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SOUTHERN NEWS

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Student-athlete detained by ICE authorities

By Brianna Wallen
Editor-in-Chief

A university student-athlete was detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement authorities while traveling through Tweed New Haven Airport on Sept. 4, according to an campus-wide announcement on Thursday, Sept. 10.

A Department of Homeland Security spokesperson confirmed the arrest in an email to The Independent on Sept. 8, and identified the student as Deng Deng.

"Our primary focus is our student's well-being," Interim President Bulmer said. "We have communicated with the student and those supporting him, and the university is assisting as appropriate."

Deng is from South Sudan and was set to begin his freshman season with the university's Men's basketball team. He previously played basketball at Linden High School in New Jersey.

According to ICE's online detainee locator, Deng is currently being held at the Wyatt Detention Facility in Rhode Island.

Ken Sweeten, associate director of athletics and athletic communications, said the university is communicating with Deng and those supporting him.

"We are aware that one of our students was detained by immigration authorities over the holiday weekend while traveling off campus," Sweeten said. "The university is in contact with the student and those supporting them and is assisting where appropriate."



PHOTO | INSTAGRAM

Deng Deng's commitment post to the university on May 11.

"We will remain attentive to the situation throughout the ongoing process," Bulmer said.

Bulmer's announcement also addressed concerns that the detention could create among students and other members of the campus community.

"We understand that news of this nature can bring uncertainty, concern and fear, particularly for members of our community who may feel personally affected," Bulmer said.

Bulmer noted that the university will continue to support students and staff.

"Please know that Southern is committed to maintaining an environment where every member of our community is treated with compassion, dignity and respect," Bulmer said.

Since Deng's case involves an ongoing legal process, Bulmer asked community members to be mindful when discussing the situation.

"We also know situations like this can leave people with questions we aren't able to answer," Bulmer said. "Because this matter involves an ongoing legal process and an individual student, we ask our community to be mindful and to avoid actions that could inadvertently complicate efforts underway on the student's behalf."

Students who need support can contact Counseling Services or the Dean of Students.

The university also directed students to resources for undocumented students and provided information about the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities policy regarding undocumented students.

Bulmer encouraged members of the university community to support one another while the situation continues.

"Southern is a community built on belonging, opportunity, and respect for the dignity of every person," Bulmer said. "In this moment, I ask that we extend compassion to our student and show care for one another."

Esteban Garcia, chair of the DREAMers Action Alliance, said the student organization stands with Deng, his family and other immigrant students at the university.

"To our fellow Owls, the Dreamers Action Alliance stands in solidarity with our student who was detained, their family, and every single immigrant student here at Southern," Garcia said. "You belong in our classrooms, you belong on this campus, and no one should ever have to come to school living in fear."

Garcia emphasized the importance of creating a campus where immigrant students feel supported and welcome.

"Education is a right, and our campus must remain a safe, welcoming place for all of us to learn and grow without being targeted," Garcia said.

The DREAMers Action Alliance is also encouraging students who need support to reach out to the organization and use the university's available resources.

"If you or someone you know needs support, guidance, or just a safe place to connect, please reach out to us," Garcia said. "We are in this together, and you are not alone."

University remembers 9/11

By Brianna Wallen
Editor-in-Chief

Twenty-five years after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, members of the university community reflected on the day that changed the country and the memories they have carried with them ever since.

For those who remember the attacks firsthand, the anniversary brings back memories of where they were, who they were with and the moment they realized the country was under attack. For Dave Van Wart, a dispatcher for university police, that scene began at home with his parents in Connecticut.

"It honestly felt like a kick in the gut," Van Wart said.

Van Wart was 21 years old when he saw the events unfold on television.

He said he initially did not realize the first plane hitting the World Trade Center was part of an attack.

"When the second plane hit the South Tower, I realized it wasn't an accident," Van Wart said.

Van Wart, who has lived in Connecticut his entire life and frequently visited New York, said that the attacks felt close to home.

According to the 9/11 Memorial and Museum, the attacks killed 2,977 people after four commercial airplanes were hijacked by terrorists.



PHOTO | WILLIAM GAGNÉ

Staff and students during the memorial observance on Friday, Sept. 11 in the Academic Quad.

Two planes struck the World Trade Center in New York City, one hit the Pentagon in Virginia near Washington, D.C and another crashed into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

The attacks became a defining moment for Van Wart's generation. He compared the event to Pearl Harbor, which had a similar impact on an earlier generation.

Van Wart said both of his parents were alive when the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred in 1941.

"9/11 was my generation's Pearl Harbor," Van Wart said.

Although many undergraduate students did not witness the events of Sept. 11 firsthand, they still recognize the lasting impact the attacks had on the country and the generations that experienced them.

"My heart goes out to all the victims from that day," business information systems major Jordan Patrick, a senior, said.

The university held a 25th anniversary memorial observance on Friday, Sept. 11, at 8:30 a.m. on the Academic Quad. The American flag was also lowered at Buley Library as part of the remembrance.

For those who lived through the day, the anniversary serves as a reminder of the lives lost. For others, it is an opportunity to learn about the impact the attacks continue to have.

Van Wart said remembering the attacks remains important, particularly as younger generations grow up without personal memories of the day.

"My message is: Don't forget it," Van Wart said.

Jennings Hall closes after death of longtime custodial member

By Brianna Wallen
Editor-in-Chief

Classes in Jennings Hall were canceled on the morning of Aug. 26, following the death of a university staff member.

Royce Palmer, a member of the third-shift custodial staff in Jennings Hall, passed away that morning, according to Allison O'Leary, interim director of Integrated Communications and Marketing.

"The building was closed to secure the area while an official investigation was conducted," O'Leary said. "Once the investigation was finished, the building was reopened to the public."

As of Monday, Sept. 14, O'Leary said there have been no details released regarding the circumstances surrounding Palmer's passing.

"We do not have an official cause or manner of death," O'Leary said, "Because the medical examiner's report is ongoing, we have no additional information at this time."

In an announcement sent to the university on Sept. 1, Eric Lessne, associate vice president for capital budgeting and facilities operations shared a dedication to Palmer.

"The facilities family is deeply saddened by the passing of Royce," Lessne said.



PHOTO | VALENTINA TORO

Sign on Jennings Hall's breezeway doorway entrance shows that building is shut down on Aug. 26.

Lessne described Palmer as a beloved member of the team who was known for his kindness and dedication.

"For the last 15 years, Royce has remained a beloved member of our team, bringing kindness, dedication and friendship to all who had the privilege of working alongside him," Lessne said.

Lessne said Palmer's co-workers knew him by his middle name, Anthony, while those closest to him called him "Ant."

"We will always remember his presence, spirit, and contributions to our community," Lessne said.

The announcement also highlighted condolences to Palmer's loved ones.

"The university extends its heartfelt condolences to Royce's family, friends and co-workers during this difficult time," the university said in its statement.

Students, faculty and staff were asked to remain out of the building during the closure, and signs were put up on doors across the department.

Once the investigation was completed, Jennings Hall reopened to the public at noon and classes were resumed.

Members of the university community also attended and took part in Palmer's services.

"President Bulmer was invited to speak to the family and community gathered," O'Leary said.

As the community honors Palmer, his time at the university left a lasting impact on the people who worked alongside him and the community he served.

"He will be greatly missed, and his legacy of service and commitment to Southern will not be forgotten," the university said in its statement.