

Unionizing higher education brings on battle

by David Warsh
Chicago Tribune
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The drive to unionize higher education is coming to a boil. The United Auto Workers last week called a day-long strike at eight campuses in California despite ongoing contract negotiations. And on Tuesday, April 25, an election at New York University was to determine whether the UAW will represent graduate assistants there.

It will be the first-ever union election at a private university — and perhaps the starting gun for many more organizing attempts.

Union representation of graduate students has become common enough at public universities in the U.S. It exists in at least ten state systems, including California, New York, and Massachusetts — but state statutes considerably limit the scope of collective bargaining.

The NYU election is the first to proceed under federal law, which could insert the UAW as a third party into every potential issue of academic judgement that exists between students and their professors — from grades to assignments to recommendations.

Whatever happens next, the NYU episode will be a big testing point for the U.S. system of higher education.

The basic facts are simple. NYU is a big, prosperous second- or third-tier research university, organized into 13 different schools. Of NYU's 35,000 students, some 16,000 are undergraduates, another 16,000 are seeking masters and professional degrees, and roughly 3,000 are Ph.D. candidates.

Around 1,600 graduate students serve as graduate assistants, help-

ing faculty members teach, grade papers, and perform research. They receive cash (up to \$20,000 a year), free tuition (worth \$20,000), and a discount at the university book store. If they are headed for a Ph.D (about half of them), they typically spend two

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years taking courses, then must pass a qualifying exam and spend three or more years to write a dissertation.

The nub of the matter is this: are they students or employees?

The university says assistantships are a vital part of students' training, for teaching and doing research are what the doctorate is about (though of course increasing numbers of Ph.D's go into industry or government work.) Thus a research assistant becomes a better researcher by doing research for her or his professor; a teaching assistant learns to teach

by teaching.

The students, at least those who organized the affiliation campaign, see it differently. They view themselves as cogs in a system, a captive pool of cheap labor, easily exploited and neglected. They want smaller workloads, bigger stipends, paid health care, and subsidized housing.

The UAW agrees — and has quickly sought to link the graduate student election to attempts to force NYU to use union labor in the construction of a new dorm, as well as to negotiate a new contract for the university's clerical workers. Lisa Jessup, the UAW organizer for student elections, told a rally the other day, "They need to understand the word 'rat.' They're not a 'private university in the public service.' They're a rat corporation in the service of scabs."

The regional director of the National Labor Relations Board sided with the students who petitioned for an election. Reversing 25 years of precedent, Daniel Silverman ruled earlier this month that NYU students in fact were employees and therefore entitled to vote on whether to join the Autoworkers. He cited an NLRB decision last year that permitted interns and residents at the Boston Medical Center to organize.

NYU quickly appealed the case. For one thing, the university argued, the precedent was ill-applied. Boston Medical house staff spend 80 percent of their time caring for patients and just 20 percent in lectures, conferences, and classes, whereas NYU assistants spend just 15 percent of their time on their assistantships and 85 percent on their own work.

There is little doubt that gradu-

ate students have been ill-treated in recent years. The Yale "grade strike" in 1995 — when undergraduates' grades were withheld — established that. The group at Yale never sought an election, and since then a cornucopia of benefits has been made available to all graduate students, not just paid assistants.

Meanwhile, unionization has proceeded steadily in the public universities, where state laws ordinarily stop short of granting academic unions the same sweeping powers to bargain they would enjoy under federal law. When UAW representation was won last year in California after 16 years of trying, some 10,000 graduate assistants on eight campuses were added to the union rolls. That brought union membership to 30,000 of the estimated 100,000 graduate assistants nationwide.

It is possible to imagine all sorts of unforeseen consequences if the unionization of private universities proceeds — or if it doesn't. For instance, students suddenly classified as employees could find their tuition benefits subject to taxation, which is not the case so long as it is described as financial aid. Then again, universities could dispense with graduate assistants altogether, preferring to hire out-of-work graduate students and post-docs as "adjunct faculty" instead, thereby dramatically restructuring the Ph.D.

There are larger ramifications. Eight years of labor-friendly appointments by the Clinton administration have made a difference in the way labor laws are administered. There is the prospect of more change if Al Gore is elected president.

Missouri looking for vandals of prominent campus sculpture

by Alexandria Ravenelle
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COLUMBIA, Mo. (TMS) — More than a week after the historic University of Missouri in Columbia columns were vandalized with brown paint, the University is still trying to repair the damage.

Each of the six columns were vandalized with an exclamation point or a letter to spell out the word "Bono!" preceded by an upside-down exclamation point.

The school is currently working with a conservator who specializes in sculpture and masonry restoration. When the graffiti was first discovered, the university's campus facilities department used graffiti remover with limited success; the paint is fainter, but still visible.

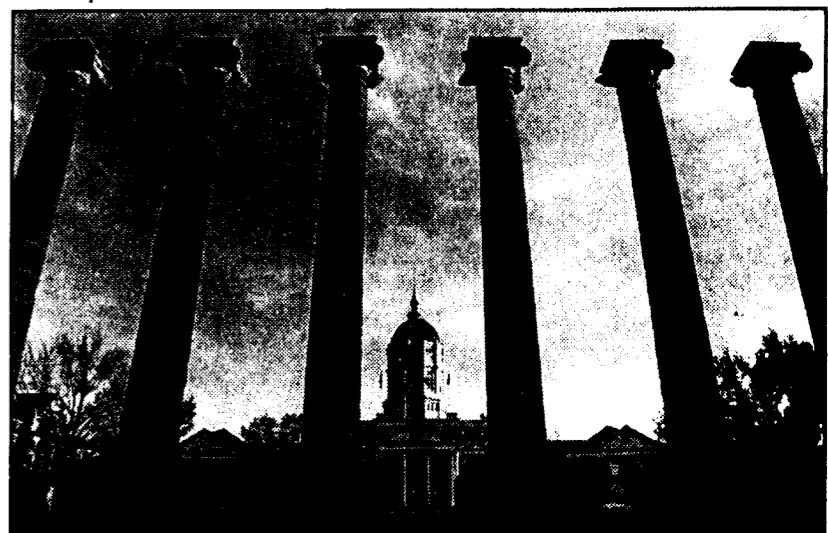
The plan is for the conservator to

either repair the columns or experiment and give a solution according to Phil Shocklee, associate director of campus facilities. "I'm sure we'll be able to get it all out, but I'm sure it'll be a tedious process," Shocklee said.

The biggest challenge is to repair the porous limestone columns without leaving any evidence of the damage through a bleached or lightened face of the stone. "We don't want the image of a [bleached] white 'Bono!'" Shocklee said.

The columns are remnants of the old Academic Building — the first building of the University — which burned in 1892. They now stand alone in the center of the quad and are believed to be the most photographed item in the state of Missouri with the exception of the Arch in St. Louis.

Campus Police have yet to catch the vandal and are not expected to be successful.



TMS PHOTO

University of Missouri officials are looking for the person or people who spray-painted the letters "BONO!" on a series of historic and prominent columns on campus.

Rapist's conviction raises questions about campus safety laws

by Cornelia Grumman
Chicago Tribune
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LINCOLN, Neb. — Like leaving a sinister calling card, the man would rape his victims the same distinctive way. He hit tiny colleges, mostly in the Midwest. He wore a dark ski mask. He looked for young women sitting alone in music rooms or computer labs. He attacked from behind. When finished, he told his victims to pray for him. Sometimes he took their pants.

If not for the struggling screams of one victim, luck, and maybe even a fluke, the man a Nebraska jury convicted last week of one of those assaults, 38-year-old traveling comedian Vinson Champ, might still be free.

Now, while authorities investigating similar attacks decide how to proceed with cases in their own jurisdictions, Champ's conviction raises questions about whether recent campus safety laws go far enough in preventing these sorts of serial rampages.

While citing the difficulty of tracking any serial criminal across a broad geographical area, some authorities speculate that schools' traditional reluctance to publicly disclose or share details about campus crimes might have inadvertently prolonged the spree of assaults in 1996 and 1997.

"I wonder whether each of these individual departments sort of looked at those problems as just being germane to their specific campus and didn't make the next connection that perhaps there might be a person who might be committing these crimes in a broader geographical area," said John King, president of the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators.

Already colleges and universities have come under fire for lax compliance with laws requiring greater reporting about campus crimes. The Campus Security Act of 1990 and its 1998 amendments require all colleges and universities to report three years' worth of serious crimes and to keep a daily log book for public inspection. But conformity with that law, known as the Jeanne Clery Act in honor of a 19-year-old student who was raped and murdered in her Lehigh University dorm room in 1986, has been so negligible, particularly among smaller schools,

that Congress this summer plans to start enforcing it for the first time by withholding significant amounts of student aid to violators.

"College is big business today, and they are afraid of losing funding in alumni giving or enrollments," said Connie Clery, who, with her husband, Howard, was instrumental in persuading Congress to pass the bill in the wake of their daughter's death.

"So this is why there has been such a tremendous cover-up situation; they're afraid to have the public know there is so much crime."

Beginning July 1, schools that do not report serious crimes to the federal Department of Education, and who do not open their daily incident books to the public within 48 hours of an incident, will face penalties of \$25,000 per violation.

While students on campuses where the masked rapist preyed generally said they were quietly informed about the attack shortly after the fact, news of the incident rarely traveled far beyond campus.

"If you've got that free flow of information, the agencies can collaborate," said Daniel Carter, vice president of Security on Campus Inc., the nonprofit campus security watchdog group founded by the Clerys. "That's the type of thing that when they keep it quiet, the public often isn't the only people left in the dark. Other agencies also are left in the dark."

That was true in other campus attacks that since have been linked either by DNA evidence or by characteristics of the attack. At Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., for example, news of an attempted assault Feb. 9, 1997, merited a brief mention in one Galesburg weekly, though long after the event.

"They [Knox officials] consider themselves sort of an island and private," said Norm Winick, editor of the *Zephyr* independent weekly in Galesburg. "When anything negative happens they like to leave it as unreported as possible."

Sgt. David Clague of the Galesburg Police Dept. said no notice was put out about the attack because "that's just usually our policy."

Another nearly identical attack occurred the next day in a college music room in Kenosha, Wis. A week later,

Finding love, friendship on the World Wide Web

by Asta Ytre
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CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (TMS) — Michelle Scuba, a junior business major at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, and her boyfriend Huang, who lives outside San Francisco, have been together for almost a year.

They live far away from each other, but talk on the phone every day and meet once a month. They are planning to get married soon and talk about having kids one day.

All of this having flowed from a chance meeting not at school, in a bar, or at a religious service — but in a chat room.

More and more people have discovered, and now prefer, meeting new friends and significant others without leaving the safety of their homes, where they can simply log on to the Internet.

Scuba said she preferred meeting people online first because the pool to choose from was more diverse and from a larger area.

"When you go out and meet people, you exclude because of looks, and you could exclude the right person," she said. "I have met people from all over the world online."

Scuba also maintains that couples who meet online get a better start because the foundation of their relationship is based on strong communication.

"They find out right from the start

that all they have is communication, and if they can hold on to that, it's good," she said.

There are chat rooms and dating services for all kinds of interests and

complete detailed surveys about their likes and dislikes and to "Go meet somebody!" Dominguez followed that command and met her husband of six years there. The site ensures the pri-

can prescreen the people," she said. "Ummmm, not exactly, said Scuba, who has learned never to let down her guard when chatting online with people she doesn't know very well."

"After talking to someone intimately, you feel you know them, but you have to be careful," she said. "They could be telling the truth or they could be lying."

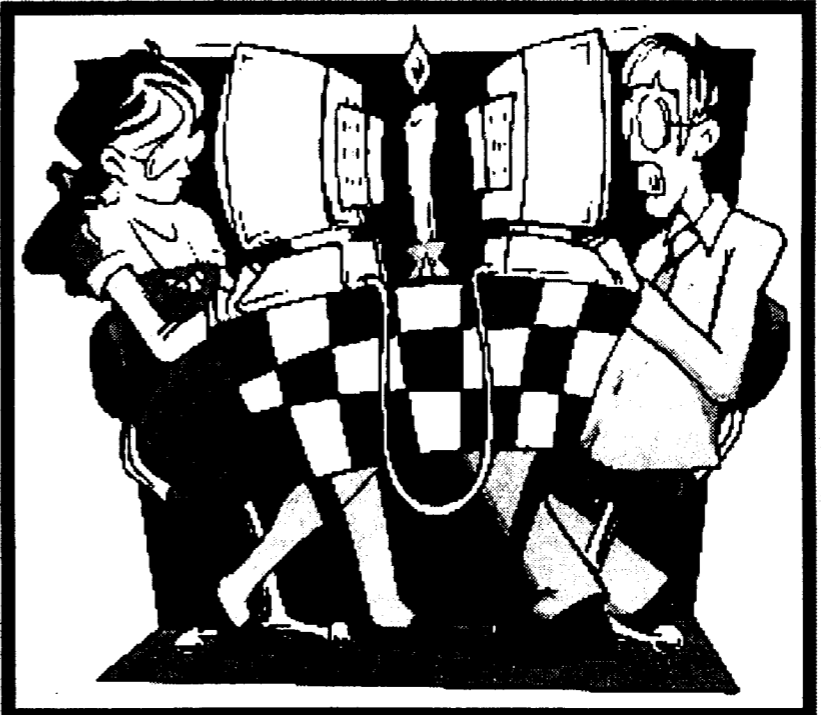
Scuba said she learned that the hard way when she moved with her family to Las Vegas last year. She met a man from the area online and invited him to go out for dinner or coffee. When he arrived at her apartment, Scuba said he sexually assaulted her.

Nowadays, Scuba said she provides online friends with minimal personal information while checking out their stories for consistency. She also thinks people should consider safety when meeting someone through the Internet or in person.

"When meeting someone, no matter how nice they sound or how long you've been talking, you should be careful," she said. "Don't give your name, phone number, or address, and never meet them alone."

That doesn't mean the relationship can't get more personal with time. Meredith Perry, a first-year student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, said she met one of her best friends through an AOL newsletter designed for people with shared movie interests.

"It seems like a weird way of meeting people, but I am glad we did," she said.



TMS ARTWORK

goals. Users can talk about their favorite pets, discuss current global situations, or meet a virtual tennis partner or soul mate. Services such as *matchmaker.com* and *gotdates.com* are becoming more popular and more accepted among students as well as other teenagers and adults.

Jodie Dominguez of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., runs the *matchmaker.com* site, which encourages users to com-

munity of members by keeping them anonymous.

Keeping user names a secret is designed to promote safety, which is a concern for many using the Internet to find promising partners. Dominguez insists that with the additional security, Internet dating isn't any more dangerous than trolling for Mr. or Mrs. Right in a bar.

"At least with the matchmaker, you

two more women reported separate campus assaults, one in Rock Island, Ill., and the other in nearby Davenport, Iowa. But it wasn't until April that authorities in Galesburg started connecting the Knox attack with those on other Midwestern campuses.

And Davenport authorities learned that a similar rape had occurred in Omaha only because two professors from the respective colleges who were friends happened to discuss the issue one day. Only a few of the investigating agencies reported details of the crimes to a national database maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"It's much easier for police departments in the same state to communicate than those across the nation," said Ross Rice, an FBI spokesman based in Chicago.

The schools where Champ allegedly found his victims were in small towns

within driving distance of his college and club performances. From January 1996 until his eventual arrest in May 1997, the former *Star Search* contestant known for his Michael Jackson impression gave 80 performances in 17 states, according to his former Chicago-based agent.

Union College in Lincoln, which was the focus of trial testimony over the last week in a Lancaster County courtroom, still does not open its daily log books to the public, according to Dean of Students Joe Parmele.

"I wasn't aware we had to keep daily incident reports," he said.

At the University of Nebraska at Omaha, it was the victim, Heidi Hess, who first contacted the student newspaper to tell her story after she was assaulted in a third-floor computer room March 5, 1997, her mother said.

Champ since has entered a plea of no contest to first-degree sexual assault

charges stemming from that attack.

Champ was first suspected after an incident three years ago in California. After a student at Pasadena City College struggled and ran screaming from an attempted sexual assault as she was practicing piano, a witness followed the masked suspect and took down his license plate number. Campus investigators traced the plate to Champ's home in nearby Hollywood, where they found clothes described by the victim and a date book containing detailed records of the comedian's performance schedule, according to Pasadena City College Police Chief Phil Mullendore.

Mullendore then vaguely recalled recent postings to an Internet discussion group for campus police having to do with a string of rapes in the Midwest. "Not being in the Midwest, I just kind of ignored it," he said. But some of the elements of the crime sounded similar, so Mullendore sent out a note

to group members. He also sent a description of the crime to a national database maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Within 24 hours, he received a flood of responses.

Champ appeared in court this week smartly dressed in double-breasted suits and pressed white shirts. Described as professional and articulate, Champ would hardly stick out as an obvious suspect by appearance alone. Hunting for music rooms or computer labs on college campuses, he could pass easily as a graduate student or an instructor.

"He was very neat and clean, and had absolutely no accent," Mullendore said. "He bought skin whiteners that he could use to change the color of his hands, so with no discernible accent and the ability to change his skin color, a lot of his victims thought he was white or Hispanic."