

College press denied public information

By WENDY BOUNDS
Staff Writer

College newspaper staff members are frustrated about the limited information they are receiving from University police and administrators due to a federal student privacy law.

Campus police and other administrative officials are withholding information regarding student-involved crimes with the excuse that this information would be in violation of the 1974 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, according to student newspaper staff members.

The Privacy Act, more commonly recognized as the Buckley Amendment, named after its sponsor, former Sen. James Buckley, R-N.Y., was written to ensure that no student records "maintained by an educational agency or institution" could be released without the consent of that student.

The law additionally now exempts "records of a law enforcement unit of an educational agency or institution" provided the records are maintained apart from the other student records, used only for law enforcement purposes and not disclosed to individuals other than law enforcement officials of the same jurisdiction. Also, educational records must not be disclosed to personnel of the law enforcement unit.

This addition was written in response to law enforcement protests that they were not able to conduct their jobs properly because they could not transfer information around within the separate law enforcement agencies.

Theoretically, if the law enforcement agencies try to release this information, then it can consequently become protected under the first section of the Buckley Amendment. If the University is found guilty of violating the Buckley Amendment, then it risks losing federal aid.

"It is censoring the press to withhold information that the students are paying to know about," June said.

There was one incident at NCSU in which a university official cited the Buckley Amendment in attempts to persuade members of The Technician not to publish information regarding a disciplinary hearing being conducted for NCSU wrestlers charged with attacking a West Raleigh man.

"We didn't print the story, because we thought we might be held liable," said Paul Woolverton, executive news editor of The Technician.

Assuming that the Buckley Amendment covers activities that are not academically or normally student related is taking the Buckley Amendment too far, said Katherine White, assistant general counsel for the North Carolina Press Association.

"Robbery and stealing are not supposed normal activity for a student and should therefore not be included," she said. Students forfeit their privacy rights by committing such crimes, White said.

"At that point, I think their crimes should become public information," White said.

The UNC Police Department does not turn down requests for information regarding investigations as long as a warrant has actually been issued for the arrest of an assailant, said Sgt. Ned Comar, of the UNC police department.

"We cannot release the name of a suspect simply because if he or she turned out to be innocent then we would be in a real civil bind," Comar said.

"However, once a warrant has been issued then we will absolutely release the information to the press. We may ask that they not print it so that we can get our hands on him (the assailant) before he flees, but we will not withhold this information from the press."

Although the Buckley Amendment still protects students who have warrants for their arrests, once a warrant is issued, newspaper staff members can go to the city law enforcement agency to get any information denied to them by school agencies.

The East Carolinian, the student newspaper for East Carolina University, was told by the administration that they could not release information regarding one case about rape and another on assault because it would be a violation of the Buckley Amendment, said Stephanie Folsom, East Carolinian editor.

State collects \$20 million from back taxpayers

By SANDY WALL
Staff Writer

Revenue collections from the recently completed Tax Amnesty program have surpassed the \$20 million mark with more than 6,400 delinquent taxpayers filing returns before the Dec. 1 deadline, state officials said Tuesday.

North Carolina's Tax Amnesty program allowed any taxpayer owing back taxes to pay the state without penalty.

As of Dec. 2, tax evasion in North Carolina became a felony punishable with sentences up to five years, a \$25,000 fine or both.

Final revenue collection figures from the Tax Amnesty program will not be released until Friday, Dec. 8, but officials with the N.C. Department of Revenue said that as of noon last Friday collections surpassed the amnesty program's \$20 million goal.

"We're still processing mail, especially mail that was sent in from out-of-state," said Charles Collins, communications manager for the Tax Amnesty program. "We will not have any numbers until Friday (but) we've had a real good volume of mail."

The majority of applications that the revenue department has received were from individuals, but businesses accounted for most of the program's revenue so far, he said.

Officials with the Tax Amnesty

program said there had been a huge rush to beat the deadline, but they were prepared for it.

"We anticipated and predicted that," said Dewey Sanders, Tax Amnesty program manager. He added that other states that have instituted similar tax amnesty programs had also experienced a last-minute rush.

Sanders said he was pleased with the outcome of the program and called it "very successful."

An official with the State Office of Budget and Management said he was pleased the amnesty program had surpassed its goal, but that any revenue over the \$20 million goal was not enough to offset a possible budget crunch currently facing the state.

"It's not enough to prevent a problem," said Paul Zipin, an economist with the State Budget Office. "(But) the Tax Amnesty program coming in above their projections is good."

The 90-day Tax Amnesty program was part of a bill that increased tax evasion penalties, passed during the last session of the General Assembly, Sanders said. The bill also called for hiring 135 additional staff members for the Department of Revenue.

These newly hired workers will be in charge of monitoring tax collections and catching tax cheats, he said, and they have been assigned to different divisions of the revenue department.

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Representatives from the NCBC were disappointed, but not surprised, that the reappointment was approved. "The decision is not a surprising one, it's not a shocking one," Ards said. "We've been expecting this all along. It shows the lack of commitment (by the BOT) to truly explore all the issues. They wanted to very mechani-

prove situations such as the small percentage of black faculty, Hardin said. "We are sensitive to, and understand as well as we can, the justified concerns of black students and faculty and others who worry about the relatively small number of black faculty at our university. We will do all we can to improve the situation."

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caly rubber-stamp her reappointment." The fact that the BOT released a press release approving her reappointment before the meeting was even held shows that lack of commitment by the board, Ards said. "I really feel we have been deferred or ignored the whole semester." The administration has been unwilling to listen to the concerns of minority students, she said.

NCBC members have not spoken with Cell since protests began, but Ards said she hoped to speak with Cell in the beginning of next semester, then by the beginning of next semester. "We want to start next semester off right, and the next five years of her tenure." While Ards said she thought the protests had very little chance of stopping the reappointment, she said she hoped they would lead to the establishment of at least two committees aimed at solving the problems that exist. Part of the NCBC's demand is that a student advisory committee meet on a regular basis with the dean in order to sensitize her to minority concerns and that a council of administrators, faculty and students be established to address seriously the issues minority student leaders have discussed.

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