Editorial:
A mugshot with your doctorate?

P rofessors have rights too, but not according to Rider University. The Human Resources Department here at Rider has required all applicants for teaching positions to receive a criminal background check. The policy was not discussed with the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), violating the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the University and the AAUP. Such conduct is entirely unacceptable. Criminal background checks, as well as the manner in which they have been implemented, stand to cause a great deal of harm to the University.

The right to privacy is not something to be taken lightly and criminal background checks throw this right entirely out the window. True, many other schools require their applicants to be subjected to the checks, but the vast majority of those schools did not implement the procedure without any discussion at all. The University should have allowed the AAUP as well as members of the faculty at Rider, to have their say in the matter. In this way, a policy acceptable to all parties could be reached and legal action avoided.

Another large area of concern is the extent to which these background checks will go. If the University plans to deny all applicants who have a criminal record, we may lose many potential candidates. This is due to the fact that many professors may have convictions on their records from protesting the Vietnam War. This could be an extremely harmful practice. It has since been proven that Vietnam War protestors had a right to be upset, since the government routinely lied to the public about the war. These people were prosecuted for nothing more than recognizing the truth and being outraged by it. They should be praised for standing up for their beliefs during a time in which those beliefs were unpopular. Turning them away because of a background check is a disservice to both them and the Rider community.

Also, the possibility exists that many potential faculty members will be turned off completely by a required criminal background check. Imagine if you had applied for a job and gone for an interview, only to hear nothing from the organization for several weeks. You would start applying at other places right? They should be declined for minute offences while also making the application process so long that many professors may start looking elsewhere. We can only hope that the AAUP can overturn this decision, otherwise it will be Rider students who end up suffering the consequences.

This weekly editorial expresses the majority opinion of The Rider News editorial board and is written by the Opinion editor.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“As long as the world shall last there will be wrongs, and if no man objected and no man rebelled, those wrongs would last forever.”

- Clarence Darrow