

the Rice Thresher

Vol. LXXXVIII, Issue No. 14 — EXTRA (midnight)

SINCE 1916

Friday, December 1, 2000

Over 350 meet with Camacho about KTRU

Camacho says there is no timetable as to when students can return to radio station

by Olivia Allison
THRASHER EDITORIAL STAFF

Over 350 people, mostly undergraduate students, attended last night's meeting between KTRU staff, Zenaido Camacho and John Hutchinson to discuss the future of KTRU after the station's regular programming was suspended yesterday morning.

The crowd, at least 60 percent undergraduates, began filling the seats in Room 301 of Sewall Hall about 10 minutes before the meeting started at 6 p.m. By the time the meeting began, people had filled the aisles and more were waiting outside both doors of the room.

Many students who attended the meeting wore KTRU bumper stickers on their clothing to show support for the station. Other students wore shirts with the words "Rice University, Enemy of Art" written on them. Two plainclothes University Police officers, Sgt. Les Hulsey and Officer Lisa Heiden, also attended the meeting, as well as at least three network television crews and several reporters.

KTRU Station Manager and Will Rice College senior Johnny So began the meeting by asking Camacho, the vice president for Student Affairs, to explain why he suspended student programming on the station and replaced it with the World Radio Network.

Camacho and Hutchinson, assistant vice president for Student Affairs, entered the KTRU office about 8 a.m. yesterday and told Wiess College sophomore Kristin Stecher, the DJ on duty, that KTRU was no longer going to be on the air.

Camacho said he wanted to hear students' opinions first before answering the question. "I'd like to first hear from the students because I know how angry you are," he said.

However, the audience insisted that Camacho answer So's question. Camacho then presented prepared remarks on the subject, saying he took KTRU off the air to end the conflict-filled negotiations about the number of athletic events that would be broadcast on the station. Camacho added that he did not know how long it would be before KTRU airs again.

"The primary basis for doing this is, in the last few months, it has become quite clear to me that we could not continue on the road we've been following," Camacho said. "It's one where collaboration and compromise did not take place."

Negotiations between Athletics and the KTRU Oversight Commit-



Members of the audience applauded after KTRU DJ and Computer Science graduate student John Clements gave his rebuttal to Vice President for Student Affairs Zenaido Camacho's initial speech.

tee began in September. The committee recommended that KTRU broadcast three to four games per week, in addition to most tournament games. Camacho approved this recommendation Wednesday to be instated for the next two years.

At the meeting, Camacho outlined four main changes he believes are necessary for KTRU. Many members of the audience booed and groaned as Camacho spoke.

First, Camacho said, he believes KTRU should be a "university-owned, student-operated radio station with appropriate lines of accountability."

Second, Camacho said because the Board of Trustees owns KTRU's Federal Communications Commission license, the station's policy requires that President Malcolm Gillis approve all policy changes regarding the station. Camacho said Gillis has delegated this responsibility to him.

Third, Camacho said a KTRU advisory committee should be created, with members of the committee appointed by himself. This committee would advise Gillis and Camacho on policy decisions regarding KTRU.

Camacho concluded his remarks by saying that a station manager should be elected by the undergraduate student body. This manager would direct student programming with guidance from KTRU General Manager Will Robedee, who is an employee of Student Affairs.

"There will be a student KTRU, but it will be clear that there will be

lines of authority," he said.

Computer science graduate student John Clements then presented prepared remarks in opposition to Camacho's statements. Clements is a member of the KTRU Oversight Committee and he said the administration acted inappropriately.

"Today a great wrong has been wrought," Clements, a DJ at KTRU, said. "Without a warning, without conscience and without right, Zenaido Camacho and Malcolm Gillis have undone 30 years of hard work and selfless labor."

Furthermore, Clements said, the timing of the shutdown at the end of the semester and on the morning *The Rice Thresher* goes to press was meant to keep student dialogue about the incident to a minimum. "The issue here is free speech," he said. "The actions and timing of the university administration make it clear that the goal was to stifle the voice of the students."

After Clements' remarks, So asked Camacho who he was responsible to in making this decision. Camacho replied that he was answering to all students. "I am trying to answer to the broad student population to the best of my ability," he said.

Wiess College junior Patrick Gauthier, a DJ, said he believed that, throughout the course of the negotiations, the administration had not respected the students.

"You have gone behind our backs, you have not told us what's happening, you have misled us," he said. "I don't believe there has ever been a dialogue. ... And if anyone is responsible for the dialogue not continuing, it is certainly not KTRU."

Gauthier continued, saying the university administration viewed KTRU merely as a monetary asset. "When you look at KTRU ... you see a room with a booth connected to a big giant tower," he said.

Gauthier added that he believed the actions of Camacho were deplorable. "I think you've disgraced the university, you've disgraced your office, you've blatantly disregarded the opinion of the people who pay your salary, whom you're supposed to represent," he said.

Camacho responded to Gauthier's remarks by saying that he believes a more clearly defined relationship between KTRU and the university will benefit the entire student body.

"By making it clear exactly where we all stand, then all of this wasted

energy can be focused on making KTRU better," he said.

Camacho also said his vision is to move the KTRU office to the first floor of the Student Center to give the station a larger and more prominent space on campus.

Wiess junior Ben Horne, one of the KTRU DJ directors, asked Camacho, "Why do you want to make it better? Why can't we make it better?"

Camacho said that was his goal. "That's the direction we're talking about: How can I help you make it better?" he said.

Wiess senior Lizzie Taishoff, a DJ, said she felt the university was not trying to negotiate with KTRU but instead was punishing the staff. "It's not some sort of way of saying, 'Okay, we all need to come to the table ... so that there is a compromise and we can continue,'" she said.

"It seems to me that KTRU is being punished for not adhering to what the university said we need to be doing for sports broadcasting. It was so petty and punitive, it was a slap in the face. Give me KTRU back. I didn't do anything to get it taken away. ... All I've had shown to me is how little my voice really matters."

Camacho said silencing student voices was not the intent of his decision. "It was not intended to hurt any of you," he said. "I never saw this as a punitive action."

Will Rice sophomore Steve Mavit asked why the KTRU bumper stickers, which had covered the door to the KTRU office, had been removed.

When Camacho said he did not know this had happened, Hutchinson said it was his decision to remove the stickers. Hutchinson said he had the stickers removed so that students who went to the office for their shifts would know that KTRU had been taken off the air. That way, Hutchinson said, the DJs would not attempt to enter the station office. The combination to the lock on the office door was also changed, and a sign on the door said it was a violation of the Code of Student Conduct to enter the office.

Jones College senior Kristin Necessary asked Camacho what would be required for the student body to win the argument with the administration. Camacho responded, "I don't see that we're that much apart."

Rosa Guerrero, a staff assistant in the Admission Office, spoke in the meeting and said the university had not acted respectfully.

"You better turn the station on or

the community's going to turn it up on y'all," Guerrero said. "I can tell you, as a community member and as someone who works here, I understand very well the meaning of 'beyond the hedges' and 'world-class university.' That is not being demonstrated here. I'm quite ashamed to see the level of conversation that you are having with these students."

Many members of the audience cheered when Guerrero told the students, "You guys are being had."

Will Rice junior Alex Hemsath was the sole audience member to speak against KTRU. "Not every student at Rice likes KTRU," Hemsath said. "KTRU cannot hide behind the concept of free speech because KTRU itself does not allow its DJs to play whatever they want. KTRU has playlists, KTRU has the rule that you are only allowed to play what is in the station."

Student Association President Lindsay Botsford said the SA could not fully support KTRU's position because, unlike other blanket tax organizations, KTRU does not have an elected leader. However, she said the SA has been working to revise their constitution so that a situation like this one will not arise again.

"The problem we ran into over the past few months is that KTRU did not have an elected leader that officially represents all the students," Botsford, a Wiess junior, said.

The meeting was forced to a close before 7 p.m. because a class was scheduled in the room, but members of the audience urged Camacho to move the discussion to another venue. Camacho said he could not continue the discussion because he had obligations but said he would like to continue the discussion at another time.

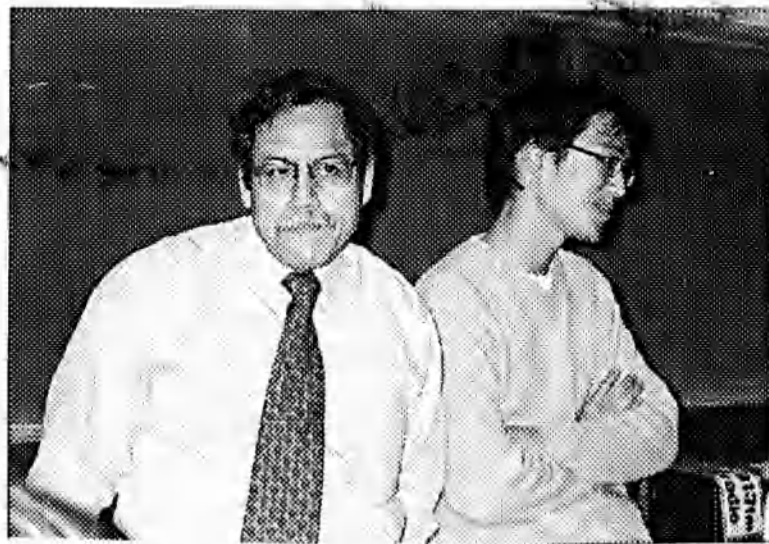
So said he was disappointed that Camacho did not answer many questions that were raised. "I'm disappointed that Dr. Camacho adroitly dodged our questions and essentially said, 'I don't know anything,'" he said. "I hate the way he answered the questions because he essentially didn't. He referred back to his piece of paper, or sidestepped the question, or just nodded his head and smiled and picked someone else to speak to. ... He was so slippery."

Horne said he was encouraged by the wide range of opinions voiced at the meeting. "KTRU and non-KTRU students who were voicing opinions here — community members, everyone who was voicing strong opinions, that encouraged me," Horne said. "I'm very discouraged that the administration doesn't listen to those voices."

There will be a student forum Sunday at 8 p.m. to further discuss the future of KTRU. The location of the forum had not been announced at press time.

EXTRA

We are doing our best to keep you updated on the evolving situation with the shutdown of KTRU. The news broke yesterday morning, after we'd gone to press with the regular issue. The letter-sized extra printed Thursday afternoon was a preliminary report of what we knew at the time. This is simply a report on last night's meeting. A longer and more complete extra edition of the *Thresher* on this topic will be available this afternoon.



Vice President for Student Affairs Zenaido Camacho and KTRU Station Manager and Will Rice College senior Johnny So explain what happened yesterday morning when KTRU was shut down at last night's meeting.