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BURNING MAN ON A TRAIN

Senior editor burns mid-day oil at exclusive northern California party. p. 08

Also inside:
Tuition increase: How much PSU spends to help you graduate. p. 14
ASPSU’s grade goes down this month. p. 03
Where can I eat, drink and be merry on the cheap? p. 06
Like Burning Man But on a Train

Xander Almeida

Our senior editor takes a wild, inebriated ride through the California redwoods with the crew from Burning Man, and Justin Bieber gets an ascot.
A CALL FOR CIVILITY (EVEN THOUGH YOU’RE WRONG)

Hey folks,

It’s election season. I know most of you disagree with where I stand. And that’s OK, I disagree with most of you too! I have strong ideals, as you all have yours. That doesn’t mean there isn’t a middle ground. And it certainly doesn’t mean that the Left or the Right hate America, or the world for that matter. We see things differently and we think things ought to be different, but only in some ways.

Vast generalizations and hateful comments don’t solve problems. During the debate in Kentucky’s Senate race between Jack Conway and Rand Paul, Conway repeated an unconfirmed story of Paul in his college days tying up a woman and forcing her to worship the “Aqua Budda,” calling the issue “fundamental.” Paul demanded that Conway “run this race as a man.” (Conway also asked, “When it is ever appropriate to tie up a woman?” to which I can only conclude this man has a boring sex life.)

Historically, some of our best leaders have had an honest willingness to seek a common good and to put the nation above political ambitions. We’ve seen this with President Theodore Roosevelt who took on rich industrialists for the welfare of the people. We saw this with President Richard Nixon who pushed through the most sweeping changes in pro-environmental policies this country has ever seen.

We can attack ideas without attacking the person who holds them. It’s a disagreement—there ought to be no ill will. We’re also going to have to agree on some simple facts. I think so long as we can all admit the president isn’t a secret Kenya-born Muslim, that 9/11 was an outside job, and that the Republican agenda isn’t fascist and the Democrats’ agenda isn’t really socialist, I think we can start a meaningful dialogue. We ought to get ourselves back into the mindset of being each other’s loyal opposition. We really only have ourselves.

Xander Almeida
Senior editor
PSU alum becomes serial killer

Randall Brent Woodfield was a wide receiver at Portland State University and the Green Bay Packers’ 17th-round draft choice in 1974. He also went on to be a serial killer.

Now 59, Woodfield is serving a life sentence without parole at the Oregon State Penitentiary for a brutal crime spree for which he is known as the “I-5 Killer.” Prosecutors say he may have killed as many as 18 people, mostly women, in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Police believe that, in October 1980, he killed former classmate Cherie Ayers in Portland. Woodfield refused to take a polygraph exam, however, and he wasn’t charged.

In 1975, Woodfield robbed and sexually assaulted several women before he was finally caught. He pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of second-degree robbery, and was sentenced to 10 years in prison. He served four years of that sentence before he was released in 1979.

That’s when prosecutors say Woodfield began committing the worst of his crimes.

Over the next several months along the Interstate 5 corridor from Washington to California, he became the leading suspect in a series of rapes, kidnappings, armed robberies and murders that didn’t end until he was arrested in Salem on March 7, 1981.

This time he was sentenced to life in prison plus 95 years. Two later convictions added 35 years to his term.

—Tony Walter, Green Bay Press-Gazette

PSU ranked No. 1 in Northwest

Portland State University’s master of business administration ranks No. 25 in the world and No. 1 in the Northwest for its emphasis on social and environmental stewardship. All online core coursework mirrors that of the campus-based program in a part-time, three-year format.

The MBA program is built upon three key values: leadership, innovation and sustainability. In addition to a rigorous business education, MBA students receive individual leadership coaching. The faculty and staff at Portland State are committed to producing leaders who will invigorate tomorrow’s business community with their innovative spirit. Portland State’s MBA program has received worldwide recognition in specific areas such as sustainability and food industry leadership.

—John Stoeckmann, admissions coordinator for Graduate Business Programs

OHSU, PSU task force calls for increased collaboration

The President’s Office has released a draft report calling for a formal strategic alliance and expanded collaboration with Oregon Health and Science University.

According to an e-mail from President Wim Wiewel, the report was drafted by the OHSU/PSU Strategic Partnership Task Force, which recommends the two universities create a formal link in order to leverage state resources and meet educational needs.

Students are encouraged to comment on the draft, which is available as a PDF on the president’s website, www.pdx.edu/president. Comments can be sent to Rachel Martinez, assistant to the chief of staff, by e-mailing rmart@pdx.edu.

Monday, Oct. 25, PSU students plant visible sustainability garden

Photo by Bethlayne Hansen

Staples
ASPSU Grade Book

Danielle Kulczyk

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.

STUDENT VOICE IN RESTRUCTURING: F

ASPSU is not doing anything new to get the word out about the restructuring of the Oregon University System—they’ve clearly been focusing on voter registration and other things.

STUDENT DIGNITY: B-

Food pantry – Katie Markey, ASPSU president, said it will still take “a few more weeks” for the arrival of the lock for the food pantry, and added time to have it installed. It was supposed to arrive and be installed by the end of October. Markey says she called the lock company and the work order “never made it through.”

Starting Oct. 21, food donation bins were placed throughout Smith Memorial Student Union, said Markey, and ASPSU is working with New Seasons and other grocery stores to solicit donations. ASPSU has been talking with Mark Russell, manager of Auxiliary Services for SMSU, about hosting a reception once the food pantry is officially open.

Inclusive spaces – In October, representatives from the rec center came to ASPSU to ask for their input on better signage for single-occupancy bathrooms. The current signage is a silhouette of a man and a woman, but Markey said ASPSU recommended the sign be of a toilet because it is more universal and does not specify a gender. The rec center also asked staff at the Queer Resource Center, who agreed on the toilet signage. All single-occupancy restrooms in the Academic and Student Recreation Center will be changed as a result.

The inclusive spaces video ASPSU made for Student Health and Counseling in September was a success, according to Markey. She said SHAC has asked ASPSU to make more videos and continue to raise awareness about SHAC’s Healthy Campus campaign.

ACCESS TO STUDENT FEE-FUNDED SERVICES: C

ASPSU has taken on the re-prioritization of SMSU as their sole endeavor under this campaign promise. Markey explained that professors, administrators and various services are using space in SMSU, but ASPSU hopes to make SMSU into more of a student union. Markey wants students to have more access and priority when reserving space.

This re-prioritization has made it into President Wim Wiewel’s Strategic Plan for the university, meaning Wiewel agrees it is a valid idea for SMSU. It will be considered carefully, and then implemented by administration or student boards. Markey said it is a multi-year process, and she has no idea who will make the final decisions or when they will be made.

OTHER: B

Voter registration – ASPSU registered 2,574 students in their voter registration drive, shy of their goal of 3,000. Statewide, Oregon Student Association schools registered 18,255 voters. Oregon Secretary of State Kate Brown visited Portland State on Oct. 11 to hold a press conference and personally register people to vote, and again on Oct. 27 to help ASPSU phone bank as part of Get Out the Vote. In additional to phone banking for Get Out the Vote and voter education, Markey said ASPSU will be collecting ballots in their office and other locations around campus, doing non-partisan class presentations and tabling.

OFFICIAL GRADES

For: ASPSU
Student Voice in Restructuring
Student Dignity
Access to Student Fee-Funded Services
Other

Final November Grade
Final October Grade
Tailgating – ASPSU ceased tailgating at Portland State football games after one game.

“We have been supporting Athletic Department [sic] tailgates rather than spending money and hosting our own,” Markey said.

ASPSU had a $150 banner made which reads "Go Viks! ASPSU loves the Vikings!" to take to all Portland State sporting events. Markey said there has been an average of 10 members of ASPSU going to games.

ASPSU Senate – The Senate recently passed a resolution regarding funding for the Campus Public Safety Office. The resolution says that student incidental fees should not fund such a large portion of an office that also handles safety for staff and administration.

Markey said she was surprised at the high level of support for this resolution among administration, and she said the resolution is gathering more support.

Also, Ethan Allen Smith has been elected senate pro tempore.

Recess – Last month, ASPSU said they would be starting “Recess” the first Thursday of each month in the Park Blocks, with sports and socializing from noon to 2 p.m., but they were not out on Oct. 7. Markey cited a large event already happening in the Park Blocks as the reason for the first cancelation, and says they will be back Nov. 4.

Editor’s Note: In last month’s ASPSU Grade Book, the food pantry appeared under Access to Student Fee-Funded Services. However, Markey considers the food pantry under her Student Dignity campaign platform—that is where it will appear from now on. The change does not affect the October grade given to ASPSU.

ASPSU seems to be doing well raising awareness about student dignity and inclusive spaces. It is important to recognize that SHAC and the rec center both went to ASPSU for help, and that action is taking place as a result.

In spite of that, ASPSU seemed to stall all work on campaign promises to focus on voter registration in October. Registering students to vote is extremely important, but it is not one of ASPSU’s campaign promises. Does the fact that ASPSU registers 2,500-plus students each fall justify a budget of $339,089? Or should they be doing more?

1) ASPSU stands for ____________________________

2) I am aware that, as a student, I pay an incidental fee that funds campus groups, including student government.
   YES  NO

3) Student government at PSU provides valuable services to me.
   YES  NO

4) The budget for student government is approximately:
   a) $50k  b) $100k  c) $200k  d) $300k

5) I believe Portland State student government is worth every penny.
   YES  NO

6) ASPSU should cut its budget down and spend less.
   YES  NO

3. $521
   Reason: A hotel charge occurred last year during an annual competition, but the bill came during this year. This has happened to Viking Motorsports multiple years in a row.
   Total budget: $17,857
   ACCEPTED

4. $1,253

5. $6,502

6. $0

7. $0

Staples

The Spectator wants to know what you think of ASPSU’s role on campus. Fill out this questionnaire, return it and be entered into a raffle for prizes! You can:

—tear it out and bring it to the Spectator office, SMSU sub-basement room S-29.
—find the survey on Facebook at facebook.com/SpectatorMagazine.
—find the survey on Twitter at twitter.com/pdxspectator.
—find the survey online at portlandspectator.org.

1) ASPSU stands for ____________________________

2) I am aware that, as a student, I pay an incidental fee that funds campus groups, including student government.
   YES  NO

3) Student government at PSU provides valuable services to me.
   YES  NO

4) The budget for student government is approximately:
   a) $50k  b) $100k  c) $200k  d) $300k

5) I believe Portland State student government is worth every penny.
   YES  NO

6) ASPSU should cut its budget down and spend less.
   YES  NO

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Student groups stood in front of ASPSU at the end of October to ask for more money in forgiveness of overages because they had gone over budget. Overages can occur for many reasons, even for groups who had been very careful with their budgets throughout the year.

None of the student groups requesting overages responded to the Spectator’s request for an interview by press time.

During the hearings, Student Fee Committee Chair Krystine McCants said the SFC would be evaluating why the overage occurred, how the overage could be avoided in the future and how the group might absorb the overage if the request is denied.

To complicate matters for the student groups requesting money, overage hearings originally occurred in spring term of last year. This year’s SFC decided to give groups who missed the spring hearings deadline an opportunity to present this fall.

“We’re probably going to be coming from the point of view that they had the opportunity to present [at overage hearings] in the spring. Why weren’t they ready?” said McCants before the hearings began. “We’re going to be looking at them with a critical eye.”

The SFC ruled on all overages on Oct. 29.
DATE NIGHT
Andrew Seger, Jonathan Miles, Danielle Kulczyk

Artsy Fartsy

CHEAP!
Oregon Symphony
Portland Center for the Performing Arts
1111 SW Broadway
Nov. 20 and Nov. 21 at 7:30 p.m.,
Nov. 22 at 8 p.m.
Students can buy $10 rush tickets
one hour before performances
start. Sit in the nosebleed section
with all the other poor folk, and
enjoy much better sound than
the swells down below. Gustav
Mahler’s bleak, death-haunted
10th Symphony promises to be an
excellent counter to the excess joy
and optimism of Thanksgiving.

FREE!
Holiday gifts at Crafty Wonderland’s pop-up shop
802 SW 10th Ave
Mid-November through end of
December
Monday through Saturday 10 a.m.
to 7 p.m.
Sundays noon to 6 p.m.
Selling locally made arts and crafts
in partnership with the City of
Portland’s downtown artist pop-
up shops.

Rock Out

FREE!
Wednesday concerts at The Old Church
1422 SW 11th Ave
Noon
Scholastic life got you down? Head
on over to The Old Church every
Wednesday for a free hour-long
concert to lift your spirits.

FREE!
Sunday concerts at Rontoms
600 E. Burnside
9 p.m.
Nov. 7 – OK Sweetheart with Oh
Captain, My Captain
Nov. 14 – Poison Control Center
with Writer
Nov. 21 – SNDTRKR with Gardening Not Architecture
Get Fed

CHEAP!
Tapalaya
28 NE 28th Ave
Wednesdays
The best bike-friendly happy hour in Portland. Every Wednesday, if you roll up to Tapalaya on a bike, it’s happy hour all night. Impress that cute girl or guy on a bike with stiff $2 martinis and $3 hurricanes. The reasonably wide selection of food from this Cajun-style tapas restaurant is also unbeatable. Some of the cooks came to Portland post-Katrina and brought their talents with them.

WIN!
Fill out survey on page four for a chance to win discounts and free jambalaya from Tapalaya.

Free Movies!

5th Ave Cinema
Fridays and Saturdays at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m., Sundays at 3 p.m.

*Thumbsucker* (2005)
Nov. 5-7
A film about addiction to ADD medication and thumbsucking starring Lou Taylor Pucci and Keanu Reeves.

*Night and the City* (1950)
Nov. 12-14
A classic wrestler drama from the ’50s with a grifter twist, starring Richard Widmark and Gene Tierney.

*Earth* (1998)
Nov. 19-21
A stunning historical drama that chronicles the partition of India and Pakistan, starring Maia Sethna and Eric Peterson.

5TH AVE SPOTLIGHT

*High and Low* (1963)
Dec. 3-5

Turned off by black and white films? Subtitles a sore spot? Get over it and see *High and Low*. Akira Kurasowa directs the film adapted from an American pulp novel. The movie is first a well made crime thriller. The plot revolves around the abduction of a rich industrialist’s child and the subsequent desperate hunt for the kidnapper by the police. While the movie can be appreciated solely on that level, there is also deep social commentary on Japanese society as well. The acceptance by each character of their different roles under the caste system is subtly critiqued through the plot of the film. A deep emotional connection and subtle handling of a child’s abduction, and the despair of a parent makes this equally suitable for impressing a date or merely enjoying the company of your egghead friends.
LIKE BURNING MAN BUT ON A TRAIN

DECOMPRESS ON A COMBUSTION ENGINE

Our senior editor burns mid-day oil at exclusive northern California party.

Story and photo by Xander Almeida
Illustration by Nate Garvison
When I arrived on this train full of eccentrically costumed Burners (those within the Burning Man community) racing through the redwoods while DJs blasted world dance beats, there was one thing I was not prepared for: Five minutes into the ride, as we departed on a train with an open bar and two open-air cars, I heard someone say, “I’m sorry sir, this is a non-smoking train.” I looked slightly dumbfounded, but obeyed the train employee (with a T-shirt that read “Still Plays With Trains”) and snuffed out my clove. Next to me, a man dressed like Jack Sparrow with a strong Eastern European accent meekly asked me, “So we can have no smoking upon this train?” I saw the sad look in his eyes and simply replied “No you can… just not when you see them around.” Half way through the train ride in the open-air cars, many began smoking a variety of cigarettes, among other things. The train employees stationed themselves at the entrances and exits of the cars, but did little to stop the inevitable.

The ride down to northern California was an exhausting 12 hours. Once we hit the coast, the roads became sadistically twisted. As the woman I was driving down with and I had already been on the road a good nine hours, the twists and turns were an unwelcome turn of events until we hit the redwoods. “These are magical,” she said to me. I can’t help but agree.

Another thing that surprised me was how early we were supposed to depart from the train station. I arrived there at 8:30 a.m. and the station was already buzzing with traingoers and their DJ equipment, kegs and ice. By 10 a.m. the parking lot was swamped with costumed people toting around cases of their own beer and fifths of hard liquor. On the open-air car, the DJs set up, and, when the first pounding bass hit the foggy air, the crowd in hive mind turned to cheer. A little late, the train took off. The music was bumping and the dance party had already started. As we left the town, the rail guards went down at the street crossings. People on their way to work and those at nearby auto shops twisted their heads around to see the party train go by. Some looked on in disbelief as the kaleidoscope of colorful costumers cheered.

It was almost surreal to dance on a train going through trees hundreds of years old. To get a good feel for the train, I walked the length of it a few times. Most of the party was in the open-air car. At the very end car, a couple was making out. As we were about to go through a tunnel
Features
the train employees told us we all had to make our way into the closed carts—safety rule, they told us—and the couple’s romantic moment was instantly ruined as the car was flooded with people. Back on the dance car, a life-size cardboard cutout of Justin Bieber was being horribly molested. By the end of the train ride, someone had affixed a red ascot to his throat.

In the open-bar car, there was a seemingly endless stream of good microbrews. The cups were poured half full to prevent spillage. As I picked up another beer, someone knocked my elbow in the narrow cart and my beer spilled across the bar. “Shit,” I said.

Within a minute, my cup was refilled, the bar was clean and the smiling bartender told me not to worry about it. “I bartend a lot on this train,” she said, “and most of the time, it’s old people and their kids who want to sightsee the redwoods. This is the most fun I get to have all year—I love these people.” I asked her if she had ever gotten to be a part of it from the other side of the bar. “No, but I definitely am going to next year,” she said with a grin. By this point, it was before noon and I was already drunk.

I struck up a conversation with a man calling himself Cornelius. He told me, “I haven’t slept well for the past three days because I’ve been so excited about this.” To him, this was the event of the year.

We took the train to what is called the half-way point. We got off at an outpost of sorts. It was about 1 p.m. (I think. I was quite a few drinks in) and people slowly oozed off the train. At the wooden outpost, there was another bar, a coffee server and a whole mess of vegetarian Pad Thai—a welcome lunch as the vast majority of the train was inebriated. A live band played a half hour into our stop.

There were a surprising number of children under five on the train with their parents. An Australian national was doing face painting, mostly on adults. One small child dressed as Elmo got his face painted to match. Some of the hired help got their faces painted, too. I talked to a couple visiting from Australia. “This kind of shit would never happen there,” the woman told me. “This all really died out in the ’70s.”

As we were about to get back on the train, someone offered me a shot of haeñero-infused tequila out of his red, furry purse. I took it and my mouth watered for the next half hour from the burn. Back on the train, we raced against the sun going down.

By 7 p.m. we were back in the station and many started their slow, stumbling descent back to solid ground. The DJs kept bumping music and, in the parking lot, the partiers kept dancing. By 8 p.m. that evening, the party train was empty—all of this before it really got dark.

I got Italian food. I wiped the makeup off my face in the bathroom and watched as the Texas Rangers won their first trip to the World Series. I was so exhausted I almost fell asleep in my food. I took a nap in the car. I woke up to a flashlight in the eyes and someone with a gruff voice asking the driver if I had been anally raped. I looked up into the light and saw a fake policeman from the party. We were in a parking lot of a motel where many of the train riders were staying. Someone tooted a 1.5 liter of vodka into a room and more smoke from a pipe filled up the parking lot. The hot tub was full of people drinking champagne. We stayed there for the next few hours. By 1 a.m. we were back at our beach house. After a few more drinks we made our way to bed. I don’t even remember having fallen asleep.

Features

Editor’s note: Faces blurred due to requests for anonymity.
Like a double-edged sword, crime and parking “taxes” tacked on to the high cost of parking, are slicing and dicing students' income. After painfully handing over $342 for a term parking permit, students have an expectation of safety and service, neither of which are being met.

The office of Transportation and Parking Services is responsible for operating the 3,700 parking spaces on campus, which are used by over 30,000 students, faculty and staff. The office claims to be self-supported, saying they receive no student fee or tuition funds. As TAPS Manager Sarah Renkens points out, “All operations, maintenance, staffing and programs that we run are paid for by parking permit sales and parking citations.” Renkins also notes, “We spend about $1 million annually to subsidize student and employee transit passes.” This means students who pay for parking passes and the inevitable parking citation, are left holding the bag to fund TAPS’ “charitable” contributions.

Questioning whether parking permit sales are actually a “student fee” is a matter of semantics. The reality is that many students do not have another option available to them, making it a required fee.
According to records, TAPS issued about 20,000 citations in the 2008–09 fiscal year, and 21,000 in the 2009–10 fiscal year. In 2008–09 they collected $497,000 in revenue and so far in 2009–10 they have collected $426,600. During a month of full time student attendance, that averages out to 2,500 citations written per month. As Renkens points out, “The amount we collect is less than the amount issued due mostly to appeals that resulted in a reduction or waiver of citations.” In other words, throw a heaping pile of citations against the wall and we’ll see how many stick.

The bigger concern is the fact that TAPS writes a large amount of parking citations to supplement their budget. Under this scenario, citations are not meant as a deterrent to negligible behavior as Renkens suggests, but a necessity to pay the bills, which is a “tax.” Renkens understands how it could be perceived as a tax but suggests, “They are issued to manage parking demand.” To be fair, it makes sense to ticket the folks parking without any sort of permit, but does not explain the $50 ticket issued when a parking enforcement officer performs the strenuous task of slapping a tow notice under your windshield wiper, for parking too close to the yellow line.

PSU student Pete Heintz has experienced the relentless full-court press employed by TAPS. In January 2010, the beginning of winter term, he purchased his parking pass to park at Epler Hall where he was a resident. Heintz tells a detailed account of his frustration: “In the beginning of the term I got two tickets—$50 each—because my tires were touching the yellow parking stripe, even though there was not another parking space on the side where my tires were touching the line.” After having his car broken into on three separate occasions, Heintz began parking his car on level one at night when students were not in class and the structure was virtually empty. Heintz points out, “I left a note on my car for parking enforcement telling them that my car had been broken into three times and I wanted to be able to keep an eye on it at night, I still wound up receiving four parking tickets.” According to Heintz, “The most frustrating part is that when I called police to file reports, they told me that they get at least ten calls a month about the same thing and that the garage is a dumping spot for stolen cars and where thieves go to steal cars.”

Looking at Campus Public Safety crime statistics, from April 2010 to now, in roughly three full months of classes there have been 18 reported cases of vandalism, and 34 cases of theft on top of the smattering of hit and run, arson, trespassing, drug violations, liquor law violations and one public masturbation report on campus.

What doesn’t add up is the fact that, in addition to Campus Public Safety making their rounds, the saturated presence of parking enforcement officers appears to do very little in deterring the wide spectrum of crimes occurring in university parking structures and lots. Of course, when you consider that these part-time enforcement officers are generating half a million dollars in revenue per year for the department through the issuing of citations, there is little time or energy for anything else.

Perhaps following the spirit of a regulation instead of the letter of a regulation would also allow time to deter illegal activity. Renkens added, “Vehicle break-ins and car thefts are difficult to combat in an urban area, but we attempt to do so by informing people to remove valuables from their vehicles.”

Damaged car in PSU’s parking garage. Photos by Stephanie Lucky
Imagine if Portland State substantially increased the cost of its tuition next year. Would you still be able to afford to attend? Unfortunately, more expensive tuition looks like a fairly realistic vision of the near future.

Given the current state of Oregon’s economy, it’s not surprising that public universities like PSU are short on money. About 20 years ago, state funding for higher education in Oregon started on a slow decline. The amount of PSU’s revenue coming from the state compared to other sources went from about 44 percent in 1989, to 14.6 percent this year. As a result, tuition costs have been steadily creeping upwards in order to balance the budget. However, it has come to the attention of prominent members of the Oregon University System that the current funding model is not a sustainable one, and the budget system must be completely restructured in order to keep Oregon universities running. Several proposals have been made about how to design the new system.

One of the more popular proposals, advocated by PSU’s administration, is to essentially take the state legislature out of the picture by turning Oregon’s public universities into private corporations. The idea started with a report written by David Frohnmayer, former president of the University of Oregon, and was quickly adopted by PSU President Wim Wiewel and other figures in higher education. Essentially, Frohnmayer states that separating Oregon’s universities from its politics will give the schools more flexibility with their own budgets, and allow their administrations to make important decisions without having to beg the legislature for permission. The proposal came from the idea that “state funding is not likely to provide the answer to higher education’s resource issues,” as stated in a white paper written by Wiewel’s office. If PSU can become more independent of the state, it will be able to pursue other forms of funding that would otherwise not be possible under the state’s direct supervision.

Unfortunately for PSU students, other forms of funding also include—you guessed it—higher tuition costs. Fortunately, the OUS has its own less extreme proposal for the restructuring: instead of completely privatizing the universities, the OUS simply asks for more financial flexibility.

“Public universities have 6,000 budget line items. K-12 schools and community colleges just get a single block budget. We want to adopt the K-12 model,” said Diane Saunders, director of communications for the OUS. This way, she says, universities could manage their own budgets instead of having the state do it for them. To protect students against tuition abuse by universities, the OUS proposes to keep the Board of Higher Education in place. “We don’t want universities having total control of tuition, and we really like the Board of Higher Education, so we want to stick to that model,” Saunders said.

Presumably, this proposal would cut costs without the fear of accessibility going down the toilet. ASPSU has a different take on the issue. According to ASPSU President Katie Markey, the current proposals only sidestep the problem.

“The proposals don’t solve the real problem, which is that we’re not getting enough revenue from the state,” Markey said. In response to the OUS proposal, which is said to drastically cut costs, Markey said she’s not convinced. “Nothing is defined,” she said, referring to the way the proposal throws around terms like “affordability” without any explanation. Markey mentioned that restructuring of the OUS is necessary, but the new system should give students more of a voice. Unfortunately, when it comes down to tuition, Markey said there is not much we can do about higher costs. “Whether or not restructuring takes place, we’re looking at a budget cut of about 25 percent for next year,” she said. “It’s possible we might even see the tuition numbers go into the double digits.”

The state legislature is set to convene in January, and the OUS will likely take their case for restructuring to Oregon’s lawmakers. At this point, it’s not clear what will happen to the OUS or PSU, but the possibility of increased tuition costs next year seems very likely.
Are You Getting Your Money’s Worth?

Sasha Chedygov

It’s not entirely surprising that the most expensive programs are the ones Portland State is throwing the most money at, but is it fair that English majors are getting less for their dollar than engineering majors? Diane Saunders, director of communications at the Oregon University System, says that if the OUS restructuring proposal gets implemented, there is a possibility that a more balanced tuition system will be put in place—one where the tuition students pay is based on their major.

Amount PSU spends per graduating student by department

Overall budget
$268,464,494

Instruction

Administration

Academic Support

Departmental budget vs. number of graduating students

General Science
$13,327,193 for 500 students

Arts & Letters
$8,486,282 for 890 students
Some Southern Oregon University students are unhappy about the mandatory health insurance fee they have to pay even if they already have insurance. According to a report by the Ashland Daily Tidings [“SOU students irked by insurance fee” Oct. 15], SOU requires students who take six regular credits or more to pay its health insurance fee, which has increased by 42 percent this fall term from. Portland State students have a much higher mandatory fee for health care.

The Portland State Domestic Student Health Insurance Plan is underwritten by Aetna Life Insurance Company and administered by Chickering Claims Administrators, Inc. The basic plan, which is very similar to the plan that SOU offers, is included in the mandatory $190 student health fee. This means $190 dollars per term for insurance is automatically assessed in the tuition for students taking five or more credit hours, excluding online classes.

The purpose of the fee is to help universities protect a percentage of students who are not on their parents’ plans, and to make sure that the fee covers costs that would otherwise be unaffordable to these students. Nevertheless, the plan’s critics say it is unfair to require students who cannot afford it to pay the fee. Also, the number of students with outside health insurance plans is expected to increase now that the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is official policy. In the latest phase of federal health care reform, beginning last September, children are able to stay on their parents’ insurance policies until age 26.

George Voss, associate director of Student Health Services at Oregon State University, said that currently all seven schools in the Oregon University System charge a health fee. In addition to that, said Voss, “For many schools, it is an amount that is added into the general tuition charge,” noting that the OSU health fee is $134.74 per term.

The University of Maryland, students who are covered by health insurance (i.e. through parent plans, family plans or employer-sponsored plans) may apply for a waiver of the requirement to enroll in the university’s health insurance plan by submitting the name of their insurance company and insurance policy number for verification.

Like all international students at PSU, Abdullah Alhathloul is provided insurance coverage by family and sponsors and is not required to pay the mandatory student health fee that non-international students are required to pay.

“I don’t think it is fair for non-international students to have to decide whether or not they can even afford going to school because of the additional costs this puts on their tuition,” he said.

If the University of Maryland, a public institution with nearly 40,000 students, can find a way to provide optional health insurance, then Portland State, with about 30,000 students, should be able to do the same.
Crouching Canvassers, Hidden Motive

WHAT TO EXPECT AROUND CAMPUS—AND HOW YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO AVOID THEM

Erica Charves

Everyday, students are accosted in the streets by clipboard-wielding marauders while they walk across campus between classes. These marauders stalk students in walkways and on downtown corners wearing Greenpeace jackets, calling out, “Do you have a moment for the environment?” Throughout the week, students are approached by various groups from Children International to the Human Rights Campaign.

There are a number of other street solicitors in Portland which students are likely to encounter, from campus canvassers to MAX-riding petition peddlers and people who sell CDs out of duffel bags. People are asking for your money on the street every day.

While researching the increase in random strangers paid to accost people minding their own business on their way to class, lunch and work, I was approached by a man going by the name of “Ty” who tried to sell my friends and I “fantastic deals” on perfume. For only $20, cash or check, I could have a perfect knockoff of Paris Hilton’s Can Can perfume, or I could buy my dad a knockoff Eternity cologne.

A street vendor and his duffel bag certainly raise some concern, but other organizations such as Fund for the Public Interest are out to sign up new members to donate to various campaigns. A leader in Portland canvassing, Fund for the Public Interest raises money for over 50 different interest groups, including the Human Rights Campaign and the Sierra Club.

Groups like Grassroots Campaigns approach people in the name of many organizations, such as Amnesty International and the American Civil Liberties Union. While the folks you meet on the street say that you must sign up there and in person, the truth is you can easily sign up online and cut out the middleman. Groups like the ACLU and Children International have places to donate online. The bad news is your local canvasser will not get the credit of a sale, but then again, did you really want to give them your money?

How bad are street salesmen and women asking for your money to save the rainforest? The Spectator examines two different types of street solicitors:

CANVASSERS

These clipboard-toting guys and gals arrive in clusters and generally hang out on corners. Their signature move is calling out questions after establishing eye contact to passersby. “How would you like to help polar bears today?”

Greenpeace dispatches dozens of people daily to downtown Portland; these solicitors make $12-$13 dollars an hour. Dialogue Direct handles soliciting for various organizations. They sign up donors for Children International, who pays the company a fee for their solicitors. Third party organizations are giving jobs to young people, but they do not employ on a long-term basis, and do not offer benefits. In fact, steady employment relies on steady streams of newly committed donors.

OREGON VOTING AND BALLOT SIGNATURE PUSHERS

Voting is important—it’s the cornerstone of democracy as we know it. Everyone who is eligible should vote! The best places to register to vote are through known and trusted agencies, such as ASPSU and at the Department of Motor Vehicles. It could be unsafe to give your voter registration information to people who are not authorized.

Ballot signatures are actually necessary in Oregon. We are an initiative state, meaning to reach the vote during elections, a petition must gather enough signatures (8 percent of previous voter turnout). Taxes cannot be raised in Oregon without the proper signatures. A referendum, or repeal of a law passed by Oregon legislators, takes roughly the same amount of signatures to reach voters.

Top 10 Ways to Avoid Canvassers

1. Pretend to use your cell phone or motion to your ear as if you were wearing a hands-free set.
2. Keep a copy of the Spectator and scan the articles intently as you scurry past corner hawkers.
3. Take a tip from the Pearl District Philanthropic Society—they printed business card-sized responses to solicitors which read, “I know you’re just doing your job… I’m not going to talk to you.”
4. Ignore them by staring intently at the ground, crossing your arms or power walking determinately past their corner. If they engage you, tell them you’re “late for a very important date.” It worked for the white rabbit.
5. Come on way too strong and ask for their number, when they get off work and if they like whips and chains.
6. Ask them to donate to your foundation to support extracurricular activities for poor college students. This includes pizza, beer and coffee… necessities in student life.
7. Tell them you already donate to their organization. Greenpeace, Children International, Human Rights Campaign, you now donate to all of them. You donate to stop environmental ruin, save children from starvation while supporting same-sex marriage for the cost of $22 every month.
8. Wear headphones as you walk between classes—the giant headphones which cover your entire ear and stick out two inches. If you’re wearing these, there’s no mistaking you’re into your iPod.
9. Make conversation with a friend regarding something very important. “So, if the heart transplant isn’t available, how long does the vet think your parrot will live?”
10. Do not fall for the handshake! If the person who approaches you with a handshake is holding a clipboard, wearing a polo shirt and toting a binder, just keep walking. The second you shake that stranger’s hand, you’ve signed over 10 minutes of your life to pushy conversation about how you should hand over your credit card information to a complete stranger. Because everyone wants to save the children, right?
Portland General Electric’s Boardman power plant has attracted protests for years. The movement led by a myriad of state and national environmental groups to shut down the state’s last remaining coal-fired plant has tried marches, public testimonials and even lawsuits. On Oct. 10, the plant might have finally met its match in the Sierra Club’s “Roll Against Coal” rally.

This time, the protestors deployed their secret weapons to help their cause: Bicycles and Voodoo Donuts.

“The only way to fight coal is to eat donuts,” someone in the large crowd laughed as she geared up to ride for the cause.

As part of a nationwide “Day of Action” against “dirty energy,” the Sierra Club organized a bike ride throughout inner Southeast Portland to demand PGE close the plant by 2014, and to call attention to the plant’s violation of the Clean Air Act. They organized the rally in partnership with Greenpeace, Climate Solutions, Transition PDX, Bright Neighbor and Youth Empowered Action. Protestors and volunteers were treated to a free demonstration on environmentally conscious bicycle repair, snacks from Voodoo Donuts and an after-party with local bands.

“The buildup to this event, working with volunteers and the bike community, is a big part of what this day is about,” said Sofia Gidlund, Greenpeace’s Northwest organizer.

The rally’s organizers said the ride was as much about raising awareness about environmentalism as protesting the Boardman plant.
“The idea of this Day of Action is to get people to act to reduce their own carbon footprint,” said Sierra Club volunteer Nick Engelfried. “We’re saying to [PGE], ‘We’re doing our part, the movement that wouldn’t go away.’”

Some of the protesters said that the rally has inspired them to take action in their own everyday lives to help the environment.

“It’s about understanding the issues regarding clean energy,” said volunteer Paul Whiting, who said he decided to pursue environmental activism after seeing An Inconvenient Truth, former Vice President Al Gore’s Academy Award-winning documentary about global warming. “I signed up for renewable energy [for my apartment], and that’s the kind of real, concrete action that people can take.”

Kevin May attended the rally as part of a cross-country bike tour he began with his own environmental group, The Cultural Recyclists, who have ridden through several states to document sustainability efforts such as eco-villages and community farms. He said that he saw great potential in the Roll Against Coal rally not just as a way to send a message, but as a networking opportunity for environmentalists.

“This event will energize everyone who is working toward sustainability, to let them know they’re not the only ones,” May said. “It’s a nice gathering for people with the same goal to link up and work together.”

THE MOVEMENT THAT WOULDN’T GO AWAY

The movement to close the Boardman plant gained new momentum on Sept. 28, when the Environmental Protection Agency served PGE with a notice that the facility has been operating in violation of the Clean Air Act since 1998. The EPA says that the facility installed two boiler upgrades in 1998 and 2004 without putting in place the emission controls required under the Act. The agency claims that the plant’s actions have resulted in greater emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide, pollutants linked to increases in haze and acid rain, as well as respiratory illnesses such as asthma. The U.S. Forest Service and National Parks Service, meanwhile, reported in October that the pollution created by the facility has damaged 14 protected parks and wilderness areas, as well as the entire Columbia River Gorge area.

“The Boardman plant is responsible for 50 percent of the pollution in the Columbia River Gorge,” said Michael Lang, conservation director of Friends of Columbia Gorge, part of the coalition of environmental groups that sued PGE in 2008 for violating the Clean Air Act. “It is the single largest point source for pollution in the area.”

[Editor’s note: Lang did not attend the rally; the Spectator spoke with him in a separate interview.]

The EPA notice threatens PGE with penalties of up to $57,500 for every day the plant has operated without emissions controls.

Though environmental groups have tried to shut the plant down before, said Engelfried, “There’s never been this much public pressure before. The EPA notice is a weapon in our arsenal.”

“PGE is saying that they’ll close in 2020 so they don’t have to apply emission control. That’s illegal.”

JOBS VS. COAL

Under the Clean Air Act, states are required to demonstrate by 2017 that their major power plants have been retrofitted with Best Available Retrofit Technology in order to decrease the pollution they produce. PGE originally planned to keep the plant open until 2040, which would require them to install more than $500 million in pollution controls in order to comply with state and federal clean air laws. In April, however, the utility proposed to close the plant in 2020, and to invest $45 million into partially cleaning the plant’s emissions of mercury and nitrogen over the next year—this plan would save PGE roughly $450 million. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is currently reviewing this proposal.

“PGE is saying that they’ll close in 2020 if they get a waiver from the Clean Air Act, so they don’t have to apply emission control technology. That’s illegal,” said Lang.

PGE spokesman Steve Corson said in a phone interview with the Spectator that if the plant were to close earlier than 2020, utility payer rates would go up anywhere between three and four percent. The proposal to close it in 2020 would keep rates low while managing emissions, he said.

“The proposal would greatly reduce emissions below the point the DEQ passed last year,” said Corson, referring to the agency’s previous proposals to close the plant in 2015 and 2018, respectively.

Corson also said that PGE’s current proposal would provide the Boardman plant’s employees with a better deal.

“Many of these folks are longtime PGE employees with longtime ties to the Boardman community,” he said. “We feel that [the proposal to close the plant in 2020] gives them more time to plan for the transition, whether that is staying with Boardman in a different facility, or moving on to something else.”

AND, WE ALL ROLL ON AGAIN

The Roll Against Coal campaign has anticipated such concerns, said Gidlund, and has its own ideas to help displaced workers. The best solution for them, she said, is to either retire or adapt to a green economy by learning new skills.

“Many people working at the plant are nearing retirement age, so [the state government] could create a retirement program,” she said. “There are also training programs that the politicians and state regulators can work on to get people into the renewable energy sector.”

Gidley said that the closure of the Boardman plant is but one of the Roll Against Coal campaign’s goals. Of equal importance, she said, is how the money that would be used to keep the plant in operation could be better spent to help the environment.

“They’re going to close the plant eventually anyway. We can take the money that [operating the plant] would cost and funnel it into Oregon.”

Whenever the Boardman plant closes, the volunteers and staff working in the Roll Against Coal campaign say they are committed to cleaning up Oregon, one person at a time. That commitment was summed up best by a volunteer interviewed for a Greenpeace documentary shot during the protest.

“We have a clear message for our politicians: We’re getting to work. Are you?”
A Liberal’s Open Letter to the Tea Party

OUR RESPECTIVE VISIONS OF AMERICA REALLY AREN’T THAT DIFFERENT

Mike Munkvold

As a left-winger working for a conservative magazine, I have had more than one occasion to provide a different perspective on Oregon’s branch of the Tea Party movement—and have had more than one occasion to be surprised by the people I’ve interviewed. I’m not proud to admit that I expected to meet pitchfork-wielding reactionaries enraged by the idea of a black man spending their tax money. I am chastened to say that I met people of good will, many of whom hold the same basic beliefs I do.

So, Tea Party Nation, now that I’ve made a peace offering on behalf of my liberal brethren, can I ask a small favor? Cut us the same slack. Stop judging us by Code Pink and Keith Olbermann, and we’ll stop judging you by Glenn Beck and Sarah Palin. Think what we could accomplish if we just listened to each other.

After all, many of us liberal folk were as disgusted as you were by the Wall Street bailout, which was followed by sharp cuts in such basic social programs as Medicare and Social Security. We too have questions about the health care overhaul, which includes a provision in which Medicare Part D cannot bargain with pharmaceutical companies for lower prescription drug prices.

We can also sympathize with (if not completely share) your frustration with President Obama, who has opted to deal with you by pretending you don’t exist. We would get angry too if the president saw our dissatisfaction with his government and wrote it off as fear of a vision we didn’t understand. In fact, we know all about such condescension: We were hopping mad when Bush told us, in effect, that he “understood” our opposition to the Iraq War, but that he didn’t care. Hubris is hubris, no matter what party it comes from.

We liberal folk are not blind to our own flaws, either. We are often our own worst enemies when it comes to communicating our various agendas to the rest of the world. The smugness with which many of our pundits, protestors and self-appointed spokespeople attack and dismiss their ideological opponents—even those deserving of a good tongue-lashing—may please the converted, but only alienates the Moveable Middle. For example, it’s wrong to accuse you of racism simply because you disapprove of Obama’s policies; true, a few Tea Partiers have shouted ethnic and homophobic slurs on live TV, but we are willing to believe that they are the exception. We do not think that you’re bigots or cranks just because you disagree with us.

If only we could say the same of some of your self-appointed leaders. Let me put this as gently as I can: Fox News and talk radio does not give a damn about you. You’re a talking point to them, nothing more. You will never find true champions in limousine populists who make obscene amounts of money by mouthing off for three hours a day. Same goes for most of the
politicians who have slithered onto the national scene by taking up your banner, only to cynically co-opt it to push their own bizarre agendas, from Michelle Bachmann’s call to investigate anti-Americanism in Congress to Christine O’Donnell’s War on Masturbation. Have their easy platitudes and angry rants created even one job? What have these wingnuts ever done but make you look crazy and stupid by association?

We both need to disengage from this “culture war.” Finger-pointing and name-calling won’t do anything but increase Fox and MSNBC’s market shares. We both want an America that respects our beliefs—and we both believe that democracy cannot function without the free, fearless exchange of ideas. We can learn so much from each other, but we must first stop demonizing each other. Liberals like me are willing to cross the picket lines if you are. (That said, I’m not going to stop calling you “tea-baggers.” It’s just too much fun.) You say you want a revolution? We’d all love to see the plan.

We liberal folk are not blind to our own flaws, either. The smugness of our pundits, protesters and self-appointed spokespeople.
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