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1

Church members file suit against professor, officials

By Nancy Hsu Daily Bruin Staff

Two UCLA extension students in the Church of Scientology have filed suit against UCLA professor Louis Jolyon West, the Board of Regents and Chancellor Charles Young for allegedly using taxpayer money to fund anti-religious activities.

The university has yet to respond to the suit filed last month with the Santa Monica

Superior Court.

John Van Dyke and Mario Majorski charge that, while on the University of California payroll, West used his position to organize anti-religious seminars and two groups that target minority religions - Cult Awareness Network and American Family Foundation.

'I saw him on TV in this program and he said some things about other people's religions and he was attacking them,' Van Dyke, who is now a senior marketing major taking classes at Cal Poly Pomona while planning to enroll in more classes at UCLA. "That's where I drew the line. It really touched my heart that someone was actually getting away with that."

But West counters that the church

practices a severe form of mind control, drawing up contracts for members to work for the church in this life - and often in

their afterlife.

"There are enormous pressures for its members to stay," West said. "Anyone who wants to leave is threatened. They're very harsh and demanding and uncompromising.

He also says the church uses amateur psychotherapy that has left its members

physically and mentally damaged.
"It's like amateurs doing surgery," West added. "There's mental damage. They've been depressed, frightened, fearful, have eating disorders, impaired sleep, loss of confidence and an inability to exercise individual thought."

The charges include that UCLA co-sponsored conferences that allegedly attack scientology, that West made derogatory remarks about scientology at a Washington, D.C. conference and that he violated the

California Education Code,

"It's despicable conduct, but if it is on his own time and if he's not spending taxpayer's dollars, it would not be implicating the university or Board of Regents," said Linda Simmons Hight, a public information officer with the church. "He represents himself as a UCLA professor, so it puts it in a whole different light."

West, 68, a doctor and professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, has spent 43 years studying the church. He said that because taxpayers pay his salary, any work that he does is underwritten by taxpayers.

"My interest has been stimulated mostly by seeing victims of psychiatric disorders that have come about by their experience in cults," West said. "I don't attack religion. My main concern is situations that put people in harm's way."

The Church of Scientology was founded in 1954 on the teachings of the late science fiction writer and author of Dianetics, L. Ron Hubbard.

The church deals with the growth and change of the human spirit to help a person improve and better communicate with family and friends. It is also very active in drug rehabilitation and other community service efforts, said Hight.

However, West says their form of drug rehabilitation, called "Purif" for purification, entails making the addict sit in daily

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> Linda Simmons Hight Church of Scientology

saunas for extended periods of time while taking vitamins that leave the patient chemically imbalanced.

West said he is bothered by the charges. Known as an outspoken critic of the scientology church, West says the church emulates Hubbard and teaches lessons based on his fictional stories.

'I'm a person who has spent most of his life trying to help people and I don't like being represented as a person of ill will," he added. "I would never try to deprive someone of his or her religion, but when people claim a religious rationale for doing evil things, then that's not a bona fide religion.'

This suit is the second attempt by students to bring an injunction against West. A similar case filed last June in the United States District Court was thrown out in

The first case was dismissed in March because the students did not have the grounds as taxpayers to sue West, and did not provide facts suggesting that the university's subsidization of West's activities were malicious.

In addition, the court held that stopping West from speaking out would violate West's free-speech rights.

"We thought the case was without merit and should be vigorously fought," campus attorney Ruth Simon said. "The judge agreed with us and the case was dismissed."

While that case is currently being appealed, the new suit is in preliminary

"I have no quarrel with the members of the Church of Scientology," West said. "I feel sorry for them. I see their members as being victims, subject to deceit and being ripped off in many ways.'