

Special Projects UNT Federal Investigation

UNT police join probe on Chesnut

10:31 AM CDT on Friday, July 21, 2006

By Matthew Zabel / Staff Writer

Date of original publication: Wednesday Aug. 31, 2005

The University of North Texas police have joined an ongoing internal investigation into the conduct of Dr. T. Lloyd Chesnut, the university's former vice president for research and technology transfer.

According to a police report, Tim Edwards, the university's chief internal auditor, filed a police complaint Aug. 22, alleging misdemeanor tampering with a government record and abuse of official capacity.

Officers have taken possession of two computer hard drives to aid in their investigation, according to the report.

Chesnut has not been arrested or charged, and the investigation is continuing, university officials said.

Chesnut could not be reached for comment.

Chesnut, 63, went on paid administrative leave July 27, and university officials said they were investigating his conduct as an administrator at the university. He resigned Aug. 23, and university officials said in a prepared statement that Chesnut had negotiated a service contract for the university with a private firm in which he held a "significant financial interest," and that he did not disclose that interest to the university.

Chesnut earned \$197,513 from the university at the time of his resignation.

Deborah Leliaert, UNT's vice president for university relations, marketing and communication, said she could not say how far back investigators were looking into Chesnut's tenure.

Lawyers with the Hunton and Williams law firm in Dallas are helping the university with its investigation, Leliaert said, in order to save work for the university's legal department.

Before coming to UNT in 2003, Chesnut held a similar position at the University of Montana-Missoula.

Because of Chesnut's resignation and the UNT investigation, John Mercer, chairman of the Montana Board Regents, believes Chesnut's work there should be scrutinized, as well.

"Everything he has been involved with at UM should be reviewed to be sure there is no impropriety," Mercer said Tues day.

Montana-Missoula President George Dennison said he is confident that no such violations occurred under Chesnut's tenure there because of the university's internal audit process.

Dennison also said Chesnut did an outstanding job there, and helped propel UM's grant-funded research beyond the \$50 million mark and double the institution's past funding efforts.

UNT administrators also have praised Chesnut's work at UNT to begin increasing the university's research reputation.

Betsy Cohen, staff writer at the Missoulian newspaper in Miss oula, Mont., contributed to this report.

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