



LAURA GOSS/Emerald

Melinda Doggett sells Seattle's Best Coffee for the EMU in Willamette Hall's Atrium Cafe.

Coffee vendor files lawsuit after losing bid for contract

The owner of Custom Roasting said the selection process showed favoritism

By Michael Hines
Editor in Chief

The EMU coffee controversy that plagued the finishing stages of the building's renovation has arisen once again.

Alberto Miranda, owner of Custom Roasting, filed a petition for review in the Lane County Circuit Court in mid-August. Custom Roasting was one of the coffee vendors that participated in last spring's selection process. Seattle Coffee Co. won the bid.

The petition names the University and University Contract Coordinator Vicki Wanner as defendants. The petition asks that Seattle Coffee Co.'s proposal be rejected and Custom Roasting either be awarded the contract or compensated \$78,000. As an alternative, the petition also requests that the entire process be repeated again.

The problems began last spring

when three companies complained that the first selection process was unfair. Wanner canceled the first process and ordered a second, which was administered by a selection committee and EMU Food Services Director Theresa Coleman-Kaiser.

"We went to the second request for proposals and we learned the spirit of intent to select a good source of coffee for the students was in favor of a coffee company from Seattle," Miranda said. "We were disappointed. I love the institution." Several local vendors decided not to bid after the pre-proposal review, he said.

"We believe that the people who chose not to participate were very good, very noble companies," Miranda said. "They were very disappointed by the display of infatuation for SBC (Seattle's Best Coffee, a subsidiary of Seattle Coffee Co.)."

Because the petition is still in litigation, Wanner and Coleman-Kaiser both refused to comment.

Legal counsel for the University Peter Swan said there was not any favoritism in the process.

"It's a very impersonal process," he said.

Miranda maintained the process was unfair, and the committee had their decisions made early in the process to go with a "marketing-oriented" company.

"I think the University wanted to land a big company rather than a good company," he said. "We would like to see if we can make market forces prevail rather than favoritism."

Miranda said he has a gut feeling that the University will prevail, but he's counting on public support.

"We got the hopes that once it comes out in the open, we will be able to get a good, fair chance," he said. "I'm not trying to make a buck out of this. We have the best customer base. I am really happy with the way things have worked out for us so far."

One aspect of the selection process Miranda was particularly unhappy with was the elimination of a taste test in the second request for proposals.

"That input probably would have given the competitive process a very clear profile," he said.



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