



National Press Photographers Association, Inc.

The Society of Professional Photojournalists

Ethics-Education-Excellence

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January 12, 2012

Chancellor Steve Ballard
East Carolina University
Office of the Chancellor
East Fifth St.
Greenville, NC 27858

Sent via e-mail

Dear Chancellor Ballard,

The National Press Photographers Association wishes to express its deep concern over the recent termination by ECU of the *The East Carolinian's* student adviser. Reportedly members of the newspaper's editorial board were informed by a senior ECU administrator that they might face "consequences" due to their controversial editorial decision. Firing their adviser because of that decision sends the wrong message to students and supporters of the school and the paper about respect for a free press under the First Amendment.

It is our understanding that the East Carolinian, while funded by student activity fees at the university, enjoys editorial independence. Rather than providing a "teachable moment" for students, actions such as this do just the opposite by chilling free speech.

As an institution of higher learning we would expect that the ECU administration would know better.

Therefore, we respectfully request that Mr. Isom be reinstated to his position and that the university renew its commitment to supporting high journalistic standards as well as an independent and unfettered student press.

Sincerely,

Sean D. Elliot
President
National Press Photographers Association

cc: Will Creeley, Director of Legal and Public Advocacy, FIRE
Donald Winslow, News Photographer magazine
Julie Moos, Poynter Institute for Media Studies