

Bowen questions funding of EMU officials' conference

By Edward Klopfenstein
Oregon Daily Emerald

Every year, EMU Director Charles Miller and other selected EMU officials travel to some part of the country for the Association of College Unions — International conference.

This year, the conference is in Hawaii and the ASUO president is questioning why student fees should help support travel to such a lush vacation spot.

"It's terribly ironic and just too perfect that they are going to Hawaii on some conference," ASUO President Eric Bowen said, adding that many student groups can't afford Hawaii-based conferences because of the cost.

Miller and at least one other official are bringing their families on the trip, extending their stay by up to a week.

A mix of EMU and Incidental Fee funds are paying for each official to attend the conference, with the officials paying for the expense of their families out of pocket.

Other officials attending the conference include: Frank Geltner, associate director of the EMU; Susan Racette, assistant director and business manager for the EMU; Debby Martin, program assistant for the Cultural Forum; and Sue Pedersen, director for the Recreation Center.

Geltner is officially taking vacation time in Hawaii with his family after the conference, according to the EMU

accounting office.

Mary Lou Mansfield, administrative secretary for Miller, said she didn't know if Miller was taking vacation time for his stay in Hawaii after the end of the conference, but added that it's customary for Miller to inform her of his vacation time after he takes his vacation.

Miller kept news of the conference quiet, said Margaret Chatfield, EMU Board chairwoman. Although the Hawaii location surprised many on the board, she said Miller generally doesn't go before the board to discuss conferences he's attending.

"If it was in a hell hole, no one would have thought about it," Chatfield said. "But since it's in Hawaii, it's a stink."

She found little problem with the conference since the EMU budget allocates funds for staff development.

The price tag for the four day conference is just under \$5,000, according to information from Miller's office.

Round-trip plane fare was about \$410 per person.

No figures were available on most of the hotel costs, but according to a memo to Miller, Miller was splitting the cost of a condominium with another student union director from a different school.

The cost of the condominium is about \$30 a day and is being charged to the EMU for the dates of the conference, according to the memo.

HARASSMENT

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begun, and Professor George Kokis' "Original Mark and Image Making" class ventured to the Willamette River, where most of the class sessions were to take place. Kokis, a professor of ceramics, laid out the ground rules for a creative exercise after the student introduction at the beginning of class.

"He said we were to journey to the past, to the beginning of human evolution and we were to get in touch with our primal feeling from behaving like apes," Gray said. The purpose of the exercise, she said, was to discover the motives of their primitive ancestors when they first created art.

Gray said Kokis told members of the class that they could act communally or go off on their own to defend their territory. The exercise took place on the Autzen Stadium side of the Willamette River near a stream, a cluster of thin, birch-like trees and a cluster of old-growth trees.

Gray, a returning student, was skeptical of the exercise. "He wanted us to climb trees. I didn't like it, especially when the students were doing it — limbs were snapping," Gray said.

Gray chose to go off on her own and keep to herself by the bank of a little stream. The afternoon sun came out, then went away. It started to rain.

Gray then moved even farther from the group, to the shelter of a grove of old growth. Also seeking shelter from the rain, the other students moved closer to where Gray was. Leaning against the tree, she decided to take the exercise seriously and fell into a meditative state.

From a distance that Gray describes as 30 feet, she watched the others acting out the scenario. "They were fun to watch," she said.

All of a sudden, a man jumped out of a nearby bush. She did not hear him creep up on her. "In another split second he was on me, in my face," Gray said.

The man, who was acting the part of a "lion" in Kokis' creative exercise, pounced on Gray, pushing her against the tree. Chest to chest and face to face with Gray, the "lion" tightly gripped her shoulders and growled.

The man, who Kokis later identified only as "Eric," wore a lion costume. Gray, who had never seen him before, said, "It doesn't look like Dorothy's lion."

Gray described the costume as a dirty yellow-hooded sweatshirt with strings of yellow yarn hanging from the hood. The word "LION" was painted across the chest.

What the "lion" and Kokis did not know is that Gray had suffered abuse in the past and had not healed completely. She viewed the lion's playfully intended attack as an attempted sexual assault — an attempted rape.

When Gray pushed the man off her and screamed, "Fuck you! Knock it off!" he asked her if she wasn't in the "Origins of Mark and Image Making" class. Then he continued to play-act as a lion and chase the other students up trees, Gray said.

Gray said that when Kokis returned to the group toward the end of the class period, he hopped around excitedly, asking the question, "Any wounds? Any wounds?"

So began the misunderstanding that eventually led to Gray's termination of her academic studies at the University and a triple lawsuit.

"He looked so small, like a little troll," Gray said of the man who until this point was her mentor. "My respect for him had diminished so greatly." Infuriated, she yelled at Kokis, who was her academic adviser. "Yeah, I'm really angry."

Gray screamed at the student who played the lion, "You had no right to touch me."

Gray screamed again at Kokis, "You never said there was going to be a lion." Gray said Kokis had deliberately planned the exercise that way.

But Gray did not accept that explanation.

Gray said, "I told him, there has got to be boundaries. You can't have a strange man attacking women. We are afraid all the time, in our bathtubs, in the grocery store parking lot ... school is supposed to be a safe haven from all that crap."

Kokis declined comment for the story at the advice of University officials, who also declined to comment on specifics of Devon Gray's case. Both Kokis and the officials said that confidentiality issues protecting Gray do not permit them to speak to reporters about specifics.

The lion was a student in the class, but was not present for the student introduction before Kokis led the group to the river. It was not the first day of class, but Gray had missed the first day and had never met him or seen him. The course guide for the fine arts department includes this description of the class under the heading "Instructor's comments": "This class takes place outdoors — by the Willamette River — very active, physical — much play-acting."

Gray was unaware that play-acting included events that she viewed as sexual assault. She said her right — under a University affirmative action law requiring a safe learning environment — had been violated, and that the University had in essence said that educators can have access to her body.

After she had yelled at Kokis and the student playing the lion, one of the other students, Gray said, asked if she would have had the same reaction if the lion had been a woman.

Gray said she told the student that she would have not had the same reaction had the lion been a female, that being attacked by another woman was not the same as an attack by a male.

The class continued to discuss the incident, and Gray claimed she felt her mind floating away in a process she described as disassociation, a process used by abuse survivors in order to handle trauma. She had used it before.

"It all got into that monotone intellectual stuff," she said of the class' discussion of her attack.

Gray did not view the incident in intellectual terms. She later began to see everything connected to that day as a serpent with a lion's head. The serpent seemed to grow and grow with each new frustration that came along with processing her grievance with the University.

The sky was darkening as the class headed back across the river toward the ceramics studio, which is located near the art building (the Millrace Studio). Gray said none of the others, Kokis included, walked near her.

"I wanted to be a professor, too, someday, and if I had ever hurt a student in that way, I would have been bending over backward and saying, 'I'm so sorry,'" Gray said. "If he had reacted that way, I probably would have healed a lot faster."

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