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## More flexibility needed

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### Repository Citation

The Maine Campus, "More flexibility needed" (1978). *Social Justice: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion*. 395. [https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/social\\_justice/395](https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/social_justice/395)

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## Editorials

# *More flexibility needed*

When a student voices a legitimate concern sparked by humane and admirable beliefs, school officials might be expected to listen.

But the University has turned a deaf ear to a medical technology student who, because of her Zen Buddhist background, refuses to take part in the "needless sacrifice" of laboratory animals.

Michele Earltinez has challenged the University's traditional policy of slaying countless numbers of small animals in the name of higher education. It seems ironic that in studying to prevent animal illness most students are required to participate in a program which systematically exterminates the creatures they work with.

When a student has valid religious beliefs opposing such actions, that conflict should not be taken lightly.

To date, the University has done this, refusing to consider any alternative measures submitted by Earltinez which would fulfill the course requirements.

The University contends it must kill the animals, because it can't afford to feed them, and it's not licensed to sell them. In addition, they can't be given away, because they may transmit disease.

One UMO official cited the violation of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) principles and

the potential loss of department accreditations to conduct research as reasons for enforcing the death code. It's important to note that the animal veterinary and sciences department receives grants from HEW.

That translates into a "don't rock the boat" policy which spells s-o-r-r-y for Earltinez.

Working within that rigid framework, it's not surprising that one official remarked that Earltinez should not have elected that major if she would not take the course.

Such inflexibility shows a distinct disregard for religious preferences of the "diverse" students that the University attempts to attract.

A prime example of this administrative inflexibility is John H. Wolford, chairman of the animal and veterinary sciences department.

Wolford's remarks on the subject, "No comment, no comment and no comment," suggest he lacks either a firm understanding of the issue or a meaningful vocabulary.

Earltinez is not trying to evade the course, she only wants to remain within the boundaries of her religious beliefs. She demonstrated this by offering several legitimate alternatives, which were hastily shot down by the University.

What it all boils down to is that Earltinez is faced with the decision of either remaining loyal to her religious doctrine or receiving an education in her desired field.

That's a choice no student should have to make.