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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**OAKLAND WOMAN FOUND GUILTY OF 2001 ARSON AT UW CENTER FOR URBAN
HORTICULTURE**

Former Evergreen Student Secured Car, Served as Lookout in Firebomb Conspiracy

BRIANA WATERS, 32, now of Oakland, California, was convicted today in U.S. District Court in Tacoma of Arson. The jury deliberated four days following a three week trial. At sentencing on May 30, 2008 WATERS faces a mandatory five years in prison up to 20 years in prison. U.S. District Judge Franklin D. Burgess temporarily ordered WATERS into custody while he considers whether she should be released pending sentencing.

At trial prosecutors showed how rental car, telephone and bank records corroborated the testimony of two cooperating witnesses, Jennifer Kolar and Lacey Phillabaum. Both women have pleaded guilty for their roles in the May 21, 2001, fire that destroyed the Center for Urban Horticulture in Seattle. Both women independently named WATERS as the person who served as the lookout for the arson team.

“The FBI, ATF and local law enforcement officers tenaciously followed every lead to solve this destructive string of arsons,” said United States Attorney Jeffrey C. Sullivan. “This cell of eco-terrorists thought they had a ‘right’ to sit in judgement and destroy the hard work of dedicated researchers at the UW and elsewhere. Today’s verdict shows that no one is above the law.”

Testimony at trial revealed that Justin Solondz, 28, then a student at Evergreen and WATERS’ boyfriend, built the destructive devices used in the fire in a “clean room” in the garage of WATERS’ rented Olympia home. WATERS arranged for her cousin’s wife (also an Olympia resident) to rent a car. WATERS told the cousin she would use the car to move some of her belongings out of her cousin’s home to her own residence. That never happened. Instead, WATERS borrowed the car the Sunday evening before the fire, claiming she was ill and needed to go to the hospital. Later, WATERS told her cousin she had not been able to get medical attention in Olympia and so had her boyfriend drive her to Seattle for medical care. In fact, WATERS and Solondz joined William Rodgers and Lacey Phillabaum for the drive to Seattle. They met up with Jennifer Kolar at the Green Lake Bar and Grill, and in the dark hours of the morning traveled to the Center for Urban Horticulture where they set the destructive devices that caused a three alarm fire. The May 21, 2001, fire caused over \$2 million in damages. The center has been rebuilt at a cost of about \$7 million. The fire destroyed samples of rare and endangered plants. Some researchers lost important data for their work to protect endangered plant species.

The UW fire bombing was one of a string of 17 arsons across the west by the radical group the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). The arson spree did more

than 20 million dollars damage. 19 people have been charged in the investigation; 14 have been convicted, including Ms. Waters, and four remain fugitives. Some have been sentenced to as much as 13 years in prison. Most of the defendants have entered guilty pleas for their roles in the conspiracy. Some have been sentenced to as much as ten years in prison. The leader of the arson cell, William C. Rodgers, 40, of Prescott, Arizona, was indicted by a federal grand jury in Seattle in connection with the case, but committed suicide December 22, 2005, while being held in the Coconino County Jail in Prescott, Arizona. Justin Solondz remains a fugitive and is actively being sought by law enforcement.

This case is the result of a nine-year investigation by law enforcement. Participating in the extensive investigation were the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF), the Eugene Police Department, the University of Washington Police Department and other state and federal law enforcement agencies.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Andrew Friedman and First Assistant United States Attorney Mark Bartlett. For additional information please contact Emily Langlie, Public Affairs Officer for the United States Attorney's Office, Western District of Washington, at (206) 553-4110.