

A CRITICAL HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Adapted from
"Let's Talk About the History of Campus Police in Oregon"
by
Unauthorized UO History

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EARLY HISTORY

- Prior to the creation of the UOPD, the University of Oregon had contracted the Eugene Police Department to conduct law enforcement activity on campus, in addition to utilizing the Department of Public Safety (DPS) for security.
- 2003: After a change in the municipal code, the public safety officers from the DPS were given the authority to give citations for certain offenses.
- 2009: A trend of large universities across the US creating their own police departments inspires UO leadership to begin lobbying for change in Oregon state law to allow for a campus police force.
- 2011: Senate Bill 405, legislation allowing for police forces on public university campuses is passed in the Oregon Legislature with bipartisan support and signed by then-Gov. John Kitzhaber, a Democrat.

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A MERE TWO YEARS AFTER SENATE BILL 405 WAS ENACTED, ANOTHER PIECE OF NEW LEGISLATION THAT UO LOBBIED HEAVILY FOR, SENATE BILL 270, WAS PASSED IN 2013.

The legislation ended the Oregon University System, replacing it with a Board of Trustees at each public university and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, which has minimal oversight over the universities. This allows the universities to govern themselves with less state intervention. The change was a major step towards privatizing the public universities, an idea supported by mega-donor and Nike founder Phil Knight. Under the new structure, the Trustees are appointed by the Governor (at the recommendation of the President and Trustees) and approved by the Senate. The appointment process is conducted with little public attention and almost no room for the public to substantively have a say in who is picked.

AS A RESULT, THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, (AND BY EXTENSION THE UOPD SINCE THE BOARD DIRECTLY OVERSEES THE DEPARTMENT) ARE COMPLETELY UNACCOUNTABLE TO THE ACTUAL STUDENT, FACULTY, STAFF, AND WIDER CAMPUS COMMUNITY.

RECENT HISTORY

- 2012: Department of Public Safety officially becomes the University of Oregon Police Department
- 2012: UOPD officer and UO Law School graduate James Cleavenger is fired.
- 2013: Cleavenger sues UOPD for wrongful termination.
- 2013: UOPD becomes armed.
- 2014: A "Bowl of Dicks" list made by UOPD is publically released as part of Cleavenger's lawsuit. The list included many people that officers disapproved of and thought should "eat a bowl of dicks". It included a disproportionate number of Black and LGBTQ+ people, the then-ASUO president who opposed officers being armed, and multiple local officials among others.

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THE HISTORY OF THE UOPD SHOWS A CONTINUED LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONCERN FOR SAFETY; A PATTERN OF CORRUPTION, MISMANAGEMENT, DISCRIMINATION, AND HARASSMENT; AND A DISDAIN FOR THOSE WHO DARE TO DISSENT AGAINST THEM AND THEIR ACTIONS. THE UOPD DOES NOT SERVE OUR FUNDAMENTAL INTERESTS AND MUST BE DEFUNDED, DISARMED, AND DISMANTLED.

JAMES CLEAVENGER'S LAWSUIT ALSO REVEALED THAT HE WAS FIRED FOR GIVING A SPEECH WHILE SERVING AS AN ASUO GRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE IN 2008 IN OPPOSITION TO DPS/ UOPD OFFICERS HAVING TASERS. ADDITIONALLY, THE LAWSUIT ALLEGED THAT CLEAVENGER'S SUPERIOR, LT. BRANDON LEBRECHT, SAID THAT HE BELIEVED PRESIDENT OBAMA WAS NOT BORN IN THE UNITED STATES AND IS "SECRETLY MUSLIM."

RECENT HISTORY CONTINUED

- 2014: Michael Gannon, an unhoused individual, sues UO for violating his rights and discriminating against the unhoused population by having UOPD target them by charging them with trespassing for being on UO property.
- 2016: UO forces UOPD Chief Carolyn McDermed to resign and pays out the remainder of her contract shortly before the lawsuit with Cleavenger is settled.
- 2016: UO settles lawsuit with James Cleavenger for over \$1 million.
- 2017: UOPD officers stoped student labor activists from handing out free pizza to dining hall workers and encouraging them to sign a petition.

- 2018: A KWVA DJ is held at gunpoint by UOPD officers outside of the EMU after being confused for a suspect they were searching for.
- 2018: Eliborio Rodriguez files a tort claim against UOPD following an arrest for a traffic violation that he was later acquitted for.
- 2019: Legislation introduced in the Oregon Legislature to disarm campus police officers.
- 2019: UOPD audit shows misclassification of tasers, missing records for firearms.
- 2019: Troy Phillips, a UOPD officer, is fired for violating use of force policy, falsifying reports, and withholding bodycam footage after Rodriguez's tort claim is filed.
- 2019: Eliborio Rodriguez is shot and killed by an EPD officer while unarmed.
- 2020: Portland State University moves to disarm their campus police force after a 7 year campaign by campus activists and in the wake of weeks of sustained Black Lives Matter protests in the city of Portland and nationwide.