

COE: Department's commitment to diversity challenged; changes start

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matters, I have seldom encountered worse morale."

He attributed this to poor communications between departments.

"A major effort must be made to create a greater sense of community and inclusivity," he wrote.

In an e-mail dated June 13 from Frohnmayer to Martin Kaufman, former dean of the COE, Frohnmayer wrote that the report "accurately describe(s) the cumulative status of the college as related to 'diversity'... his document provides a foundation of actions that are needed, feasible, and have the potential to significantly advance the recommendations forthcoming from the college's Diversity Steering Committee."

Frohnmayer then suggested that the COE "begin immediately to plan a faculty/student induction/orientation" by Sept. 15.

Cortés held a workshop in September for members of the COE, though it was not the type of orientation described by Frohnmayer.

Other administrators and faculty

members said they mostly agreed with and appreciated the report, although some faculty members said they were hesitant to publicly criticize the COE.

Kaufman said the matter was a "complex issue" and that he felt Cortés' input was necessary.

"I thought it was a timely and insightful review of the college — where we have had successes and where we still faced challenges — and we found the report so valuable that we've asked Dr. Cortés to serve as a lead consultant to the college this year regarding the implementation of the plan," Kaufman said.

Associate Dean Chard said that considering the brevity of Cortés' visit, he did a remarkable job of "capturing the perspectives" of different groups within the college.

Chard discussed the problems facing the COE.

"Probably the largest one is that we are a faculty that is very lean on resources," Chard said. "Our tenure-line faculty is relatively small compared to most (similar) institu-

tions, yet we are the number-one most productive research faculty in the country."

Chard said the natural result of that situation is that faculty spends "a lot of time working and not much time talking to each other."

Implementing Cortés' suggestions would take time, he said, and Cortés was present at initial orientations and faculty meetings to facilitate dialogue.

Mary Ann Winter-Messiers, an instructor at the COE and project coordinator for Project PASS (Preparing Autism Specialists for Schools), said she felt the review was both timely and appropriate.

"I was very pleased and reassured that the college hired Dr. Cortés to do this initial review ... I think he really put his finger on some of the issues, and in doing so, provided a structure for direction," said Messiers. "It was very helpful."

Messiers feels that Michael Bullis, the interim dean of the COE, will be "incredibly competent" at implementing Cortés' outline of action.

Student reactions to the plan were generally positive, although most agreed that changes need to be made.

First-year COE student Bobbi Malos said she feels diversity is emphasized at the COE.

"They stated, in the beginning, to respect diversity ... in orientation, they addressed all that going into it," Malos said.

Steve "D" Cohen, a COE student, called the current diversity effort "really strong" but said the school had a long-term reputation for being culturally incompetent.

"For a long time, there've been problems with people graduating from the teaching program that aren't culturally competent ... for example, Jefferson Middle School for a while wouldn't even take teachers from the College of Ed. because of the damage that was being

done to the youth," Cohen said. In an ODE article dated June 7, 2004, Eugene 4-J School District's Human Resources Director Wally Bryant said the school was hesitant to hire graduates of the COE because of the college's "multicultural shortcomings."

Cohen expressed hope for the future of the COE, provided that the college follows through on Cortés' recommendations.

"There's key points that have been made — that diversity needs to be infused into every aspect of the College of Ed," Cohen said. "But if there's just lip service and 'oh, yeah, we're gonna take care of that,' then I don't think a lot of changes are going to be made."

Contact the higher education reporter at kbrown@dailyemerald.com

READ MORE ONLINE

For more information about the external review of the College of Education's diversity, go to <http://education.uoregon.edu/feature.htm>

IN BRIEF

Student drinking concerns increase at Oregon State

CORVALLIS — Student leaders are working to restore the reputation of Oregon State University after two deaths and a serious injury involving alcohol this year.

The school appears no worse than others nationally, where studies show the majority of students drink moderately, if at all. But the increasing percentage of students who binge drink is causing problems and raising concerns.

Last Monday, three OSU football players were charged with providing alcohol to 18-year-old Lance Strickland of Joseph, who was found dead in September in a dorm room with more than five times the legal limit of alcohol in his blood.

In May, a 22-year-old OSU senior hanged herself after leaving a houseboat party during the Shasta Lake weekend in Northern California. Later that month, a 20-year-old sophomore was paralyzed after diving into a shallow pool at an OSU fraternity party. Both incidents occurred at events where alcohol played a significant role.

Unfortunately, the latest alcohol-related incidents have "defined our culture. It's what we're beginning to be known for," said Dan McCarthy, the OSU student body president.

The OSU student senate recently voted to spend student fees to hire a substance abuse prevention coordinator to strengthen campus efforts. Meanwhile, McCarthy has joined Greek system leaders to eliminate the annual weekend of houseboat partying at Shasta Lake.

While recent events have put the spotlight on Corvallis, OSU students don't drink more or less than college students nationally, said Eric Alexander, the prevention coordinator hired with student funds.


Nationally, about 60 percent of college students drink moderately or abstain, according to a 2002 study sponsored by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

But about 40 percent of students report frequent binge drinking — defined as five or more drinks in a row for men and four or more for women.

The study noted that college drinking contributes to 1,700 student deaths, 600,000 injuries and 97,000 cases of sexual assault or date rape each year.

—The Associated Press

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