

## ALLEGATIONS RILE UP UO PHILOSOPHERS

Allegations of sexual harassment by an unnamed male faculty member of the UO Department of Philosophy by a retired faculty member have led to an investigation by the UO Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity (AAEO) and a lively discussion on philosophy blogs. Major points of the online debate are if and how the unproven allegations reflect on the reputation of a department known as a center for feminist thought and an exceptional place for women to study.

An Aug. 3 memo to department faculty and students by Russ Tomlin, senior VP for academic affairs, says the allegations were unfounded, in part because “no grievance or complaint was filed by any alleged victim.” The memo, requested by *EW*, states that there was “insufficient evidence” to conclude that the UO policy on conflict of interest or sexual harassment was violated. AAEO staff interviewed 25 current or former graduate students, eight undergrads and one faculty member, along with anyone else they were referred to who might know something about the alleged incidents.

The allegations were made public recently on *Leiter Reports*, a national philosophy blog by Brian Leiter. Leiter, in a July post, wrote that a UO grad student told him “there is a faculty member suspected of being a serial sexual harasser, and it was graduate students who had to raise a stink about it, due to departmental

and administrative lethargy on the matter,” and that “a feminist philosopher on the faculty urged quiet about this incident lest it cost the department an award for being ‘women-friendly.’”

The “feminist philosopher” mentioned by Leiter is likely associate professor Bonnie Mann. When asked to comment, Mann said, “Leiter’s comments are grossly misleading and represent an aggressively stupid reading of my original statement.”

A statement this week signed by seven members of the faculty, including department head Ted Toadvine, calls the blog statements “false and misleading,” and says the allegations were addressed in “a timely way,” and there was no attempt to suppress information other than “respecting confidentiality” during the investigation.

On a different blog called *Feminist Philosophers*, Mann is quoted saying, “The entire discussion, as far as I can tell, seems to be based on a letter sent to Leiter ... This letter seems to have been taken at face value, however, with no hesitation whatsoever in assuming its factual worth.”

Mann said the department had a history of sexual harassment up until about 15 years ago, but the issues were “transformed by the work of a number of our current faculty members, including Mark Johnson, and former faculty members, including Nancy Tuana, into a program that values feminism and has been a wonderful place for women to study. That reputation was hard earned.”

Mann said she’s worried that “the last thing that seems to be at issue in any of these discussions is the actual woman who may have been harmed, and the efforts to publicly defame the department without so much as a phone call to the Affirmative Action office to ask about the actual process or outcome of the investigation. ... Some of us are being publicly hung here.”

UO senior spokesman Phil Weiler said the policy of the UO is to not release names of those making accusations in

order to protect their privacy, and likewise protect the person accused since the investigation was inconclusive.

What’s next? Tomlin’s memo says “In response to these circumstances, Academic Affairs has put together a working group to review and update our efforts to educate faculty on the management of sexual and romantic engagements with students and others on campus.” And the memo from the faculty says, “We take the recent events in our department as an invitation to work energetically and proactively toward improving the climate for women in our community even further.” — *Ted Taylor*

## HOEDADS BACK FOR BUMPIN’ GOOD TIME

Get ready to do The Bump or The Reverse-Take-It-Back. It’s time to practice those tree-planting dance moves since the Hoedads are coming back to town. Members of the Hoedads Reforestation Cooperative will return to Eugene the weekend of Aug. 12 for their 40-year reunion celebration.

The three-day celebration will be filled with private parties and a public dance party at WOW Hall.

Jerry Rust, one of the organization’s two founders and former Lane County commissioner, says the celebration is sure to be filled with “laid-back earnestness.” Of course, what would you expect from the original tree-planting cooperative that preached ideologies such as feminism, environmentalism and participatory democracy?

Rust says the more Hoedads he “bumps” into, the more successful the night.

“I’m looking forward to bumping into lots of old Hoedads,” Rust says, “and trying hard to remember gliding through the woods by day and huddling around a campfire by night eating peanut butter and sprouts sandwiches.”

Former Hoedads president Rust wants to pass on a philosophy: “Occasionally, when planting a unit I would hear someone on the crew yell, ‘Today the unit; tomorrow the world.’ There is the idea that if we can get it right locally, we can get it right globally.” He adds, “For the Hoedads, living locally was a straight tree root placed in the bottom of a deep hole, filled in with moist soil.”

The Hoedads will gather at the WOW Hall starting at 8 pm Aug. 13 (doors open at 7:30) with free admission for Hoedads. — *Kendall Fields*

## LABOR BOARD RULES ON OLD R-G COMPLAINT

More than a decade ago, *The Register-Guard* and Eugene Newspaper Guild were embroiled in protracted labor disputes and Guard Publishing even imported the notorious self-described union-buster Michael Zinser to head negotiations. One of the many issues of the time was a disciplinary action against *R-G* copy editor Suzi Prozanski for improper use of a company computer to send emails in 2000 regarding union activities. Prozanski, who is married to State Sen. Floyd Prozanski, left the *R-G* in 2002.

The disciplinary action was appealed to the National Labor Relations Board, got national attention in law circles, and the case ended up in the U.S. Court of Appeals, where it was remanded to the NLRB. A decision dated July 26 finds in favor of Prozanski and the court is requiring the *R-G* to “rescind the disciplinary actions taken against Prozanski for sending those emails and to post an appropriate notice.”

The order gives the *R-G* until Aug. 10 to “remove from its files any reference to the unlawful warning, and within three days thereafter notify Prozanski in writing that this has been done.”

## SLANT

• Some of us remember **Mark Hatfield** from earlier times in Oregon when politics seemed less polarized and being a politician was more about serving the public interest and less about promoting a narrow ideology and belonging to a gang. Hatfield was a Republican who earned the trust and the support of Democrats because he was clear-headed, far-thinking and independent of party lines. As a senator and governor he was an effective and creative advocate for our long-term economic vitality. Once upon a time Oregon voters marked their ballots for the most qualified candidates, regardless of party affiliation. Now we vote straight party lines out of fear that extreme party platforms will lead us to ruin. Does Hatfield’s death mark the end of an era, or does his legacy of bipartisan sanity remind us of what we can aspire to in his memory?

• **Is print dead? Not yet.** We got great news last week that *EW* now has a record 96,457 regular print readers in Lane County, up from 84,570 last year, and an even more dramatic jump from 77,180 back in 2007. These numbers are from the independent Media Audit, a company that does extensive, in-depth, random polling every spring to document what local media local people use, what they buy,

etc. We’re happy to see our readership take a big jump, but we see *The Register-Guard’s* readership numbers have dropped significantly in every category. Puzzling statistics. Last year 25.3 percent of Lane County residents read the *R-G* weekday sports section. This year it’s only 19 percent. Where did the sports fans go? Online? Both papers have a growing web presence, but for some reason, people still like us in print.

• Fascinating process going on in the **UO Department of Philosophy** regarding unsubstantiated allegations of sexual harassment reported by a former faculty member (see News Briefs this week). The department has evolved over the years to become a national center for feminist philosophy and has a reputation for being a great place for women to study, so the allegations were particularly disturbing for both faculty and students. But unlike earlier times when sexual harassment was common and ignored, a thorough investigation was conducted which determined the allegations were unsubstantiated. Unfortunately, a blogger and University of Chicago law professor, Brian Leiter, posted rumors as facts in this case, mistaking confidentiality for cover-up. Has the

department’s reputation been besmirched? Maybe not. The investigation shows how seriously the department and the university take such accusations.

• **Who’s to blame** for the economic crisis? Unfettered capitalism brings exciting boom and bust with its gross inequities, while socialism brings boring stability with its overriding sense of social justice. We favor the latter, but we don’t seem to be heading in that direction. And while everyone is watching the emotion-driven stock market (and most of us are pissed at obstructionist conservative wingnuts), climate change continues to threaten not only our economy but also our national security. Everything is tied together: Short-term, greedy, materialistic thinking hurts our environment, our health and our national bank account. Maybe we need a new national slogan. We heard a couple of good suggestions from *EW* reader Melanie Lee: “A Healthy Global Ecology Equals a Healthy Global Economy,” and “Power to the People and to the Natural Environment.” Any others?

*SLANT* includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com