

Universities monitor Nike, labor groups closely

■ All eyes are on the race between the WRC and the Fair Labor Association

By Ben Romano
Oregon Daily Emerald

In Nike CEO Phil Knight's announcement that he will no longer donate money to the University, he made clear his company's dislike of the Worker Rights Consortium.

Officials at University of Michigan claim that Nike's refusal to renew its contract with that school was in reaction to the school's membership in the WRC.

This news has had varying effects on other campuses across the country that have similar ties to both the WRC and Nike.

Nike terminated negotiations April 27 to renew its six-year, mul-

ti-million dollar contract to supply footwear, apparel and equipment to Michigan's 25 varsity athletic teams and recreational sports programs. The company cited "unacceptable material terms" in the school's most recent contracts as the reason for the termination.

In a statement released on the same day that Nike discontinued negotiations, the Big-10 school spoke out against the corporation's attempt to "make an example of a university."

The statement went on to reaffirm Michigan's commitment to international human rights.

"We're not going to back off as a result of this," said Joel Seguine, spokesman for the University of Michigan. "Most people are pretty supportive of standing firm. We're standing on principle here."

At the University of North Carolina's Chapel Hill campus, there has been discussion of how the school's relationship with Nike could be impacted by its membership in the WRC, but the situation UNC faces is completely different from circumstances at Michigan and the University.

"We're aware of (the Nike/WRC issue), but it doesn't impact licensing on a day-to-day basis," said Steve Brummett, UNC director of trademark licensing.

UNC does not receive the large private donations from Knight like the University and its contract with Nike is less binding than Michigan's. Michigan's contract made a commitment to a non-specific living wage for overseas workers in Nike factories that is years down the road, a stipulation Nike would-

n't agree to, Brummett said.

The Chapel Hill school is a member of both the WRC and the Fair Labor Association. Both groups have the goal of monitoring conditions in factories that produce university apparel, but the FLA was formed in partnership with industry, while the WRC currently allows no industry representation on its board.

Right now, all eyes in Chapel Hill are watching the progress of both the WRC and the FLA. The question is which monitoring group is going to be more effective, sooner, Brummett said.

"We're waiting to see what happens," he said.

The two groups are in what many involved with the issue have called a race.

Duncan McDonald, University vice-president for public affairs

and development, said the race is between labor-rights groups finding a position with the FLA and industry representatives gaining a seat at the table of the WRC.

Indiana University conditionally joined the WRC in February.

"There has been very little reaction" to the news that Nike has severed ties to University of Michigan, said IU's Dick McKaig, vice chancellor for students.

Indiana currently has few ties to Nike, but there is talk of a contract between Indiana's football program and Nike in the future.

The student-led initiative to join the WRC was harmonious at the Bloomington campus. The decision was made through a series of meetings between students and administrators over the last year, McKaig said.

Resignation

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Knight's pledge to stop all personal donations to the school. Papé said Kilkenny told him that the events of the past few weeks have put Kilkenny, who holds both University President Dave Frohnmayer and Knight in high regard, into an uncomfortable position.

Papé said he was surprised

when the office of the foundation contacted him Monday with the news that a letter of resignation from Kilkenny might be on its way.

"I picked up the phone and called Pat and I said 'Pat, what's going on?'" he said.

The University Foundation is a private, non-profit organization that has received and administered private, confidential donations and gifts to the University since 1957. The Foundation's 52-member board of trustees is made

up mostly of respected University alumni. Donations and gifts to the University, overseen and administered by the board, are used to help various departments cover expenses for buildings, scholarships and faculty.

Should Kilkenny in fact follow through on his resignation, Papé said he will not be replaced. The number of trustees, who serve five year-terms, can be anywhere between 45 and 55 members. Currently Kilkenny has one year left

before his term expires.

Tom Haeger, the University's director of communications, said the University Foundation, although aligned closely with the University itself, is a separate entity.

The Register-Guard reported Tuesday that Kilkenny, who graduated from the University in 1974, was stepping down from the board, but plans to continue to support his alma mater as a donor.

"I'm not walking away from that. It's a great school with great

people, and I wish them all the best," Kilkenny was quoted in The Register-Guard. "By no means am I bailing out on my interest in that marvelous institution up in Eugene."

Kilkenny also told The Register-Guard that while his resignation is a statement expressing his feelings on recent events at the University, he said he holds Frohnmayer in high regard, and his resignation does not mean that he questions the president in any way.

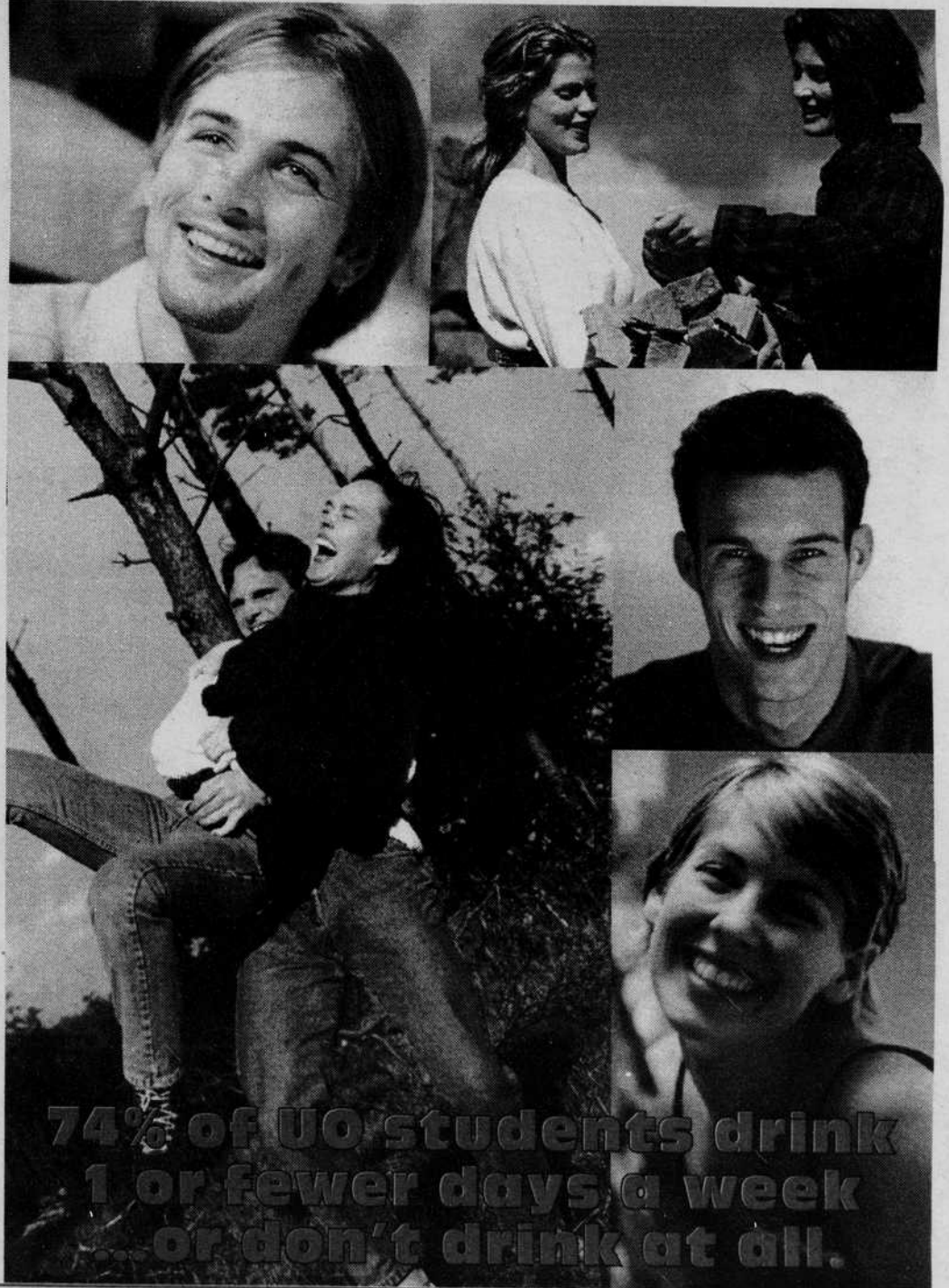
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