

Shakeup

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allowed to comment on what will happen to the administrators after their contracts expire because those are “personnel matters”.

Culturally Insensitive?

Following the publishing of the Register-Guard article, the UO Native American student body, with help from other student

recruiting and retention, as well as directly connecting with Indians from the Reservations.

Ada Ball, a representative of the Native American Student Union and Tom’s niece, says the move was culturally insensitive.

“Now they want one person at the VP level to oversee everything,” she says. “We feel that person wouldn’t be able to ade-

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groups and community organizations, organized and carried out a protest on Jan. 7, the first day of classes for the winter term. The group is also circulating a petition for students to sign in support of Gary, Hernandez and Ball.

According to Shay Macy, a representative for the Native American student body, Ball was irreplaceable.

She notes that Ball was essential to

quately address all our needs.”

A Lack of Communication?

While his predecessor had a reputation for reaching out to communities of color, President Gottfredson has cast a different impression in the eyes of some students.

Ada Ball says that communication between the President’s Office and the Native American community is lacking. She says she has yet to meet the President this school year and has only seen him once at a community parade.

In response to allegations that she and the President’s offices haven’t done enough outreach with communities of color, Alex-Assensoh notes that she arrived on campus in August of 2012, the same time as President Gottfredson.

“While I cannot speak for what has happened in the past, I will happily affirm my respect for community members as well as my colleagues at OEI and my sincere interest in engaging in dialogue on the issues that I am at liberty to discuss,” says Alex-Assensoh.

A “Distributed Model”

While the communication disconnect has rubbed some students the wrong way, many are even more concerned about what the new “distributed model” entails.

“I think the struggles that people go through racially are very unique from the struggles people go through with sexual identity, or being a non-traditional student or having a disability,” says Harris.

Alex-Assensoh says that while a focus on diversity is a good first step, it’s not sufficient in itself.

“Diversity focuses primarily on ensuring that people of different backgrounds are present in an organization, but it does not focus intentionally on whether or not people have voices in the decisions, policies and processes that are significant in bringing about change,” she says in her email statement.

According to Alex-Assensoh, the OEI is trying to put in place a more focused approach that will be led by directors rather than assistant vice presidents, which is what they’ve done with other OEI units.

She wouldn’t comment on whether the administrators did anything to earn the discontinuing of their contracts, once again citing “personnel matters”.

Where Will Students Go?

Many students expressed a level of intimacy they felt with the administrators and wondered what will fill that void in the midst of the restructuring.



Yvette Alex-Assensoh

In response, Alex-Assensoh says there will be people in the OEI and other places at the university to discuss culturally specific issues, but didn’t specify beyond that.

She says there is a plan to expand the services OEI provides, as well (Read more about this in the online version). Alex-Assensoh emphasizes that the change is designed to fit the needs of students.

However, Ada Ball suggests that this restructuring doesn’t take students’ views into account.

“We understand that part of the reason for Tom’s position is the unique need for him at this school,” she says. “We feel that by having him in this position, it gave us strength while we’re at this school. It was seen as something to aspire to.”

Trust

While some students have expressed a sense of distrust, Alex-Assensoh wants to reassure them that she’s ready to reach out.

“Trust is the result of not only dialogue, but action,” she writes. “I am looking forward to continuing my dialogue with various communities of color and others, benefiting from their expertise and moving forward in ways that allow them to see the utility and benefit of the changes.”

Harris is skeptical.

“I’m hoping this is just a cultural barrier that needs to be explained,” he says.

“When I got here to the university I didn’t expect to be around to watch minority services dwindle and falter this much.”

This is a significantly abbreviated version of this story. The full version is available online.

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Memorial Service:
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Place: Philadelphia Missionary Baptist Church
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Time: 3:00 p.m.

Survived by son: George W. Brown.; grandchildren: Lori Brown, Yulonda Chapman, Cesario Chapman and Marcel Roshto; great grandchildren: Kiara Sanders and Christopher Hunt; sister: Jean Blocker; brother: George W. Lawson; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, other relatives and friends.

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