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The Bowdoin Orient

An Interview with Senator Olympia Snowe



The Orient's Evan Kohn spoke with Maine's senior senator this week about the Supreme Court, anti-discrimination law, energy, her future plans, and Bowdoin-Colby hockey.

Conversations with Maine's Political Leaders

Third in a series

This week I spoke with U.S. Senator Olympia J. Snowe about a variety of topics pertaining to the lives of Bowdoin students.



When elected in 1994, Snowe became the second woman ever to represent the state of Maine in the Senate, after the late Senator Margaret Chase Smith. Snowe previously represented Maine's second congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives for 16 years.

At the age of 31, Snowe was first elected to Congress in 1978 as the youngest Republican woman—and the first Greek-American woman—ever elected to Congress. She is also the first woman in American history to serve in both houses of a state legislature and both houses of Congress. Snowe has won more federal elections in Maine than any other person since World War II.

Now Maine's senior senator, Snowe is currently finishing up her second term and will be up for re-election next November. She has earned a reputation as a centrist

senator and often seeks consensus-based approaches to policymaking. Snowe serves as chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Small Business, and is a member of the Select Committee on Intelligence, the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, and the Finance Committee.

Born in Augusta, Snowe was raised in Auburn and attended the University of Maine at Orono. Her father immigrated to America from Mytilene, Greece, and her mother's parents emigrated from Sparta. She is married to former Maine Governor John R. McKernan Jr.

The following includes excerpts of the interview.

Evan S. Kohn: Senator, my first question has to do with discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Issues of discrimination in the state have been discussed on campus a lot recently. You supported an amendment in 1996 that was ultimately defeated, which would have banned discrimination in hiring on the basis of sexual orientation. Do you think this type of legislation should be brought up again on the federal level?

Senator Olympia J. Snowe: Well, it certainly could. Obviously, these issues have been best addressed by the state...I don't know whether this legislation will

be introduced again on that question, but it is possible. That was my position, but I think this is best left to the states to determine and in particular for protecting those rights.

ESK: My next question has to do with the Supreme Court. In what ways might changes to the court, with now Chief Justice John Roberts and possibly soon-to-be Associate Justice Samuel Alito, in the end affect college students' lives and higher education? Are there any issues up for grabs that you think would be particularly salient with college students?

SOJS: That's a good question. It's hard to calculate...what you would expect is for judges to be open-minded, fair, predictable, pragmatic and understanding of the real-life implications of decisions that are made for the average American...So those would be the attributes and qualities that I'm looking for in a justice. You can never predict with certainty how they might rule on a certain question. What you do expect and hope for is that they provide open and fair consideration to every [side] of an issue.

Obviously, I think the chief justice is conservative, and I think the same is true for Judge Alito. But that is not really the issue. The issue is how they are going to apply their philosophy when it comes to

ruling on important issues. That's what you really have to calibrate as a senator and in the process of this confirmation...it's possible to be surprised by the rulings they make or might render, as we've heard about Justice Souter and Justice Kennedy, for example. So you never really know. What you do is look for those qualities. In the case of Judge Alito, obviously we're still exploring his record, and seeing what his questionnaire will tell, and [we'll hear about this more] in the confirmation Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearings. So, good question, and I'll be evaluating [those parts] of his record.

ESK: Moving onto financial aid, I know you've been a supporter of Pell Grants, having voted for an amendment in late October that was defeated, but would have increased the total possible amount of Pell Grants awarded. There has been concern that recent legislation might hurt the state of financial aid. What are your thoughts on this? Is there anything in particular on your agenda in regards to financial aid?

SOJS: The wrong direction would be to cut financial aid to the students who depend upon it. Since the days when I went to the University of Maine, [I have] understood its value. That is why I will continue to champion not only support of student aid and the Pell

Grant program, but also enhancing and expanding it. I obviously don't need to tell you what the costs are for higher education...

One of the first acts I undertook [occurred] when I was a freshman senator during my first year in the United States Senate when I served as a member of the Budget Committee. There were cuts in the Pell Grants program. I wasn't successful on the committee, so I took my initiative to the floor...Then I teamed up with the late Paul Simon, the senator from Illinois—an outstanding individual and great advocate for higher education. He and I collaborated on an amendment, and actually were able to save more money under that amendment than the one that I initially offered...As a result we were able to salvage student aid and the Pell Grant program...that was a major turning point because up to that point in time, there was a thought that we could cut programs like student aid and once we were successful it really wasn't attempted because of significant accomplishments and being able to restore the cuts that had occurred in the Budget Committee. That was a transformational moment for higher education and for the Pell Grant program, recognizing that this program should remain untouched because it is of

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Drinking cultures distinctly different in U.S.A., U.K.

by Kathryn Papnek
CONTRIBUTOR

When I arrived for orientation in London, my teachers told me that British students are all crack heads. Ecstasy, they informed me, could be bought anywhere on campus for the equivalent of 30 cents a pill and heroin sometimes for even less, but forget about buying pizza—it costs more than 40 dollars to get it delivered.

Like many of the other students at the orientation, I left London with a rather skewed impression of Oxford University as a place where everyone walked around dressed in all black, taking pills, by the hour and living on beans and rice because pizza was so expensive. However, after spending less than a week at Oxford, I realized that, as my British friends might put it, my teachers were probably “taking the piss.”

On the surface at least, Oxford is not too different from America. The signs are in English, you can shop at Gap and Borders, the students are all on facebook.com, and everyone is keen to see the latest episodes of “The OC” and “Desperate Housewives.” In fact, it seems so much like home that sometimes it’s only when you open your mouth and hear yourself as the

only strident and brassy American accent in a sea of cultured British voices that you realize you’re in a foreign country.

Nevertheless, after a few more weeks certain differences do become apparent. Certainly a comparison between Bowdoin’s class-based method of teaching and Oxford’s more independent tutorial

after a few weeks in Britain that you discover a subtle difference in the way in which alcohol is approached. Because the legal drinking age is 18 and is laxly enforced, many students have had easy access to booze long before they became legal adults. Brits are much more casual about alcohol.

Although you still hear stories about the freshman who got so drunk he cut his head open on the cobblestones before classes had even begun, in general, parties and drinking are more relaxed. Because alcohol is not a novelty, the focus is instead on the crazy costumes and “fancy dress” that are a staple of Oxford college parties and it’s only when notice you’re draining your fourth vodka tonic that you realize how trashed you’re getting. Although that’s another thing—British students don’t count drinks and anyone informing another student, as I did, that it was 10 p.m. and he was already on his third drink, will no doubt be looked at oddly and told to “chill out.”

In many ways then, the chill British parties seem an improvement over the five-shots-in-five-minutes, competitive pre-gaming culture of American drinking, where the focus is often on getting as trashed as possible before heading to the event. However, this relaxed attitude can mask a number of problems. The British may drink less intensely when they do drink, but they definitely drink more frequently than Americans. Alcohol is everywhere at Oxford and with Monday night trips to the pub, to “meet and greet” drink parties for every club from the hockey team to the Tolkien society, it can be impossible to escape.

In a place where you can buy wine from the college kitchens at every meal including breakfast, one has to wonder if this much access is a good thing.

On the other hand, the relaxed attitude makes it much easier for those with willpower to abstain. No one looks askance at you if you order orange juice without the vodka and with no drinking games and no one counting your drinks, it’s much easier to stop your count at one. Overall, then, the British way of drinking forces students to take control and make decisions about their own drinking—in short, to act like adults, which is what university students are supposed to be doing anyway.

It can take an effort for Americans used to elaborate pre-gaming rituals with illicitly obtained alcohol to adjust to hearing an 18-year-old casually suggest a trip down to the beer cellar, but it’s well worth the effort. The British way of drinking is a great deal of fun and definitely still exciting.

And best of all, takeout pizza actually only costs five pounds.

Kathryn Papnek '06 is currently studying abroad at University of Oxford in Oxford, England.



Mike Ardolino, The Bowdoin Orient

system would be both informative and educational. However, it would be perhaps more interesting to discuss an aspect of studying abroad that American students are sometimes accused (unjustly of course) of focusing on unduly—drinking.

British students like to drink. So do American students. But it’s only

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Addressing flu fears

Ask Dr. Jeff

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Dear Dr. Jeff: If I get a flu shot, will it also protect me against the bird flu? -L.E.

Dear L.E.: Probably not—but you should get your flu shot anyway!

As Dr. Gerberding, the Director of the Federal Centers for Disease Control has recently said, pandemic bird flu may well be a “worrysome possibility,” but with 13 states already reporting outbreaks of “regular flu,” this year’s flu season is truly at our doorsteps.

Vaccination remains the single best prevention against a disease which claims over 36,000 lives each year in this country alone.

Avian H5N1 influenza has infected some 100 people worldwide since 2003, and about half of them died. In 1997, a H5N1 outbreak in Hong Kong claimed six lives.

What are the historic and biologic relationships between avian and human flu?

Probably all influenza viruses originated in birds. Wild birds can safely carry a large variety of the viruses without themselves becoming ill. Domesticated birds are far more susceptible. In the case of highly pathogenic subtypes, mortality rates can reach 90 to 100 percent within 48 hours.

Surface proteins on influenza viruses largely determine the virus’s infectivity and virulence. Influenza A viruses are subtyped according to their hemagglutinin (“H_n”) and neuraminidase (“N_m”) surface proteins. There are 16 known “H” subtypes and nine known “N” subtypes.

All combinations have been found in birds. Infections with several subtypes do occur in humans, although mostly uncommonly and inefficiently. There are currently only three known subtypes that spread widely among humans (H1N1, H2N2, and H3N2). Each fall, one or the other of them causes outbreaks of “regular,” seasonal flu.

Historically speaking, though, their initial appearances were far more significant. They were the causes, respectively, of the 1918-19 “Spanish flu,” the 1957-58 “Asian flu,” and the 1968-69 “Hong Kong flu” pandemics. The global death toll in the 1918-19 pandemic is thought to have reached 50 million people.

How and why do influenza pandemics occur? Influenza viruses mutate frequently and sometimes rapidly. If more than one subtype co-infects the same host, re-assortment of genetic material can occur among them. Re-assortment can create a new “avian” virus, which has gained the ability to spread easily and directly to humans and among humans. This same process can also occur more gradually through adaptive mutation.

According to the CDC, three conditions must be met for a pandemic to occur. First, a new influenza sub-

type must emerge (to which we have not yet established protective immunity). The new subtype must be capable of infecting humans and of causing serious illness. Third, and very importantly, the new subtype must spread easily among people.

The H5N1 avian influenza virus which has broken out in Asia, and has now spread to Europe, is certainly a new virus for humans. Considering the numbers of birds that have been involved, H5N1 has so far infected very few people (only 100 cases or so). When it has jumped hosts, it has caused very serious illness. In fact, it has remained so lethal that it has not spread efficiently. Transmission has thus far occurred almost exclusively from birds to people. Spread of the virus from one ill person to another has been reported only very rarely, and when it has occurred, it has not continued beyond that second person.

In other words, so far, that critical third step in the genesis of a pandem-



ic has not occurred. Worldwide, concerted efforts are being made to prevent it from ever occurring. Take a look at the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control pandemic flu web pages (http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/ and <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic/>). Or closer to home, the Maine CDC web site (http://www.mainecdc.org/dhhs/boh/pandemic_flu_info.htm). Here at Bowdoin, our Campus Emergency Management Team will focus on responding to a pandemic flu outbreak in our annual preparedness exercises in the spring.

In the meantime, L.E., consider this. This year’s flu vaccine protects against H3N2 and H1N1 (plus Influenza type B). Maybe the less (human) influenza we all have, the less genetic material will be on hand for rogue (avian) flu to join up with and re-assort. We might be doing our very small part to stop the antigenic drift that would make a virus like H5N1 more infectious to humans. We would certainly also be protecting ourselves against a known and very-soon-to-be-present cause of considerable morbidity and mortality.

We anticipate receiving our next allotment of flu vaccine next week and holding a flu shot clinic the following week.

See you then!

Jeff Benson, MD
Dudley Coe Health Center

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A cause for (false) alarm?

by Tanisha Love Ramirez
CONTRIBUTOR

This semester alone, the Department of Safety and Security responded to about 40 fire alarms on campus. Five of these alarms have been at Brunswick Apartments and five at Chamberlain Hall.

So why are there so many fire alarms going off if there aren't any fires?

The alarms set up in each building on campus are highly sensitive. There are obvious triggers such as candles, incense, smoking, and, of course, people manually pulling the alarm. However, many other factors can trigger the alarm. A majority of the alarms received by the Communications Center on campus have been set off by burnt popcorn or other food in residences and campus buildings.

Five times this semester, hair-

care items have caused an alarm to go off. The culprit: hair straighteners, which can easily overheat. This may occur while someone is straightening her hair or even afterwards, when the straightener has been unplugged. The smoke or steam created by the overheating can set off a fire alarm.

In one instance, hair spray was a culprit. According to Manager of Environmental Health and Safety Mark Fisher, aerosol sprays can trigger an alarm. The alarms respond not only to smoke but also to particulates. So when hair spray or other aerosol products are sprayed, they can activate the alarm.

There are two alarm systems in effect on campus, the Metasys system and the Siebe system. Every building on campus is equipped with one of the two sys-

tems. They both essentially work the same way, detecting smoke and particulates that are not supposed to be in the air.

Three buildings on campus have newer versions of alarms in place: East Hall, West Hall, and Coles Tower. Assistant Director of Security Louann Dustin-Hunter said that these dorms are equipped with localized alarms. This means that an alarm will not sound throughout the entire building if only one room or area is experiencing smoke or something out of the ordinary. This has cut down on the amount of evacuations that residents have to go through.

When a localized alarm is set off, it is reported to the Communications Center. A security officer will respond to the alarm and check it out. If by chance another alarm in the same building or in a neighboring area is set off as well, then the fire department will be called, and the full alarm will go off. These alarm systems are much more convenient than the older systems because full buildings do not have to be evacuated because of a small, localized incident. New buildings being built or renovated on campus will be equipped with systems that have the localized alarms.

So what do you do when a fire alarm goes off? We've been learning how to react to fire alarms since the first grade, so some of Security's advice may seem like common sense. The Department of Safety and Security warns that should you hear a fire alarm, you should leave the vicinity in a calm and orderly manner.

There have been instances in which students have become complacent because some students "assume that it is a false alarm," said Director of Safety and Security Randy Nichols. Although it may be understandable, since most of the alarms have not been due to an actual fire, one day your building may really be on fire.

Additionally, you can be punished for not evacuating your room when a fire alarm goes off. When an alarm is reported to Security, security officers go into every room to make sure that every student has evacuated the



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There have been more than 40 false fire alarms on campus this semester.

building. If caught in your room while a fire alarm is going off, you can be cited. These citations are reported to the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs. Other than getting yourself in trouble, such behavior puts others in danger. Nichols noted, "If [students] choose to remain, somebody has to go in to find them."

But it is hard not to become complacent about the fire alarms. When filing out of a building during a fire alarm, you can typically hear students mumbling under their breaths that if and when they find out whose room has caused the alarm, they will find them and

*You can be punished
for not evacuating
your room when a fire
alarm goes off.*

make sure they pay. False alarms become irritating, especially when the alarms are so sensitive as to pick up on hair spray. It is almost inconvenient, but then again, real fires aren't ever convenient. Daphney Olius '06, who has experienced several false alarms in her own residence halls and those of her friends, said, "You never know when a fire is going to occur, so it is helpful. But they're easily triggered, and that's not good, because you'll be in the middle of typing a paper, or sleeping and then the alarm goes off.

"The fire alarms go off for no reason, when I'm just chillin'.

You start to think 'that's nonsense!' And in some places they're never triggered, like at Stowe Inn. It makes you wonder if the alarms there even work," Olins said.

Bowdoin has been fortunate not to have experienced any large fires recently. The last serious fire occurred ten years ago in Brunswick Apartments. A menorah was lit on the windowsill in the E section of the Brunswick Apartments. The menorah tipped over onto a couch, and set the entire apartment section on fire. Luckily, there were no deaths or injuries.

This year, Brunswick Apartments came close to experiencing another fire when a student left a towel on a hot toaster oven. Another student experienced a small grease fire in Smith House.

The holidays bring with them higher risks of fires and alarm triggers. Fisher and Nichols ask that students avoid using real greenery such as trees or wreaths for holiday decorations. If students insist on using real trees and wreaths, the greenery must be treated with fire retardant materials.

If any lights are going to be used it is recommended that they be LED lights because they do not generate heat and don't ever burn out. Fisher and Nichols also ask that students take the candles prohibition seriously.

For further fire safety tips that focus especially on holiday decorations, students can go to <http://www.bowdoin.edu/security/safety/reference.shtml>



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Mike Ardolino, The Bowdoin Orient

Senator Olympia J. Snowe pledges to 'champion' push for student aid



Courtesy of the Office of U.S. Senator Olympia J. Snowe

Maine's senior senator, Olympia J. Snowe, meets with Samuel A. Alito Jr., nominee for associate justice of the Supreme Court, on November 16, 2005 in her Washington office.

Snowe, from page 4

such value to...students across this country.

It really does bridge the income gap in America in many ways, because without the opportunity to access higher education, many people would be left behind in America...I think we have an obligation at the federal level to ensure that the goal [of access to higher education] is preserved and embraced and enhanced. So, I am a strong advocate and will continue to be a voice of support for higher education programs and to help working families and low-income families so they can have the opportunity for economic independence and security.

My father was from Greece, and for my family there was no way to have access [to higher education]. He died when I was really young, but the point was that they aspired to come to this country so I could have the benefit of educational programs. They came to this country to seek opportunity and they recognized that education was key to that opportunity...the only way we could have benefited from a college education was to have access to student aid....It really does make the difference for so many young people to access the American dream.

ESK: I'd like to ask about the Brunswick Naval Air Station (BNAS). Since its announced closing, there has been a lot of talk about different redevelopment plans. In a recent interview with the Orient, Speaker of the Maine State

House John Richardson said he thought some land ought to be considered for transfer to Bowdoin. How do you envision the air station in 10 years?

SOJS: Hopefully it will be a decision by the community itself. I know that this is a very significant and ongoing discussion, as it should be. It is a monumental transformation to the community, and it will be important to determine what path will accomplish [the community's] goals and what they anticipate the future benefits to both communities, both Brunswick and Topsham, and the Mid-coast region [could be]. I think it will be a center of economic revitalization. It has exceptional attributes such as the runways, and obviously it could support new infrastructure and new housing. New businesses will have an incentive to locate there.

There is so much potential for a redevelopment plan...I know that they've already had many offers from different types of companies...the local redevelopment authority [has many contacts]...there is a wide-ranging opportunity that that facility affords. There is not only much land area, but infrastructure. I could see the Defense Department continuing to have a role...I could foresee [the BNAS site becoming] a major centerpiece for the Mid-coast region, without question. It may take some time, but it will happen. I have no doubts about that. It really has extraordinary value...the infrastructure is all in top-notch condition. So there's prime real estate and prime infrastructure.

ESK: Well it will be interesting to see how the process evolves.

SOJS: It will be. After you graduate, you can come back and remember how it was. Hopefully, you will see a major change. It takes a considerable amount of planning and resources and collaboration between the local, state, and federal [levels] to make it possible. That's why I think the Local Redevelopment Authority is so central to this revitalization and to the development of the property...It is so important to move in a direction that is supported by the community itself...In the final analysis, I think there will be multiple opportunities to maximize the benefits of the naval air station to its fullest.

ESK: The last issue I would like to discuss is energy. In a Commerce Committee hearing two weeks ago, you questioned big oil company executives about their recent record-breaking profits. Do you think the hearing made it clear why energy prices have been so high? Bowdoin has predicted it will need to go \$1 million over budget this winter for energy costs. What do you think the prospects are for energy prices in Maine?

SOJS: That's one of my major concerns. It remains to be unknown exactly how much energy increases will cost over the course of the winter...by all measures and standards they have been devastating to Maine families and to anyone who lives in cold weather. So, I'm concerned about it. I've been leaving no stone unturned along with other members of the delegation...[When] I hear oil executives

attempting to explain why this hasn't been price gouging—that's something I do not accept.

Frankly, one step I did take in the tax bill was to repeal one tax benefit that [oil companies] currently get in the tax code, because they indicated that they don't need the tax break. So, in that case we ought to repeal it...They are registering record profits not only for their own industry, but also in corporate America's history because of the amount of revenue that they have generated. This is very unusual. In my view, [this] is highly questionable and suspect that [it has happened] during a very difficult time in our nation's history from the devastation of the hurricanes in the Gulf region. What we saw was a monumental [increase] in energy prices...so I've [attempted] to repeal this tax break, [and to not repeal it] would be regrettable. The executives themselves acknowledged that they do not need this incentive, and I thought well they certainly don't need it with the prices this high...

In any event, I'm very much concerned about this winter...we have to be prepared, and I want a state like Maine to have the ability to purchase oil...We want to put more money in the hands of the state. I regret that we haven't been able to accomplish that at this point. I hope by the end of this session, when we return in December, that additional money will be [in] the appropriations bill.

ESK: I know you voted for an amendment a few weeks ago that would work to prevent price gou-

ing. Will you push for this more?

SOJS: Yes, I am. We need to [look more] at what happened.

ESK: So will you be running for re-election to the Senate next November? I've heard rumors that you might run for governor.

SOJS: No that's not true (laughter). I'm running for reelection [to the Senate], but not for governor. I think that's where I could best serve the people of Maine in my role on the Finance Committee, and the years that I've gotten in my seniority [will] help me to play a pivotal role on behalf of my constituents. We need to develop a consensus-based approach to many of the policy initiatives that will attempt to solve the problems of this country. Unfortunately, it's been a much more polarizing, partisan environment in Washington...My upbringing is reflected in the way in which I approach the issues in the United States Senate. I think we need to continue that consensus-based approach.

ESK: Last question. There is a Bowdoin-Colby hockey game coming up. Who might you be rooting for?

SOJS: Oh my gosh (laughter). Is it okay if I remain on the sidelines for that one?

ESK: Fair enough. Thank you for taking the time to do an interview, Senator.

SOJS: I'm glad we could, thank you.

Look for another Evan Kohn interview with one of Maine's political leaders in the near future.