

# ASUO: Administrators say there were no signs of potentially illegal activity

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Student Senator Toby Hill-Meyer said there was a strong possibility alcohol was transported in a state-owned vehicle.

The Green Tape Notebook — the handbook containing the rules and regulations that govern the ASUO — states that a violation of the state guidelines for use of state-owned vehicles could allow the ASUO president to revoke the group's use of the motor pool.

Hill-Meyer said two attendees who were over 21 were not present when the rules were discussed at a meeting prior to the trip and didn't realize that it was a violation for them to drink.

Another retreat attendee, who spoke only on condition of anonymity, said the number of students drinking was minimal, but messages about whether drinking was appropriate were sometimes ambiguous and the retreat had a "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

"Some people were told different things," the source said. "Some people were told there wasn't drinking but told with a 'wink, wink, nod, nod.' But I think that's the way every retreat is."

ASUO Accounting Coordinator and retreat director Jennifer Creighton-Neiwert denied the claim that there was an implied acceptance of drinking and said it was made very clear before and during the trip that it was to be alcohol-free.

Hill-Meyer said many students seemed unaware of the "impetus" behind the rules against alcohol and drug use and thought the rule was in place only because people didn't want to be around alcohol. Hill-Meyer said that misunderstanding may be why Conifer 13, the main house used on the retreat, was what the senator perceived as a

"designated dry house."

Out of the four houses occupied by members of the ASUO, Hill-Meyer said three had alcohol consumed in them, though one had only "minimal" drinking.

Hill-Meyer said no major incidents occurred as a result of the drinking.

"It got to the point where ... there was a concern that hangovers might occur," Hill-Meyer said.

## What role did administrators play?

Five University employees also went on the trip — Miller, Creighton-Neiwert, EMU Business Manager Jean Sun, EMU Director of Student Activities Gregg Lobisser and ASUO Programs Administrative Assistant Brandy Ota — none of whom have been involved in the disciplinary process.

Miller, Lobisser and Creighton-Neiwert said no formal guidelines dictate what role administrators play on off-campus trips funded by student fees, but all agreed they must maintain the same professional manner they have while on the job.

"State employees are obligated to follow campus policies, rules, state law, federal law," Lobisser said. "Simply pleading ignorance is not satisfactory."

Creighton-Neiwert said her duties as retreat director are mostly organization oriented, ranging from renting the houses to cooking the meals to cleaning the kitchen.

"ASUO doesn't have any rules or regulations as far as what goes on the retreats," Creighton-Neiwert said. "In the future, that's something that will definitely be considered."

Miller said he adhered to his job description as he would any time he is working.

"I don't get to not be a state employee simply because I'm not in the EMU," Miller said. "When presented with an indication that something has gone amiss, you cannot ignore it."

Administrators are "expected to work with these student leaders as adults and not prejudice or presume that something amiss is going until presented with some evidence of that," Miller said.

Because he saw no indication of any illegal activity, Miller said there was no need to check on anyone after the evening workshops concluded.

If no evidence exists, "I don't believe that my job then is to be a sleuth," Miller said. "The good thing about the University of Oregon is it expects me to treat you as an adult."

Out of the five houses occupied by retreat attendees, Miller said he saw the inside of three. Two of the houses, Conifer 13 and Spruce 1, hosted workshops he attended, and one was the house he stayed in. He said he did not visit the houses looking for evidence of illegal activity, but he noted he saw nothing that even warranted suspicion.

"There was never so much as a beer can that was visible," Miller said.

Lobisser said his role on the retreat was to act as an adviser and resource about incidental-fee funding policies and to get to know members of the finance committees.

Lobisser said he did not witness illegal activities but said he would have dealt with them if he had.

The responsibility of ASUO leaders on the retreat was to "conduct a high-quality retreat," not to monitor participants, Lobisser said.

"I don't know that, as retreat heads, that it's their job to serve as camp monitors," he said. "These are all elected or appointed student

leaders — they're adults. The expectations for the retreat were clear."

But Lobisser added that if student leaders were aware of inappropriate behavior, "they should have done something."

"If I were senate members, finance committee members, and I felt like someone was checking in on me at 10 and 11 and doing bed checks, I'd be pretty offended," Lobisser said.

## When did people find out?

Administrators' and students' accounts differ about when the violations became known.

Lobisser said he learned of "inappropriate behavior" before he departed from Sunriver. He said he was among the last people to leave the retreat and that Sunriver staff informed Creighton-Neiwert and ASUO Student Senate President James George of possible wrongdoing when they went to check out.

George previously told the Emerald he did not find out about the violations until the trip home.

Creighton-Neiwert said she was alerted when the group stopped in Oakridge for a snack on the trip home.

Miller said he saw no evidence of any wrongdoing until returning from the retreat, when student leaders brought him a copy of the note left behind in the guest book of Lark 14.

The anonymous retreat attendee said the most concerning issue from the retreat is not the fact that students drank alcohol or consumed drugs but that the students embarrassed the University with the inappropriate note. This could hinder future trips to Sunriver by other University-affiliated groups because "those people are going to remember that you disrespected them and their house."

Debra Campbell, operations

manager for Sunset Realty, the company that oversees the five houses, said the incident has not affected the company's overall view of college-aged guests.

"In general, we have pretty good luck with college students," Campbell said. "This just happened to be a pretty disheartening group."

## A successful trip

Creighton-Neiwert said the retreat was very successful and was probably the most productive retreat she's attended in the time she's been involved with the ASUO.

"Students made some bad choices," Creighton-Neiwert said. "It's a shame that certain behavior has seemed to overshadow the good work that was done."

Lobisser said he is a "strong advocate" for retreats, especially for this one, because it involved people responsible for allocating and making recommendations for \$9 million worth of incidental fees.

"It's a comprehensive program that contributes vastly to the quality of the experience that students have here," he said.

He said the retreat was necessary for student government officials to gain experience with the finance process and to get to know their colleagues.

Hill-Meyer also agreed the retreats are valuable and are a justifiable use of incidental fees but is worried that the problems arising from the retreat are a reflection of possible problems with the way the retreats are run.

"I am concerned how the money is being spent and (that) we're not just flagrantly using it to have some lavish party," he said.

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