



The GW Hatchet

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IN THE AFTERMATH OF CONTROVERSY



The GW softball team huddles during practice Tuesday morning. The team is playing again after their season was cancelled last year amid accusations of misconduct by former coach Shaunté Fremin.

Softball team eyes future

First-year GW softball coach Jo Anne Ferguson spent Tuesday morning firing batting practice pitches to her team on a sun-soaked field at Mount Vernon. Players enthusiastically encouraged each other's swings, and as line drives dinged off the aluminum bats, it appeared as if the three-year-old program was back to normal.

story by **Alan Siegel**
photos by **Jeff Baum**

suspended the softball season in early March and canceled it March 22.

The University brought in an outside investigator to look into the allegations but did not make the report public. The NCAA did not penalize the program, ensuring that last season would not count against the four years players are eligible to compete.

Now, despite the program's history, players, coaches and administrators are optimistic that the team is headed in a positive direction. On Sept. 13, the team began practicing for the first time since reporting their problems with Fremin. And last weekend, the Colonials took the field for the first time under Ferguson, winning both of their games in a

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First-year coach Jo Anne Ferguson discusses a new defensive scheme with freshman Caroline Howe at practice Tuesday.

Staff gives to Democrats

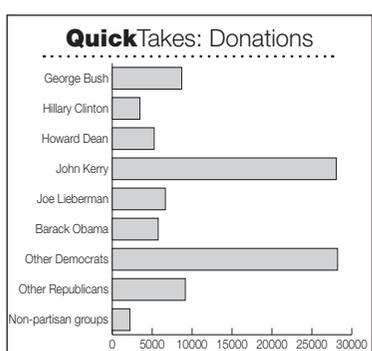
Eighty percent of GW employees' donations go to Dems

by **Ryan Holeywell**
Metro Editor

Recent polls indicate that Americans are almost evenly divided on the 2004 presidential election, but GW's staff is leaning heavily in one direction. University employees have donated three times more money to Sen. John Kerry than to President Bush, according to public donations records.

Staff members contributed more than \$97,000 to political causes during 2004 election cycle. Nine percent of that money went to Bush, while 29 percent went to Kerry. When other political candidates and organiza-

tions are factored in, GW employees gave Democrats about \$77,000 - more than four times as much as



the Republican total. The statistics come from Federal Election Commission data compiled by the Center for Responsive Politics. Only donations of \$200 or more were

considered. The disparity between the politics of the national population and the overwhelming support for Kerry among GW staff members raises questions for some people.

"I think it illustrates the problem. They're free to donate to whomever they want, but there's very few conservative professors in academia," said Sarah Dogan, national director of Students for Academic Freedom, a group that seeks to keep partisan politics out of the classroom. "Conservatives really aren't welcomed in academia ... (universities) actively discriminate against conservative applicants."

She added, "We've done surveys on political affiliations of faculty at top schools ... at most of the Ivy League schools its 95 percent

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Report on deaths: Center underfunded

by **Robert Lintott**
Hatchet Staff Writer

The University Counseling Center does not have enough resources to address students' mental health needs, according to an investigation of GW's response to student deaths.

The finding was one of many included in a report compiled by a 21-member commission charged with analyzing the University's response to student deaths. Six GW students have died since December 2003, three by suicide.

Among other recommendations, the report calls for an increase in counseling center funds that would partly be used to hire additional staff.

University officials said they hope the changes will allow for more hours of counseling each week and a better ability to respond to student crises.

"I have no doubt we will enhance the staff at the counseling center," said Dean of Students Linda Donnels, who organized the commission following five student deaths in the last academic year. According to the report, the counseling center has already increased the amount of hours its psychiatrist is available each week, from nine to 20.

"What I wanted to do with the commission is to look at what we did, how we did, and do things better," Donnels added.

In interviewing other colleges, the report found that GW's counseling center has one counselor for every 2,614 students, while similarly sized New York University has one counselor for every 1,520 students.

The 55-page report, which can be viewed in its entirety on the Web at www.gwhatchet.com, also

cites slow response time by counselors as a main problem facing the University.

"(It took a) long time for counselors to arrive on site, and staff wished they knew more about what to do in the interim," the report said. "Counselors were great once they got there."

The final conclusions of the commission, which includes a recommended procedure for responding to student deaths, call for a crisis response coordinator to direct the actions of GW officials. During this period, the University would provide counseling to students or groups who are grieving or "at risk" of committing suicide.

Donnels, who said she already acts as a crisis response coordinator, did not know how much the recommended changes would cost, but added that they will be implemented soon.

"It's a high priority. I think that, not knowing my price tag, (many changes will occur) within the year," she said.

In addition to expanding counseling center staff and hours, increased training of faculty and staff members is needed, the report stated. "Community Facilitators" said they got no training on suicide assessment or referrals," the report said, adding that faculty members were not contacted about any of the deaths until three days after they occurred.

The report recommended that staff members who have direct contact with students every week, should undergo "gatekeeper" training to spot students who are at a high risk for suicides. Two of last year's five deaths were confirmed suicides; earlier this month,

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NATIVEPRIDE



Sam Sherraden/photo assistant

Los Nativos de la Isla Taquile, a dance group from Peru, performs on the Mall Monday as part of the National Museum of the American Indian opening. See story, page 7.

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