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Students allege discrimination

By Tricia Schwennesen
Oregon Daily Emerald

Two students filed a grievance against the University Computing Center and its assistant director Joe St Sauver, alleging religious discrimination.

Psychology major Kerry Delf and anthropology major Craig Hunt filed their complaint in late August with the Office of Affirmative Action after the alt.paganism, alt.satanism and the entire alt.magick hierarchy newsgroups were arbitrarily removed from Usenet, the University server.

Newsgroups are on-line addresses where people can post messages and exchange information.

"If we had all the religious newsgroups or none of the religious newsgroups, then this wouldn't be an issue," Delf said. "This is a state institution, and this is illegal, unacceptable, and this is unconstitutional."

Ken Lehrman, Office of Affirmative Action director, said that the grievance is still under investigation and that a report will be made to the Affirmative Action Admin-

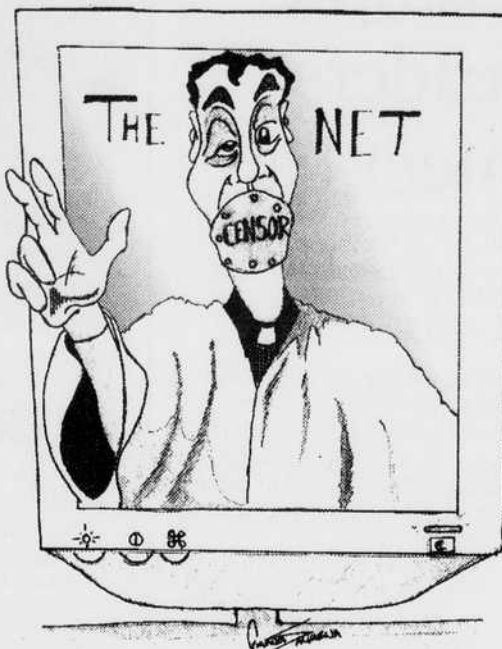
istrative Council with a recommendation of how to remedy the situation.

John Moseley, provost and vice president for academic affairs, in consultation with University President Dave Frohn-mayer, will decide within the next 30 days whether Delf and Hunt were subject to religious discrimination.

"No decision has been made regarding the allegations of religious discrimination," Lehrman said.

"We are investigating in a thorough and complete manner."

The University provides access to more than 35,000 newsgroups, but there are no formal guidelines



about which newsgroups are available, Computing Center director Joanne Hugi said.

On any given day an unknown number of other religious newsgroups are available to anyone with access to the University server.

"Formal guidelines probably wouldn't meet the needs of the University because technology is changing so quickly," Hugi said.

Newsgroups are added and deleted on a daily basis. The University network would operate more slowly if more newsgroups were made accessible, Hugi said.

Hugi said the complaints of religious discrimination and academic censorship are not justified because those same newsgroups can be accessed through other servers made available on the University homepage.

"I'm not going to pull a Clinton and say that it depends on how you define censorship, but obviously we can't carry everything, and we don't carry things that are against regulations or are illegal," Hugi said. "These groups were not eliminated because of content. They no longer fit the newsgroup management standards."

Delf, Hunt and Faux agree the newsgroups could be easily accessed through another server such as Dejanews or Eugene Free Net, but the quality of the access would be inferior to the access provided by Usenet.

Hugi said St Sauver made the decision to remove the three newsgroups and other newsgroups related to hobby topics like cars because he was implementing a new system to organize and manage the news available through the University server.

St Sauver did not return phone calls, but Hugi said she stands by his decision.

The University server is recognized as being one of the top 100 newsfeeds, according to a monthly review called Freenix 1000.

"The Computing Center has removed newsgroups that contain content pertinent to the UO curriculum," said David Faux, folklore graduate student. "People aren't clamoring about newsgroups that were never there. We're clamoring about newsgroups that were there, that were active newsgroups."

In a message posted to the uo.org.asuo newsgroup, Faux said the newsgroups that were removed were actively used for research purposes by students studying folklore, religion and even sociology.

In that same message, Faux wrote, "By refusing to entertain any notions foreign to their own whims, the Computing Center is saying that their own arbitrary decisions supersede the needs, interests and academic concerns of the student body."

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