

Team decides incident report not racially based

■ University Housing officials defend against discrimination claims during Finals Week of fall term 2000

By Jeremy Lang
Oregon Daily Emerald

A Bias Response Team investigation concluded during winter break that a University Housing employee's report of a November incident involving three black high school students was not racially biased.

During Finals Week, the team found that housing employee Silke Crombie reported the incident to the Department of Public Safety based on claims made by an unidentified University student who told her three high school students tried to sell him drugs in the Carson Hall lobby.

DPS officers stopped the three Jefferson High School students who matched that description about five

minutes after the call was made. The students were among about 600 high-school seniors on campus for the annual Gateway to the Future minority recruitment event Nov. 30.

When the incident occurred, some members of the response team and Gateway organizers believed Crombie made a first-hand, racially biased account of the incident based on the students' race and clothing.

But they didn't know her call to DPS was based on the account given by the unidentified University student to her.

"There was no discrimination from the housing staff," said Mark Tracy, assistant dean for diversity programs and a member of the response team.

Crombie declined to comment on the incident, but Housing Director Mike Eyster, who is also on the response team, agreed his staff did not discriminate based on the stu-

dent's race or dress, because Crombie was reporting the University student's claims.

"Did my employees act in good faith? They did," Eyster said.

Before the team investigated the incident, University Housing did its own investigation, trying to piece together the events before DPS stopped the students.

Eyster said three black students had a brief conversation with the University student. No one nearby, including a Carson Hall janitor, overheard the conversation, and the three students left.

The University student then reported the incident to Crombie, but he didn't want to stay until DPS officers arrived.

"He was really clear he didn't want to talk to DPS," Eyster said. "He was obviously sort of shaken by this."

Eyster added the janitor walked with the student across campus to the Hamilton Complex.

"It would be really nice if the student would come forward," Eyster said.

The three high school students denied selling drugs. Tracy said they told him they were in the Carson Hall Lobby, which is open to the public, but it is unclear if they were the same three students seen in the lobby.

But Tracy added that the University community shouldn't instantly dismiss the incident as a misunderstanding, and discrimination may have occurred with the description that the students were wearing "urban clothes."

Fitzpatrick said Crombie described three black males wearing "urban clothes." But Eyster said

neither Crombie nor the student ever referred to them that way.

Tracy said that with differing stories about who was involved and who said what, it will be hard to definitively determine what happened and if DPS inappropriately responded to the call, without the help of the unidentified University student.

"Nobody has really sat down and talked to the student," he said. "No matter what, people perceived discrimination."

He added that the response team and the University need to be careful and respond to situations like this only after they have all the facts and understand the entire situation.

Bend campus

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posals, many said they will not make their final decision until comparison reports are compiled by University System Vice Chancellor Shirley Clark.

"It continues to stay true over time that both proposals are excellent," said board member Jerome Colonna, superintendent for the Redmond School District.

Colonna said the University seems to have the advantage in student financial aid and staffing, but he said he is attracted to OSU's innovative academic programs. In terms of cultural ties, he said the University would better fit the Bend community, while OSU would be more attractive to outlying communities in Central Oregon like Madras, Prineville and Warm Springs.

"It's kind of like the difference between Eugene and Corvallis in terms of cultural and community ties," he said.

Advisory board member John Rhetts, a retired psychologist who trains horses in the Bend area, said the issue is not which is the better school, but which best answers Central Oregon's education needs.

"This isn't a football contest," he said.

At this stage, Rhetts said he does not know which school should open the branch campus until he can evaluate each proposal further.

Bank of the Cascades C.E.O. and Bend resident Patricia Moss said it was too early for her to choose which school should come to the Bend area. She said most of the differences between the two were philosophical.

"You can't apply a scorecard to it," she said.

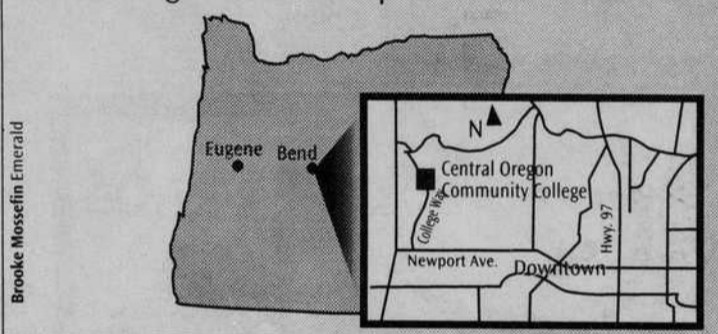
She said it would be premature to say one school is better than the other because she expects many changes after the state board picks a university.

Competing Proposals

Gov. John Kitzhaber has earmarked \$7.2 million in his higher education budget proposal that would help fund the new Bend campus.

According to the University's proposal, the branch campus would be named UO/Central Oregon, and would be similar in organization to the Eugene campus' professional schools. Instead of offering degrees related to just one discipline, however, the branch campus would offer degrees in the University's core programs of science, social sciences, humanities

The University has delivered a detailed plan to the Oregon University System in an effort to establish a Central Oregon branch campus



and education. Several minors would also be offered, including chemistry, business administration, European studies and family and human studies. More minors would be included in later years.

For fall term 2001, the University expects to offer 70 courses taught by seven University faculty members, five COCC faculty and three others, for 96 full-time students. By 2005, the University projects there will be 875 full-time students, 45 courses and 72 faculty members.

These projects do not include the courses and faculty members from other institutions already on the COCC campus.

OSU's plan would create Central Oregon State University, which would offer degrees in liberal arts programs and biological and physical sciences, social sciences and humanities. Like the University, OSU would expand upon partnerships with other Oregon institutions, but it would also make Internet education a key element of COSU.

Both Schools Confident

When the institution is finally picked, COCC President and advisory board member Bob Barber said COCC will work closely with the chosen university to ensure Central Oregon's four-year school is ready in September.

He said either school would serve the campus well.

"I truly believe that these are two strong universities," he said.

Barber added the board is only advisory and its preferences may be overruled by the state board if it believes it is not in accordance with the OUS' greater mission.

"Our biases and preferences need to be balanced with the system," he said.

Despite the middle-of-the-road stance taken by those in Bend, both the University of Oregon's and OSU's provosts who helped

draft their school's proposals are confident their institution will be given the green light for a branch campus.

OSU Provost and Executive Vice President Tim White said COSU would be a "21st century campus" that would deliver exactly what Bend residents want.

"This campus is going to be a campus that really attracts students there and holds them there," he said.

White said OSU's existing programs in the area show the school has the experience and resources to open a successful branch campus.

After the state board makes its decision, White said OSU could incorporate elements of the University's plan in its branch campus, but he said many of the University's programs are already included in OSU's proposal.

"I think it is clear that we have included UO [programs] in our proposal," he said, "but that doesn't appear to be the case as I read [the University's] proposal."

University Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs John Moseley said the University has the stronger proposal because it offers programs more beneficial to students in the long run, sets up a better working relationship with COCC staff and offers more benefits for students.

He also said the University could include some of OSU's proposals if the OUS felt it was necessary, but said they initiated a joint effort early on that was rejected by OSU.

The key element of the University's plan, Moseley said, was that it would give Central Oregon residents a top-notch education in their own backyard.

"Our vision is to provide the same quality education in Central Oregon as in Eugene," he said.

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