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WSSU committed to being responsive to needs of students and staff.

Debate over censorship of school newspapers continues.

OPINION

Court blessing of censorship echoes at second Illinois campus

By Matthew Chayes
KRT WIRE SERVICE

The problems, say student journalists at Illinois Central College in East Peoria, began after their longtime adviser retired and a new one unveiled a policy that broke with past practice: He would have final say over the content of the campus newspaper, *The Harbinger*, but the paper's top editors say he promised never to use the power.

In less than two months, adviser Michael Gray began telling the students whom to hire and what to print, they say, and a few weeks ago he ordered the staff to run a biography of himself in the paper.

"He pulled a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and started demanding that we run his bio," said Brandon Hagan, 20, *The Harbinger's* associate editor.

Gray said the biography was just a suggestion to introduce him to the college community. He said he also asked the students to print their biographies. Gray also said he has encouraged editors to pursue hard-hitting stories.

"I think they should be expected to listen to the adviser," he added, noting he had worked as a professional journalist.

Press advocates predict such disputes

between student journalists and officials will become more common now that the Supreme Court has upheld a decision by a Chicago-based federal appeals court involving Governors State University in Chicago's south suburbs.

The Student Press Law Center in Arlington, Va., which defends the 1st Amendment rights of student journalists, has seen an upsurge in complaints about administrators trying to control student newspapers' content in the aftermath of the Governors State decision, *Hosty vs. Carter*.

The case began in 2000 when Patricia Harris, a dean at the university, ordered a now-defunct student newspaper, *The Innovator*, not to publish until officials could review each issue. The students, led by managing editor Margaret Hosty, sued, citing free-speech rights.

In its ruling, the 7th U.S. Court of Appeals suggested that colleges could declare their student publications non-public forums and, as at high schools, censor them.

In a brief filed with the Supreme Court, a coalition of free-speech groups called the decision "a grave threat to academic free speech" that "endangers the very existence of independent college media." In February, the court declined the case.

Legally, the precedent applies only to public colleges in Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin — the three states covered by the appellate court. But nationwide, college editors and administrators are tinkering with their papers' policies to prepare for battles over content.

The battlefield is on the campuses of public universities that fund student newspapers. Do 1st Amendment principles mean administrators must keep hands off, or can a school argue that if it's paying, it gets some say over content?

Press freedom is well-established in American law, but student-run newspapers operate in a relatively murky area.

In 1988, the Supreme Court ruled that high schools have significant censorship authority, but the court hasn't extended that authority to colleges.

In Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin, at least, the answer might depend on whether a paper can convince its school to declare it a public forum. That would grant it editorial freedom and give the school some legal protection if someone sues.

"Much of the action in student press cases, in the 7th Circuit at least, will now focus on whether the publication is a public forum or a non-public forum," said Gary Feinerman,

the solicitor general of Illinois.

At Illinois Central, *Harbinger* editor-in-chief Dawnell Zeine expected to hear soon about the outcome of the school's legal review of the newspaper handbook. Vice President Bruce Budde said the review is pending.

The students maintain that in telling them to run his bio, Gray was issuing an order, not making a suggestion. They provided e-mail exchanges with Gray, the authenticity of which was confirmed by a college spokeswoman, to validate the claims.

"The new handbook ... makes it clear that I am the final word," Gray wrote to one of the editors on March 1. "Are you in or out?"

The Gray bio didn't run after Zeine balked.

Seven months before the Supreme Court declined to take up the Hosty case, Christine Helwick, California State University's general counsel, told all 23 campus presidents in the Cal State system that the appellate court ruling could permit official censorship when newspapers aren't labeled "public forums."

"Censorship is appropriate," she wrote in a memo obtained by the Student Press Law Center, when a school regularly supervises and reviews content.

From the Editor:

Change, growth and opportunity come from within

By Lisa R. Boone

The choices we make determine the lives we lead. With graduation just around the corner and my term as editor-in-chief of *The News Argus* quickly coming to an end, so many thoughts flood my mind. What would life be like if I had not attended WSSU? What will the next chapter of my life be like? When I came to WSSU in the fall of 2002, I had a plan. Although there have been some changes or adjustments to that plan, I have still stayed true to the main parts of that plan.

I believe a decision I made as early as elementary school has carried me to this point and will continue to shape my life. After realizing that my attitude about learning and desire to inform was much different than some of the attitudes of my peers, I decided that only I could get myself where I wanted to go, and in order to get there, I needed to step out of the crowd so I could see the way.

An excerpt from Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self-Reliance" explains my conclusion about the decision I made early on in life. "What I must do, is all that concerns me, not what people think ... But do your work and I shall know you. Do your work, and you shall reinforce yourself."

As a student at WSSU, I have been afforded many opportunities and have taken advantage of the resources here. Upon graduation, I will participate in the Poynter Summer Fellowship for Young Journalists. I have been chosen to interview for the Hearst Newspapers Fellowship and have applied for a Howard Simons Fellowship. A simple decision, a piece of paper, a pen and the desire to let my voice be heard has changed my life. What will you choose to do?



Boone

Dr. Blount leaves post as chairperson to teach

Dear WSSU Community:

Being asked by *The News Argus* to provide this letter of transitional notice to you gives me great honor. For the past 14 years, I have had the pleasure and privilege to serve as the chairperson for the Department of Mass Communications.

On July 1, 2006, another phase of my professional life will begin. For personal reasons, in the capacity as a tenured Associate Professor, I will enter the classroom on a full-time basis. With much excitement

and anticipation, I will join a team of dedicated educators and researchers who possess great passion and pride for their discipline.



Dr. Brian Blount

As I make this transition from the position as an administrator of the department into the role as a full-time teacher, I feel obligated to take this opportunity to thank the many individuals who collaborated for the purpose of contributing to the overall success that our program has experienced throughout its existence.

Approximately five years before I first assumed the leadership responsibilities of the unit in 1992, the program was considered relatively new. Visionary planning and effective leadership before I arrived positioned the department to accomplish many significant goals and objectives.

Throughout the years, we have grown to become one of the largest departments at the university. As a result of the current WSSU administration's strategic efforts, the number of high-achieving students increased also. Unquestionably, the unit will continue to ascend to greater levels of achievement in all aspects.

With perpetual hard work

and anticipated successes by a comprehensive assembled team that is dedicated to providing a high caliber of educational services, without any doubt, the students who enter the Department of Mass Communications to genuinely learn the essential tenets of the Fourth Estate will depart to effectively serve the imperative media needs for all citizens.

Again, thank you very much for the distinct honor and pleasure that I have been afforded while serving as the chairperson of the Department of Mass Communications.

Sincerely,
Brian C. Blount, Ed.D
Chairperson



What's on your mind?

The *News Argus* welcomes letters to the editor.

Please send letters to newzargus@yahoo.com, with the subject line "Letter to the Editor." Include your full name, including middle initial, classification at the university (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior or senior), and the name of your home city and state. All letters are subject to editing and should be limited to 200 words.

Strategic Issues drive WSSU's committed to excellence

As we continue to develop programs and best business practices around the WSSU Strategic Issues, we must enhance our understanding of these Issues as driving our commitment to excellence. As I have discussed Curricular and Non-curricular modifications to produce high demand graduates and Branding, I would like to share insight regarding Effectiveness and Efficiency. As one of the university's five Strategic Issues, the Effectiveness and Efficiency Strategic Issue guides us in continuing to be more customer focused. This practice of customer focus attempts to address the needs of our primary customers, the students, but also the needs of faculty, staff, and external partners as we interact within our university environment. In this effort, we have identified the following seven strategic areas for enhancing our customer

chancellor's corner

with Dr. Harold L. Martin



focus: assess business practices, staff development, performance management, adult and distance learners, policies and procedures, safety and security, and information technology. Assessment of business practices as a strategic area has been an on-going focus and has led to new initiatives. One example has been our need to streamline our hiring process. We recognized the need to put a system in place that would create a higher level of electronic tracking of applications from start to finish, continued connectivity between Human Resources and

the EEO Office, and a reduced-paper process, all delivered through a system that is user-friendly and adaptable to changing needs. With these needs in mind, we selected the People Admin Program as the system to meet our needs in an efficient manner. This program will streamline our hiring process while maintaining a user-friendly interface for hiring managers. Another strategic area is that of policies and procedures. In recognizing the need to update our policies and procedures, we moved forward to develop a comprehensive document that will be available for viewing on our website. Yet, we were also cognizant of the need to provide an effective sharing site to update the policies and procedures on a regular and to provide training for faculty and staff regarding policies and procedures in their respective areas. Through the use of a specially

designed software program, this management and training module will have an efficient delivery system that will assist faculty and staff in better understanding and updating policies and procedures that affect daily operation. We have also continued to focus on safety and security. If we are to maintain effective operations, we must feel that we are maintaining a safe and secure environment. This is an area of concern expressed by you, the students, as an important consideration regarding your college experience. In an effort to address this concern, we have continued to assess your concerns and develop strategies for implementation. This includes adding four additional police-officer positions, maintaining our bike patrols, working closely with city officials to address potential safety threats, continuing to address emergency preparedness needs, obtaining

feedback from the campus community regarding safety and security concerns, and conducting regular assessment of the department to ensure that best practices are maintained. If we are to continue to succeed, we must embrace the perspective that maintaining best practices is representative of our continued commitment to excellence. This commitment is increasingly important as we challenge ourselves to be innovative, insightful, and intrigued by new opportunities. As well, this commitment will drive us to determine new strategic areas as our needs change, to use our resources to address those strategic areas, and to maintain a system of self-assessment that provides a vehicle for identifying new concerns. This must continue to be our commitment as we provide a quality environment for members of our campus community.