

# Presidents' scandals affect schools

By The College Press Service

When a university president is embroiled in scandal, it seems to stun the campus and community like nothing else can.

In a recent survey ranking prestige in jobs, the American public ranked college presidents just below doctors and above astronauts, according to the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center.

Since 1988, however, the nation's academic community has endured a rash of scandals involving college presidents who have, in one sense or another, lost the confidence of students or peers enough to be ousted from office. Considering that 300 to 400 college presidents are selected for four-year universities each year, the number is quite low. But when a president falls, particularly a beloved one, shock wave can reverberate for years.

In the midst of the whirl of allegations and accusations, a question is hotly debated: Are university presidents judged by a higher standard than other public officials?

Most educators say yes.

"A college president becomes the image of the institution he or she serves," said James B. Appleberry, president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. "If that image is tarnished, there is rarely a way for the public to separate the president from the college or university."

After a campus scandal, beleaguered officials must scramble to clean up the

mess. Often they are left to deal with a demoralized, split campus, not to mention a severe leadership crisis and damaged community relations.

Presidential misbehavior, particularly involving sexual inproprieties, is often fair game for tabloids and television programs such as "Hard Copy" and "A Current Affair," which drag the entire event, in embarrassing detail, into the national spotlight.

Such was the recent case of Robert Altman, 45, the articulate, high-profile University of Central Florida president whose penchant for massage services on out-of-town trips brought the demise of his presidency.

Altman, popular with the student body, was asked to step down in June after detailed reports of his trips appeared in a newspaper.

"These are positions of public trust," said Dr. Charles Reed, chancellor of the state university system of Florida. "Yes, we are judged and held to a higher standard than any other position in public trust."

However, many students rushed to Altman's defense. Some said that college administrators might not get a fair shake once the accusations start rolling.

"If he (Altman) were the president of a company, he would still be the president of that company," said Jason DiBona, president of the UCF student body at that time. "I don't think it's realistic to look for leaders who have public private lives."

Jamie Carte, editor of The Central Florida Future, said students generally seemed

stunned by the scandal, which unfolded a short time after Altman received a major award for his work as university president.

"I think they were all shocked just reading the headlines," she said.

Although there was sympathy for Altman's situation, students also were realistic. "It was really sad because he had a lot going and he blew it all," she said.

The resulting fallout hasn't settled completely on campus.

Altman, who is now serving in an advisory role to the board of regents, will be drawing a salary until November. He has declined to speak with reporters since his resignation. When he makes his exit, it marks the end of a troubled time at UCF.

"It's the right thing to do to hold educators to a higher standard because they provide leadership — an example to students," Reed insists. "The only thing colleges have is their integrity. You must do everything you can to uphold that."

The UCF struggle was similar to one that occurred at American University in 1990, when it was discovered that its former president, Richard E. Berendzen, was making obscene telephone calls.

Berendzen pleaded guilty, was given a suspended 30-day sentence and checked into the Sexual Disorders Clinic at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Washington — but the aftershock on campus went on for months.

After protests over a money settlement, which was eventually withdrawn, it was decided that Berendzen, who would continue treatment for his condition, could return to the school as a professor of phys-

ics in the spring of 1992.

Being a college president is "certainly a high-powered job," said American University's Annita Gottlieb, assistant vice president for university relations. "I believe there is a lot of stress in many of them — but I don't believe they are more stressful than any other."

"They (presidents) are just like anyone else," continued Gottlieb, who was the university spokeswoman at the time of Berendzen's troubles. "If they need to fundraise, they have to become very visible. If they behave in ways that are against the norm, they are out in the public arena . . . and that makes them different than the corporate executive."

Others disagree. Frank Newman, former president of the University of Rhode Island, said being a college president is stressful.

"The public has such enormous faith and belief in you — it is an added burden," he said. "People will feel let down and betrayed — so much is expected of you. It's a role that (the president) will be above partisan battles and narrow interests, on question about it."

While Altman and Berendzen were the most visible cases, other presidents, often colorful and well-liked figures, have made headlines as well.

M. Richard Rose, president of Rochester Institute of Technology, recently announced his retirement in the midst of a furor over his ties with the Central Intelligence Agency.

1991 also saw Stanford University's Donald Kennedy resign after a govern-



Holderman

ment probe of the school's billing practices, which included controversial payments on a yacht and the president's wedding.

In 1990, James B. Holderman, then president of the University of South Carolina, resigned when it was discovered he had spent \$533,000 in one year from an account that was part of a foundation — paying as much as \$7,000 one year for limousine services.

Holderman was indicted for receiving \$25,000 for his services in freeing a Puerto Rico businessman from cocaine charges. He was later convicted of using his office for personal gain in May 1991.

## Recession shows at Career Expos

### Job opportunities grim for students

By The College Press Service

The scene is familiar. Young men and women in suits, armed with resumes, handshakes and smiles for older men and women prepared to greet them with stories of the grim realities of today's job market.

Welcome to Career Expos for the 1991-92 school year.

"There are fewer positions available because of the recession and because of sales trends," said Dot Svobdia, a manager with American

Tourister. "Still, we're hoping to find some good folks out there."

So is everyone else. This particular job fair brought nearly 80 prospective employers to the University of Central Florida in early September.

"I think it's tight," said Jim Gracey, director of UCF's Career Resource Center. "I had some employers say that they would not attend because of the recession."

Of the ones who did, sentiments were the same. "We're finding a lot more qualified applicants," said F. Darren Oliverio, a field training consultant with Metropolitan Life.

The reason for the flood of qualified students is the lack of jobs.

Although not all companies are suffering from the sagging economy, they are still seeing an increase in applications.

"We're now even seeing alumni coming to these events," said Moira Oliver, director of Human Resources for Hyatt Hotels and Resorts. "We didn't used to see that nearly as much."

Oliver calls the turnout at job fairs in 1990 and 1991 "astounding."

"We have been surprised at the number of qualified applicants we're seeing. It's really been to our advantage," said Steve Hoppe, of Arthur Andersen Tax Technology Group.

Because of the flood of graduating college students entering into the job market, employers are getting pickier when hiring.

They offer this advice to job-seekers:

"Students should get practical experience before they graduate. That's very important," Oliver said.

"In our business, a college education isn't a determining factor," said Oliverio of work in the insurance field. "We look for someone who really has oomph. When we find someone who's hot, we make room for him or her."

"I went from house to house, getting any food or clothes they would give me. Then I handed it all out to needy people in the neighborhood."

—Jack Powell  
Salisbury, MD

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