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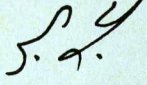
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SIUE BULLETIN

To the Faculty, Staff and Students of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville

Vol. 21, No. 17
November 15, 1990

MEMO TO: The University Community
FROM: Earl Lazerson 
SUBJECT: Tower Lake Housing

On October 1, 1990, I reported to the University community that a dispute involving student residents and guests had occurred at Tower Lake Housing. The incident ended without injuries or property damage. However, the confrontation took on racial overtones, and a number of the students who were present voiced complaints about the University's response to the situation.

Some students alleged that police officers who were called to the scene focused their attentions on the misbehavior of African American students and disregarded the misbehavior of other students. Students also alleged rude and harsh treatment; particularly as it involved African Americans. Additionally, students expressed the belief that the police officers overreacted and exacerbated the situation by calling for outside assistance from area police departments. In response to the complaints received from the students, I called for a thorough investigation by Vice Presidents Quillian and Rockingham. I have now received their findings and recommendations. A brief summary of the significant findings and the actions the University will take follow.

Alcoholic beverages played a significant role in the incident. Consumption was apparently excessive, and many individuals were underage. As a result, judgments were impaired, tempers were not fully under control, behaviors were unruly and the entire situation was confused and tense. Students, both black and white, failed to exercise proper judgment. I have asked the Vice President for Student Affairs to develop additional alcohol and drug prevention programming for Tower Lake residents. Students who may have alcohol or drug problems will be referred for proper professional assistance. The Vice President for Student Affairs will also review all allegations of misconduct involving University students and determine appropriate disciplinary actions in accordance with the Student Conduct and Student Grievances: Rights and Responsibilities document. No additional legal charges will be filed against individuals who were arrested on September 30, 1990. To the extent supported by findings of substantial evidence, however, charges will be sought for other individuals suspected of legal violations.

The police officers at the scene were required to make judgments quickly, often without the benefit of complete information. Some of the decisions that were made did not reflect a full awareness or sensitivity to the apprehensions held by many of our students. As a result, there were perceptions of bias and unfair treatment; even though the actions being taken were reasonable and in accordance with proper police procedures. For this reason, I have directed the Vice President for Administration to implement a training program for the University police that

will go beyond conventional police methods and establish more sensitive response procedures that are appropriate for a multi-racial university environment. Additionally, I have directed the Vice President for Administration and the Vice President for Student Affairs to review the roles of the police and the Housing staff in incidents at Tower Lake and to make recommendations concerning the relative authority responsibility, and scope of both groups.

The decision to call in outside police assistance resulted in large measure from inadequate numbers of involved Housing staff and University police at the scene. I have directed the Vice President for Student Affairs to provide proper identification badges for the Housing staff to insure their ability to perform their proper duties. I have also directed the Vice President for Administration and the Vice President for Student Affairs to determine the cost of additional police coverage for Tower Lake Housing and to take steps to increase police presence to insure the safety of our students. Moreover I have directed the Vice President for Administration to develop specific procedures for determining when outside police assistance is warranted and to establish responsibility for implementing such procedures.

I have also accepted the following recommendations:

1. Establishment of an SIUE ad hoc police and campus community relations committee. The committee will be comprised of faculty, staff, administrators and local government officials and students, including representatives of student government and the Black Student Association. The committee will be charged to review the events that occurred at Tower Lake on September 30, and to make recommendations to enhance police and campus community relations.
2. Strengthening of communications between the Office of the Vice President for Administration and the University police department. This is to foster a mutual appreciation for values inherent in the University's responsibility to insure a humane environment for all members of the campus community.
3. Establishment of dialogue with the faculty concerning the development of courses in human relations and cultural diversity for SIUE students. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will be charged with the responsibility for initiating such dialogue.
4. Development of procedures to insure the immediate notification of the Director of Human Relations in police incidents involving students of color on campus. The Vice President for Administration will be responsible for the development of such procedures.
5. Development and implementation of race relations/cultural diversity programs at Tower Lake Housing. The Vice Presidents for Administration and Student Affairs and the Director of Human Relations will be charged with responsibility for establishing such programs.
6. Review of incidents involving African American students and the University police department to insure proper police conduct. The Vice President for Administration will be charged with responsibility for said review and recommendations.

These steps are being taken to insure that a humane, safe, and supportive environment, essential to the welfare, growth and advancement of all members of the University community, can be maintained.