

University puts up \$80,000 for video on campus discrimination

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It was the kind of publicity no university wants. In the spring of 2007, an April Fool's edition of the University of Western Ontario's student newspaper featured a front-page spoof depicting the rape of a women's-rights activist by the local police chief.

The ill-conceived prank in the Gazette created an uproar on and off the London campus, and made national headlines. As parents began to have second thoughts about sending their sons and daughters to the school, the administration expressed shock and vowed to take action.

One of those actions was a decision by various groups within the administration to foot the bill for an \$80,000 video that documents campus discrimination.

The hour-long *Voices of Diversity*, released yesterday, was produced by the university's Caucus on Women's Issues, the same group that made waves two decades ago with another documentary, *Chilly Climate*, that looked at the boy's club atmosphere on campus.

This time, the group uses the same director to look not only at women's issues but at the sometimes less-than-welcoming experiences of a long list of groups that includes part-time faculty and staff as well as foreign students, visible minorities and disabled people.

Bonnie MacLachlan, the past president of the caucus and a long-time faculty member in the classics department, said her group had been trying with no luck to raise funds for such a project long before the controversial article hit the street. The outrage it created was enough to get the money flowing from the university. "We really didn't get the support for it until the Gazette," she said.

University president Paul Davenport, who makes a cameo appearance in the video, said his administration has enacted a range of measures to combat the kinds of attitudes expressed in the April Fool's prank. "The insensitivity and the vulgarity of that issue did shock me," he said. "I had thought we had made progress in that area."

Cara Eng, a student council vice-president who appears in the video, said many of her friends were targeted in the spoof issue. She said the university council, which funds the newspaper, has taken steps to guide the paper and to oversee material, including posters and ads that are distributed at the student centre. "We just try to monitor as much as we can."

Asked whether such policing is a sign that attitudes have not changed, she responded: "There is the opportunity for education."