

Former UI dance instructor resigns at Connecticut over false degrees

By: Clara Hogan - The Daily Iowan

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The interim chairwoman of Connecticut College's dance department - a former UI instructor - resigned Monday after officials discovered she had falsely claimed to have two UI degrees.

Lan-Lan Wang, a UI dance instructor from 1980 until 1990, reportedly told the New London, Conn.-based university that she had received bachelor's and master's degrees from the UI, Connecticut College spokeswoman Amy Martin said.

An associate dean at Connecticut recently received an e-mail that threw doubt on Wang's credentials, Martin said, which prompted Connecticut officials to contact the UI and learn that, contrary to her résumé, Wang had never graduated from the UI.

Shortly after, Wang resigned.

She did not return phone calls made Tuesday.

"I am deeply saddened because [Wang] has contributed so much to the college over many years," Roger Brooks, the Connecticut College dean of the faculty, said in a press release. "Lan-Lan Wang's accomplishments in dance are very real."

Though Wang was never a UI student, she taught in the UI dance department for nearly 10 years as a program assistant, a project director, and a visiting assistant professor. UI spokesman Steve Parrott said he couldn't determine whether Wang told officials that she graduated from the UI when she applied for the teaching position in Iowa City nearly 30 years ago.

In addition to teaching at the UI, Wang has had an impressive academic-dance career. She founded dance companies, taught at the University of California-Los Angeles, and was one of the first American modern dancers to perform in China after the Cultural Revolution.

Martin said that Connecticut College hired Wang based on her earlier teaching record from the University of California-Los Angeles. "We normally don't verify potential faculty members' degrees if they have already been teaching," Martin said. "We counted on UCLA to have done that."

Checking an applicant's credentials at the UI did not become a written rule until June 2003, Parrott said. Now, the UI verifies degrees through the National Student Clearinghouse's electronic database for a fee.

Parrott said he believed this became mandatory because of the increased number of high-profile cases in which universities learned that faculty members had made up degrees.

Some of these incidences included Rev. Eugene Kole, who ended his presidency at Quincy University, in Illinois, after his claim to have two master's degrees was exposed as false. Marilee Jones quit her job as dean at Massachusetts Institute of Technology after acknowledging she never earned the degrees she claimed.

