Coalition protests issues, entry stopped by police

By Linda Bohmer

About 30 black students, protesting President Harold L. Enarson's stances on open admissions and black issues, attempted to enter the Administration Building Monday, but were prevented by OSU Police.

Although the gathering was peaceful, the demonstrators repeatedly shouted, "We want Miami at OSU," alluding to recent race riots that have killed at least 18 people in that Florida city.

OSU police closed the building to the students at 4:15 p.m., locking the doors with handcuffs, according to one demonstrator who was allowed inside. University regulations prohibit demonstrations in campus buildings, said OSU Deputy Police Chief Gary Wilson.

Enarson has suggested the need for competency testing at OSU during testimony before the Legislature. Some people took his remarks to mean a possible step toward a tighter admissions policy.

The demonstrators missed the president, who is attending a conference of the American College Testing Board in Salt Lake City.

Three of the students, allowed into the building as representatives, said they made an appointment to talk with Enarson next week.

"We're not going to break out the windows of the Administration Building because that wouldn't accomplish our goals — but if it could, we would knock them out," said one of the rally organizers, speaking through a loudspeaker to two women looking out Enarson's second-floor office window.

Initially, 80 students gathered at the east end of the Oval at 1 p.m. for a rally to commemorate the birth of Malcolm X, a black activist assassinated in 1965.

The rally was organized by a new group, the Black Student-Community Coalition.

Speakers at the rally said they wanted the university to resolve what they called a lack of funds for black student organizations, inadequate promotion and hiring of black faculty and poor treatment of blacks by professors in classes.

Coalition leaders said they also plan to ask Enarson for a black cultural center when they meet with him.

"Black people are only tolerated here, not wanted," said William Nelson, chairman of the Department of Black Studies.

Nelson said blacks will continue to be oppressed on campus until they organize and defend their rights.

He advocated rallying behind one issue to bring the black community together, using the issue of police brutality as an example.

Police use of deadly force became an issue in the Columbus black community when a white policeman shot and killed a black youth who allegedly tried to elude capture.

The death was ruled a justifiable homicide in mid-February by Franklin County Coroner William Adrion.

A group of councilmen, city officials and civic leaders recently formulated a plan providing more restrictive guidelines for police.

A speaker at the 1 p.m. rally said Columbus black leaders will not solve the problem of police brutality by enacting a new deadly force policy.

The speaker, Charles Ross, an associate professor of social work and a leader of Columbus' United Black Front, called black politicians who think they can bring about change through the system "Uncle Toms."

Jerry Hammond, one of two blacks on City Council, said at the rally that he does not support the coroner ruling on the Burke shooting, but disagreed with Ross, saying that working toward peaceful change is more effective than violence.

"The first step to me is to change the policy so they (the police) can't hide under it," Hammond said.

He urged the ralliers to attend a council hearing on deadly force today to voice their opinions.