



Jon House Emerald

Officer Scott Cameron and Cpl. Bob Guse were among the eight total DPS employees sworn in as commissioned officers Tuesday by DPS Director Tom Fitzpatrick.

DPS

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powerful force, but to provide officers with the legal privileges to perform a better and more efficient job.

"It isn't to give us any unnecessarily overpowering rights to harass or otherwise," he said. "It is about us being able to do our job better and more effectively.

As well as expecting more professionalism, Fitzpatrick said he believes commissioning officers will also reduce incidents in which DPS officers' authority is questioned.

"This provides [officers] with a level of authority that minimizes the questioning of what they can and can't do," he said.

Lt. Joan Saylor was one of the DPS officers commissioned and she now hopes students will realize DPS officers do have authority on campus.

"I know that there are a lot of times where students don't particularly know what our role is," she said. "I think part of this is helping folks understand better what our function is."

DPS Associate Director Tom Hicks, Sgt. Lynn Brown, Sgt. Sean Strahon, Cpl. Bob Guse and officers Scott Cameron, Rick Bean and Frank Lewis were also commissioned.

Another round of officers are set to be commissioned in June, Fitzpatrick said.

Guse said a key element of being commissioned will be to provide "educational tools" to help students understand safety issues.

"I think it gives us another level of professionalism," he said. "It just basically gives us more tools to be able to use to make campus a safer place, a better place to be."

To be commissioned, Fitzpatrick said each officer received several weeks of police academy training

and had to pass a written test. Those officers who passed then received an oral examination from a board of administrative staff, University Housing representatives and one student.

When Fitzpatrick first made the announcement that DPS would commission officers, he received some criticism from student leaders who said it would lead to greater abuses of power and officers eventually carrying firearms, which they said could lead to more violent confrontations with students and DPS officers.

Fitzpatrick said any decision on DPS officers carrying firearms can only be made in the state Legislature, and he said he does not see that happening soon.

He added commissioning will only give DPS officers a greater sense of safety and more recourse to deal with quarrelsome people, and that it will not alter much of DPS operating policy.

"These officers aren't going to be doing a lot of things different," he said.

In the event of a serious felony or violent person, Fitzpatrick said the standard policy will remain to defer to the Eugene Police Department.

If a student has any complaint from how they were treated by a DPS officer, Fitzpatrick said those complaints will be closely examined by DPS administrative staff and dealt with promptly and thoroughly.

"We'll certainly be responsive to any citizen who feels they've been treated poorly," he said.

But Fitzpatrick stressed that under the strict guidelines for officers to perform their duties "legally and with an emphasis on understanding the community's needs ... we very much want to put forth a positive image."

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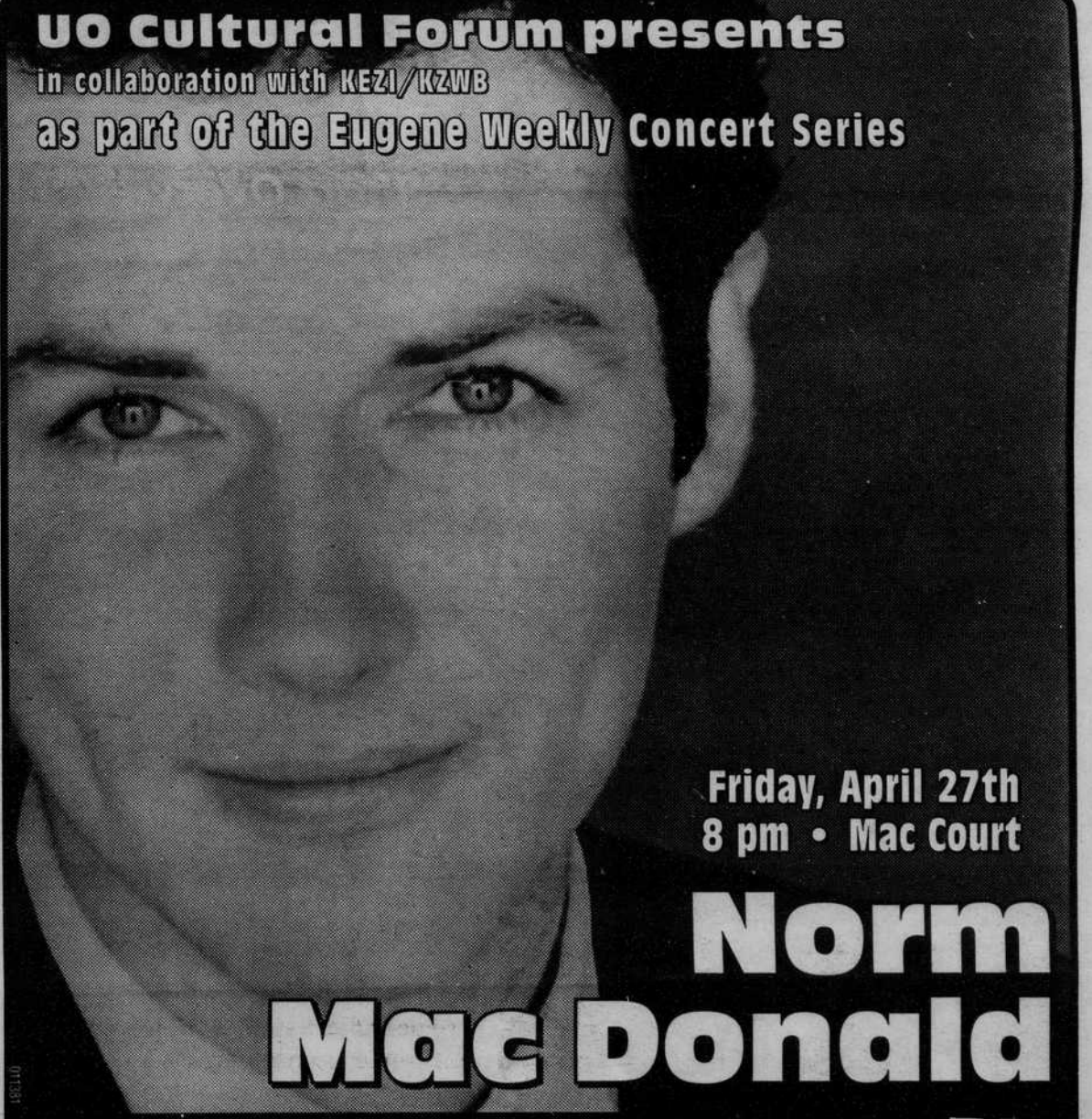
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