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### Schools discipline students over Internet content

Four at SU get probation for "extreme" language critical of teaching assistant.

Wednesday, February 22, 2006

By **Nancy Buczek**  
Staff writer

Four Syracuse University students punished for trashing their teacher on Facebook.com joined the growing number of students nationally whose school has held them accountable for what they put on the Internet.

"Criticism can be considered a matter of free speech. In this particular situation it was the content, and the content was considered as being reviewable as a possible violation of the university code of student conduct," said Kevin Morrow, speaking for SU. "The language and the phrasing of these Facebook postings were extreme."

Some students use Facebook.com as their personal diary. They post pictures and information such as their favorite movies and music, political views, relationship status and sexual orientation. Most students expect only other college students to read what they post because a college e-mail address is needed to access the site.

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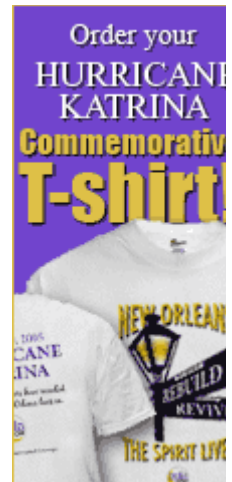
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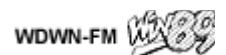


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At SU, a student-created page on Facebook.com used vulgar language to deride teaching assistant Rachel Collins. SU put on probation four students listed as officers on the page, called, "Clearly Rachel Doesn't Know What She's Doing . . . EVER," according to Madison Alpern, one of the students punished.

The SU case demonstrated a growing trend where officials

nationally are paying attention to what their students are posting on the Internet. Consider:

Ö At Lincoln East High School in Nebraska administrators suspended seven male basketball players for two weeks over blog entries that mentioned drinking alcohol, according to a Feb. 12 article in the Omaha World-Herald.

Ö At Northern Kentucky University and North Carolina State University, campus police charged students with violations after finding photos of them drinking alcohol, according to the World-Herald article.

Ö At George Washington University, students were convinced campus police were monitoring Facebook.com, so they posted information to mislead police about a party, according to a story Jan. 8 in The New York Times. When police showed up, they found only cake and cookies decorated with the word "beer."

Here's a closer look at Facebook.com:

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