

Uoff investigates prof accused of asking for sexual favors

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Iowa City, Ia.—University of Iowa police searched the e-mail account of a political science professor following allegations that he solicited sexual favors in exchange for better grades.

Seized in the search of Arthur H. Miller's e-mail account were messages between at least 10 U of I students and Miller from April 1 to Aug. 4 regarding grades, meetings or future assistance from Miller, according to the search warrant return filed Aug. 5 in Johnson County.

Miller, 66, of Iowa City is charged with four counts of accepting bribes based on allegations he asked four female students to perform sexual favors, including exposing their breasts and letting him fondle them, in exchange for better grades in his classes.

The U of I's Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, which handles sexual harassment and assault complaints on campus, also is investigating Miller's conduct. This investigation is separate from the criminal probe.

Police seized 47 e-mail messages between Miller and students, staff and professors, according to the search warrant return. The text of the messages is not included in the search warrant return, only brief descriptions of contents.

Several e-mail exchanges between students and Miller referred to grades or offers to negotiate. Other messages between Miller and U of I administrators involved the investigation of complaints against him, the warrant states.

Miller, who has been a U of I professor since 1985 and is paid \$123,500, is on paid leave pending the internal investigation. He has been barred from having contact with students.

When reached by e-mail, Miller declined to comment and suggested calling his attorney, John Beasley, who did not return a call.

The Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity began its investigation of Miller in mid-May after a student filed a complaint against him. Miller immediately was told to have no contact with students while the probe was under way, university officials said.

The university's public safety department began a separate investigation in mid-May, eventually turning its findings over to the Johnson County attorney.

"Our primary focus right now is on ensuring the safety and security of our students and fully investigating these allegations," U of I Associate Provost Susan Johnson said in a release.

According to the criminal complaint, one student said Miller told her he would give her an "A" if she let him fondle her breasts. The student said Miller fondled her and then asked to lick her breasts, police reported. Miller later sent her an e-mail asking to meet again, stating, "A lasting memory of a lovely Monet cannot be formed in 20 seconds," the complaint states.

Miller is accused of asking another student to take off her shirt in exchange for an "A." The student said Miller said that "girls in New Orleans do it all the time just for beads and that her grade was on the line," the complaint states.

Johnson, the associate provost, said she could not comment on the Miller probe. However, she did say that these types of allegations would not require the university to look at all grades a professor has given in his or her tenure to check for fairness.

"If people do come forward from that person's past, our response would be to take up those concerns individually," she said.

Johnson said she expected the report on the case to be ready soon, but she did not give a timeline.

Contesting grades is becoming increasingly common in higher education, said Ann Franke, a Washington, D.C., attorney and former general counsel for the American Association of University Professors. Students and parents have no reservations about asking for higher grades, especially if a student is seeking admission to a prestigious graduate school, she said.

"It's very common for students to go to a professor and say, 'My grade was too low,'" Franke said.

A public "sex-for-grades" scandal is much more unusual, she said. "Many of those are resolved very quietly," Franke said.

Miller has spent the bulk of his career at two universities: the U of I and University of Michigan, where he was an associate professor from 1976 to 1984.