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Adm: Peck; Edm: Beckett

BULLETIN

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

Vol. 22, No. 20
November 19, 1991

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

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SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
AT EDWARDSVILLE

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

A little more than a year ago, a dispute involving student residents and guests occurred at Tower Lake Housing. The dispute became confrontational, and some students apparently took sides along racial lines. After the incident, numerous students expressed concerns about the treatment of African-American students and the handling of the incident. In response, I called for a comprehensive investigation. That investigation has now been completed. The findings and our intended actions follow.

The inquiry into the incident revealed a confused and tense situation exacerbated by the excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages. The judgment of some of the students was impaired, tempers flared, and some of the behaviors were disorderly. Those charged with maintaining order were required to quickly assess the situation and respond in a manner to ensure the safety of all involved. With the advantage of hindsight, many of those involved may have handled themselves differently. In spite of the difficulties and complicating factors, however, the incident ended without serious injuries or property damage.

The incident, nevertheless, raised serious questions about the climate of our University community and particularly the treatment of African-American students. To address this issue, I accepted the recommendation of Gerald Thomas, Director of Human Relations, to establish a committee made up of faculty, staff, students and community citizens to review what occurred at Tower Lake, offer strategies to prevent the reoccurrence of similar incidents and improve our response should preventative measures fail. Dr. Thomas chaired the committee.

Based upon the work of the committee, we have taken certain initiatives.

1. Additional security measures have been put in place at Tower Lake Housing. University Police has increased its number of patrols and has periodically used roadblocks to limit uninvited guests. A Campus Watch Program, designed to acquaint residents with one another and to inform them of means to secure their apartments, vehicles and personal belongings, has also been initiated.
2. The University's alcohol policy is being revised. The new policy is intended to raise the awareness level of the dangers of alcohol consumption and to assign more responsibility to individuals who host

(over)

parties where alcohol will be present. Sanctions for individuals who abuse or ignore the policy will be specified.

3. Procedures have been revised to improve the working relationship among Tower Lake Housing staff, University Police and the Human Relations Office. The directors of these units are now able to interact on a more timely basis to ensure that issues affecting resident life are handled in a prompt and fair manner. A representative from University Police will continue to attend the weekly Tower Lake staff meetings to facilitate communication among the units.
4. Training programs in race relations and cultural diversity for University staff have been evaluated, and the programs have been strengthened. During the past fiscal year, representatives from A World of Difference presented programs to members of the University community. The programs were designed to find ways to meet minority needs, with special concern for racial, ethnic, cultural and religious diversities, and specific vulnerabilities. Perceptual differences, value clarification and cultural assumptions were also explored. Additionally, the staff of the Human Relations Office continues to present cultural diversity programs to employees and students.
5. University Police and the Human Relations Office have been charged with developing plans to work more closely with student government and other student organizations to improve relationships and increase mutual understandings. Plans include presentations to the Student Senate of issues, initiatives and accomplishments, particularly those affecting Tower Lake Housing. Assistance from student government and student organization leaders in the resolution of problems affecting the student community will be requested.

The effectiveness of the above initiatives will depend upon our collective commitment and dedication to the realization of one of the major values of SIUE; that is, a humane, safe, and supportive environment is essential to the welfare, growth, and advancement of all members of the University community. I invite each of you to join me in active effort to encourage those behaviors that will foster a fair and hospitable climate.