



PUBLIC RELATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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SUNO responds to Times-Picayune article

NEW ORLEANS, LA. – In response to the *Times-Picayune's* September 20, 2008 article "Case tells of scheme at SUNO," Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) issues the following statement:

The September 20, 2008 article in *The Times-Picayune* titled "Case tells of scheme at SUNO" appears to suggest wrong-doing perpetrated by Southern University at New Orleans. This is contrary to the presiding judge's ruling that the whistle blower law which the plaintiffs sought to be protected by does not apply in this case. Specifically, the judge stated that for the whistle blower law to apply, it "requires that a law was actually violated by the employer." The judge simply found that the plaintiffs believed that laws had been violated. The judge adjudicated that the plaintiffs be reinstated, but did not honor their petition filed for payment of financial damages. The reinstatement judgment will be appealed by SUNO per the advice of the Southern University System's attorney.

It is worth mentioning that the Louisiana Board of Regents' internal auditor testified at a court hearing that SUNO did not violate any rules or regulations with the University's Dual Enrollment program. The internal auditor explained that it is routine for adjustments to be made on initial enrollment data submitted by post-secondary institutions until they are finalized. Court reports will show that the internal auditor testified that SUNO's submittal fell into this category. It is also important to note that the University's fall 2006 final enrollment data was verified by the Louisiana Board of Regents.

MORE



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The truth is that the two plaintiffs involved had become disgruntled employees months prior to the inception of the Dual Enrollment program at SUNO because their requests in the spring of 2006 for salary increases had been denied. Specifically, in a letter dated May 1, 2006, Linda Tolbert-Mosley requested a salary adjustment from \$41,200 to \$65,000. At the time, Tolbert-Mosley, one of the plaintiffs, served as the director of retention. Dr. Victor Ukpolo, Chancellor of SUNO, met with Tolbert-Mosley regarding her request and explained that it could not be honored at that time. He testified in court that she vehemently stated that he would regret denying her salary request. This event occurred a few months prior to the start of the normal fall 2006 enrollment process, including the newly established Dual Enrollment program. Similarly the other plaintiff, Timotea Sanchez Bailey, then director of admissions, had verbally requested a salary increase that was also not honored.

It was also clearly documented during court hearings that a significant number of the “ghost” Dual Enrollment students were, in fact, entered into the computer system by Bailey. She did not refute this during the hearings. Additional irregularities that surfaced during the hearings showed that in many cases students who were originally admitted as regular freshmen in the fall of 2006 were redirected into the Dual Enrollment program by Bailey. This is yet another fact that she did not deny in court. This was done in spite of a directive from Dr. Ukpolo that all students in the program must meet the criteria as outlined by the Louisiana Board of Regents.

Dr. Ukpolo, in an August 12, 2006 e-mail to Bailey wrote, “Let me go on record on this issue again for clarification. While we have given students provisional admission, it is still the responsibility of the admissions office to ensure that all students meet the requirement for unconditional admission to SUNO, including providing whatever documents are missing in their files. Provisional admission does not equate to admission unless all necessary requirements have been met.” This was in response to an August 11, 2006 e-mail from Bailey indicating that she had entered students into the system. In spite of the directives from Dr. Ukpolo, court records show that she continued to enroll “ghost” students into the Dual Enrollment program.

The Dual Enrollment program, now known as the Early Start program, has grown into an outstanding program. SUNO will appeal the court’s ruling that the plaintiffs be reinstated in their previous positions.

END