



Oklahoma State University

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Faculty resign in wake of investigation

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An investigation by the General Counsel's Office into the illegal use of software by Oklahoma State employees has been concluded, resulting in the resignation of two employees.

An investigation launched on May 7 and concluded on June 18, stated two information technology employees were involved, both used poor judgment and their actions were inconsistent with OSU policy.

The findings of the review were:

1. An OSU employee did bring several software applications developed at Texas Tech to OSU, and three of these software applications have been utilized by OSU's Division of Information Technology.
2. Two OSU employees more likely than not did gain access to one or more TTU-IT computer servers shortly after they started working at OSU, using TTU identifiers and passwords assigned to them while employees at TTU.
3. This office has uncovered no information indicating that an OSU executive official was actually aware of the activities that had been engaged in by other OSU employees at issue.

In an interview with The Daily O'Collegian on June 11, Mark Weiser, information technology professor and head of OSU's Center for Technology, named the two employees.

"Mike Hewitt is the one who pushed the buttons to steal the software," Weiser said. "Brandon Labonte is the one who brought the software to campus and told Mike Hewitt to push the buttons."

Weiser said he was the one that notified officials at TTU after an employee brought him the disk of software. He also explained the process Hewitt and Labonte used to gain more software from TTU after they were employed at OSU.

“Not only are they crooks, they’re not good crooks,” Weiser said. “They neglected to bring all the software. So after they were already employed by OSU, they gained access, with the witness there, to the systems at Texas Tech, and downloaded the remaining part of the code.”

Weiser said he did not believe Gary Wiggins, vice president of information technology, was aware of the software usage until after the calendar had been created.

Labonte was hired by OSU on July 7, 2003, to fill the role of director of software support. Hewitt was hired on Sept. 8, 2003, as assistant director of IT.

“We take this matter quite seriously,” said OSU President and CEO David Schmidly in a release. “We expect all OSU employees to represent the University in a positive, ethical manner and adhere to acceptable business practices and principles — to do otherwise is unacceptable.”

According to the report, the computer disk contained 48 folders of computing data, with each containing subfiles. Three applications have been in use at OSU, which include applications titled “Phrame,” “Calendar” and “Globalauth.”

In a release, Wiggins reported the two employees have left OSU.

“This has been an unfortunate situation,” said Wiggins in the release.

OSU and TTU have reached a principle agreement on the licensing of the software, which will become finalized when TTU signs the paperwork. Financial figures will be available after the deal has been finalized.

“It’s pretty much a done deal,” said Mike Phillips, TTU chief information officer.