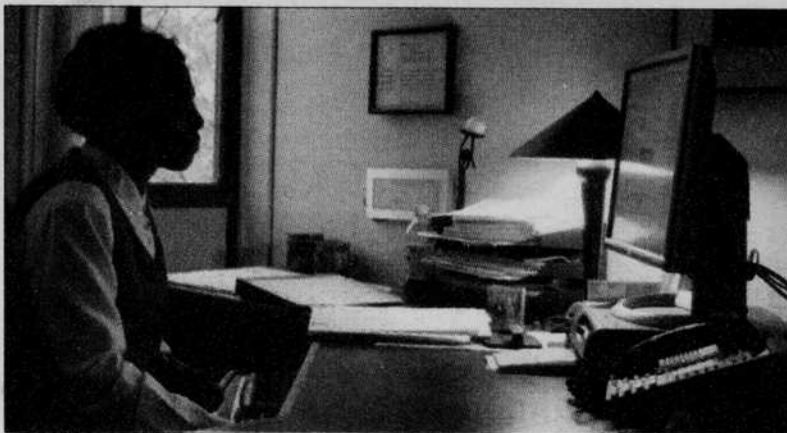


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Above: A University Crisis Center volunteer answers phone calls for students dealing with crises, including those who are suicidal. The names and identities of the volunteers are kept secret. Left: Robin Holmes is at the center of a new University suicide prevention policy.

LAUREN WIMER
SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Suicide's student SURGE

In response to a rising number of suicides and suicide attempts nationwide, the University is creating policies to support students

BY KARA HANSEN
NEWS REPORTER

The scenario is increasingly common across the nation. Colleges around the country are reporting an upswing in student suicides, with experts pointing to a combination of catalysts for increased depression and anxiety in student populations: academic stress, a poor job market, financial concerns amid tuition increases, social obligations.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college-age students, with 1,088 suicides occurring on campuses nationwide each year, according to the University of Oregon Counseling and Testing Center.

With at least two suicides from 2003 to 2004 and with a significant increase in the number of students expressing suicidal thoughts and behaviors, the University has not escaped the national trend. The problem has prompted the creation of a Suicide Prevention Task Force on campus, which is preparing a new draft of the school's mandatory medical-leave policy and has drafted a set of "best practices" for referring suicidal students to campus resources. The mandatory medical-leave policy outlines conditions under which the University can require students to leave, such as when students pose imminent danger to themselves or others.

Add in a potential funding boost from a bill that recently passed in Congress, and the University has a new face on suicide prevention and policies.

Increase in campus suicides, attempts

Colleges nationwide have reported increases in the number of students expressing suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

University counseling centers across the nation have reported an 8 percent increase in the number of students receiving services, and a recent survey found that 61 percent of college students felt hopeless, 45 percent felt depressed to the point they couldn't function and 9 percent

felt suicidal, according to the American College Health Association.

Those figures are reflected at the University in a 13 percent jump in the number of students reporting suicidal thoughts and behaviors, said University Counseling and Testing Center Director Robin Holmes.

"We have a lot of students who think about or carry through thoughts of suicidal behaviors," Holmes

said. "We're concerned. Either students are showing up to our campus with more difficulties, or things are more difficult out there and students are seeing this as a way of dealing with their problems."

In a paper drafted for University deans, directors and department heads, Holmes noted the overall suicide rate for adolescents has tripled over the past 60 years, propelling it to the third leading cause of death among 15 to 24 year olds nationwide.

Director of Residence Life Sandy Schoonover

SUICIDE, page 8

Examining ASUO

ASUO officials say retreat's regulations clear for 'dry event'



New information surrounding the Sunriver retreat creates more questions than answers

BY MEGHANN M. CUNIFF & PARKER HOWELL
NEWS REPORTERS

Nearly a month after student government members admitted to violating the Student Conduct Code by drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana on the fall finance retreat in Sunriver, more information about the violations and the roles administrators played while on the trip has come to light.

The Oct. 8-10 retreat was funded by about \$3,200 in student fees, which ASUO officials have since pledged to refund.

Student Judicial Affairs Director Chris Loschiavo said Tuesday he expects to get the ASUO's final recommendations for punishments later this week.

But while ASUO members finish drafting proposals for their own punishments, there is still uncertainty about whether the rules on drinking were clear, as well as when ASUO leaders and administrators learned of the violations.

Were the rules clear?

ASUO leaders have repeatedly stated they made it clear before and during the trip that the retreat was to be alcohol-free, but recent interviews indicate some students did not see the importance of abiding by them.

EMU Director Dusty Miller, one of the administrators who attended the retreat, said there was no discussion among administrators about the possibility of illegal substance consumption by retreat attendees because there was no evidence that it was even likely.

"The event was announced to be a dry event," Miller said.

But Miller also said there was some discussion of the no-alcohol and no-drug rule on the drive from Eugene, stemming from a general discussion of state rules regulating the trip. He said it was established that transporting alcohol in state-owned vehicles is a violation of the rules.

ASUO, page 7

TIMELINE OF A VIOLATION

Oct. 8

39 members of the ASUO and three University administrators traveled to Sunriver, Ore., for a weekend retreat to learn ASUO processes and build group unity.

Oct. 10

The group returns to Eugene. ASUO Student Senate President James George and ASUO Vice President Mena Ravassipour said they learned of the alcohol and marijuana consumption by retreat attendees during the drive home.

Oct. 11

Sunset Realty, the real estate agency that oversees the five houses rented by the ASUO, faxes a copy of an "inappropriate" note written in one of the houses' guest book. The ASUO sends a letter of apology to the agency.

Oct. 20

Numerous members of the ASUO are seen meeting in an unannounced, closed-door meeting in the EMU Board Room.

Oct. 21

George, Ravassipour, ASUO President Adam Petkun and ASUO Publicity Director Nathan Strauss meet with the Emerald to discuss the illegal activities and conduct code violations that took place at the retreat.

Oct. 22

A letter by the ASUO apologizing to the student body for misrepresenting the University by illegally consuming substances at the Sunriver retreat is published in the Emerald.

Oct. 27

Members of the ASUO are seen meeting in a closed-door meeting in the EMU Coquille Room.

Oct. 28

Sunset Realty faxes a copy of the "inappropriate" note to the Emerald. George, Ravassipour and Strauss meet with the Emerald to discuss plans for disciplinary action. The three said the group will fundraise to pay back the student money spent on the trip.

Oct. 29

Sunset Realty reportedly received ASUO's letter of apology.

Nov. 11

Members of the ASUO are seen meeting in the EMU Board Room. EMU Director Dusty Miller was in attendance.

BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHIC ARTIST

Audit: Raises may violate statewide salary freeze

Representatives of the University and other institutions questioned say the pay increases were approved before the new budget took effect

BY MORIAH BALINGIT
NEWS REPORTER

A secretary of state audit on the Oregon University System labeled 126 pay raises granted by the University and Oregon State University as "questionable" because they may not comply with a statewide salary freeze instituted to ease Oregon's increasing budget woes.

However, representatives of the University, Oregon State University, the Oregon

University System and the Interinstitutional Faculty Senate said the pay raises being scrutinized are in compliance with the salary freeze, as they were approved before the beginning of the biennium, the two-year period for which the budget applies.

"The UO fully complied with the 2003-2005 salary freeze," Lorraine Davis, University vice president for Academic Affairs, said. "In fact,

SALARY, page 4