

'Juicy Campus' Rocks Another University

Contributed by Geoffrey Cooper & Belinda Dunn--Black College Wire
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Gossip site sparks drama at N.C. Central

After more than a year of unwelcome remarks and distasteful content, Juicy Campus, the anonymous online gossip forum for college students, has found its way to N.C. Central University.

The Web site was founded by Duke University alumnus Matt Ivester on Aug. 1, 2007.

It launched on Oct. 24, 2007, with a stated mission to "enable online anonymous free speech on college campuses." During the first couple of months, there were about 60 schools on the Web site.

According to a blog posted Sept. 2 on Juicy Campus's main blog site, NCCU was officially added that day, along with 185 other campuses.

By Oct. 6, approximately 500 schools were hosted on the Web site.

With topics such as "Strippers on Campus," "White people," and "Teachers … anybody hit one?" the site has brewed considerable tension at NCCU.

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SGA president Kent Williams Jr. said he first learned of Juicy Campus from a friend.

He said that he was taken aback by when he say how crude the site was.

"I was very shocked to see that there are people out here that have many hateful things to say about one another on this campus," said Williams.

Williams said Chancellor Charlie Nelms and his administration are aware of the site and that he plans to talk about the site with the University's Board of Trustees today.

Williams also said he wants to put Juicy Campus on the agenda at this Saturday's UNC Association of Student Government meeting.

Williams said he wants to get a feel for how other student body presidents are handling Juicy Campus.

Williams said many students have come to him with their concerns about the site.

"While it may be freedom of speech, it's making our University look bad," he said.

Other campuses are also giving Juicy Campus negative reviews.

The Associated Press reported that on Dec. 8, 2007, Loyola Marymount University civil engineering senior Carlos Huerta allegedly posted a threat from a computer saying he would shoot random students on the campus's Alumni Mall.

His post read: "I am going to shoot and kill as many people as I can until which time I am incapacitated or killed by the police."

On Oct. 28, Juicy Campus founder Ivester answered questions from concerned Georgetown University students adamant about banning the Web site from the university's network.

In the discussion, reported by the George Washington University Hatchet, Ivester said he felt the site's exclusion would put a dent in the freedom of speech. "If it were banned, Juicy Campus would be the first Web site banned on a college campus for content," Ivester said. He said this means that "you could go to the sickest porn site, read the most hateful speech, but you couldn't go to Juicy Campus.com. That seems strange to me."

Sarah Hamlin, an NCCU computer information systems sophomore, said Juicy Campus should be shut down altogether. She said she sent a e-mail complaining that Juicy Campus is "trashing many innocent people" and "creating false reputations." She said Juicy Campus did not reply to her e-mail, but she has started a group on Facebook urging other students to boycott Juicy Campus.

"He's enjoying the idea of making money, but still he should worry more about the people that are constantly being hurt," she said of Ivester.

"When and if someone does take their life that will sit on his mind and heart for the rest of his life."

The Web site's FAQ section states that Juicy Campus is immune from liability for the site's content.

Although the site promotes free speech and anonymity, it states that it will cooperate with law enforcement if illegal rhetoric, such as death threats, takes place.

NCCU campus Webmaster Derek Brinson, who recently became aware of the site, said that technology is neither positive nor negative, but "it's a continuous game of cat-and-mouse.

"It's only as helpful or as hurtful as the attitudes of those who use them," he said. "That type of cyber- treachery has been going on for a long time."

Brinson said he knows of no NCCU mandates for Information Technology Services to block Juicy Campus. But he added that, technically, it would be easy to block the site.

And recently one HBCU did just that.

After parents complained about the site, the Tennessee State University Meter reported, vice president of student affairs Michael Freeman and SGA president Patrick Walker-Reese requested the school's division of technology and administrative services to block Juicy Campus from the university's Internet network.

In an e-mail sent by Nelms to the Campus Echo, he stated he has asked University chief information officer Greg Marrow to collaborate with University legal counsel, Kaye Webb, in order to decide what action, if any, the University should take.

"While I am disappointed to hear that some students are making negative or untrue statements against fellow students, the University must take special care not to do anything to restrict the First Amendment rights of any student," Nelms wrote.

Brinson said that other measures may apply to student use of the site.

He explained that NCCU's Responsible Use Policy prohibits students from downloading offensive or derogatory material from the Internet or sending harassing or offensive communications over computer lines.

Eric Jefferson, Mr. NCCU, himself the subject of critical remarks on the site, described anonymous Juicy Campus posters as "cowards."

"They need a life. I think they really need a few hobbies under their belt," said the criminal justice senior.

Jefferson said that the majority of the student body is intelligent enough to overcome the negativity deriving from the website.

"I think the purpose of the website is to start chaos and anarchy," said Jefferson.

"Our student body is a lot smarter than that. The majority of the student body understands that it is an anonymous Web site of people, haters, or anyone that doesn't like you."

"This is the last thing we need around this time among our people or any people."

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Geoffrey Cooper and Belinda Dunn write for the Campus Echo, the North Carolina Central University student newspaper, which originally published this article.