

Debate: Raised during discussion of campus sexual assaults

Continued from Page A1

mented on the topic.

UO interim President Scott Coltrane assured Ralph that the university will ask about provocative dancing as part of its \$500,000 effort to prevent sexual assault on campus. One part of the plan, Coltrane said, is to train and certify three Title IX deputies, including one assigned to the athletic department. The deputies would help train staff, and, in athletics, look at the messaging that the programs put out, Coltrane said. Title IX is the federal civil rights legislation that bans gender discrimination in education.

Cheerleading “is part of the athletic department,” Coltrane said, “and how those (dance) routines get developed, who decides them — part of it is internally generated — it’s something we need to look at.”

The UO declined to make cheerleading Head Coach Dana Guthrie or any of the cheerleaders available for interviews with The Register-Guard.

In response to the request, Craig Pintens, the athletic department’s marketing manager, wrote: “Our cheerleaders and mascot are nationally recognized and important ambassadors for the University of Oregon at sporting events and in the community.

“Our cheerleading and mascot program prides itself on monitoring the latest developments in uniform technology and choreography and implementing best practices from around the world. We welcome any discussion from our leadership on improvement of our program that will continue to develop the young men and women associated with it.”

The UO cheerleaders — 14 dancers and 14 “stunt couples” — play a highly prominent visual role for the UO, but otherwise largely keep in the background.

Unlike UO athletes, the cheerleaders are seldom quoted in news or sports reports. The UO does not list their full names on team rosters — in contrast

to the UO practice in all other sports, including acrobatics and tumbling. Instead they’re listed as Katelynn J., Annie R., etc.

Guthrie has no public voice, except when she serves as interpreter for the Duck mascot in, for instance, an ESPN video clip. Guthrie’s annual pay at \$38,430 is tiny compared with most coaching or assistant coaching staff, according to a UO salary report.

What message?

Ralph raised her cheerleader questions during a trustee discussion of sexual assault on campus, and the UO’s efforts to curb the prevalence of such incidents. She said she is trying to understand feminist scholars and student activists who say policies at U.S. universities support a “rape culture.”

Preliminary estimates are that 20 UO students a week face sexual assault, according to a UO Senate Task Force on Sexual Assault report. Two studies meant to establish actual incidence are in the works.

The problem is pervasive, Coltrane said recently: “It’s huge and it’s not OK, and we really need to be serious about stopping it.”

Ralph said she’s trying to understand whether any part of the campus community lends itself to a culture that gives permission to sexual assault.

“Where, if anywhere,” she said, “does the overt sexuality with the bump-and-grind, pelvic-thrusting dancing that the female cheerleader and dance squads feature in their routines fit in this context?” she asked.

Cheerleading, athletics and an evolving definition of “rape culture” are a modern vein in gender studies; women and gender studies is one of the signature strengths in the UO College of Arts and Sciences, Bruce Blonigen, associate dean for social sciences, told the trustees recently.

UO graduate student Dana Rognlie is writing her UO dissertation on how cultural imagery on campus affects how students think about themselves

MORE ON THE WEB

Here are more details about UO cheerleading activities:

Knight birthday video: bit.ly/1CIsbzn

Cheerleading routines: bit.ly/1GJKZFS

Bang Bang lyrics: bit.ly/1voBnes

and act toward one another — and what the university’s role should be, she said.

“How cheerleaders and young women present their bodies to the world is a very difficult question to tackle. It’s not one you can have a clean sort of line on,” said Rognlie, who is active against sexual assault.

The cheerleaders’ provocative dancing may help influence the cultural atmosphere surrounding sex on campus, she said.

“Women are just sexual objects that can be used and their way of being in the world can be dictated to them. That’s just not acceptable,” Rognlie said.

According to police reports, a provocative dance was one element in the alleged rape of a UO freshman by three basketball players last March, according to police reports and witness statements.

The event took place within hours of a Ducks basketball game. Three players met an 18-year-old freshman at a house party and ushered her into a bathroom, according to a police report. The young woman said she thought this was part of “college fun.” The players asked her to “shake her butt,” and she did so, according to the police report.

Sexual acts ensued. The freshman said it was rape; the basketball players said it was consensual. The university found sexual misconduct on the part of the players and banned them from campus.

Sexualized dancing is hardly unique to UO cheerleading. Cheerleading teams at other colleges have similar routines. The UO cheerleaders’ moves would be at home in any Be-

yonce video. Still, the moves are troublesome to some. A national brouhaha arose last year when singer Miley Cyrus “twerked” (bent over and waved her posterior) on the televised MTV Video Music Awards program.

Birthday appearance

A more recent incident raised hackles among activists on the UO campus.

In late February, a squad of UO cheerleaders in uniform — with cropped tops and short skirts — cheered UO benefactor Phil Knight as he stood in a conference room at the Nike campus in Beaverton. A video of the birthday event was posted on Comcast Sportsnet; it shows the cheerleaders chanting in unison:

“Mr. Knight, we’re here to cheer you, on your very special day.

“We appreciate your kindness, there’s no way we can repay.

“One request from all of us students, can you put us in your will?

“So a great big Happy Birthday, to our favorite Uncle Phil!”

Rognlie said she was disgusted by the video. She stood up at the most recent UO Board of Trustees with a sign that said: “UO Admin: Stop pimping UO cheerleaders.”

Why?

“A case of young women wearing very (little) clothing going to beg an older man in his office for money adheres to a very old (story) of ... women’s bodies being utilized as commodities for the purposes of getting more money. That is to reduce those young women and rob them of their freedom, really,” Rognlie said.

The UO cheerleaders appear at a variety of business events.

The university hires them out by the hour, under strict rules, according to the cheerleading website. The rate is \$200 per hour for one to three cheerleaders; \$400 for three to six cheerleaders and \$600 for seven or more cheerleaders. The Duck mascot can be rented, too, for a higher per-individual rate. Proceeds help pay for the cheer

program.

The UO carefully evaluates where, when and why the cheerleaders or the Duck make appearances, the Web page says. Approval is at the discretion of the athletic department. “The Athletic Department will decide if any appearance conflicts with its best interests,” the website says.

Studies ahead

UO psychology professor Jennifer Freyd, meanwhile, has attempted on and off since 2007 to study the cheerleading program, but she said the athletic department has declined her requests to interview program participants.

In March 2014 — just before the alleged rape — Pintens replied to a set of the professor’s questions by email:

“Is there any consideration of whether the uniforms and/or choreography might (or might appear to) convey or encourage exploitive sexuality?” Freyd asked.

“No,” Pintens answered.

Freyd and a graduate student, Marina Rosenthal, are in the middle of a study that tries to measure the attitudes of college students after they watch UO sports. Participants watch a mix of 30-second video clips of UO teams: men’s football, men’s basketball, men’s and women’s volleyball and, finally, cheerleading.

“Is watching the highly sexualized dancing going to relate to increases in acceptance of rape or common misconceptions about what causes rape?” Rosenthal said.

“We think there’s something important about community context. It’s not just that you’re seeing sexually suggestive dancing; you’re seeing sexually suggestive dancing in your school context. It’s sanctioned by your school. The institution is inherently saying, ‘This is OK. We approve of this,’” she said.

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Iran: Collateral damage from missiles a key concern

Continued from Page A1

equips the Iraqi military and security services to help defeat the Islamic State, but unlike Iran is unwilling to commit fighters and advisers who join Iraqi forces in the field.

One senior U.S. military official who tracks classified intelligence reports said Iran had deployed Fajr-5 artillery rockets and Fateh-110 missiles and their launchers.

Another senior U.S. military official who also monitors sensitive government reports on Iran said the deployed weapons were similar to the Fajr-5 rockets and Fateh-110 missiles but were slightly different and had different names. The official offered no other details. The CIA declined to comment.

Either way, U.S. officials agreed that the Iranian missiles introduced a new level of advanced weaponry to the battlefield in Iraq, even as some experts questioned their usefulness at this stage in the battle for Tikrit. But the Fajr-5 rockets are the same weapons Hamas has fired against Israel in recent conflicts. Hezbollah and the Syrian army have also been using Iranian rockets and missiles for some time, military specialists said.

The second senior U.S. military official said the Iranian missiles are “not a big deal at this point” but then added, “My concern, as with artillery and other non-precise weapons, is collateral damage if they employ them.”

There has been growing international pressure to avoid civilian casualties and revenge attacks on people or property in an operation by a mostly Shiite force in a hub of the Sunni Triangle.

Appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 3, Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, alluded to the deployment of the rockets and missiles when he said, “This is the most overt con-

duct of Iranian support, in the form of artillery and other things.”

Dempsey also said that while the involvement of Iranian-backed Shiites in Tikrit could be “a positive thing,” he voiced concerns that “it will only be a problem if it results in sectarianism.”

That sentiment underscored the reality that even though U.S. officials have deep reservations about Iran’s enduring role in Iraq, Iraqis need Iranian help in defeating the Islamic State.

“Are you concerned that Iran has basically taken over the fight?” Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who heads the Armed Services Committee, asked Defense Secretary Ash Carter at the same March 3 hearing.

“Sectarianism is what brought us to the point where we are,” Carter replied. “And so I do look at it with concern. We’re watching it very closely.”

U.S. officials say they believe that Iran imported the rockets and missiles for the Tikrit operation because other artillery was not able to reach targets around the city in what has become a difficult, protracted battle. Even after weeks of fighting, Islamic State militants remained dug in Monday in Tikrit and still controlled parts of the city against the much larger pro-government force.

And in a sign of how much this battle reflected the entire campaign against the Islamic State, Iraqi officials said they were pausing their offensive to summon reinforcements and to preserve property and civilian lives.

“Generally speaking, these weapons are more effective at terrorizing civilians than providing fire support for ground operations,” said Jeffrey Lewis, a nonproliferation analyst at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. “That is how Hezbollah has used them. I don’t expect that either system will produce dramatically different results on the battlefield.”

handled by state police.

A tree was knocked down into the roadway, blocking both lanes as a result of the crash, deputies said, and another tree was leaning against a third tree, causing a severe safety hazard for responding personnel.

Lane County Public Works personnel removed the trees.

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DON RYAN/The Associated Press

Gov. Kate Brown holds up an automatic voter registration bill after signing it Monday in Salem. Those who register with the DMV will be registered to vote.

Voter: Expected to eventually link all those in DMV database

Continued from Page A1

but none has gone as far as Oregon.

Minnesota nearly implemented automatic voter registration in 2009 before the plan was vetoed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty, who said “registering to vote should be a voluntary, intentional act.”

Similar concerns were raised by Oregon’s minority Republicans.

“Simply because it makes us unique or makes us first does not necessarily mean that it actually improves on what we’re doing,” said state Sen. Jackie Winters, a Republican from Salem.

Oregon Republicans also voiced worry about potential voter fraud, the cost of implementing the measure, and whether the DMV can ensure that personal information remains secure.

Information the DMV has on file, such as age, residential information, signature and citizenship status, will be transferred to the secretary of state, who will then automatically update registration information.

When it came up for a vote in the state Senate last week, all Republicans and one Democrat voted against it. The Democrats hold a 18-12 advantage in the Senate so the bill easily passed.

State Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, a Portland Democrat who carried the bill in the Senate, said there were rumblings the measure was a “secret plot” to enroll more Democrats. But she denied that was true.

Oregon already has one of the highest voter registration rates in the nation — 73 percent of Oregonians were registered to vote and 70 percent of them cast ballots during the 2014 general election.

Tony Green, spokesman for the secretary of state, said the legislation is expected to eventually capture all unregistered voters who are in the DMV

database after taking actions such as obtaining or renewing a driver’s license.

Two years ago, when the measure was first proposed, Green said there were questions about whether the Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division records were confidential under federal law. The legislative counsel determined the secretary of state and the division could share information as long as it was for legitimate government purposes, he said.

People eligible to vote will get a postcard saying they’ve been registered and have three weeks to opt out. They’ll be automatically registered as unaffiliated but can select a political party from the postcard and return it to election officials through the mail.

Automatic registration is not uncommon in other countries. A 2009 report by the Brennan Center for Justice says nations where the government takes the lead in enrolling voters have much higher registration rates. Argentina has a 100 percent registration rate, while Sweden, Australia and Canada all have registration rates over 90 percent.

Myrna Perez, deputy director of the Brennan Center’s Democracy Program, said a state needs to already have reliable agency records of eligible Americans who have demonstrated citizenship in order to successfully follow in Oregon’s footsteps. In Oregon, people must provide a birth certificate or passport to get a driver’s license or register a car.

Oregonians were the first to see all-mail elections, and the state has since been followed by Washington state and Colorado.

“Oregon is a true leader in accessibility to voting and I challenge every other state in this nation to examine their policies and find ways to ensure there are as few barriers as possible in the way of the citizen’s right to vote,” Brown said.

Crash: Survivor was in critical condition

Continued from Page A1

all three men were ejected from the car.

Holmes was taken to Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend in Springfield. He was in critical condition as of late Monday afternoon, said hospital spokeswoman Monique Danzinger.

It was unclear who was driving the car at the time of the accident, or where the three were headed, authorities said. However, speed is believed to be a factor in the crash, deputies said.

The accident investigation is being