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Racial Misunderstanding Persists at the UR

By Behshad Dowlatshahi

Anyone who does not believe a racial problem exists at the U.R. "is absolutely wrong," said Zachary Harris, President of the Black Students Union.

"One of the most important things we must all realize is that racism permeates every aspect of society, including the U.R. We have to face that fact," he said.

The consciousness of white students of the race problem needs to be raised, Harris said.

The U.R. community must realize that problems causing one "part of it to be ill at ease belong to the whole community," said Dr. Frederick Jefferson, director of Special Student Services. Students must "change their lenses" to look at the problem with a wider scope and ask what role they play in the problem, he said.

Other students and administrators expressed similar concerns.

"The primary problem seems to lie with student insensitivity," said Provost Richard O'Brien. "It (racism) should be everybody's worry. A healthy mixed society is something we should all want."

O'Brien said that such a "healthy society" does not yet exist. The needed level of mixing, or "the point where two communities meaningfully meet and interact in a positive way does not exist at the UR," said Marion Walker, director of minority students affairs office.

Open forums and discussion groups would provide the opportunity for interchange of ideas between black and white students, he said.

It is important that all groups talk to each other and that the conversa-

tion is "open and honest," said Dr. Bernard Gifford, Vice President for student affairs

In efforts to bring racial problems at the UR to light, Gifford commissioned a race-relations survey last April, which was designed to "hold a mirror up to the UR community," he said.

The survey can only serve, however, to identify the problems, Gifford said. "There is discomfort on both sides of the street and discomfort is a problem which cannot be solved by an institution," he said.

The President cannot change the misperceptions on the part of minority and majority students and transform the community, he said.

To combat the problem, Jefferson said, "we should begin from the time of recruitment on," to use "preventive, not reactive or band-aid like" measures.

Workshops on race-relations and training programs for Resident Advisors, Wilson Commons Managers and Health Advocates can be effective, he said because those people have a great deal of influence and

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Provost Richard O'Brien



Zachary Harris



Kennedy Brayboy



Dr. Bernard Gifford