

Racism at Gonzaga fought with diversity awareness tacticts

SPOKANE (AP) — Stung by a spate of hostile, anonymous letters sent to black students, Gonzaga University administrators have formed a task force to increase cultural understanding on campus.

The Roman Catholic university was rocked last spring when several black students at its law school received the letters. No arrests resulted from police and FBI investigations, but officials suspect the person who sent the letters was a first-year law school student.

Just before final examinations, four black law students received two anonymous letters, one using a racial epithet, criticizing spe-

cial programs and considerations for minority students.

"Racial bigotry is contrary to the university's ideals, and morally and ethically unacceptable; moreover, malicious harassment is illegal," the Rev. Bernard Coughlin, Gonzaga's president and chancellor-elect, said in a recent memorandum establishing the 26-member task force.

The task force is to submit recommendations by February to Coughlin and the school's board of trustees on how to make minority students feel more welcome. Planned forums and speeches on cultural diversity are to address a troubling undercurrent of bigotry, a school official

said. "I think Spokane is a great community, but I think there's a racial issue of some significance that needs addressing," John Clute, dean of the law school, said.

The school has 587 students, 83 of whom are members of minority groups. Just five are black. Two black law students have left school since the incidents.

One of them, Andrew B. Smith Jr., says he left because of poor grades he attributed to stress from the letters and other racist insults. He sought readmission, citing the harassment, but was not allowed to return to class.

Smith said his departure means the letter writers — who threatened that blacks would not graduate — got what they wanted.

The problem of bigotry on campus remains unsolved, he said.

"It's been going on longer than the school wants to admit publicly," Smith said.

The law school's only black teacher, assistant professor William Hanson, plans to leave at the end of the school year. Hanson, who is serving on the task force, said he is leaving because there are not enough teaching opportunities for his wife, not because of racism.

But he said he is troubled by

the community's lack of diversity.

Administrators and faculty said the school can do more to make minority students feel welcome.

The school has sponsored two receptions for minority students to help them get acquainted with each other. Law school professors are offering additional academic help.

Juliana Repp, an American Indian student and a member of the task force, said she's pleased the university is taking action.

"Students are still concerned, obviously, because the issue of who wrote the letters is still unresolved," she said.

Lobbyists rally for support to fund new Mariners' ballpark through luxury taxes

OLYMPIA, WA. (AP) — Some of the capital's most skilled lobbyists signed on Monday to help persuade lawmakers to finance a new Mariners stadium — and they're doing it for free.

Former top Boeing lobbyist Bud Coffey counted himself and the likes of insurance heavyweight Basil Badley, former House Speaker Wayne Ehlers and contract lobbyist Becky Bogard among the 13-member lobbying team.

Coffey released the list as Gov. Mike Lowry and legislative leaders looked over a draft proposal to be presented to the four legislative caucuses on or before Wednesday. Lowry has said he will call a special session for Thursday to act on a plan if he thinks there is a chance for passage.

Though still under wraps, the plan could involve more than \$120 million in state spending and an equal amount from King County. Mariners management would contribute \$45 million.

The state's share could be financed with bonds, a portion of a \$700 million budget surplus or a combination of the two,

with an understanding that the debt would be retired using revenue that would be lost if the Mariners left Seattle.

King County's share likely would come from a 1 percent tax on bar and restaurant tabs, a 2 percent rental-car tax and a 5 percent tax on admissions to events in the Kingdom and the proposed new baseball park.

Coffey conceded the volunteer lobbying team has a difficult row to hoe.

"It's a tough sell," he said. "If I were a legislator from Eastern Washington, and not a baseball fan and a fairly conservative guy, I'd have a tough time."

But he said he believes his crew will swing enough votes to get a bailout package approved.

"We will say, 'What's the sense of losing them [the Mariners] if you can keep them?'" Coffey said, referring to the plan to recover any state bailout funds with Mariners-generated tax revenue. The lobbying group will begin contacting individual legislators Tuesday, he said.

Also Monday, Home Town Fans, an

organization of stadium backers, released a poll that showed a narrow majority of citizens support government financing for the stadium if they're first told that the Mariners have a positive impact on business.

The survey of 600 registered voters statewide — 200 of them in King County — found that "the voter population is equally divided as to whether the state should be involved."

But when told that the Mariners have a positive economic impact in Washington, 51 percent would favor the project, with 36 percent opposed and the rest undecided. The poll, conducted Oct. 3-5, has a 4.6 percentage-point margin of error.

A Seattle Times survey of 400 voters, published Sunday, found 53 percent opposed using state money, while 36 percent supported it and 11 percent were undecided. Support was strongest in King County (44 percent) and weakest in Eastern Washington (22 percent), the copyright poll found.

That survey did not address the issue of economic benefit. Both surveys were conducted by Elway Research of Seattle.

King County voters narrowly defeated a sales-tax increase to raise money for a new stadium and Kingdome repairs last month — just as the Mariners began the steamroller performance that Sunday night produced the first American League divisional-playoff-series victory in the team's 19-year history.

The Mariners had said if that proposal failed they would put the team up for sale to out-of-town interests, but they extended the deadline to Oct. 30 when state leaders moved to try for a solution.

The Mariners expect to lose \$30 million this year, bringing losses to \$67 million since new owners bought the club 3 1/2 years ago.

Owners blame the red ink on the configuration and lack of amenities in the multipurpose Kingdome. They want an outdoor ballpark with a retractable roof, a grass playing field, luxury boxes and club seats.

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