

**How Activism during the Vietnam Era Influenced Change in
the Student Role on Campus**

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In describing United States student activists of the 1990's, Kate Zernike says they are "a very different pack of protesters from the long-haired, antiestablishment dissenters of the past".¹ This seems to be a common attitude toward the student protesters of the 1960's. The reality of 1960's protests was not however what many may have imagined. While protests of the sixties may have included token hippies and a few violent dissenters, student protesters were not antiestablishment. On many campuses they even had their own form of establishment, and many members of this establishment would go on to play an important role in the United States government. At the University of Oregon, the student protest movement and its leaders became an integral part of student government. Not only was student government involved in protests, but the official actions taken by the University of Oregon student government, the Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO), during this time reflect the attitudes of the student protesters. Students of the sixties wanted control over myriad aspects of their lives, and used the establishment of student government to fight for this control. This was clearly seen through specific actions taken by student government in the late 1960's in an attempt to gain control over their education. At the University of Oregon, student government and student protest went hand in hand.

The University of Oregon became involved with the Civil Rights movement in the south in 1964. Three University of Oregon students traveled to Mississippi to help African-Americans register to vote.² This became known as Freedom Summer, and it

¹ Zernike, Kate. "College activism, '90s style, unites two sides". Boston Globe February 15, 1999. March 10, 2005 <<http://community.middlebury.edu/~mcp/page7.html>>

² CORE Newsletter, "CORE is Going to Raise \$750.00 By April 30th, 1965!" in Laura Bock Collection, regarding a fundraiser for CORE to send to volunteers to register voters in Louisiana. April 7, 1965, Civil Rights, Laura Bock Collection, 1965, 04-07, no collection number, Division of Special Collections and University Archives; University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403.

induced more white students at the University of Oregon to join the civil rights movement. The other national movement that swept through college campuses during the sixties was the free speech movement. Credit is given to University of California Berkeley, for the initiation of the free speech movement. However, momentum had been building for years in regard to free speech, although it wasn't until Mario Savio gave his speech "An End to History"³ that college students around the nation had a common cause around which to unite; the Free Speech Movement.

Students went from being timid and complacent to rebellious and outspoken. The sixties and early seventies are known as years when students united against the war and against the establishment. It was not until the war and the draft that university students united, not only on their individual campuses, but nationally as well. Students came together under a mutual desire for control, control over the war, over their rights, over their education; overall, students wanted more control over their lives. In general the sixties can be described, in Todd Gitlin words, as "years of hope" and "days of rage"⁴

Nineteen seventy was a key year for student activists at the University of Oregon. January began with the student's attack of ROTC on campus. February brought the burning of an ROTC facility causing thousands of dollars in damage.⁵ In the months following the burning in the ROTC facility students' frustration at the University's lack of initiative regarding their demands to eliminate ROTC and other military organizations from campus increased. On April 22 approximately 300 students took over the administrative building to show their frustration and to make their demands heard in

³ Savio, Mario. "An End to History." Berkley, California. 1964.

⁴ Gitlin, Todd. "The Sixties". New York: Bantam Books, 1993.

⁵ System Institutions; Office of the President: Robert D. Clark, coll. UA16; Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403.

regard to the military's presence on campus. This sit-in ended in a mass of angry students and National Guard members in a cloud of tear gas.⁶ Three days following the sit-in, students gathered at the student union and decided to close 13th Avenue, the main street running through campus.⁷ This had been discussed for many years, but nothing had ever been accomplished,⁸ until, on April 26, 1970 a group of students built brick planters that blocked 13th Ave from traffic. These planters spurred talks between the University and the city, finally resulting in the permanent closure of the section of 13th Ave that goes through the University of Oregon campus.⁹ Just a month after the protests on the University of Oregon campus, a similar protest at Kent State University resulted in the shooting of 13 students, four of which were fatal. The National Guard was called in, and open fired on a group of protesters.¹⁰ The Kent State "massacre" as it is often referred to, angered many students, and seemed to inspire more protests and violent actions on university campuses around the nation. On University of Oregon's campus, 1970 unrest ended with the bombing of the Prince Lucian Campbell building, on the evening of October 2.¹¹ There is no certainty as to who planted the bomb, but it was assumed, by the University, to be student radicals. 1970 was a turbulent year, full of student activism, ranging from violent burnings and bombings to the peaceful closure of 13th street.

A closer look shows that even in the midst of the turbulence, there was much organization and communication between students and administration, for example

⁶ unlabeled (Student Unrest); Office of the President Records, Division of Special Collections and University Archives; University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403.

⁷ *The World*, Coos Bay Oregon, "Students at UO Build Street Wall", April 27, 1970. Confirmed by Ron Eachus, a student involved in the planning and execution of the barricades.

⁸ *The Oregonian*, Portland Oregon, "UO Street Barricades Upset Eugene Citizens", April 29, 1970.

⁹ *Register Guard*, "U of O portion on 13th Ave to be closed for 2-week test", May 12, 1970

¹⁰ *Inquire, Learn, Reflect: May 4, 1970*. March 10, 2005.

<http://www.kent.edu/History/may4_1970/index.cfm>

¹¹ *Oregon Daily Emerald*. "No suspects yet in \$50,000 PLC bombing". October 5, 1970

students gathered during the afternoon of April 22, 1970 to show their frustration with the administration in regard to military groups on campus. They planned to stage a peaceful demonstration to state their demands. The 4 demands were: “removal of naval recruiters from campus, ending of ROTC, amnesty for individuals were arrested as a result of last week’s disturbances, removal of all police from campus”.¹² Students announced their plan of a non-violent protest, and President of the University, Robert D. Clark, responded to the protesters, saying that he would not call the police as long as they remained non-violent and understood that were in violation of the law. Students remained in Johnson Hall through the night.¹³ The next day, April 23, 1970, President Clark addressed the students, and asked them to leave. Many students did not listen to the President’s requests, at which point the police were brought in to remove the remaining students. An archival document reports that the “peaceful removal of the persons arrested was marred by the arrival of a squad of National Guardsmen”.¹⁴ The arrival of the National Guard involved the use of tear gas, which escalated the mild protest into an angry and violent scene.¹⁵

However, a more organized and cohesive student effort was born when just days following the Johnson Hall sit-in, students gathered at the EMU student union for a similar demonstration. Ron Eachus described that the students “literally took over the student union” in protest of the war and the invasion of Cambodia.¹⁶ This gathering remained low-key and no disruptions occurred, however, it was here that a group of

¹² *Oregon Daily Emerald*, “Students take Johnson Hall; stay all night”, April 27, 1970.

¹³ *Oregon Daily Emerald*, “Students take Johnson Hall; stay all night”, April 27, 1970.

¹⁴ unlabeled (Student Unrest); Office of the President Records, Division of Special Collections and University Archives; University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403

¹⁵ unlabeled (Student Unrest); Office of the President Records, Division of Special Collections and University Archives; University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403

¹⁶ Ron Eachus. Interview. Salem, Oregon. March 1, 2005.

students got the idea to close the portion of 13th street that runs through the campus.¹⁷ Ron Eachus, University of Oregon student body president 1969-1970, describes the process of organizing people and supplies: “it came together in an almost anarchical way; there were some leaders of student government, also some other leaders of different factions and leaders of different groups”. On the night of April 26, 1970 a group of students gathered at either end of 13th street to build planters to block the street from traffic. Traffic going through campus had been a problem for years, as it was dangerous for students to cross the busy street on their way through campus. However, nothing had ever been done to close the street. It is said to have been discussed for 30 years, but there was never a concentrated effort to make a permanent change.¹⁸ Once the planters were up and traffic was blocked, the University was forced to take a stand and do something. The University showed their support for the students in a vote that unanimously supported, in principle, the closure of 13th Ave.¹⁹ After a series of public hearings where both students and angry Eugene citizens were able to state their opinions; the city council approved the closure of 13th.²⁰ This was a non-violent success for the students of the University of Oregon that has remained in place to this day.

Another aspect surrounding the Johnson Hall sit-in as well as the EMU gathering was the student involvement in what was called the “general strike”.²¹ These students were opposed to the actions taken by the University, and President Clark, at the time of the Johnson Hall sit-in. These students met with President Clark on April 25 to discuss

¹⁷ *The World*, Coos Bay Oregon, “Students at UO Build Street Wall”, April 17, 1970. Confirmed by Ron Eachus, a student involved in the planning and execution of the barricades.

¹⁸ *The Oregonian*, Portland Oregon, “UO Street Barricades Upset Eugene Citizens”, April 29, 1970.

¹⁹ *Register Guard*, “UO planters back closure”, May 5, 1970.

²⁰ *Register Guard*, “U of O portion on 13th Ave to be closed for 2-week test”, May 12, 1970.

²¹ *Oregon Daily Emerald*. “Clark responds to strike demands” April 27, 1970.

the issues. This is a good example of how student government was involved in the student protests, as the session was “chaired by ASUO Administrative Assistant Ron Eachus, who had arranged the dialogue with Clark”.²² The discussion lasted for four hours and brought in more than 1,000 students, faculty members and interested community members. The discussion involved the presentation of the nine demands written by the strikers, and then Clark was allowed to respond to each of the demands individually as well as to the attitudes of the strikers in general. In brief, Clark said that he understood the strikers’ desire for power within the University, but he criticized the strikers for not touching on the complexity of the issues. Ron Eachus and other members of ASUO were involved in orchestrating the discussion between the strikers and President Clark, and the ASUO had called for the “general strike” on April 23, but on April 27 the senate voted to withdraw its support.²³ The fact that ASUO both started the strike, and ended it, shows just how closely connected protests and ASUO were during this time period, and especially in 1970.

The University of Oregon continued to see radical actions and violence throughout the year. There were five bombings in Eugene in 1970 alone. Both Emerald Hall and Prince Lucien Campbell Hall, henceforth PLC, were bombed in the second half of the year. Emerald Hall was bombed on August 21, 1970 and caused a fire which was put out by the building’s sprinkler system. The major bombing on campus, however was the bombing of PLC on October 2, 1970. The bomb exploded in the evening in a ground floor lavatory. There were no fatalities and the building remained structurally sound. There were no suspects in the case. Overall the PLC bombing resulted in \$50,000 in

²² *Oregon Daily Emerald*. “Clark responds to strike demands” April 27, 1970.

²³ *Oregon Daily Emerald*. “Strike support withdrawn” April 28, 1970

damage and bombings between 1969 and 1970 caused more than \$300,000 in damage to University property.²⁴

Even with the turmoil that resounded through these years, the majority of students maintained a positive attitude toward student government and continued to use it as an organizational tool to gain more control over their education. The attitudes that emanated through the nation during the late sixties and early seventies were not only seen through the student protest movement, but also through the official actions taken by the student government. The ASUO student leaders between the years of 1968 and 1970 made some major changes in incidental fee control and the Student Conduct Code, most of which are still in effect today. The events of the late 1960's and early 1970's, as described previously, spurred radical action on university campuses around the nation. The attitudes of student protestors centered around a desire for control. They were striving for more say in their own lives, in their education and even in how the country was being run. The change made by ASUO leaders during the 1960's and early 1970's corresponded with the attitudes of the times.

The leaders of University of Oregon student government were many of the same people who were instrumental in leading the student protests on campus. In the official sector, the key players to be looked at are Kip Morgan, Ron Eachus and Phil Barnhart. Morgan was the ASUO student body president 1968-1969, Eachus was student body president 1969-1970, and Barnhart served in a number of ASUO positions, including the student senate, the student conduct committee, and as student prosecutor on the student court²⁵. All of the positions held by these men were elected positions. Student

²⁴ *Oregon Daily Emerald*. "PLC one of nine bomb sites in two years" October 5, 1970

²⁵ Phil Barnhart. Interview by phone. Eugene, Oregon. January 31, 2005.

government elections are modeled after national political election, and are open to the entire student body²⁶. Candidates run a campaign designed to inform the student body of their plans for the campus if they get elected as well as inform them of their general political and personal beliefs²⁷. Due to this platform, the student body officials who are elected are the ones who have beliefs similar to the larger portion of the student population. As elected officials of the student body, all three of these men were expected to represent the student body as a whole when making their decisions. While there were many others involved, these three seem to be the most instrumental in getting things accomplished.

One of the most significant and enduring changes accomplished by the ASUO leaders between 1968 and 1970 was to gain control of the incidental fees in 1970. Until then, the Board of Higher Education had had control of how the incidental fees were spent. In October 1969 Kip Morgan (ASUO student body president), Ron Eachus (ASUO Administrative Assistant), and students Tom Fagan and Phil Barnhart filed suit against the Board of Higher Education regarding incidental fees. The students hired an attorney, Robert Acherman, to represent them and hired a lobbyist, Russell Sadler, to represent them at the legislature and before the Board. The suit regarded an accusation of misallocation of incidental fee funds by the Board. The grounds of the case were that the Board had allocated money for “departments or schools that predominantly provide instruction and the maintenance of courses for academic credit”²⁸, and Oregon law

²⁶ University of Oregon. “ASUO Election Rules”. University of Oregon.
<<http://gladstone.uoregon.edu/~senate/documents/election%20rules.pdf>>

²⁷ This assertion is from a series of newspaper articles in the *Oregon Daily Emerald* about the platforms of each of the candidates for the election of 1969.

²⁸ *Oregon Daily Emerald*. “Incidental Fee suit comes to trial today”. Page 1. April 14, 1970.

prohibits the use of incidental fees to support “instructional or academic programs”²⁹. The suit filed by the students asked for control over the unused money for that year, as well as developing a new way to allocate the incidental fees. In April 1970 a trial was held to make a decision regarding incidental fees. The Board claimed to have done nothing wrong, and said that it was their right to be allowed to maintain control of the funds. Kip Morgan was the spokesman for the students, and he said that the incidental fees had been used inappropriately and he suggested that they be used to lower tuition or to fund student projects. After two days of hearings the decision was reached that the students should be allowed to make recommendations regarding the allocation of funds as well as have a say in the final incidental fee budget³⁰. This decision remains in effect today, as the finalization of the incidental fee budget is done by the student senate, and is open to the public³¹. As one of the major successes of the ASUO administrations between 1968 and 1970, gaining control of incidental fees seems to reflect the general feeling of students around the nation trying to gain more control over their country, campus, or life.

Another longstanding change that happened during the 1960’s was the initiation of a new Student Conduct Code. The new Code was put into effect on October 1, 1963. It was radically different from the previous Code, giving students a great deal of power over their own discipline. President of the University, Arthur Fleming said “we have gone as far as any institution in the country in placing ultimate responsibility on the

²⁹ *Oregon Daily Emerald*. “Morgan brings incidental fee suit to court”. Page 1. April 16, 1970.

³⁰ *Oregon Daily Emerald*. “ASUO fees suit action delayed for review of report”. Page 3. October 6, 1969. This is not an article about the final court decision, but rather one describing what the students asked for. The final verdict was in favor of the students, so their initial requests are considered to be the final verdict.

³¹ University of Oregon. “Incidental Fee 101”. University of Oregon.

<<http://asuo.uoregon.edu/index.php?cid=30>>

This website tells of how incidental fees are currently allocated.

students”³². The new Conduct Code established a Faculty-Student Committee which is “responsible for recommending policies related to student conduct”³³. It also established a Student Court which is responsible for the adjudication of violations to the Conduct Code. While the Conduct Code was written before the major student protests on campus, it was not used to its full potential until the 1970’s, and it had an effect regarding how all the protests to come would be handled. The development of a new Conduct Code seemed to foreshadow the fight for additional control that would ensue in the late sixties.

While the 1968-1970 student leaders were not involved in the initiation of the Student Conduct Code or the new organizations it established, they were instrumental in utilizing the authority given to them by the code. Even through 1970 students felt as though they were not getting the authority given to them by the Conduct Code. Though the committees were established and the rules had been changed, students felt like the administration was still acting without real student input. In an article in the *Daily Emerald*, Grattan Kerans describes how the administration was continually taking away student control.³⁴ One of the few significant structural changes made in this period was in 1968, when the Faculty-Student Committee was changed to include 3 more members, making it a committee composed of five students and five faculty members.³⁵ This was a significant change because it made the Faculty-Student Committee the only committee on campus to have equal representation of faculty and students. The original composition of

³² *Oregon Daily Emerald*, “Flemming releases ‘Historic Code’”, page 1. October 1, 1963. The University of Oregon Student Conduct Code was one of the first in the nation to initiate a policy of allowing students to control their own discipline. This quote was from a press conference held on the new Conduct Code. Fleming called the Conduct Code a “historical document”

³³ *Oregon Daily Emerald*, “Discipline Code Lists Violations, Sanctions”, page 1. October 1, 1963.

³⁴ *Oregon Daily Emerald*, “Conduct code in trouble: Model code deteriorating”, page 3 October 15, 1970.

³⁵ *Oregon Daily Emerald*. “Public hearing se on Student Court changes” September 23, 1970.

the committee was four faculty members and three students.³⁶ The change in 1968 gave students more say in the changes that were to be made to the Conduct Code. The changes to the Conduct Code in the late sixties and early seventies were the changes that truly allowed students to participate in their own discipline.

A result of the protests and other actions taken by student activists during the late 1960's and early 1970's was an increase in the number of violations of the Student Conduct Code. These violations are dealt with by the Student Court. The Student Court is a ruling body composed of students and staff, in charge of adjudicating violations of the Student Conduct Code. Until the late 1960's the Student Court was small, composed of just a few students and staff, but with the increase in violations came an increase in the size of the Student Court. Along with dealing with more cases, many of the violations were more complicated than had been previously dealt with by the court. In order to be able to deal with all of the cases that were coming in, as well as to properly research each case, the court needed to include a larger number of people. The size of the Court was increased in September 1970. A position that was added to the court was someone called the assistant to the prosecutor, whose job it was to do research on each case and to help the prosecutors deal with the new and complicated cases.³⁷ Phil Barnhart was a Student Prosecutor on the Student Court, and instrumental in increasing the size and the jurisdiction of the Student Court. Barnhart, along with many other members of the Student Court used their positions as a way to both express their feelings about the Vietnam War and other events of the time, but also to express to their fellow students that illegal actions are not the way to make change. In an interview, Barnhart said that he was

³⁶ *Oregon Daily Emerald*, "Discipline Code Lists Violations, Sanctions", page 1. October 1, 1963.

³⁷ *Oregon Daily Emerald*, "Discipline Code Lists Violations, Sanctions", page 1. October 1, 1963.

against the war, but he was also opposed to the way the students protested. As a student prosecutor he took student protestors to trial for their inappropriate actions³⁸.

The late 1960's and early 1970's were a time of enormous change, on both a national and local level. The actions taken by the ASUO between the years of 1968 and 1970 reflect the change in attitude as well as the shift in control. Students had been fighting for more control, and they started by gaining control of their education. The events of the 1960's and 1970's can be seen at the University of Oregon through the longstanding changes made by the ASUO.

While on the surface the major events seen on the University of Oregon during the late sixties and the early seventies seem to be either the result of ASUO sanctioned activities or grass root student activism, in reality, the two are inseparable, and together are responsible for the campus activity of the time. By the late sixties the student activists had established themselves in ASUO, thus blurring the line between official student government actions and student protest and anti-war activities.

The official actions taken by ASUO during the late sixties and the early seventies demonstrated the shift seen in ASUO leaders. With the increase in activism on college campuses, came a change in the student leadership within student government organizations. Iain More, ASUO student body president 1970-1971, described an "upward migration" of student activists into ASUO leadership positions. It soon became apparent that "you could not run for student government if you didn't have a stand on the [Vietnam] War".³⁹ Student leaders were also activists; one of the most influential student body presidents of this era was Ron Eachus. He was not only involved in trying to make

³⁸ Phil Barnhart. Interview by phone. Eugene, Oregon. January 31, 2005.

³⁹ Iain More. Interview by phone. Eugene, Oregon. March 4, 2005.

major changes on campus, but he was also involved in the student protests and organizations trying to invoke changes in the world. For Eachus the two were inseparable. His work with ASUO and his involvement in student protests and other activist groups seemed to be one and the same.⁴⁰

Eachus was instrumental in gaining control of incidental fees, and his description of this event tied in directly with activist activities. For Eachus, control of the incidental fees went hand in hand with the development of the Oregon State Public Interest Group, henceforth OSPIRG. At the same time the ASUO was fighting to gain control of incidental fees, a group of students were working to start OSPIRG. Ron Eachus described the situation:

Ralph Nader showed up, and gave this speech about creating public interest research groups... but the problem was that he wanted to use student government money, but he didn't want to go through student government. He was unaware of everything we had tried to do to get control over this money. Fortunately one of my best friends ended up leading the public interest research groups. So the public interest group people and student government agreed: look, we have to get this -- we can't have you going out and wanting to spend incidental fee money on this, but not supporting the idea that -- that -- but saying that you don't want to go through student government because we're trying to get all the incidental fees to go through student government, so we joined forces on

⁴⁰ Ron Eachus. Interview. Salem, Oregon. March 1, 2005.

that. ... Eventually students got control over incidental fees and OSPIRG got started.⁴¹

By teaming up, the ASUO increased their support which helped their case, and as soon as their case was won they were able to allocate funds to develop OSPIRG. So student government and political activism were not only connected through individuals, but also through events. Without the help from the OSPIRG group, ASUO probably would not have been able to win their incidental fees suit, and without ASUO it is doubtful that OSPIRG would have been funded.

The connection between student government and student activism was present throughout the nation. The National Student Association was a group of student government leaders from throughout the United States. Ron Eachus, was on the board for NSA and was part of a group of NSA members who visited Vietnam in December 1970. A delegation from NSA had plans to travel to South Vietnam to meet with the South Vietnamese student union. However, only a few students were able to make this trip however, because the South Vietnamese government was threatened by the student union and did not allow the American students to visit. Instead, the delegation was able to travel to North Vietnam with a Quaker organization. While in South and North Vietnam the NSA students wrote a draft of a document entitled the People's Peace Treaty, and it was signed by American, and South and North Vietnamese students. The People's Peace Treaty was a document stating that none of the students were in favor of the war and it gave terms to end the war. The Treaty stated that they wanted to end the war so that "both peoples can live under the joys of independence and can devote

⁴¹ Ron Eachus. Interview. Salem, Oregon. March 1, 2005.

themselves to building a society based on human equality and respect for the earth”.⁴²

The students from each country pledged to take whatever actions were appropriate to implement the People’s Peace Treaty to have it accepted by their respective governments. Ron Eachus said “We would bring it back and use it as an organizing tool to go to student government, we would go to city councils, as a local organizing tool, and in fact we did have a big demonstration in March, some time later that year to the (Eugene) city council to get a vote on endorsing the People’s Peace Treaty”.⁴³ This connection between student government leaders and an anti-war document clearly shows the impact that individual student leaders and world events had on each other.

Many people, both during the 1960’s and today, have simplified the image of student protesters of the late sixties and early seventies, as just a radical group of antiestablishment hippies who were only interested in making trouble. This is a stereotype that has existed since these protests were going on, and will probably exist forever. However, there is a lot more to the protests of the 1960’s than meets the eye. Students were fighting for more control over their lives, and while they often fought against establishments in higher education and local and national government, they actually had their own form of establishment, often manifested in student government. On university campuses, student government became an integral part of the student protests, not just in regard to education, but in almost all aspects of activism. Student government leaders were student protest leaders, and it is interesting to look at the passions of these young leaders as their inspiration to later become involved in governmental leadership. Phil Barnhart, Ron Eachus, Grattan Kerans, and Iain Moore are

⁴² *Joint Treaty of Peace*. March 3, 2005.

<<http://www.davka.org/what/theleft/peoplespeacetreatyvietnam.html>>

⁴³ Ron Eachus. Interview. Salem, Oregon. March 1, 2005.

just a few of the University of Oregon student protest and student government leaders who have gone to play a large role in Oregon governmental politics, as state legislators and as high level policy makers within the state. By the end of the student protest movement, student government and student protests were inseparable. They involved the same people and were fighting for the same things. The University of Oregon, the city of Eugene and the state of Oregon has benefited from this activism, government ever since.