

► CRIME

'Racial' attack outrages campus

■ **Students attacked:**
An assault on two Washington students was clearly motivated by racial bias, a police officer says.

The Associated Press

BELLINGHAM. — An off-campus attack on two minority students at Western Washington University has sparked outrage and concern among school officials and students.

"Our first concern is for the two students who have been injured," Western President Karen Morse said. "But we consider this incident an attack upon the ideals of the

larger community as well."

A 19-year-old black man and a 20-year-old Asian man, both sophomores at the university, were attacked by two men last week. Neither of the victims was seriously injured.

"They are feeling much better," said student support services director Ted Pratt, who is counseling both men. "The level of support is far beyond their expectations."

Police said two men, described by witnesses as skinheads, yelled racial slurs while beating up the two students.

"The motive of the assault was clearly racial bias," Police Chief

Don Pierce said. "The two individuals were assaulted because of the color of their skin."

Jason G. LaRue, 22, and Banner Dawson, 20, both of Chico, Calif., were booked into the Whatcom County Jail and were being held on \$5,000 bail each.

They were arrested Nov. 3 for investigation of malicious harassment. Police later also arrested Dawson for investigation of second-degree assault and LaRue for investigation of fourth-degree assault.

Bellingham and Whatcom County authorities reported 20 hate crimes last year, including a cross-burning at a migrant farmworker camp.

Eight hate crimes have been reported in Bellingham so far this year.

Thirteen percent of Western's 10,700 students are racial minorities.

"We believe in diversity," said Larry Estrada, vice provost for diversity. "When things like this happen, it is a tragedy for the campus and community."

Some minority students on campus say the attack reflects a nationwide trend of racial intolerance.

"But the community has been very supportive about what has happened," said Mark Manuel, 22, a member of the Asian & Pacific Islander Student Union.