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State

ASU denies classes restricted

Wednesday, October 5, 2005 7:52 PM PDT

PHOENIX (AP) - Arizona State University officials say two English classes advertised by a professor as "restricted to Native Americans only" never in fact used race as a qualification for class admission.

Responding to a letter from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, or FIRE, ASU Provost Milt Glick said that information on a flier and on a professor's university-sanctioned Web site erred in suggesting that the classes only accepted students of American Indian decent.

"The Web site ... has been changed to reflect the long-standing practice of admitting any student who seeks admittance into these courses," Glick wrote in response to a letter from the civil liberties group calling for ASU to remove the restriction.

Glick said the Tempe-based university became aware of the site and the flier after receiving a Sept. 23 letter from FIRE. He said the "Native Americans only" disclaimer was removed from Nelson's Web site by Sept. 26.

"We have 2000 faculty members," Glick said. "We don't review every single of their Web sites unless there is a complaint."

Greg Lukianoff, director of legal and public advocacy for FIRE, said he was pleased to see the university remove the perceived exclusion, even if it did take some prompting.

"Sometimes it's disappointing that it takes an aggressive campaign to make the university do the right thing," Lukianoff said, "but if they've rectified the situation now, then we're happy."

According to a copy posted on FIRE's Web site, the flier read: "Native American students who need to take first year composition are invited to enroll in special Native American sections of ENG 101 and 102."

It said the classes were standard first-year composition classes with an "added emphasis" on, among other things, "a supportive, encouraging, and non-threatening

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atmosphere," and a "feather circle approach to writing and sharing."

An explicit suggestion that the courses were somehow restricted by ethnicity was posted on the faculty Web site of ASU professor G. Lynn Nelson, who teaches the courses.

Glick said it appeared that Nelson, who has taught at ASU since 1973, acted on his own in posting the restriction. He said Nelson would face no disciplinary action for the postings.

Nelson did not return a call Wednesday from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Lukianoff said it was the second time in four years that the group wrote a letter to ASU protesting classes that appeared to be offered only to Native Americans.

In 2002, FIRE objected to a Navajo history course listing that said "class enrollment is limited to Native American students."

In that case, Lukianoff said ASU quickly dropped the racial restriction and changed the course catalog.

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Last updated: Thursday, October 06, 2005