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Officials defend class enrollment restrictions

The Office of Multicultural Academic Support claims its practice of withholding slots for minority students is legal

BY JARED PABEN
NEWS EDITOR

When senior Stephanie Ramey tried to sign up online for Math 243 Calculus for Business and Social Science for spring term she was denied access and informed she would have to contact the class professor.

The professor asked her to contact the Office of Multicultural Academic Support about enrolling in his class.

A staff member at the office said she couldn't register for the class because she doesn't identify as a minority, Ramey said.

Ramey, who tried to get into the section because it was the only one available, was told that if she wanted to be in the class, she'd have to show up at 7:45 a.m. Monday, the first day of classes, and meet with an adviser

before she could enroll, she said.

"I guess I was just really surprised and irritated because I thought I had a right to get into the class too. ... I guess I felt a little bit discriminated against," Ramey said. "For a sophomore math class, I shouldn't have to wait just because I'm white."

Ramey attempted to enroll in one of six University classes this term that reserve the first 10 slots in an 18-student class for minority students, while requiring others who want to get into the class to arrive on the morning of the first day of class and meet with an adviser before being allowed to register for the remaining eight slots. The OMAS pays for and controls three lower-division math and three lower-division English classes that allow fewer enrolled

students and provide more individualized instructor attention. While other sections of Math 242 and Math 243 this term have an average of 115 students for lectures, 29 students for discussions and 35 students for integrated classes, the OMAS classes had a maximum of 18 students. The general Writing 121 and Writing 122 sections had an average of 25 students per class, and the OMAS sections were again restricted to 18 students.

Linda Liu, advising coordinator and academic adviser for OMAS, said the classes are meant to offer a safe haven for minority students and give struggling students a chance to work more closely with professors.

But Edward Blum — senior fellow at the conservative Virginia-based Center for Equal Opportunity, which monitors education policy and has filed complaints with the federal government about race-exclusive programs at universities across the

nation — said the policy is illegal.

"I can say it 10 different ways, but it's illegal, and the Department of Education will shut this down if it's brought to their attention," Blum said.

Blum said the policy amounts to a "very fast, hard quota system that will never stand up in court" and is similar to the University of Michigan undergraduate racial quota system struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003.

Students must identify as being African-American, Asian-American/Pacific Islander, Chicano/Latino, Native American or multiracial to enroll in the first 10 slots. The OMAS confirms all students' racial identifications with the Office of the Registrar, Liu said.

Greg Vincent, vice provost for institutional equity and diversity, said the University offers a smaller class setting for these "gateway courses" for students who could benefit from

them. He said the classes also provide a comforting environment that minority students may not get in other classes. The classes aren't based on a quota, and after the initial 10 spots are filled, the classes are open to everyone, he said.

"We only give preference for a number of slots," Vincent said. "I think it's ethical. I think it is legal. I think it is effective."

Liu said her office receives several students each term who call the policy reverse discrimination.

But Liu said during the seven years she's been in control of enrollment for the classes, there have always been spots open for students who want to enroll after the initial 10 spots are filled.

"If students really need it because they want that time, they want that class, they're willing to wake up at 7:30 to get here. And it takes less than

OMAS, page 3

Senators authorize increase in stipends

BY PARKER HOWELL
SENIOR NEWS REPORTER

More paid positions are slated for student groups whose payrolls were recently slashed after the ASUO Student Senate on Wednesday authorized reinstating some pay using \$60,500 in over-realized funds.

Senators said they hope the move will aid groups and prevent drastic fee increases, but the decision to use the funds must now gain approval from the ASUO Executive and University President Dave Frohnmayer.

Many leaders received cuts this year when the Programs Finance Committee revised the pay model, upsetting cultural group members who said pay decreases unfairly affect low-income students and students of color. The decision, one of four repayment options presented to the Senate last week, replaces all cut positions at \$125 each.

ASUO Vice President Mena Ravassipour said the Executive favors the \$60,500 option because a \$94,600 possibility would be a "backdoor" around the PFC budget process. She said groups could still come to the Senate to request additional pay.

Multicultural Center spokesman Kit Myers presented a petition that circulated among groups in favor of a different option that would have refunded all cut money at a cost of about \$94,600. He said 115 people from about 10 student groups signed the petition.

Myers said the option the Senate approved is unfair because it causes group leaders to receive equal pay without necessarily doing equal work.

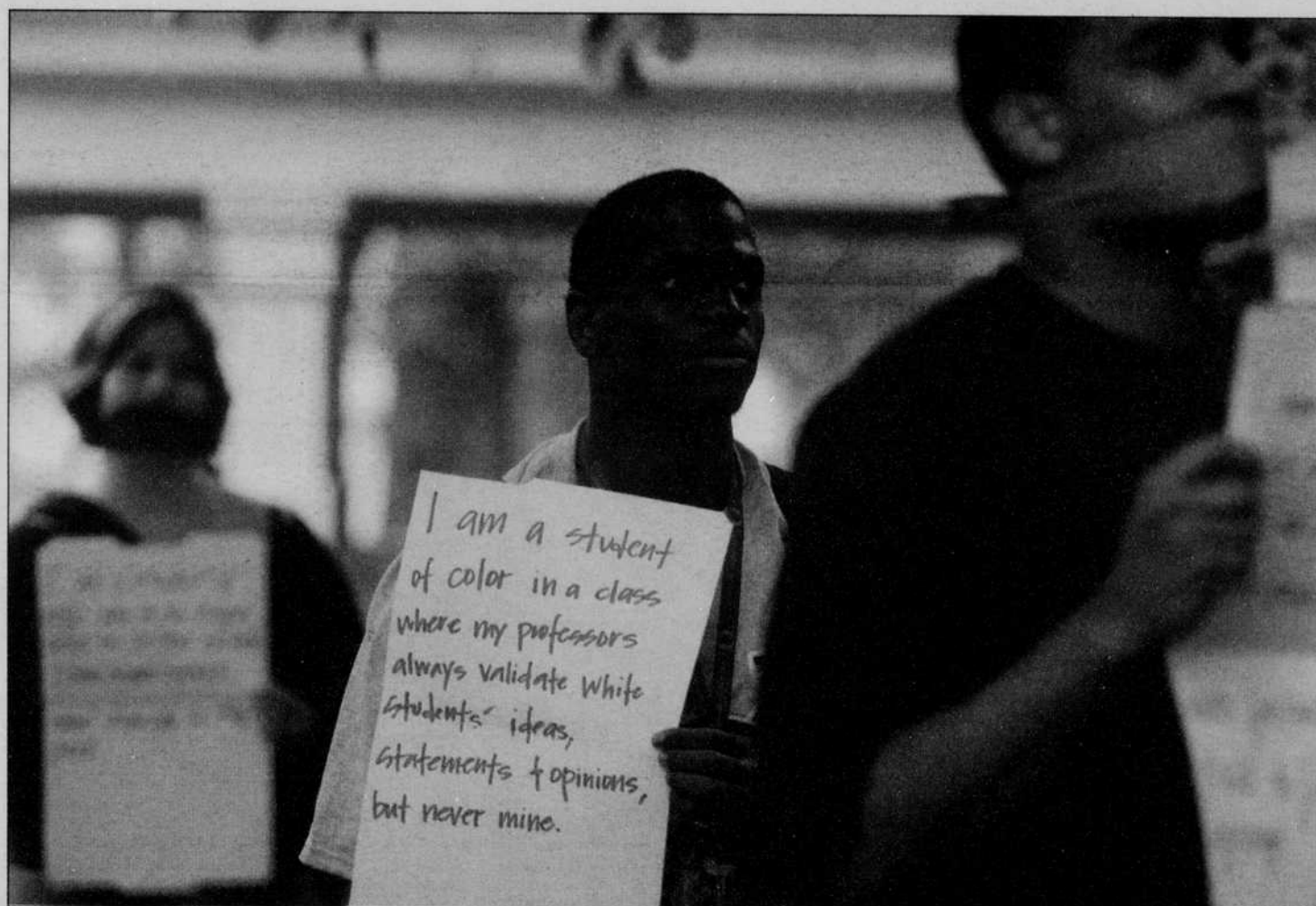
Senators agreed the model still needs work. "It's still going to be a problem down the road," Senator Nick Hudson said.

Senator Michael Sherman said student government members and campus radio station KWVA employees' pay makes up most of the difference between the repayment options.

He said there would be a "pretty small difference for the rest of the groups," and it would have the best chance of gaining Frohnmayer's approval.

Senate President James George said he didn't know Frohnmayer's timeline for ruling on the use of the funds.

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LAUREN WIMER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

From left to right: University students Maria Cortez, Andiel Brown and Jordan Thierry surround the dean's office at the College of Education during the protest Wednesday afternoon.

Second COE rally revisits race issues

Members of the University and community gathered to follow up an earlier protest of the College of Education's alleged discrimination

BY MORIAH BALINGIT
NEWS REPORTER

Graduate student Shadiin Garcia's lone voice reverberated across the College of Education courtyard Wednesday as about 100 others, including students, faculty and community members, stood in silence.

Some wore red and brown gags and held a rope that stretched from the entrance of the COE Dean's office, across the courtyard and to the front of the building.

"(The COE) is asking you to cover your mouths and be silent ... they are forcing you to

be quiet about this treatment," she said. "We are asking you to defy this."

Garcia was speaking at the second rally this month protesting alleged racism at the college.

The students wearing the gags symbolized the students and faculty that have experienced discrimination in the COE but have had to remain silent, Garcia said. She read anonymous testimonials that she collected from students and faculty members in which they allege discrimination.

"I am a student of color who is constantly reminded that I am here on scholarship by my professors," read one testimonial.

Staff from the COE also submitted testimonials.

"I am a staff person of color who was told that because of my advocacy efforts, I was unemployable," read another testimonial.

Garcia criticized COE Dean Marty Kaufman for his failure to come to the rally or meet with her.

"Where was Dean Kaufman?" she asked. "Why would he choose to leave town? Where's the integrity in that?"

Graduate student Johnny Lake, the rally's other speaker, said the administration needs to start taking responsibilities for these issues.

"The victim is most often given the responsibility to address the very issue that victimized them in the first place," he said.

RALLY, page 4