

Uni whistleblower won't recant

By MICHELE TYDD

Wollongong University whistleblower Dr Ted Steele said he would fight "tooth and nail" against any action to remove him from his position.

This follows a letter by Associate Professor Mark Walker, head of Biological Sciences, asking that he "urgently" recant recent public allegations of upgraded marking for honours students.

Dr Steele claimed he had been coerced into agreeing to the boosting of marks of some of his students, including one full fee-paying student.

He cited two examples where the students' marks were upgraded against his and expert evaluation, which allowed one student to qualify for entry to a PhD program.

Prof Walker, in a letter dated January 24, pointed out that after the accusations, Dr Steele told a departmental meeting he had not told a Sydney reporter he was instructed to upgrade marks.

Refusal to budge over allegations of grade-doctoring

He went on to say Dr Steele had since refused to have the public record corrected.

"But you have further sought to frustrate the attempts of your employer and other members of the department to have the record corrected," Prof Walker said.

"Let me stress to you that I have serious concerns that your actions have done real harm to the operations of the university and to the reputation of your departmental colleagues.

"I believe it is incumbent upon you to appropriately correct the public record as a matter of urgency.

"Accordingly I request that you immediately

advise all media outlets, who to your knowledge have reported on this matter, of the correct situation."

In reply, Dr Steele maintained that although he did not use the word 'instructed' with the reporter, "he had witnessed active upgrading".

Dr Steele last night described Prof Walker's letter as "threatening" and said he had no intention of retracting any of his accusations.

"I see this as the first step in my removal but I have no intention of stepping back from what I see as a flawed process of assessing honours students," he said.

Dr Steele yesterday contacted Prime Minister John Howard's office "to place the problem squarely in his lap".

A university spokesman described Prof Walker's letter as "part of a normal internal process of the university".

"Therefore it is not appropriate to comment in the public arena on this matter at this time," the spokesman said.

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