



## Oklahoma State University

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### Two ex-employees paid in resignation agreement

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Two employees of Oklahoma State University were paid a combined \$28,996 to leave the university as part of a resignation agreement involving the use of illegal software.

According to a copy of the agreement obtained by The Daily O'Collegian, Brandon LaBonte was paid \$16,083.34 in an agreement that he would leave the university.

The agreement also states that OSU agrees to seal "any negative documentation that it may have in its possession."

It also states that the sealed records will not be available to any employee or officer of OSU for future reference.

Mike Hewett agreed to a similar agreement and was paid \$12,883 to meet the same requirements. The former employees also agreed "to make no adverse comments about Oklahoma State University to any third parties." According to Birne Binengar, secretary of OSU's faculty council, the results of the agreement are disturbing.

"The question the faculty council is asking is why are the records being sealed from council members and administrators forever," Binengar said. The agreement also states that OSU "agrees to make no adverse comments regarding the employment of Brandon LaBonte as an OSU employee of OSU to prospective employers." Binengar said he was concerned about the image this situation gives the university to not only those outside, but also those who attend classes. "I would compare this to a student in the classroom," Binengar said. "The student could cheat on a paper or a test, go to the appeals board and have the administration step in and give the student a 'B' and send him on his way." Binengar continued his analogy by saying OSU would then give good comments to any school interested in the student. LaBonte was hired from Texas Tech on July 7, 2003, to fill the position of director of software support at an annual salary of \$96,500. Hewett was hired on September 8, 2003 to fill the position of

LaBonte's assistant. Hewett also came from TTU. Both LaBonte and Hewett agreed to give up their rights to sue the university. An investigation by the General Counsel's Office was released on June 25, which stated the two employees "more likely than not" gained unauthorized access to the TTU computer system after being employed at OSU. A computer disk containing 48 folders of computing data, which included three applications currently in use at OSU was also mentioned in the report.

The three applications are "Phrame," "Globalauth" and "Calendar," which is part of the program used to develop the calendar system OSU uses on its Web site. Gary Wiggins, chief information officer and vice president for information technology, deferred all comments about the situation involving the two employees to the faculty council's office. Wiggins did confirm that TTU rejected an early offer from OSU in the ongoing software negotiations. While he said both schools have agreed not to discuss financial figures, the numbers would be released when both sides have settled. Wiggins also said early reports of the deal possibly being finished this Friday are not necessarily true, but he does think it will be wrapped up soon. "It is very close to being done," Wiggins said. "It could be any day." Binegar said he hopes this entire situation will be finished soon, so the university can move on. "This has not been good for the university," Binegar said. "We need to take care of this and put it behind us."

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