

A \$10,000 award or offhand joke? Crane announcement at UI leaves most confused

Shanon Quinn/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

Idaho Treasurer Ron Crane left an erroneous impression on his audience Thursday at the University of Idaho during a press conference touting the benefits of the state's higher education savings plan, IDeal.

Crane was in Moscow with Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter and first lady Lori Otter to share thoughts on the plan, as well as to introduce UI junior Kim Davenport, who was able to finance her four-year degree with the help of the plan and remain, as she said, "debt free."

In introducing Davenport, Crane showed his apparent confusion at her presence on the stage.

"The first person we are going to ask to talk is Kim Davenport. She, what was it? She won some award? She was selected as ... oh, we haven't given it to her yet," he said.

At the conclusion of Davenport's presentation in which she talked of the difference her IDeal account had made to her education, finances and college experience, Crane reclaimed the microphone.

"Thank you, Kim, and what I haven't told you was that you've won a \$10,000 award from the governor and first lady," Crane said.

Although apparently Crane was joking, as there was no award, his humor was lost on many in the audience.

Following the Thursday event, Davenport accepted congratulations for the award and told the Daily News she planned to use the funds to help pay for veterinary school. However, her father, Dan Davenport, said Monday his daughter denied making the statement and had been aware the "award" was a jest.

Whether the statement came from confusion on the part of Crane or as a joke is unclear.

If it was a joke, not all members of the media were informed of that information. As a result, Friday's Daily News coverage of the event contained the erroneous information.

Gov. Otter's press secretary, Jon Hanian, said he wasn't in attendance at the press conference, but it was his understanding the treasurer was simply confused as to why Davenport was present, and thought it was because she had won something.

Later communications with the governor's office had a different message.

"I think the treasurer was joking, it was concerning something in her past, a past award from the U of I," communications associate Nicole Bare Kinney told the Daily News on Monday.

Kinney said she was unaware of Davenport's initial reaction to Crane's statement.

"I'm not sure what her reaction was on the stage, but I spoke to her afterward and she said she understood that it was a joke," Kinney said.

Neither Kim Davenport nor the treasurer's office returned calls Monday from the Daily News.

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