

OMAS: Private equity firm calls classes illegal, wrong

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five minutes to do the preauthorization and register for them," Liu said.

This spring term, all of the classes had open spaces but no students showed up at the OMAS on the first day of classes to meet with her and enroll, Liu said.

University Senior Instructor Michel Kovcholvsky, who teaches the OMAS's math classes, said the classes were created to foster a comfortable environment for minorities. "That was the basic idea, so that they don't feel afraid to raise their hand and ask something."

He said he understands that some students get angry over the class enrollment policy, which he has no control over. "Is it unfair? That, I'd rather not even go there. I understand the reason why it exists."

He said students enjoy interacting with him one-on-one. The course material he teaches is exactly the same. "To lower the standards for people of color would be racism," Kovcholvsky said.

Liu said all students still have to meet basic academic requirements necessary to get into the OMAS classes and that sometimes people misunderstand and think the classes are remedial.

"Sometimes we get the athletic department wanting to send us students who don't necessarily have the (academic) requirements ... and they believe these classes are remedial and we have to tell them it's not. If anything, it's harder," Liu said.

Senior psychology major Kady-Ann Davy, who identifies as Jamaican American, said she took an OMAS Writing 122 class her sophomore year, and she liked the class because it covered diverse cultures and provided time to free-write about her own experiences with diversity.

She said the enrollment policy is fair because coming from a smaller high school, she liked the opportunity to study in a smaller class and that the remaining slots still give everybody a chance to enroll.

"Knowing that it's open to everybody the first day, first come, first served, if there's any slot openings, I feel that still gives the opportunity for the other population of students to come and sign up for the class," Davy said.

Other departments also have classes specifically designated for specific student populations.

The American English Institute has a Writing 121E class each term for students who speak English as a second language. The instructor is more sensitive to the grammatical needs of those students. Academic Learning Services also has a program, funded by a federal grant, that students can apply for if they are low income, first generation college students or have documented disabilities. Students in that program have first priority on a Math 111 class taught by ALS Math Specialist Doug Hintz. The federal grant requires students who have a greater need of the class to get priority, Hintz said.

Blum said these classes aren't illegal because neither uses race as a determinant for enrollment.

Roger Clegg, general counsel for the Center for Equal Opportunity, said in the Regents of the University of California v. Bakke decision, the Supreme Court "made it clear setting aside slots on the basis of race is illegal."

"The legality aside, it's just wrong," Clegg said. "It's divisive to tell students you're not going to be considered because of your skin color ... I hope that the University will look at the law and will reconsider the policy."

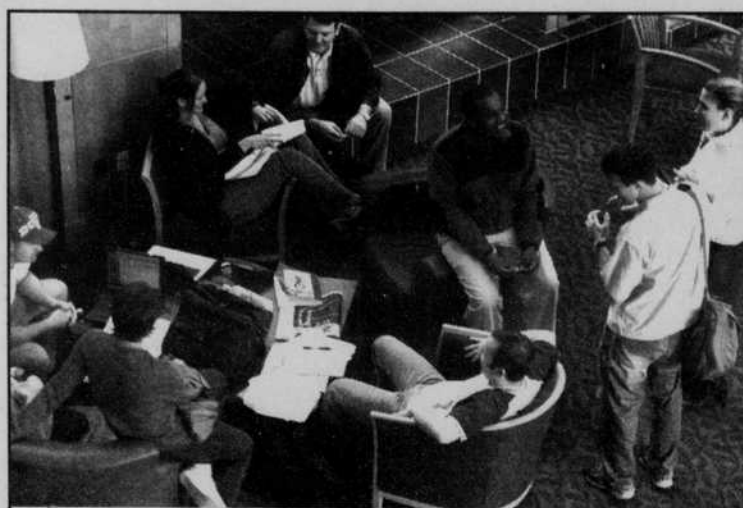
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