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ARIZONA DAILY WILDCAT

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The University of Arizona, Tucson

DO NOT LOOK DIRECTLY AT THE SUN



Byron Skinner of the International Dark Skies Association explains to chemical engineering senior Jake Messing what he sees through a solar telescope yesterday on the UA Mall. The telescope, which is equipped with an H alpha filter, allowed students to view sunspots and prominences on the sun.

Local group wants to darken skies

By J. Ferguson
ARIZONA DAILY WILDCAT

Although bright lights illuminating Tucson streets and evening sporting events are helpful for students and residents alike, the light is also a curse for astronomers in Southern Arizona.

The International Dark-Sky Association came to the UA Mall yesterday to talk about the growing problem of light pollution to UA students for UA Earth Day.

John Polacheck, the vice president for the Southern Arizona chapter of the Dark-Sky Association, said light pollution affects the ability for astronomers to gaze at the stars with

optical telescopes.

Too much outdoor lighting can compete with the visible spectrum of the night sky, effectively blinding optical telescopes from detecting faint stars and other cosmic objects, such as comets and asteroids, Polacheck said.

Polacheck said Pima County has an aggressive light pollution ordinance, which strictly regulates lighting on any private building to minimize light pollution. The regulation also concerns wattage and direction of the light, most importantly, that it's angled down or toward the event. But, Polacheck said outdoor lightning still poses a problem for Tucson astronomers.

"There is an enormous amount of wasted light," Polacheck said.

Polacheck said light trespass, which is when outdoor light leaves your property and shines somewhere else, is one of the largest problems for amateur astronomers. He estimated local sports parks contribute almost 25 percent of all light pollution in Tucson with the use of unfocused light fixtures.

Polacheck compared images from two local sports parks, one with focused lighting and another without focused lighting. With focused lighting, the park offers good lighting for those in the park but does not allow

See EARTH DAY/12

Officials mum on possible rape suspects

By Jennifer Amsler and Natasha Bhuyan
ARIZONA DAILY WILDCAT

The investigation of a reported rape at a fraternity house two weeks ago could continue for months, but police and university officials would not confirm or deny rumors that the suspects are university public figures.

A UA student contacted police in the early hours of April 13 and said a man sexually assaulted her at the Sigma Pi fraternity house, 1525 E. Drachman St., said Sgt. Eugene Mejia, University of Arizona Police Department spokesman.

Although rumors have been floating among students that the suspect or suspects are high-profile members of the campus community, administrators said they could not comment on the issue because of privacy laws and the police investigation.

A caller who identified himself as "John" said on a KNST 790 AM talk show Monday he was at the Sigma Pi fraternity when the student reported she was raped, said John Basarab, a producer for the station.

"John" suggested the possibility that UAPD is covering up a crime and taking the side of the well-known campus men, Basarab said.

Mejia said because the investigation is still pending, police cannot comment on who the suspect or suspects are. The reason the investigation is taking a long time is not because they are attempting a cover-up, but a person who is accused of rape deserves a fair investigation, Mejia said.

"Our main function is to fully investigate and ensure justice is served," Mejia said, acknowledging how he has also heard about the rumors circulating around campus.

University officials said they know about the reported rape but were careful to divulge information.

"Right now the rumors are just that: rumors," said Paul Allvin, UA spokesman.

Sandra Taylor, vice president of campus life, said the university will not open an investigation on the person or people accused of sexual assault until police complete their investigation, and she would not comment on who the suspect or suspects are.

See RAPE/12

Dept. of Multicultural Programs and services to hire directors

By Danielle Rideau
ARIZONA DAILY WILDCAT

The Department of Multicultural Programs and Services will look for new directors in an effort to bring multicultural student retention and success up to the same figure as the rest of the university.

Josephine T. Gin, director of Asian Pacific American Student Association, and Alex M. Wright, director of African American Student Affairs, confirmed that their contracts would not be renewed for the 2005-2006 academic year ending June 30.

In an e-mail sent April 12 to the Asian Pacific American Cultural Resource Center mailing list, Gin said, "I wanted to let you know that my contract for 2005-2006 has not been renewed, so as of June 30, I will no longer be the director of APASA."

Wright had no comment on the issue, but did confirm that his contract has not been renewed.

Lynette Cook-Francis, assistant vice president for multicultural affairs and student success, would not confirm the non-renewal of contracts, but did say they would be looking for new directors who "have experience in success and demonstrate a high rate of success in the programs they have worked in."

Student retention is a top priority for DMPS, Cook-Francis said, and they strive to achieve the same retention rate as the rest of the UA.

"Our goals are to participate along with the rest of the university with retention and success for students of color," Cook-Francis said.

These goals are also important to the entire university, Cook-Francis said, and DMPS would like to see equal figures for each specific group.

“Students are more likely to graduate if they come back after their first year.”

— Lynette Cook-Francis
assistant vice president for multicultural affairs and student success

"The first-year retention goal for the university is 85 percent, and we want the same for each group," Cook-Francis said. "All students should be at 85 percent."

Currently the average first-year retention rate for all students in DMPS is 76.6 percent Cook-Francis said.

When an employee's contract is not renewed it is important to understand that they are not being fired, but rather their function is not needed in current form, said Paul Allvin, UA spokesman.

While the retention rate is the highest it has ever been at just under 80 percent, Cook-Francis said DMPS is still looking for new directors who will be "implementing several aggressive strategies" to keep the numbers high.

The ultimate strategy to reach out to incoming students is to connect them with resources, develop and implement programs, track progress and assess results, Cook-Francis said.

Cook-Francis said some programs in planning include an "early alert system for faculty to alert advisers of a student's progress with in the first six weeks, and programs that help students get connected and teach skills to be successful."

When hiring directors, a focus on first-year student retention is essential, Cook-Francis said, because "freshman year is critical."

"Students are more likely to graduate if they come back after their first year," Cook-Francis said. "The numbers are even higher after the second year."