

IN BRIEF

Oregon investigates insurance overcharge

PORTLAND — State insurance regulators are investigating Marsh USA, which has acknowledged overcharging six Oregon school districts and Lane Community College since 2000.

Marsh, the nation's biggest insurance brokerage, alerted the districts to the inflated bills in late October and has offered to reimburse them, said Ed Healy, managing partner of Marsh's office in Portland.

In return for the \$1.2 million in reimbursements, Marsh asked its clients to sign a release waiving their right to take legal action against the brokerage. Most of the districts rejected Marsh's request, and the company agreed to repay them anyway.

The Oregon Insurance Division decided to investigate after learning of the matter last week, said Cory Streisinger, director of the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services.

Streisinger said Marsh deserves credit for admitting the overcharges and offering the reimbursements. But she was surprised to learn that Marsh had asked for legal releases in exchange.

"We would expect the brokerage to make restitution unconditionally," she said. "If a district came to us with a complaint about that practice (of requesting legal releases), that's certainly something we'd look into."

Healy said the overcharges were unrelated to accusations out of New York that the company masterminded widespread insurance bid-rigging.

— The Associated Press

Illinois: Games must be played unless contract is violated

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Dinan said the group was under the impression playing a team with a racist mascot would no longer be an issue.

However, Athletic Director Bill Moos said in a Feb. 27 Emerald article ("Athletics scheduling garners criticism") that the University is looking to schedule intersectional games against Big Ten conference teams "and Illinois is one of them."

The University has contracts with the University of Illinois to play the Dec. 11 men's basketball game and a game next December in Portland that will be televised live on ESPN.

Greg Walker, assistant athletics director for media services, said the University cannot pull out of the games because contracts cannot be broken "unless one party violated a stipulation."

"Especially for Dec. 11, that's not a possibility," Walker said.

But Natasha Joseph, Native American Student Union co-director, said there is precedent for breaking the contracts because playing a team that uses an American Indian mascot violates the University's anti-discriminatory mission statement.

University of Illinois Athletic Director Kent Brown said it is "inappropriate" to tie racism to the upcoming basketball game.

"I don't agree with the comment that Chief Illiniwek is a racist mascot," Brown said. "This is about two basketball teams playing each other."

While the University has said it will be made clear during the ESPN television broadcast that the University does not condone the use of the mascot, Dinan said, "We can do something today that would kind of set the standard, set the bar."

Both Dinan and Walker said the University understands that Illinois'

mascot could be potentially harmful. Dinan said the University has pledged to address the issue in the future.

"We completely understand that these could be offensive to both Native Americans and non-Native Americans," Walker said, but she added that the fact that contracts have been signed is inescapable.

"I just don't understand how we can all agree on the issue and then not do anything about it," Dinan said. "I don't think we'd be breaking the contract in ill faith."

Walker said it is not the University's place to try to push for a mascot change at the University of Illinois.

"I'm not sure it's really our business to enforce our views on them," he said.

Genevieve Tenoso, vice president of the University of Illinois' Native American Student Organization, said the school's use of an American Indian mascot has been a controversial issue on the school's campus for many years.

"I would go so far as to say it's a racially divisive issue," she said.

Tenoso said the student opposition on campus welcomes any outside help and encouragement.

"It's very encouraging when we have other schools wanting to get involved," Tenoso said.

Dinan agreed.

"If there's any help we can provide them, I think it's our obligation to do that," he said.

The University of Illinois Board of Trustees is the only governing body that can make a decision regarding the use of Chief Illiniwek and the Fighting Illini and is currently examining the issue, board secretary Michele Thompson said.

The board passed a resolution

Sept. 9 expressing support for a "policy to preserve and recognize the state's American Indian heritage" at the University of Illinois. Thompson said the university does not consider Chief Illiniwek to be a mascot and "prefers the term symbol."

"A mascot is usually a caricature," Thompson said. Chief Illiniwek only appears with the Illini Marching Band and never performs any of the stunts or theatrics typical of school mascots, Thompson said.

"Chief Illiniwek is not present on the floor or field during a game," Thompson said.

Tenoso said the argument that the Chief is not a mascot is a fairly new one and doesn't hold much weight with the student opposition on campus.

"It is a racist issue," Tenoso said.

Walker questioned why there has not been protest about the other University athletic events with teams such as Florida State University, which uses the Seminole as its mascot, or the scholarly work that is produced at the University of Illinois.

"If (the University) really wants to make a statement, should we ban the literature of the 20 Nobel prize winners at the University of Illinois?" Walker said.

But, Dinan said Florida State's mascot is endorsed by the Seminole tribe and the tribe receives tuition discounts and other compensations for the school's use of its likeness.

Protesting scheduled athletic events is important because "it's in our face and it's something we can change," Dinan said.

In 1995, the Peoria Tribe, the direct descendants of the Illini tribe, expressed support for the use of the Chief Illiniwek symbol, but in 2000 passed a resolution calling for the retirement of the symbol.

Dinan said the decision was

made after the tribe saw the effect the mascot had on American Indian students at the University of Illinois.

Dinan said the University says there hasn't been enough organized opposition from American Indians, but it is important to understand that this issue isn't just about American Indians.

"The administration says the Native American voice isn't loud enough," Dinan said. "If this institution wants to make it a Native American issue, MEChA won't stand for it."

Walker said he has heard about "a bit of discussion" pertaining to the Dec. 11 basketball game but said the majority of discussion happened last year.

Joseph said she is willing to start gathering signatures of students in favor of the University breaking the contract for the December 2005 men's basketball game but is hoping the administration will act without her having to go through the trouble of such a time-consuming task.

"The U of O could set a big precedent," Joseph said.

The ASUO Student Senate unanimously passed a resolution Wednesday night declaring the use of "indigenous sports mascots" to be a violation of the University's non discrimination and affirmative action policy.

Student Senator Rodrigo Moreno-Villamar said he will bring a similar resolution before the University Senate.

Though Dinan and Joseph said they're not satisfied with the current response from the administration, they are happy with the future steps the University has pledged to take.

"We still do appreciate how far they're willing to go," Joseph said.

meghanncuniff@dailyemerald.com



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WE PUT OUT

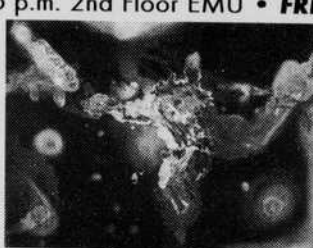
... great events

University of Oregon Cultural Forum

Dec. 2:

Artist Don Voss "Fiat Illuminare"

Opening Reception, Adell McMillan Gallery
6 p.m. 2nd Floor EMU • **FREE**



Dec. 3:

Artists Andy Lunday & Risa Masamura

Opening Reception
5 p.m. Aperture Gallery & Buzz Cafe • **FREE**

Foghorn String Band
w/Accordions Anonymous
Fiddle tunes, high spirited dance music
7 p.m. Fir Room • **Student \$3, \$5 general**



Dec. 7:

Holiday Music For All

Classical Holiday Music on Harp & Violin
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., EMU Fishbowl • **FREE**

http://culturalforum.uoregon.edu