

N.C .Central Seeks Medical Records for Handicapped Parking Tags

Contributed by Denique Prout and news reports -- Black College Wire
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Students call it invasion of privacy

One N.C. Central University student believes having to divulge her medical history just to receive an on-campus handicapped sticker violates her privacy.

Phyllistine Thornton received an e-mail from the Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EEO/AAO) Office on Sept. 17, requesting her to complete a form allowing the release of all her medical information, including treatment and prognosis, in order to receive the sticker.

To be designated as a handicapped driver by the Department of Motor Vehicles, state residents must submit a form completed by a doctor, along with a \$5 fee.

Thornton, a mass communication senior, said her medical history should be viewed only by medical professionals. And she refused to comply with the school's request.

"I was upset because I had already done what the state required me to do to get my handicapped sticker," said Thornton, a self-described "non-traditional student."

EEO/AAO director Andria Knight, in an e-mail sent to Thornton, said the release is necessary to verify her disability and "to further determine qualifications for disability campus parking accommodations."

Requiring such information is necessary so the system isn't abused, Knight said.

"There are many people who were getting over," she said. "People were abusing the process by using other people's disability stickers as their own."

Students with NCCU handicapped stickers are able to park in timed parking spaces as long as they want.

University police will begin strict parking enforcement throughout campus today. Vehicles with illegal or unauthorized decals will be ticketed, towed and prosecuted.

Thornton was told she could instead show her Social Security award letter, which verifies that she receives disability pension money. She also thought that was too personal.

Improper use of handicapped parking spaces is a problem on a number of college campuses.

At the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, disabled students now have to pay to park on campus. The new handicapped permits are sold for the same price as a regular parking permit, \$115 for an annual pass. The new rule was established to help crack down on people who use stolen or borrowed handicap tags, according to the UNLV student newspaper, The Rebel Yell.

Knight, who wouldn't discuss Thornton's case specifically, said students are not obligated to release their medical records as long as they provide proof of their disability.

For now, Thornton parks about two blocks from campus.

She believes her state-issued designation should be enough for an on-campus spot.

"I choose to not pay the \$150 [parking fee] and give them all my personal information for a parking space that probably won't exist anyway," she said.

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Denique Prout writes for The Campus Echo, the North Carolina Central University student newspaper, which originally published a version of this article.