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EMU

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nity for input," he said. "And most of the programs in the EMU rely heavily on student input."

He added state laws prohibit students from supervising University staff, and the laws also do not give students the authority to hire and fire staff members.

Last week, Steven Sawada, the Cultural Forum's regional music coordinator, said students are the ones who work closest with the programs and staff leaders and therefore can best determine how any decision will affect programs. Although they cannot have the ultimate say, students should at least be consulted about such decisions, he said.

"This is seriously affecting us in a very negative way," he said about Dievendorf's termination.

University members have also expressed concern about closed meetings involving discussions about recommended changes to the Clark Document, which governs use of the student incidental fee. Again, students argued the issue involves their money, and they should have had input before the recommendation was sent to University President Dave Frohnmayer's office.

Student leaders and staff members involved in the meetings, however, said the committee included people who were experts on the issues. The small number of committee members also helped them get more done in the short time allowed, they said. Not only that, but students still have the opportunity to offer input.

But students said the closed meetings and refusal to disclose the reason Dievendorf was terminated are examples of why they mistrust the administration's intentions. Several staff members also pointed to deeper problems they could not discuss.

Sawada had previously also said the administration's behavior appeared "shady." He said administrators should have known that suddenly deciding not to renew Dievendorf's contract would raise suspicions.

"This leaves so much room for rumors because no one knows why," he said.

Debate over the role of administrators

Multicultural Center Director Erica Fuller said some administrators appear to have their own agendas and do not want students and staff members to get in the way of these visions.

"In many cases, the management has a tendency to force its agenda over the experience of those who actually work with the students," she said. "They have a tendency to micromanage, and I think they overvalue their importance in the overall discussion."

But Associate Vice President of Student Affairs Anne Leavitt said the EMU is not run by just a few people. Rather, everyone has different roles they are expected to fulfill, which contributes to accomplishing the building's mission, she said. And this includes the expectation that supervisors such as Lobisser will evaluate and review staff members.

"I don't think it's an issue of power. I think it's a joint responsibility," she said. "I'd like to see the building pull together by being focused on what the common work is. These current issues are making people lose sight a little bit of all the good work that has been done."

Dievendorf previously said she had not been given a reason for her termination, but she added that

she believed her supervisors wanted to change the direction of the Cultural Forum. She also mentioned disagreements with supervisors who she said wanted her to change her leadership style and "tell students what to do."

Lobisser said he does not want staff members to dictate what students do, but that they still have a responsibility to be leaders.

"I want students to be as empowered as possible, but I also want staff to lead ... otherwise, why have them?" he said. "While I expect my staff to listen to students, I also ask them to bring their kind of knowledge and expertise to the process. ... They don't have the option of being passive bystanders. They should be adding to the plate."

Fuller said although administrators talk about empowering students, their actions sometimes contradict this philosophy, making it difficult for students to trust them.

"Administrators often forget who they're working for," she said. "If they actually believed there was a shared system where both students and administrators have a say in the matter, I would imagine there wouldn't be such an incredible gap between them."

Collaboration is key

Fuller said if administrators were more involved with programs' daily activities, they would have more right to make program changes.

"It would be OK if they were actually involved in the process," she said. "But they are too far removed and out of touch with regard to what students, at least the ones I work with, are doing and what's important to them."

Leavitt said students are only here for a few years and have short-term perspectives, while administrators can view programs over a long period of time. She said the combination of these different outlooks is important, but sometimes more communication is necessary.

"It's that tension between the two perspectives — immediate and long-term — that makes that building able to serve students well. ... I think it's a creative tension," she said. "But when people raise issues on trust, we need to not just communicate about what the problem is, but communicate overall."

Student Sen. Andy Elliott said administrators are committed to implementing programs in the best interest of students, and these efforts are meant to be helpful. But he said administrators' perceptions of what is best sometimes differ from those of students, who feel "alienated" when decisions are made without their consent.

Elliott added that students should never be asked to "turn a blind eye to the insensitive actions of administrators," but should instead strive to create an environment that does not include such actions. He said the ASUO Constitution, executive and senate rules, and other governance documents should be reviewed and amended to ensure "students greater clarity of voice." Even when administrators and students disagree, students must remember they pay the incidental fee and should "determine the benefits," he said.

"Administrators need not be seen as the enemy. ... Unfortunately, that's how they're viewed by most students today," he said. "The greatest good for students would be achieved if students and administrators worked together for a common goal. Such a situation is possible, but it will take some hard work to achieve."

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