Fraud charges dropped against WSU assistant professor

The criminal case against an associate professor at Washington State University accused of allegedly defrauding federal research out of more than $8 million has been dismissed.

According to federal court documents, the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Western New York dropped the charges against Haifang “Harry” Wen, who is still listed on WSU’s website as an associate professor in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department on the WSU Pullman campus.

Wen, his brother Bin “Ben” Wen, and Bin’s wife, Fang “Jessica” Wen, were all arrested in February 2016 for allegedly spending the research funding on themselves.

The three were accused of falsifying research results and claiming that the results were based on the research results for which funds were spent. They were also accused of falsifying data and intentionally altering calculations to hide the fact that research funds were spent.

Barbara Burns, the spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney’s Office, was unable to reach federal government for comment on why the case had been dropped.

Bin Wen pleaded guilty in February to conspiracy to commit theft charges. He faces several years in prison and restitution when he is sentenced. Fang Wen has also entered into a plea agreement with federal authorities.

A chance to ROAR toward a career

WSU launches program for students with intellectual, developmental disabilities

By Taylor Nadadu

Washington State University is launching a new, non-degree seeking program to prepare students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to pursue a career.

The new ROAR program (Responsibility, Opportunity, Advocacy, and Career) is open to students who have been diagnosed with an intellectual or developmental disability and have a desire to pursue a career in an academic and professional setting.

All accepted applicants will participate in the program, which will provide opportunities for professional growth and development, including training in communication, career development, and on-campus living.

There are two main goals for students entering the ROAR program: first, to become both independent and a part of their community, second, to become employable in a career they desire.

Barros said there is need for such a program for a four-year college level anywhere west of the Mississippi.

There are only seven programs like the ROAR program around the country, so there’s a huge, huge need for that, but especially on the west side of the country,” Barros said.

Assistant professor of special education from WSU’s College of Education, Barros co-founded the program with fellow special education staff member Dr. Inhun Macon, and Paula Groves Price, associate dean for diversity and international programs.

The program has been supported by the program on an administrative level, Barros said.

The colleagues began developing the program three years ago after they saw a need not only for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, but also for students, faculty, and staff to benefit from a program like this.

Barros said the program will provide opportunities for people with disabilities without disabilities to work together.

“Right now, we’re pushing for increased diversity at WSU,” Barros said. “This gives everybody an opportunity to truly experience working and being around people with disabilities that has not been done before.”

Celebrating 50 years of preservation

Panel discusses importance, effect of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act on Idaho’s waterways

By Garrett Cabeza

About 50 people sang happy birthday and celebrated the 50th anniversary of Congress’ Wild and Scenic Rivers Act on Monday night at the University of Idaho College of Law building in Moscow.

A four-person panel, including Idaho’s United States Senator, Barack Obama, and Executive Director Kevin Lewis, Advocates for the West Board President Linwood Laughy, Idaho River Adventure Owners Dustin Akerin and Chris Noyes, Wild and Scenic Rivers program manager Dan Boscotor, and the “the people who write the Act” will serve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural and recreational values, will discuss the special character of these rivers.

Aherin said the middle forks of the Clearwater and Salmon rivers in Idaho were two of the original eight U.S. rivers designated as part of the NRS.

In order to protect rivers in their free-flowing state, Noyes said the presence of dams is prohibited in and Wild and Scenic Rivers sections. While Idaho has about 13,000 miles of rivers, 1,200 miles of those rivers are protected under the act.

“These rivers are actually rare and really special,” Noyes said.

Lewis said Idaho’s Wild and Scenic Rivers program provides great economic benefits to the state.

He said tourists visit the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, partly because they like the act it is designated under the act.

Aherin said that there are many eligible Idaho rivers still waiting to be designated under the act after decades of being designated.

“The Lower Salmon is a section of river that should really have been designated a long time ago,” Aherin said. “For whatever reason, it was carved out, and the main Salmon was designated.”

Barros said that there are about 13,000 miles of rivers in Idaho, 1,200 miles of those rivers are protected under the act.

“These rivers are actually rare and really special,” Noyes said.

Chris Noyes, Wild and Scenic Rivers program manager