



West Virginia
Higher Education
Policy Commission

**Higher Education
News Clippings**

Week of September 20, 2009



September 24, 2009

Preparing For What Could Happen

MetroNews, Institute, Kanawha County

Higher education officials are heading back to class to learn about the H1N1 virus.

Representatives from 25 of the state's 30 higher education institutions plan to participate in a one day H1N1 virus workshop at West Virginia State University in Kanawha County on Friday. It's sponsored by the state Bureau of Public Health and the Higher Education Policy Commission.

Ashley Schumaker with the Commission says the goal is to make sure West Virginia's colleges and universities don't neglect a serious threat.

"We want to create awareness at the institutions that this is something that they should be planning for, they should be prepared for, in the event this does happen at their campus."

The workshop, though, won't just stop at ways to prepare for H1N1. It will also tackle how to pay for those preps. "In total, there's about \$540,000 that's available. Awards will be made up to \$20,000 per campus."

Those funds come from the Centers for Disease Control. Schumaker says it's money well spent.

"The real hope for that is to provide campuses with some funding to offset the cost of implementing and preparing for any kind of crisis planning, also setting up vaccination clinics campuses and this isn't only for students. This would also be available to faculty and staff."

The workshop is aimed at administrators, health services providers and communication and public relation directors.

So far, there haven't been any major H1N1 outbreaks on campuses in West Virginia. But with flu season just around the corner, health experts say it could happen, and happen quickly if colleges and universities aren't prepared.

Charleston Daily Mail

DAILYMAIL.COM

September 25, 2009

Debate over changed grades heats up

Dean allegedly altered marks for state treasurer's daughter without the professor's permission

by Ry Rivard, Daily Mail Capitol Reporter

HUNTINGTON, W.Va.--The dean of Marshall University's largest college changed two grades given to West Virginia Treasurer John Perdue's daughter, and the classroom professor is asking for an investigation by the university's Faculty Senate.

The allegations come in the wake of controversy at Marshall's College of Education and Human Services, which has been beset by a number of complaints and formal grievance filings centered on its executive dean, Rosalyn Templeton.

Now Templeton is said to have taken the unusual step of supervising and grading a student after the student had received "incompletes" in two classes that Templeton had not originally taught and that had wrapped up weeks earlier at the end of the spring semester.

After receiving work from the student over the summer, Templeton changed the two "incompletes" the student had received to an "A" in each course. That student has been identified as Emily Perdue, the daughter of the state treasurer.

Emily apparently needed the courses to gain admittance to Marshall's business school.

In letters to top Marshall officials, Perdue's original professor for the two classes, Laura Wyant, alleges the grades were given without her permission.

The newspaper obtained the letters and other information about the incident from a source other than Wyant.

However, Wyant confirmed that she had written the letters and said the events that led to them were among the reasons she resigned earlier this year as chairwoman of the college's Division of Human Development and Allied Technology.

In her first letter, dated Sept. 11, Wyant wrote to Marshall's chief record keeper that Wyant had received two grade change requests forms through the campus mail system.

"The grade change forms are requesting grade changes for Ms. Emily Perdue who was in two independent studies with me in the Spring 2009," Wyant wrote to Marshall registrar Roberta Ferguson.

"I issued a grade of 'I' in each course for Ms. Perdue at the appropriate time at the conclusion of the Spring semester. I have not seen any work completed by Ms. Perdue for either course. Therefore I cannot change the grade."

A week later, on Sept. 18, Wyant wrote to Marshall President Stephen Kopp that someone had changed the grades of a student. The student is not named in the letter, but Wyant confirmed both her letters refer to the same incident.

"This particular student received 'incompletes' from me in both courses for Spring 2009, and her grades were recently changed to reflect an 'A' grade in each course," Wyant wrote.

"I did not approve these grade changes, nor do I have any information that would allow me to consent to the grades being changed by anyone else."

The letters prompted a review by Marshall's chief academic officer, Provost Gayle Ormiston.

Ormiston discussed the outcome with the Daily Mail but did not use the student's name because of federal privacy laws. He said she had completed her work over the summer.

"She completed the work," Ormiston said Thursday. "She earned the grade she was given in the courses."

Of Wyant's letter, Ormiston said, "She rightly said, 'I don't know anything about this, I haven't seen the work, I can't change the grade,'" Ormiston said.

But he said Templeton and Wyant had agreed in mid-June - several weeks after the end of the spring semester - that Templeton would take over as the so-called professor of record, which would authorize Templeton to change the grade. He said listing Templeton as the professor in school records was something that "fell through the cracks."

Wyant declined to comment on the agreement that supposedly was reached in mid-June.

But just as Ormiston finished his review on Thursday morning, Wyant e-mailed the president of the Marshall Faculty Senate to ask for an investigation of the grade changes.

"I am asking that you and the Faculty Senate Personnel Committee investigate the inappropriate grade change," Wyant wrote in her e-mail, which was provided by another faculty member.

Treasurer John Perdue said on Wednesday that he would wait on Ormiston's review to comment on the matter. A spokesman said on Thursday, after the provost's review was completed, that Perdue would not comment.

Perdue did state briefly on Wednesday, "The class is an independent study. There is no class."

Asked about the accuracy of the allegations, he said, "I think you might be surprised."

Perdue declined to provide contact information for his daughter and said his family would have no further comment.

The grade changes came after a series of events involving Templeton, the Perdue family and other college officials, according to interviews with Wyant, two students who were in the independent study classes and e-mails sent to Wyant.

Wyant during the spring semester led two independent study classes for undergraduate students who want to become high school business education teachers.

Wyant said the independent studies were set up because there was not enough student interest to fill a regular class. There were only three students in the classes.

Students in independent studies do not have to meet regularly at the college. Attendance was never mandatory, but two of the students and Wyant apparently met frequently.

Wyant says the classes got off to a "rocky start," in part because of a heart procedure she had in the first week of February. One student said the class did not meet during that period for four or five weeks.

Wyant said the first meeting was on Jan. 20.

At the first meeting, Emily Perdue brought her mother to class, said Britany Thompson, a student at Marshall who was in one of the independent study classes.

Wyant's medical procedure took place shortly after that and she said it may have been difficult to reach her for awhile. It is unclear for how long the class did not meet, but in March it started meeting once a week, Wyant said.

The third student, Justin Brooks, said he did not see Emily Perdue in class until the very end of the year.

"As far I could tell, if she didn't show up with me and Britany, she was missing class," Brooks said. Thompson provided a similar account.

On April 23, shortly before the end of the term, dean Templeton sent Wyant an e-mail.

While the text of the e-mail was provided by a source, Wyant said it matched the one she had received.

"Emily Perdue and her father met with Darlene [Daneker, an associate dean.] today," Templeton wrote. "Emily indicated that she will need a grade in the two courses before the LCOB [Marshall's Lewis College of Business] will let her into their program. Darlene said that Emily was anxious that if she could not complete these courses entering into her new program would be held-up.

"Will she be able to complete these two courses?"

Wyant said she replied that the student "has not completed any assignments" and it would be "extremely hard" for the student to do all the work that needed to be done.

Days later, at a May 1 meeting, Wyant said it was indicated that Templeton "would be taking over the instruction of those courses for that student." Wyant recalls that was "very close to the end of the semester."

"I think it's highly interesting that I was the instructor of record, the student didn't want to work with me, so all the sudden the dean becomes the instructor," Wyant said, adding that the class is outside Templeton's area of expertise.

Wyant said that in more than 18 years of teaching she has never had a student appeal a grade, that she receives good student evaluations and that she advises about 150 students.

"That student alone did not want to work with me," Wyant said.

She added, "The other two students did fine in the class. They turned in their assignments. They came to their study group."

But Ormiston found in his investigation that the relationship between Wyant and Perdue was "unproductive." He did not clarify.

At the last meeting of the class, Emily Perdue's mother came again, according to Brooks and Thompson.

Wyant said at that May 5 class meeting, the student, the mother, dean Templeton and two associate deans were present.

"My students walk in expecting class and we don't have class, we have a fiasco," Wyant recalls.

She said Templeton then excused her students and those remaining talked about the work that needed to be done by Perdue.

"It was basically Emily having her meeting," Brooks, one of the other students, said. "I don't know why they were having a meeting during our class period. It should have been separate, I thought."

Thompson, also a student, recalls that the others in the room were "very rude with my teacher, my professor, they were very rude with her, very short with her."

She said that she and Brooks had turned in their work and that Emily "had nothing to turn in."

"She said she could not complete the class because of the four weeks our professor was not able to be reached," Thompson said.

September 25, 2009

Osteopathic medical school to inaugurate 5th president

By The Associated Press

LEWISBURG, W.Va. -- The West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine will inaugurate its fifth president next week.

Richard Rafes will be formally installed at an Oct. 2 ceremony at the university. He succeeds Dr. Olen Jones, who was the school's president from 1987 until January.

Rafes was previously president at East Central University in Ada, Okla. He also worked in the University of North Texas System for 26 years.

WVSU fires business center director amid workforce grant inquiry

By Eric Eyre, Staff writer

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- A West Virginia State University administrator has been fired amid a state workforce training grants' scandal, according to university employees and other officials familiar with the investigation.

Christine K. Gardner, an extension agent who has directed WVSU's Economic Development Center in Charleston since 2005, was charged last week with embezzling part of a \$100,000 grant awarded last year to Comar Inc., a Cross Lanes marketing firm.

Federal prosecutors filed the charge as an "information," signaling that Gardner plans to plead guilty.

"My client has signed a plea agreement and is cooperating with federal authorities," Charleston lawyer Mike Callaghan said Thursday. "She's doing everything she can to rectify the situation."

WVSU officials confirmed Thursday that Gardner, 58, no longer works for the university, but they declined to comment on the specific reasons for her departure.

Gardner's payroll records show she was paid through Sept. 15. Her co-workers and others familiar with her employment said she was terminated late last week.

The state Legislature's Commission on Special Investigations and the Federal Bureau of Investigation started investigating Gardner in April, following a series of Gazette reports about federal grants distributed by former state Workforce West Virginia manager Mary Jane Bowling.

Gardner and Bowling share the same house in Cross Lanes.

Federal prosecutors also have charged Bowling with misappropriating grant money.

State and federal agents raided the Cross Lanes house last May, seizing computers and documents.

In a affidavit filed to justify the search, federal and state authorities alleged Bowling and Gardner took part in an elaborate cover-up to conceal the misuse of a \$100,000 "Governor's set-aside grant" funded by the U.S. Department of Labor last spring.

Gardner received \$5,000 from the grant as a "personal adviser" to Comar, and she deposited the money into a joint bank account she holds with Bowling, according to the FBI affidavit.

Bowling administered and distributed the grant money, and hand-delivered the first grant payment -- which included money for Gardner -- to Comar's office, records show.

The Gazette has previously reported that Gardner received \$5,000 for 10 days of work in July 2008, even though she continued to collect her WVSU salary in full during the same period.

Eight months later, Gardner obtained a letter for Comar CEO Albert Hendershot, who advised WVSU officials that Gardner did no consulting work for Comar during her normal Economic Development Center work hours.

During the investigation, the FBI discovered allegedly falsified invoices submitted by Gardner to Comar for payment, according to the affidavit.

Gardner, who made \$45,968 a year to manage WVSU's business center on Charleston's West Side, was hired in 2005, after interviewing before a committee that included Bowling.

The Economic Development Center, which has received more than \$1.7 million in grants since 2006, provides employment-training programs and serves as an incubator for "micro-businesses."

Bowling has steered more than \$128,000 in federally funded "set-aside" grants to the business center during the past three years.

Gardner previously worked at the state Development Office, where she was assigned to recruit Canadian businesses.