitement in passing the 600 voter mark and still having another week to go in elections. At the rally, live music was played in Smith Memorial Student Union, Parkway North, and free Subway was served across from a voting table. The E-Board wanted to have as much time available as possible for students to trickle in during the day.

“it was cool because there were a bunch of people in line and at one point I remember saying that if you want food you can go around to the other side, and they said, ‘We’re not in line to get food. We’re in line to vote,’ which was really neat for someone from the Elections Board to see people that were excited about voting,” Wubbold said.

He also received feedback saying that it was one of the most successful, and well-organized ASPSU events they’ve ever seen.

Reflecting on the elections rally, Wubbold said, “It was a great success, more students voted [at the rally]. We now have roughly 1,200 votes. Now keep in mind we only had 700 last year and students still have 4.5 days left to vote.”

BANWEB DOWNTIME

An Office of Information Technologies maintenance period caused Banweb to be unavailable on April 28 from 7 a.m. to noon and the E-Board decided to extend the voting period.

“What we’re trying to do is compensate for the maintenance that is out of our control,” Wubbold said. “We’re giving students two extra days to vote. Instead of having [voting] end on Friday, we’re allowing students to vote until Sunday.”

The E-Board saw the biggest turnout in many years for ASPSU elections.

“We still have more candidates than in recent memory, we still have more votes than in recent memory, we passed some constitutional amend-ments to extend the campaigning and voting period next year,” Wubbold said. “Those were our three goals and we’ve met them already. And I’m pretty happy about the elections this year.”

Some students experienced confusion as to whether or not their vote actually went through on Banweb and voted again. However, only the student’s initial vote was counted. Wubbold explained that he ran into this situation and hoped for next year to have a page that confirmed the voter’s submission.
A New Head for Student Government

Sasha Chedygov

After an extended voting period and delayed results announcements, the ASPSU elections winners were finally announced on May 4. Your new student government leaders are Adam Rahmlow and Pearce Whitehead, as president and vice president, respectively. The Spectator interviewed each of them separately with a series of rigorous questions designed to make even the strongest of candidates crumble under pressure. Editor’s note: Responses were edited for brevity and clarity.

Editor’s note: Responses were edited for brevity and clarity.

**S:** What is your biggest reason you won the election?

**AR:** I think we had very strong organization and work ethic. We worked together better than the other candidates.

**PW:** We did a lot of planning way in advance. We started organizing the campaign weeks before it started, and I think that’s the advantage we had over our competition. We had a lot of content right away. We also reached out to those who were most involved with the community, and I think that helped a lot.

**S:** What is your biggest concern for next year?

**AR:** Oh man, there are a million. I don’t even know where to start. I think my top concern is reforming the organization of ASPSU. There are a lot of problems and inefficiencies with the way it’s set up right now, and we want to change that.

**PW:** My biggest concern is that we are losing touch with the students. ASPSU has had this problem for a long time, and I think it’s a large issue. There needs to be a discussion between us and the students, and that isn’t there now. I definitely think we need to change the system in order to do this.

**S:** What is your biggest strength?

**AR:** I think we’re a very positive and optimistic group. I think this is what made the campaign so successful, and I think it will help us in the future.

**PW:** I think it’s that we are keeping our goals broad. We want to enable students, basically, and everything else comes from that.

**S:** Do you have anything specific planned for next year?

**AR:** I think the biggest thing we want to do is to provide real, tangible services to students. We want to provide students with something they can really appreciate. I think that’s really the goal here. Part of that involves holding campus-wide parties every term, but we are going to do more than that. It’s really about that energy that students have, and taking that energy and using it to make a better system.

**PW:** We want to make the process more democratic, so that a larger portion of students have their voices heard. We’re serious about the campus-wide parties every term that we promised, and we want to do more things like that.

**S:** A hot topic right now is the budget situation. Do you have any specific plans relating to PSU’s budget and/or tuition?

**AR:** Well, tuition is going to keep going up—there’s nothing we can do about that. We need to start a widespread movement. That’s the only way we will be able to change anything. We need to rally up the students, and not just in small groups like we’ve been doing, but on a large scale.

**PW:** The budget stuff is sort of a side issue. The first thing we need to do is connect with the students. For example, we had that rally in Salem a while back, but there were only a handful of students from PSU there. As far as legislative issues are concerned, I think we need to come up with a better way for the legislature to hear from us.

**S:** Do you feel confident about your new position?

**AR:** Yeah! I think we have a lot of issues facing us next year, and I don’t think we will solve all of them, but I am pretty confident that we will do a good job, regardless.

**PW:** Yes, absolutely. Obviously, we won’t be able to get everything we want done, and we won’t be able to complete all of our goals, but I am confident that we will be able to create a better system for students.

**S:** Any other comments?

**AR:** Student groups—especially publications—play a large role in this. I think we have to work together with student groups in order to accomplish our goals. We need to be able to sit down with these groups and ask, “What are the criticisms?” and “How can we improve?” I think if we could work directly with publications and other groups, we could better meet our expectations.

**PW:** This is going to be a lot of work, and we have a lot of issues to tackle, but I think—I know, actually—that we can do it.
Supporters of Measure 26-131, a proposed $548 million bond and levy to upgrade aging public schools in Portland School District 1, frame their cause in stark terms. Voters can either approve the measure on the May 17 ballot, they say, or stand by and watch as already struggling schools fall further into disrepair.

“There is no good plan B,” says Ben Unger, communications director for the campaign to pass the measure. “The only plan B is to take more money away from schools.”

If the measure passes, the current school levy—set to expire next year—would be replaced, and a six-year bond would be added, providing a total of $548 million in maintenance for schools in Portland School District 1. Proponents of the measure say this money will go toward fixing problems such as out-of-date plumbing, electrical wiring, heating and ventilation, fire alarms and lighting. The bond will also pay for additional earthquake safety, accessibility and safety in stage areas, and to repair or replace aging school grounds, fields and exteriors.

The district also plans to modernize the equipment and technology in classrooms and provide outdoor recreation structures, and rebuild nine schools, including Roosevelt and Cleveland high schools.

“On average, our buildings are about 65 years old,” says Matt Shelby, public information officer for Portland Public Schools. “Couple that with the fact that our funds have been cut for years, and we have been looking for savings everywhere so we don’t take money from the classroom. Maintenance takes a hit. Many of these buildings are beyond maintenance; we need to replace them.”

There would be a new bond measure up for a vote every six years, Unger says, and each bond would operate on a “pay-as-you-go” basis in which they would mature in from one to three years. He says this strategy is designed to “begin the process of rebuilding public schools in Portland.”

“The goal over the next 30 years is rebuild our schools to meet a greater upwardly mobile families to Portland neighborhoods,” says Unger. “If we want great neighborhoods, we need to attract more families to Portland neighborhoods. As Portland ages and we have more empty nesters, we need to attract more families to make for a prosperous community,” says Unger. “From a property owner’s perspective, there’s no greater investment than a community.”

In summing up the support for Measure 26-131, he says, “People want to live in communities with great schools. If we want great schools, we have to invest in them.”

While he says that he is neutral to the measure in his official capacity as a Portland Public Schools employee, he disagrees with critics who say that the district is too far in debt.

“I don’t follow their logic,” he says. “If someone is concerned with the level of debt the district is carrying, they should check out the district’s credit rating.”

Unger says that the bond measure would help the state economy by creating 7,000 new jobs, and raises property values by attracting more upwardly mobile families in Portland neighborhoods.

“Portland School District 1 is not capable of running this operation,” says Kropf. “They are already borrowing $465 million from the state to pay for Public Employees Retirement System costs and refinanced it as a bond payment.”

“Portland School District 1 is not capable of running this operation,” says Unger. “Every school you see in Portland needs [use] wood paneling. It’s a tragedy waiting to happen. As for seismic standards, schools need reinforcements today in their roofs, or students wouldn’t survive an earthquake.”

“Every school you see in Portland needs help,” he says. “The need is so dire. You see the most bizarre setup for teaching children: The teachers and faculty care about teaching children, but they don’t have the resources.”

Of course, those resources are not free. If the measure passes, area property taxes will increase at an annual rate of $2 a year per $1,000 of taxable assessed value for six years; after that period, the tax would decrease to approximately $22. For the first six years the measure is in effect, it would cost the average Portland homeowner between $300 and $400 more in property taxes, not during a recession in which there are property credits, but if we pass this bond, we’re giving them more drugs.”

Kropf responds to such criticism by pointing to a recent analysis performed by Portland School District 1 of tax rates for school districts statewide, which found that the district was the only one without a capital bond. He adds that, with the measure, the district is asking less of taxpayers than most other districts throughout the metro area, ranking “in about the middle of the pack.”

“Portland School District 1 of tax rates for school districts statewide, which found that the district was the only one without a capital bond. He adds that, with the measure, the district is asking less of taxpayers than most other districts throughout the metro area, ranking “in about the middle of the pack.”

“Portland School District 1 of tax rates for school districts statewide, which found that the district was the only one without a capital bond. He adds that, with the measure, the district is asking less of taxpayers than most other districts throughout the metro area, ranking “in about the middle of the pack.”

“Portland School District 1 of tax rates for school districts statewide, which found that the district was the only one without a capital bond. He adds that, with the measure, the district is asking less of taxpayers than most other districts throughout the metro area, ranking “in about the middle of the pack.”
Raise Prices, Cut Quality and Expect More

AS THE COST OF HIGHER ED GOES UP, THE STUDENT DEBT BUBBLE COMES CLOSER TO BURSTING. SOME SAY, IT ALREADY HAS.

Jonathan Miles

On April 26, Portland State students and faculty were schooled on the financial commodity known as higher education. According to University of California Santa Cruz Professor Bob Meister, higher education has not only been commoditized, but also “financialized” into a complex credit default swap system that is likely to follow in the steps of its cousin in the mortgage market.

“We are following, blindly, a growth model that amounts to predatory lending,” said Meister to a room of about 40 students and staff, “and the bubble has burst!”

Meister pointed out that students who have to pay higher taxes in order to maintain a public system of higher education won’t be able to afford it due to ever increasing debt burdens, and that’s exactly how the big lenders on Wall Street want it.

“For most Americans,” said Meister, “debt service eats up a higher portion of their income than tax burden.”

He posits that this is good for business because as our tax receipts get smaller, universities receive less public funding, our tuition bill gets higher and we borrow more to pay for a degree. In Meister’s home state, public university tuition went up 40 percent from 1999–2004 and doubled in 2004. At Portland State, tuition has gone up about 10 percent each year since the 1990s when Oregon taxes paid for 2/3 of its public universities’ costs. Today, Portland State’s budget is about 15 percent tax-funded and 85 percent tuition-funded, forcing students to borrow increasing amounts. And this problem is not isolated to the West Coast. According to the U.S. Department of Education, average student debt in the U.S. has doubled since 1993 to about $30,000 per student.

Meanwhile, universities like Portland State and the UC system have continued to cut an average of three percent from their academic instruction budgets over these same periods. Meister claimed that his university’s expenditure per student dropped by 1/3 as tuition increased.

So, why do students continue to borrow orders of magnitude more than their predecessors for a service that continues to cut quality? According to Meister it’s all about income inequality—students are borrowing tens of thousands to buy class mobility. According to a report by the National Center for Education Statistics, a bachelor degree will earn you $20,000 more on average than a high school diploma, a number that is likely to continue growing. According to the same report, from 1980–2008 the difference in income between college and high school graduates grew from $10,100 to $20,000.

Since 1975, student loans have been made available to students who couldn’t otherwise afford an education under the premise that as more citizens earn four-year degrees, the median income will go up and people will be more prosperous en masse. Unfortunately, economic growth in the last two decades has been largely concentrated into the upper income quintile while the bottom 80 percent has either remained stagnant or declined. California’s Legislative Analyst Elizabeth Hill published a report in August 2000 that found the richest 20 percent of Californians grew their income by 66 percent between 1975–1998, whereas the rest of the population saw a decrease in income anywhere from 8 to 25 percent in that same period. This means someone who made $109,000 in 1998 was at the same income level as the person earning $26,000 in 1975 or $182,000 in 1998, while the person earning $26,000 in 1975 made $15,700 in 1998.

Meister claims that higher education is commoditized to the point that universities are in the business of charging you for the cost of income protection in a world of economic volatility,” said Meister, adding, “They’re selling income insurance against being in the bottom 80 percent.”

The problem Meister sees with this model is the ever-present state disinvestment and cost cutting at public universities. As students pay more, they default more as well. This year, student debt surpassed the sum total of all U.S. credit card debt—a number that Meister pegs at about $1 trillion. That’s a problem for more than the 10 percent of students who are defaulting, because those bad debts are guaranteed by the federal government who will swap bad debt to Wall Street lenders for U.S. treasury bonds at a rate of 100 percent. So, when the economy crashes and students default at increasingly higher rates on their humongous debt, Wall Street lenders will still take home 1 to 5 percent gains on the back of U.S. taxpayers. This is what Meister called the “financialization” of student debt.

“Universities are,” said Meister, “as far as Wall Street was concerned, the most recession-proof industry.”
Talk back to your government

Let Metro know what’s important to you. Join the new online opinion panel today.

www.oregonmetro.gov/connect

Join the Opt In opinion panel and help shape the region’s future.

Opt In lets you share your views on issues that matter. Your opinions can help guide decisions that strengthen your community.

Opt In is quick, easy and confidential. Share what you want, when you want – your private information stays private.

Opt In is rewarding. Join the panel and be entered into a monthly drawing for cash gift cards and other prizes.

Stay in touch with news, stories and things to do. Follow Metro online, track news and stories or subscribe to email updates, RSS feeds, newsletters and more.

Opt In community partners:

Metro | Making a great place

Metro partners with Davis, Hibbitts, & Midghall (DHM Research), an independent, nonpartisan opinion research firm, in the management and operations of the Opt In panel.