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Records detail end of class-slot priority

The UO stopped holding slots for minority students after a student expressed concerns over the policy

BY JARED PABEN
NEWS EDITOR

The University changed a controversial policy that reserved slots in certain low-enrollment classes for minority students before the federal government opened an investigation, according to documents obtained by the Emerald from a Freedom of Information Act request and an Oregon public records request.

The documents, obtained first from the U.S. Department of Education and later from General Counsel to the University Melinda Grier, reaffirm administrators' statements that they changed the policy in reaction to a student grievance in the spring, and that the decision was not prompted by the education department's investigation.

The education department's Office for Civil Rights is still reviewing the University's new policy.

The University's previous policy reserved at least 10 slots in 18-student English and math classes for minority students and required other students to meet with an Office of Multicultural Academic Support counselor on the first day of classes to enroll.

The new policy allows priority pre-authorization for students involved in several OMAS-affiliated programs, and some of those programs cater to students of all races. The new policy gives counselors and instructors the discretion to admit other students to the priority pre-authorization process, according to a copy of the policy. It also allows students who aren't allowed priority pre-authorization to register before the first day of classes. This policy went into effect for this term.

In an Aug. 22 letter from Grier to an investigator at the Office for Civil Rights, Grier stated the University developed the new policy at the end of spring term, and officials reached a consensus on the final details of the priority pre-authorization period over the summer.

"During Spring 2005, the University learned a student had concerns about the priority

OMAS, page 5

Mistrial delays electrician's lawsuit

Former University employee Cindy Boynton-Burns is suing UO, which she says retaliated against her complaints of discrimination

BY KATY GAGNON
NEWS REPORTER

A Lane County Circuit Court judge has declared a mistrial in the case of a former University electrician who is suing the University on claims she was retaliated against after she complained to her bosses about gender discrimination.

Judge Lauren S. Holland declared the mistrial on Nov. 16 after determining she had a conflict of interest because the University, on the day the trial began, offered Holland a teaching job at the Law School. The trial was rescheduled for May.

Former University employee Cindy Boynton-Burns, who is seeking \$300,000 in noneconomic damages, first filed a lawsuit against the University in August 2000, claiming the University retaliated against her after she complained about a "sexually hostile work environment," her attorney David Force said.

The case went to trial in April 2002, but Holland dismissed the retaliation claims, saying Boynton-Burns did not provide enough evidence of a connection between her complaints and the lack of work that led to her dismissal, according to the appeals court judge's opinion.

After the initial trial, the plaintiff filed an

appeal. The Court of Appeals ruled in her favor, sending the case back to the trial court.

Boynton-Burns was retaliated against when the University refused to interview her for an electrician position she applied for in 1999, Force said.

Force said the University claimed Boynton-Burns did not have relevant work experience; however, Boynton-Burns was the only applicant who had worked at the University before and was the most qualified for the job.

But in 2001, the University hired two journeyman electricians who had not worked for the University before, he said.

Assistant Attorney General David Kramer, who is representing the University in the case, could not be reached for comment Monday. Between February 1995 and May 1999, the

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KATE HORTON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Car thefts, break-ins double in 2005

Police warn homeward-bound students to keep their vehicles safe during the winter break

BY KATY GAGNON
NEWS REPORTER

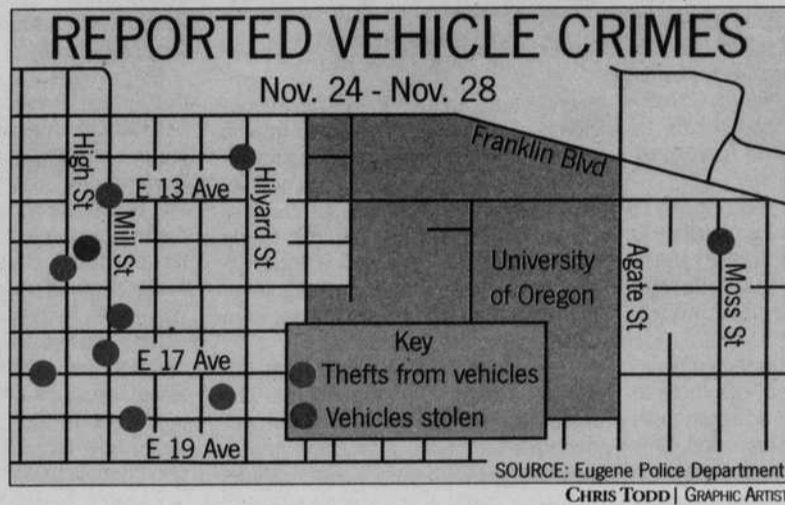
Car thefts and break-ins in the University area have doubled in the last year, and with winter break approaching, Eugene police are urging students to be extra careful when leaving their vehicles during the vacation.

Since the beginning of the year, thieves have broken into cars throughout Eugene in record numbers, and police expect this number to increase during the holidays.

During the break, cars will be parked in the same spot for an extended period, which can make them targets by thieves who tend to work in one area, Eugene police officer Randy Ellis said. Also, patrols in the area will be decreased during the holidays because more officers will be requesting time off, he said.

Thieves are seeing items from outside the car and they break windows to steal them,

THEFT, page 8



(Above): University student Elisabeth Foitle came home from Thanksgiving break to find her car, parked in her driveway on East 16th Avenue and Mill Street, broken into for the second time this year.

Dueling masters tangle with student test-taking plans

Test preparation companies sharing the same name clash because of issues such as how students can distinguish between them and the quality of their services

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COURTESY

BY KELLY BROWN
NEWS REPORTER

What a difference a space makes.

The New York State Consumer Protection Board has issued a warning against Test Masters, a test preparation company based in Texas, saying the name is too similar to TestMasters, a California-based company that offers Law School Admissions Test preparation courses.

Seventeen students who took the Test Masters prep course at Hunter College in New York said they thought they were enrolling in a TestMasters course, according to a press release from the NY CPB. They have since filed complaints with the NY CPB,

according to the release.

TestMasters offers classes here in Eugene, and Test Masters has advertised classes in the area.

Jon Sorenson, the spokesman for the CPB, said that although CPB did not examine what each program offered, the names seemed similar enough to cause problems.

"We never did try to evaluate one product over another, but it's clear that the one company has the reputation and is the one that students, at least the ones that we talked to, were seeking when they enrolled," he said.

He added that the board issued its warning to help

LSAT, page 6

Two similar Web sites offer test-preparation classes: Test Masters (left) is based in Texas and offers courses in various standardized tests, and TestMasters, from California, offers classes on the LSAT.