

# ADFC

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ing stalemated on April 11. Negotiations stagnated after ADFC members refused to sign a contract that would take away Section 9 — the section many students consider a favorite because it is closest to the 30-yard line — rather than a section closer to the end zone.

Last year, the ADFC, part of the ASUO, agreed to let the athletic department sell seats in student sections to the general public if there were extra tickets five days before a preseason game. The agreement was for the athletic department to start selling tickets at Section 5 and for students to pick up their tickets at Section 9.

This year, the athletic department insisted it wanted to start selling preseason tickets to the general public the other way around — going from Section 9 to Section 5 to make more revenue and avoid complaints from the general public who could not see past standing student fans.

Now, after the mediation process, all parties have agreed to a compromise that works for everyone.

ADFC member and ASUO Student Sen. Spencer Hamlin said under the new contract, the athletic department committed to offering students the same seats at 50 percent of the tickets' fair-market value for the next 10 years.

For the regular season, this means students keep the same 6,100 seats they have had in Sections 5 through 9 in the past.

"I feel that that's huge," Hamlin said.

For preseason games, which have been attended by only a fraction of the student population in the past, the new agreement means students will give up Section 9 to the general public. But rather than having the athletic department sell general-admission tickets starting at Section 9 going over to Section 5 and risking that students might lose Sections 8 and 7, parties agreed that the athletic department will sell general admission tickets in Section 9, then 5 and then 6. Students will get tickets starting at Section 8, then 7 and then 6.

Hamlin said this agreement guarantees students will have a minimum of 2,622 seats at each of the two preseason games for the next 10 years.

The contract also includes a stipulation that requires the athletic department to offer students the same number of seats after the Autzen Stadium expansion. Also, student sections have to remain the same in regard to their location in relation to the field.

While the athletic department committed to offering this arrangement to the students for the next 10 years, students can choose to accept or deny the offer each year.

With the new 10-year stipulations, ADFC members said they feel giving up a popular section for two preseason games was a fair compromise.

"Obviously we didn't want to give up Section 9 during preseason, but what we got in return

was well worth it," Hamlin said.

He said he was surprised when the athletic department agreed to the expansion and location clause without objections.

"When we requested 10 years, we planned on five, hoped for seven," he said. "We got stability that we've never ever had."

Sandy Walton, senior associate athletic director, has negotiated contracts with the ADFC for more than 15 years. The stalemate last month was the first time the ADFC and athletic department failed to come up with a solution that worked for both.

"Sometimes when you reach an impasse, it's important to sit back and take another look," Walton said. "I think it's a compromise we can all live with."

ASUO Student Sen. and ADFC member Jennifer Greenough said the mediation process was effective because both sides knew they had to work something out.

"I think we gave up a little, but we gained a lot," she said.

Greenough said all sides returned to the negotiating table ready to compromise and come to a solution that would be acceptable to both sides.

Walton explained that the athletic department is actually excited about the condition because it sets some standards beyond just one year and gives new student representatives on the ADFC something to work with.

"We are delighted," she said. "We have wanted a contract that is worth more than one year."

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# Hospital chain to settle fraud claims

By Phil Galewitz  
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Columbia/HCA Healthcare Corp., the nation's largest hospital chain, has agreed to pay the federal government \$745 million to settle allegations that it submitted fraudulent bills to Medicare and other government programs, the company said Thursday.

The Justice Department said it has resolved most, but not all, of the issues it had been investigating since at least 1997 and made clear it will be seeking more money.

The deal must still be approved by more Justice Department officials, a federal judge and other federal agencies. Further, the settlement would not be final until all criminal investigations are resolved.

Analysts have speculated that Columbia will have to pay at least \$1 billion overall to settle the probe.

The government has been investigating allegations that Columbia submitted false claims and doctored cost reports that determine how much its hospitals are paid under federal programs such as Medicare, a health insur-

ance program for the elderly, and Medicaid, an insurance program that covers the poor.

Columbia/HCA is not admitting any wrongdoing in the deal, said spokesman Jeff Prescott.

The government's fraud probe targeting Nashville-based Columbia/HCA became public in 1997 with a series of raids on several hospitals. Last year, two Columbia middle managers in Florida were convicted of defrauding several government health insurance programs.

The investigation led to wholesale changes at Columbia/HCA, which once sought to become the McDonald's of hospital care. The company has ousted its top executives, stopped an aggressive hospital acquisition program and began a major downsizing, trimming from a high of 345 to 205 hospitals and other facilities.

The government and Columbia have been trying to negotiate a settlement for more than two years.

"We are pleased to have reached an understanding on these issues and today's announcement signals that a significant step in this process is complete," said Thomas F. Frist, Jr., chairman and chief ex-

ecutive officer.

Investors were also elated by the news, pushing shares of Columbia up \$2.25, or 8 percent to \$30.50 on the New York Stock Exchange.

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