Norm Berney is National Advisor of the Year

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Norm Berney, advisor of the Associated Student Government (ASG), received the National Advisor of the Year Award last month in Washington D.C. at the American Student Association of Community Colleges (ASACC) conference.

Any of the 140 advisors who are involved in the ASACC organization are eligible for the award, according to Berney who is also the president of the Advisors Institute. Each year the award is decided by the Executive Director, the ASACC board and by students. It is based on how active and how visible an ASG is in its home college, and in the ASACC organization.

"I wouldn't have it (the award) except for the students' actions," said Berney.

Clackamas ASG members Mariah Kreinheder, student access officer, and Bryan Fuentez, administrator assistant, read a compilation of quotes about Berney, collected from various students.

"The quotes really meant a lot," said Berney. "That's what's been so amazing to me this year, when students have come and thanked me for the things I've done."

"I don't get teary-eyed very often, because I've won awards before, but I did," he commented.

Along with the students' speech, Berney spoke about some Clackamas programs, including Child-care grants, the Young Parents Opportunity Program and Pell grants. He also mentioned lobbying for education, which was the main reason Clackamas' ASG was at the conference. Berney announced he will retire as of November 2000, although he expressed interest in remaining a part of ASG in some aspect.

Berney has been at Clackamas for 29 years. In that time, he has worked as a coach for cross country, wresting and track from 1971-89; a counselor from 1974-92; and as the ASG advisor since 1992.

TONY MCMICHAEL/ *Clackamas Print*

Bryan Fuentez, administrator assistant, and Mariah Kreinheder, student access officer, speak about ASG Advisor Norm Berney as he recieved the National Advisor of the Year Award.

"I have had national awards before, national coach of the year, but this one was even more meaningful to me, because it wasn't just a specific audience," said Berney.

Darris: students speak loudly against administration

Continued from page 1

The college encouraged Darris to attend the St. Kitts school.

According to both Darris and Department Chair Don Hartsock, Darris was approached by Eric Lewis, Clackamas psychology instructor and colleague of Darris, with the idea of attending Berne. After looking carefully at the school, Darris decided not to attend because it wasn't an officially accredited institution. According to Hartsock, the department chair then convinced the instructor to reconsider. Darris then submitted an appropriations request for funds to Liz Goulard and Kay Davis, former deans at the college, and eventually it was approved.

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>
> Dian Connett
> Dean of Instruction

In separate interviews with Keyser and Dian Connett, dean of instruction, both administrators expressed a feeling of disapproval that an outside agency has brought into question a degree that the college has already taken a stance on, as well as feelings of support for Darris through this ordeal.

"The college has taken a position of saying that it recognizes the degree that he received," noted Keyser. "Frankly, I think [the ODA] should stay out of it. Dean is a very good teacher and I think it's unfortunate if he feels that he needs to leave, somewhat precipitously, to defend himself."

"The college learned that Dean's doctorate had come into question the same time that Dean was notified by Mr. Contreras," noted Connett. "We weren't aware that office had the authority to look at degrees—we were as surprised as he was. What we've said and what we've clarified is that we will still list that degree in our catalog—we're not taking any actions on our part to do anything about that. We feel like there's a process that's been set out. Dean is in communication [with the ODA]. My understanding is that there hasn't been a final decision.

"I've reassured Dean that the college isn't taking any action with the case. We're not going to stop recognizing that degree," added Connett. "Alan is saying that if we choose to recognize [the degree] that's our prerogative. There hasn't been anything that we've looked at or found out that we'd want to reverse in any way. [The ODA] doesn't have any authority to tell the college 'you can't give him credit on the pay scale' or 'you have to get money back that maybe you helped pay for that degree.' Alan doesn't have the authority to do any of that. I think it's very premature to say that Dean's degree is not going to be recognized.

"Dean is an excellent instructor. Everyone has recognized his teaching ability. Whatever he thinks he needs to do, we really want to support him in that—if he wants to keep teaching, if he wants to take a break, if he wants to start his sabbatical."

Students express frustration with the administration

With the announcement of his departure last week, many of Darris' students filled their instructor's tiny office to express feelings of support throughout the day, and many spoke with members of the ASG to see what support they could generate through the student government offices with the idea of a public rally. A controversial newsletter written by one of Darris' students was also circulated around campus early this week.

"We're losing an incredibly awesome teacher," said Julie M. Smith, one of Darris' Honors students. "My daughter is at this college—this is her first year. This is the second teacher that she is going to lose in her first year of college."

Some students feel that, while this degree has been brought into question by an outside agency, Darris has been subject to much harassment by members of the administration over the years and also see a connection with the recent retirement of Dr. Donald Epstein.

"We're representing the students, not Dean," noted Luke Precourt, student. "We're talking about [the administration] trying to harass teachers that we like—whether they're through the approved channels or not. We are not fighting for Dean Darris, we are trying to bring our own grievances against the administration. I want that to be clear."

"First it's Epstein, then this," said Matthew Coleman, student. "It's a continuation of teacher after teacher. It seems like all the great teachers are leaving. I know Dean was one of the best experiences of my college education. Before I took his classes, I was kind of an average student—really didn't care about my education and took easy classes—I never really pressed myself because I never knew what my limits were. Now I know and I press myself to those limits as much as possible because of that experience."

"The saddest part is that it continues—first Epstein," noted Matt Steketee, student. "It's not even that we're taking good teachers out, it's that when people speak their mind they get put down for it—for thinking. Why are [the administrators] taking away people that we like? The students should have a choice about who teaches at this college—who we like. We're not voting that David Koresh be a teacher here, we're saying that certain teachers have the credentials and should be able to teach here. When they take them away without [the students] having a say in it, that pretty much sucks.

"Dr. Epstein was not forced out of here but he was harassed," continued Steketee. "Dr. Darris was not forced out of here. It's secondary issues that are put on him so heavily, very conveniently, that he doesn't have the money or time to represent himself and still teach at this college and then he can't do this job. It's very convenient that he can't do the job while he's dealing with the whole other issues. That's kind of what's happened. [Some administrators] have understood that there are certain routes that they can take and they've understood that they can't do it through the college. So by putting separate pressures on them, they've not forced teachers out but it's made them unable to perform their jobs here."

Instructors fill the void in Darris' classes

"You can't replace Dean with another Dean," noted Connett. "So we have to start from there and there's going to be some disappointment [by students]. I spoke briefly with the department chair [Hartsock] yesterday [last Wednesday], and I think he's found replacements for all of the classes. The social sciences department is a large department and they have a lot of part-timers so that's kind of the good news—that if they need to do some shifting around they can, fairly quickly. I'm very sorry that it's happening just as the term is starting. If we had seen it coming or if we had seen some anticipation then we could have planned ahead. I just want everybody to try and make the most of it and pitch in and let's support Dean and the students in his classes."

Berne: U.S. recognizes it

Continued from page 1

requirements.

Those requirements for a foreign university are listed in Part 600 of the amended Higher Education Act of 1965. Section 600.54 states the requirements to determine whether a foreign institution is eligible to receive federal monies and is comparable to an institution of higher learning in the US.

The website lists those requirements as:

1) Admits regular students who have secondary degrees completion.

2) Is legally authorized to award degrees (associate, baccalaureate, graduate or professional).

Berne University's website says it has been recognized by the United States as an accredited university and eligible for Title IV funds (federal monies to the school). It is accredited by the World Association of Universities and Colleges, the Accrediting Commission International and by the Ministry of Education from the government of St. Kitts.

Darris noted that College President John Keyser recognized this after he approved Darris' completion of the Ph.D. in 1998.

According to Darris and Fishell, Berne University is a school of high merit and academic quality. Students and professors alike leave the university with a great sense of accomplishment and honor. It is clearly accredited, they say, and accepted in the United States as a comparable institution.

Alan Contreras of the Degree Authorization Board said that a "degree from Berne would not be illegal in the majority of States. However, Oregon has strict laws concerning accreditation status."

Robert McKieran of the US Department of Education states that, "Berne... is an eligible institution [to have Title IV Standing.]" In order to obtain Title IV eligibility it has to "produce evidence that it is legally authorized... to provide post-secondary education."

Since recognition of accreditation and allotment of Title IV funds are decisions of the US Dept. of Education, Contreras was unclear how the state has any jurisprudence in this matter.