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## Opinion - Editorials

Sunday, January 22, 2006

# First Amendment covers campuses, too

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The First Amendment creates a free speech and assembly zone from one end of the United States to the other.

Except at UNCG.

University rules permit outdoor assemblies without prior approval only in two areas on campus. Even then, administrators must be given 48 hours' notice.

Fortunately, that policy is under review -- just in time to prevent a legal challenge. Two students, members of College Libertarians, led a peaceful protest in front of Jackson Library in November and were charged with code-of-conduct violations. The proposed disciplinary actions against seniors Allison Jaynes and Robert Sinnott were dismissed Jan. 13.

The students were supported by the Philadelphia-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, which joined with Raleigh's Pope Center for Higher Education Policy in issuing a Jan. 10 report alleging unconstitutionally restrictive regulations throughout the University of North Carolina system. The First Amendment too often is overridden by campus speech codes designed to punish the use of offensive language, the organizations say.

Nothing in the report quite matches UNCG's designated free-speech zones, which administrators explain as well-intended remnants of the Vietnam War era, when raucous protests disrupted campuses across the country and sometimes led to violence.

Whatever its origins, the policy was revised in September 2003 with the free-speech-zone rules intact. Furthermore, it was defended in a letter written last month by university counsel Lucien Capone III to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education.

UNCG values freedom of speech, Capone wrote, adding: "By the



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