

Yale rejects gay studies endowment

FUNDS: A Yale alum and playwright had his offer of funds for a professorship in gay studies rejected

By **Brigitte Greenberg**
The Associated Press

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — Larry Kramer, playwright and in-your-face AIDS activist, is in Yale University's face now.

The 1957 graduate is accusing the Ivy League school of homophobia for rejecting his multimillion-dollar offer to endow a professorship in gay studies.

Kramer, who helped create the Gay Men's Health Crisis support organization in 1981 and founded the confrontational AIDS activist group ACT UP in 1987, said he gave Yale about a dozen proposals and all were dismissed.

"I have no question in my mind that they were rejected because of extreme homophobia," Kramer, 62, said in a telephone interview from his home in New York. "There's no question that Yale is not a friendly place for gay professors or teachers."

In a letter to Kramer, Provost Alison Richard said gay and lesbian studies is too narrow a field for a permanent professorship. Yale also said that there is a freeze on faculty hiring and that the university could not add a professorship without cutting one elsewhere.

Richard, an anthropologist who studies lemurs in Madagascar, did not immediately respond to requests for comment Wednesday.

Kramer, who is HIV positive, first approached Yale nine months ago while he was making up his will, and met with Richard several times. Now he has withdrawn the offer and said he might set up an independent foundation.

As a writer, Kramer is best known for his novel "Faggots" and his play "The Normal Heart." In 1970, he was nominated for an Oscar for his screenplay adaptation of D.H. Lawrence's "Women in Love."

One of his other creations, ACT UP, or the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, has become known

for headline-grabbing exploits, such as an interruption of trading on the New York Stock Exchange floor in 1989.

The group shocked Dan Rather on network television in 1991 when members broke into the studio of "CBS Evening News" and one managed to leap in front of a camera at the beginning of the broadcast. At St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1989, members of ACT UP and other groups chained themselves to pews and shouted during Mass.

Kramer said an academic discipline in gay studies would focus on contributions in history, sociology, politics and culture, as well as on aspects of sexual identity.

He would not disclose how much money he offered to Yale but said that it was in the millions and that it would have endowed one or two full professorships. Endowed professorships at Yale cost \$2 million.

"As we grow more and more visible, we want to use our money to teach about us," Kramer said.

Budget: 'Kicker' could be one type of reform

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increased by 80 percent since 1991.

The salaries of Oregon university faculty was one of the major issues in the education budget, especially in light of the University's recent loss of professors to other higher-paying universities.

"The University of Oregon is at the very bottom tier in faculty salaries," Bailey said. "We are second-to-last according to the American Association of Universities."

Bailey said, "We had requested of the governor a 6 percent increase in faculty salaries. What we got was a 2 percent increase and the faculty fighting fund."

The faculty fighting fund is a \$7.5 million fund for the recruitment and retention of state university faculty, he explained.

"That recruitment and retention fund will allow us to make counter-offers" to faculty who have received offers from other universities, Bailey said.

"However, in many cases faculty were offered three or four times more than the University could counter-offer," he said. "\$7.5 million spread out over seven institutions will probably not be enough."

"We will continue to slip at this funding level," Bailey said. "Salaries across the country will increase by 3 percent within the next year. And we will be increasing ours at a rate of 2 percent, which is not even keeping up with inflation."

"I think it was unreasonable when we can't pro-

"When we can't adequately fund schools and education, but we can give huge tax breaks to corporations, it's time to look at tax reform."

Tony Corcoran
State Representative

vide enough money to recruit and retain excellent faculty," said state Rep. Tony Corcoran, who represents nearby District 44.


"When we can't adequately fund schools and education, but we can give huge tax breaks to corporations, it's time to look at tax reform," he said.

One type of reform could involve using the "kicker" to fund education. The kicker is the return of income tax dollars collected above budgeted amounts to taxpayers.

"Overall our healthy state economy helped us do many things, but we could have done even more had we been willing to tap into a fraction of those kicker funds," Castillo said.

Castillo said that even a compromise in which a partial refund was given and the remaining funds used for education would have helped.

In summary, Corcoran said, "The education budget that we put together basically gets us back to the level of six years ago."



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