

Campuses screening new workers

CU joining other schools following attack on student

By Berny Morson, Rocky Mountain News

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Many major Colorado colleges and universities are doing background checks on all new hires amid increased safety concerns, officials said Wednesday.

The University of Colorado has decided to check all new hires following an incident Monday in which a former cafeteria worker attacked a student with a knife.

The suspect, Kenton Drew Astin, 39, was still in Boulder Community Hospital on Wednesday recovering from wounds he inflicted on himself after attacking the student. He is under police guard, said Cmdr. Brad Wiesley of the CU police department.

Astin was in good condition as of Tuesday. Hospital officials withheld his condition Wednesday.

Police do not know when they will be able to take Astin to the Boulder County jail or bring him before a judge, Wiesley said.

The University of Denver, the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley and the Colorado School of Mines in Golden do checks on all new employees.

"We felt that, given the environment we seem to operate in, that it was really important to us that individuals we hire don't pose threats to the physical safety of our campus community and they don't pose unacceptable risks to the integrity of our financial processes, assets and records," said Mines Vice President Mike Dougherty.

Colorado State University only checks workers in dormitories, custodians who have keys and people in contact with financial data, said spokesman Brad Bohlander. Some CSU faculty members doing work on defense contracts or research on infectious diseases also undergo checks.

CU checks those categories of employees, too, said spokesman Bronson Hilliard. Also getting checks at CU are all tenure-track professors, laboratory employees who work with hazardous chemicals and people who work with kids at the campus day care, Hilliard said.

Just how many of CU's 7,200 workers that covers isn't clear, Hilliard said.

The campus is still looking at whether to extend checks to some people who were hired in the past and the cost of such a program.

CU pays a private firm about \$45 per person to run the checks.

Astin was found not guilty by reason of insanity in a 2001 attack in Longmont similar to the one that occurred at CU. That record was not revealed to CU by a job-training program for the mentally ill that referred Astin to the school.

However, Astin's six-month employment at CU's Alferd Packer Grill was without incident.