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ECU's newspaper adviser fired

BY JANE STANCILL - jstancill@newsobserver.com

GREENVILLE–East Carolina University fired the adviser to its student newspaper this week, two months after the paper published unedited nude photos of a streaker at an ECU football game.

Paul Isom, the director of student media since 2008, was dismissed Wednesday. ECU officials declined to comment on the reason for the termination, describing it as a personnel matter.

In an interview Thursday, Isom said officials gave him only a vague explanation that they wanted to "go in a different direction." Isom, whose salary was $57,000, said he only had positive ECU job evaluations.

The firing prompted criticism from free-press advocates, who say the students had the First Amendment right to publish the photos and that Isom is a victim.

"They know they can't retaliate against the editor, so I guess this is their plan B - 'Let's fire the adviser,' " said Adam Goldstein, an attorney with the Student Press Law Center, a national group that aims to protect the rights of student journalists.

Isom oversaw all student media outlets and directly advised The East Carolinian newspaper, where a series of photos was published Nov. 8 showing a naked man sprinting across the field and then being tackled and arrested. The streaker's stunt happened during a halftime military appreciation ceremony at the ECU-Southern Mississippi game on Nov. 5.
The incident, and the nude photos, kicked up a controversy and drew national attention for ECU. A Raleigh man, John Sieglinger, 21, was charged with trespassing and indecent exposure. He has a court date in Pitt County later this month.

The university previously described the newspaper's decision to publish the photo, showing full frontal nudity, as "in very poor taste."

The East Carolinian is a student-run newspaper. The paper's editor, Caitlin Hale, could not be reached for comment Thursday. But in a previous statement, she said she and other student editors decided to publish unedited photos because the paper's audience, primarily students, should have access to them.

"While the photos may be seen as offensive to some, the photos were not meant to be seen as sexually suggestive or insulting, but instead an accurate account," Hale's statement said.

'Consequences' promised

University officials had said they would have conversations with those who made the decision "to further the students' understanding that with the freedom of the press comes a certain level of responsibility about what is appropriate and effective to get their message across," according to a Nov. 8 statement from Virginia Hardy, vice chancellor for student affairs.

Initially, Isom said, Hardy told him to take down the photographs from the newspaper's website.

"I told her as politely as I could that if we do that, this will go from a controversy that will die down in a couple of days to a slam-dunk First Amendment issue that the university will lose and will go on for years," Isom said. "Then she backed down."

Days after the incident, ECU administrators met with Isom and the student journalists. One promised there would be "consequences," Isom said.

Saw, discussed photos

Isom said that during production of the Nov. 8 edition, he had seen the photos on a computer screen. He and several editors had what he described as an "informal" and "broad" discussion about how to use the photos. He said he was not aware of exactly how or where the photos would appear.

"As the adviser I try to make sure they have the resources they need to make the best decisions they can, and then step out of the way and allow them to make those decisions," he said.
To do otherwise, Isom said, would actually put the university at risk. If he involved himself in the student journalists' day-to-day decisions, that would constitute what's called "prior restraint," impinging on the students' First Amendment rights, he said.

In the early 1970s, the ECU student newspaper's editor was suspended for obscenity when the paper published a letter to the editor that included a four-letter word directed at then-Chancellor Leo Jenkins. The editor then filed a lawsuit against the university.

For now, Isom will look for another job

"The only thing that I could have done differently to prevent this from happening would have been to tell the students, 'Don't do anything controversial, don't run anything that's going to make an administrator mad,'" Isom said. "And then I wouldn't be doing my job to teach them to be journalists."

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ECU fires student paper advisor
By Jackie Drake

The adviser of the student newspaper at East Carolina University was fired Wednesday in the wake of last fall’s controversial streaker photos.

The university will not comment further on the personnel matter, according to a statement released Thursday from Virginia Hardy, vice chancellor for student affairs. A replacement has not been named.

The decision came two months after the student-run East Carolinian printed photos showing full nudity of a streaker at a football game in November.

Paul Isom, who was the student media advisor, said he had two unexpected visitors in his office on Wednesday morning. He said his supervisor, the director of marketing and communications for student affairs, and a representative from human resources came to tell him he was being terminated and that he had a few hours to clean out his office.

“They told me they wanted to go in a different direction,” Isom said. At ECU since 2008, Isom supervised the newspaper, the Rebel literary magazine and the Buccaneer yearbook.

“They were very cautious not to give me a real reason,” he said.

“ECU values and respects the Constitution and the rights provided by the First Amendment and upholds them in the way it operates its student media,” spokeswoman Mary Schulken said Thursday.

But a Student Press Law Center article posted Wednesday evening said Isom’s firing raises serious First Amendment concerns.

“There’s no camouflaging what this is, which is retaliation for an editorial judgment made by the students that was completely within the students’ authority to make,” said Frank LoMonte, executive director of the SPLC. “They’re clearly punishing the adviser for something he not only didn’t control, but legally couldn’t control.”

The photos were published on Nov. 8 at the discretion of student editors, who “felt that our audience, which is primarily the ECU student body, should have access to unedited and factual photos of the streaking incident,” according to a statement released shortly after the photos were printed.
“While the photos may be seen as offensive to some, the photos were not meant to be seen as sexually suggestive or insulting, but instead an accurate account of Saturday’s events.”

Student editors have not responded to messages seeking comment. While federal privacy acts prohibit the university from confirming or denying any disciplinary actions against students, Schulken confirmed that all students working at the East Carolinian in the fall still are working there in the spring semester, minus those who graduated in December. Editors and staff are chosen by a panel made up of students and faculty.

At the Nov. 5 Southern Miss game, John Sieglinger, a 21-year-old Raleigh resident who is not an ECU student, streaked naked across the field during a halftime military appreciation ceremony. He was charged with first-degree indecent exposure and first-degree trespassing, both misdemeanors. He was released on bond and banned from the university.

ECU released a statement after the photos ran, saying it disagreed with the decision.

“The decision by The East Carolinian to publish a photo of a streaker that showed full frontal nudity was in very poor taste,” the statement read. “The leadership at East Carolina University does not agree with that decision and does not support it. But The East Carolinian is an independent, student-run newspaper. As such, it is a learning environment for student journalists, who make decisions about news content — and ultimately are responsible for those decisions.”

The East Carolinian is “independent to a certain extent,” according to Isom. The student paper generates its own revenue but the university pays for the building and utilities, he said.

“But they pay my salary and they hired and fired me, so it’s obviously not that independent,” Isom said.

At the time, Isom said he knew the student paper had nude streaker photos, but that he legally is not allowed to interfere with students’ editorial decisions. Legal precedent holds that student newspapers at state universities have the same first amendment freedoms as professional newspapers.

“When we met about the streaker photos afterward, administrators said there would be consequences, and there hasn’t been anything until now,” Isom said. “Things changed dramatically for me after the streaker photos in how administrators interacted with me.”
Isom, who has been a student paper adviser for about 15 years and has worked as a professional journalist, said he is searching for a new job. He is considering taking action against the university.

“Ideally administrators understand the role of student newspapers as part of learning about journalism,” Isom said. “At ECU, it’s hard to say. There doesn’t seem to be any understanding of that here.”

There has been a lot of positive support from former students and colleagues, Isom said. “And people I’ve never even met before have spoken out on my behalf. It’s incredible.”

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567.
Seeing double: Twin births rise

One in every 30 babies born in the United States in 2009 was a twin

By Mark Rutledge

A report this week indicating a dramatic increase in the rate of twin births over three decades is reflected in the membership roll of a local support group for parents of multiples.

Greenville Mothers of Multiples, a nonprofit group that provides support and guidance to parents of multiples, is growing along with the increased numbers of twin births.

“Right now, our active membership (representing about 20 families) is entirely mothers of twins,” the group’s president, Stephanie Phillips, said.

A report conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows twin birth rates rising 76 percent from 1980 through 2009. One in every 30 babies born in the United States in 2009 was a twin, compared with one in every 53 babies in 1980.

The increase comes from wider use of fertility drugs and women bearing children later in life, according to the report.

“Older maternal age accounts for about one-third of the growth in the twinning rate over this period,” the report says. “The increased availability and use of infertility treatments likely explains much of the remainder of the rise.”
A positive factor related to advances in infertility treatments is a much lower incidence of multiple births above twins.

According to Dr. Cal Hayslip, division director for infertility services at Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, fertility treatment advances, including in vitro fertilization, have reduced the number of triplet births, which are at far greater risk for complications.

“In 2003, the percentage of pregnancies with triplet births was 6.4 percent,” Hayslip said. “It has decreased each year since and in 2009 was at 1.6 percent.”

Twin births among couples undergoing in vitro remain about 33 percent, he said.

“Infertility couples often view twins as a positive,” Hayslip said. “Even though it’s a more complicated pregnancy, they are much more willing to take that chance.”

Hayslip said the number of twin births in Greenville and Pitt County most likely mirrors the national increase.

Aside from fertility treatments, twin births are on the rise due to an increase in maternal obesity and delayed childbearing, according to Dr. Jeffery Livingston, director of maternal fetal medicine at Brody School of Medicine.

“The key with prenatal care is identifying those at greater risk for complications,” Livingston said. “Identicals are at much higher risk for complications. Identicals are about 20 percent of all twins.”

Increased prenatal anxiety and twice the rigors of baby care led to the establishment of Greenville Mothers of Multiples. Members meet every first Monday of the month to “share the unique joys and challenges of raising multiples.”

The group’s website is greenvillemultiples.com.

Phillips, who joined the club while expecting her 2-year-old identical twin daughters Samantha and Alexis, says a large part of the group’s mission is reaching out to expectant moms to share support and resources.

“We help them learn about doctors for high-risk pregnancies,” she said.

“Once the children are born, we establish contact and find out what we can do to help with meals, child care or just someone to talk to.”

The group has two mothers in their 40s, but Phillips said the average age of members is about 28.
“We have a fall cookout and we’ve organized a moms’ night out,” she said. “The dads come to the cookout, too, and there’s been a lot of jokes about establishing a dads’ night out so they can commiserate a little — maybe bond over beers and talk about night feedings.”

Phillips, who also manages the Texas-based website twinstuff.com, said the Greenville group tries to remain in touch with inactive members in an effort to maintain a large network of support.

The group also advocates for support services among the health care community.

“We would like to see a twin pregnancy class established in Greenville,” Phillips said. “And we want to connect with a lactation consultant who has experience with twin breast feeding.”

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The Associated Press contributed to this report.
Clarification

The Dec. 27 story on a draft plan for academic consolidation at East Carolina University listed several undergraduate programs up for elimination including jazz studies. The certificate and minor programs in jazz studies could be cut, but the bachelor’s and master’s degrees in performance of jazz studies would be maintained.
Friday, January 6, 2012

“We have a large amount of students and faculty who were juried into the show. I think that shows the talent from ECU.”

-- Holly Garriott
executive director of PCAC at Emerge

**11th Annual Schwa Show opens**

By Kelley Kirk

Looking for something to do tonight? Uptown Greenville will hold its First Friday event for January from 6-9 p.m.

As part of the fun, there will be an opening reception for the 11th annual Schwa Show, a national juried art exhibition, at the Pitt County Arts Council at Emerge, 404 S. Evans St. The reception is free and open to the public.

The Schwa Show — a schwa is the upside “e” in PCAC at Emerge’s logo and represents an unstressed central vowel in the International Phonetic Alphabet — will be on display through Jan. 29.

The competition recognizes excellence in craft and fine art and was open to any artist in any media and subject matter.

“There is a variety of media including painting, ceramics, textiles, metal design, sculpture and photography in the exhibition this year,” said Holly Garriott, executive director of PCAC at Emerge.

A call for entries was put out in April last year to artists. Each artist could submit up to five entries. There were approximately 120 entries received, most of which came from North Carolina.

“We also received entries from Ohio, Indiana, Virginia and California,” Garriott said.

There are 37 pieces in the show including several East Carolina University-related pieces.

“We have a large amount of students and faculty who were juried into the show. I think that shows the talent from ECU,” Garriott said.

Lia Newman was to be the exhibition’s juror, however due to a scheduling conflict the PCAC at Emerge’s Exhibition Committee served as the juror.
Best in Show was awarded to James Dudley for “Industrial Extentions,” made with wood and steel.

Second place went to Isaac Talley for a graphite on bristol board piece called “Accidents.”

Third place was awarded to Joanne Lang for “Hanna’s Bee,” made of brass, copper, ivory and found objects.

Honorable mentions are Omar Abbas’ oil on canvas titled “Push” and Kyle Rees’ porcelain piece “Four Face Double Cupple.”

The show was originally scheduled for last summer.

“We had to change the schedule — and this will be the new annual time — for the exhibition because our exhibition budget was cut in 2011,” Garriott said.

Garriott said that the Arts Council will post a call for entries for the 2013 show in February.

“The deadline date will be Nov. 17, and all images of entries must be sent via email or submitted on a CD.

Garriott said the cost is $15 for up to three entries and then $5 for each additional entry.
Thompson picks ECU Pirates

Nation's No. 6 safety values comfortable, family atmosphere over popular pick

By Corey Long
ESPN Recruiting Nation

In the world of players wanting to go to the powerhouse BCS programs, Winter Garden (Fla.) West Orange safety Lucas Thompson has chosen to take the road less traveled.

The 6-foot, 185-pound four-star prospect chose East Carolina over Miami and South Carolina, and announced his decision Thursday night at the 2012 Under Armour All-America Game in St. Petersburg, Fla. Other offers included South Florida, Louisville, Rutgers, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Ole Miss and Illinois.

For Thompson the final decision came down to a comfort level between him and the East Carolina coaching staff.

"From that first meeting with Coach [Lincoln] Riley to my visit there, I always felt a sense of family and togetherness," Thompson said. "We ate together, we laughed together, we talked about things that are really important.

"With me leaving my family and friends it's important to be in a place where they don't have to worry about me, and ECU is that place."

The No. 139 overall player in the ESPNU 150, nationally ranked No. 6 at his position, admitted to being a lifelong Miami fan and said it was a tough decision to go against the Hurricanes.

"I love Miami, I like a lot of the guys in their class, like Angelo [Jean-Louis] and Duke [Johnson]," Thompson added. "I liked South Carolina, too; they came on real strong."
"But I need to make my own decision and do what is right for me."

This is East Carolina's second time striking it big with an Orlando-area prospect. Several years ago the Pirates took a flier on Orlando Olympia running back Chris Johnson, who became a first-round NFL draft choice.

Thompson said Johnson's experience at East Carolina was a factor.

"These days you can go to any school and succeed," Thompson said. "If the coaches are right and the player is happy, he's going to play hard. I will play hard and succeed."

It has been a long road for the player who competed at last season's Under Armour Combine with just three offers and little exposure. Since then Thompson has been to The Opening and was named an Under Armour All-American in the fall.

"It's been the greatest experience of my life," Thompson said. "I never thought I'd be an All-American and considered one of the best in the nation.

"I just wanted to have the opportunity to play football in college. I didn't expect any of this. It's the greatest blessing and I just want to make people proud for believing in me."

Corey Long has been covering high school football and recruiting in the Sunshine State since 1995. He can be reached at coreyespn@gmail.com.
High school college credit program gets a makeover

By Pressley Baird
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High school students in the Cape Fear region who want to get college credit will navigate a new program this spring.

Career and College Promise, the new college transfer program for North Carolina high schoolers, carves out three tracks that eligible students can enroll in. They can earn up to 44 credits from a community college that will transfer to any participating university or a certificate in technical community college programs. Career and College Promise consolidates all other dual enrollment programs, which included Huskins, concurrent enrollment and Learn and Earn Online.

Students can start taking classes through the program as soon as the spring semester starts. For most area high schools, that'll come at the end of January after exams.

High schoolers already in former dual enrollment programs in New Hanover County will be grandfathered in to the new program for the spring semester, said LaVerne Pickett, career technical education facilitator for the schools. After that, students will have to meet the new program's stricter requirements to participate.

Those new requirements open the program to only juniors and seniors. Students must enter the program with a 3.0 high school GPA and maintain a 2.0 GPA in college classes. Students also must earn a certain score on a diagnostic assessment test other than the SAT or ACT.

To take a class at Cape Fear Community College under old dual enrollment programs, students had to be 16 years old, earn a certain SAT score and be preapproved by their high school principal, said David Hardin, CFCC's spokesman.

Pickett said she felt the point of the new requirements was to make sure students could handle college-level coursework.

"Students accessing these courses are supposed to be college ready," she said. "This is just to ensure that students have those foundational skills they need."
But Brian Weeks, college liaison at CFCC, said the more stringent requirements could mean fewer students would sign up for the program initially.

"Eventually, with that bar set, more students are going to take the college classes seriously," he said. "We're going to see a little bit of enrollment decrease just because it is stricter."

The three specific pathways also limit the variety of classes students can take, Hardin said. But students can earn more credits in each of the pathways under the new program.

Those pathways also make the new consolidated program stronger than any of the old individual tracks, said Rob Hines, director of local education agency projects for the state Department of Public Instruction.

"Prior programs didn't necessarily specify requirements that ensured that the investment made in both time and funding led to a specific outcome such as transfer credit," he said.

Students in private and charter schools and home-schooled students are also eligible to apply for the program, Hines said. They have to meet all the requirements laid out for traditional high school students.

Apart from the requirement changes, Pickett said the new program is simply a restructuring.

"This has just renamed our program," she said. "Students will still have the same kind of access they've always had."

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Tuskegee Airman and former NCCU dean dies at 92

BY MARK SCHULTZ - mschultz@newsobserver.com

DURHAM–Stewart B. Fulbright, a Tuskegee Airman during World War II who later became the first dean of the School of Business at N.C. Central University, died in Durham on New Year's Day at age 92.

NCCU, where Fulbright worked as a professor and administrator for 35 years, announced his death Thursday.

A year ago, Fulbright was chosen to represent Durham in a sculpture at the N.C. Veterans Park in Fayetteville, where his right hand is cast in bronze, one of 100 hands of veterans from all of the state's counties.

Fulbright was born in Springfield, Mo., and earned a bachelor's degree in French from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Mo., in 1941. In early 1943, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps, which had created a program in Tuskegee, Ala., to train black aviators. Fulbright was one of nearly 1,000 men who trained at Tuskegee to be pilots, navigators and bombardiers.
during the war. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant and pilot in December 1943 and served as a B-25 bomber pilot for the rest of the war. His all-black 477th Bombardment Group was preparing for deployment in the Pacific when the war ended.

"We were taught how to fly by black civilians," Fulbright told those who came to see his hand cast for the sculpture. "Most of us had no idea there were that many black guys who could fly."

The Tuskegee Airmen were an experiment at a time when black soldiers typically supported white troops.

Fulbright recalled riding the bus with 21 young white men to Camp Crowder, Mo., to see if the Army would take him.

Just 5 feet 7 inches tall, he knew the minimum weight was 125 pounds, and he didn't weigh that much. That morning he stuffed himself with bananas. But instead of taking the exam when they got off the bus, the young men were given breakfast.

Only eight of the 22 passed the written test. They then went to lunch before the physical exam. "I hadn't been to the bathroom yet," Fulbright said. "When I got on the scales I weighed exactly 125. I got off the scales and asked the doctor, 'Where is the bathroom?'"

Only two of the young men passed the physical, he said.

About half of the Tuskegee Airmen flew overseas. Even before the first squadron left for combat, Fulbright said there were those who tried to get it disbanded. The pilots like Fulbright who remained home for additional training faced their own battles.

"My instructor in basic was a racist," Fulbright said. "He didn't like any of us, and he let it be known."

But the black pilots did not let the racists win. "The barriers they kept putting up had the opposite effect," he said. "It showed us these people are not gonna keep us down; we are going to succeed. And most of us did."

After the war, Fulbright received an MBA from the University of Chicago in 1947, then joined the faculty of the Commerce Department at N.C. College (now NCCU). He earned a Ph.D. in business administration from Ohio State University in 1953.

Fulbright served as acting dean of NCCU's Undergraduate School from 1966 to 1968, then returned to the Commerce Department as its chairman in 1968.
When the department became the School of Business in 1972, he became its first dean, serving in that position until 1976. He retired in 1982.

"Everyone thought of him as a friend," Howard Fitts, former chairman of Public Health programs at NCCU, said in a statement. "He was well-liked and respected, and students felt at ease with him."

Fulbright remained in contact with his wartime comrades through the Wilson V. Eagleson Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen, based in Goldsboro. He was among the Tuskegee Airmen present in Washington in 2007 when they were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

In 2003, Fulbright recalled the confidence that being a Tuskegee Airman gave him and so many of his peers. "We had been through a lot of adversity, and we had pretty much conquered it," he said. "It was just a matter of various guys picking out what they wanted as careers. We had a lot of guys with doctoral degrees, bank presidents, college presidents, politicians."

Fulbright's survivors include his wife of 68 years, Della Marie Fulbright; a daughter, Gina Fulbright-Powell, of Silver Spring, Md., and a son, Edward, of Durham.

A funeral is scheduled for 1 p.m. Saturday at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 2620 Weaver St. in Durham.

The family requests that donations be sent to the Dr. Stewart B. Fulbright Memorial Fund at NCCU (NCCU Foundation, P.O. Box 19363, Durham, NC, with the Fulbright Memorial Fund in the memo line.) and the Covenant Presbyterian Church Building Fund, 2620 Weaver St. Durham, NC 27707.

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Number of lists ranking colleges proliferate — and some don’t make sense

By Jenna Johnson

Georgetown University is rated one of the “10 most hipster campuses.” Catholic University is home to not one, but two of the “15 best dorms in the country.” And Johns Hopkins University made a list of 25 well-regarded schools deemed “least rigorous.”

Wait, really? One of the region’s most selective universities — a world-renowned research institution that warns teaching assistants about the intense competitiveness of its undergraduates and has four Nobel laureates on its faculty — is accused of not being rigorous?

“The reaction around here was a collective scratch of the head and a unanimous ‘Huh?’ ” Johns Hopkins spokesman Dennis O’Shea said of the September ranking published by the Daily Beast and Newsweek of “schools that will get you a top-notch degree for the least amount of work.”

The honor was decided using anonymous online surveys about the school’s workload and professors, student-to-faculty ratios, average SAT scores and retention rates. A spokesman for the Daily Beast and Newsweek said the methodology is transparent. Higher education wonks call it laughable.
Colleges have long been rated on all sorts of things, but in the last few years the number of lists has exploded. Many are compiled by start-up Web sites, media outlets or marketing companies using creative mash-ups of statistics, pseudo-statistics and online reviews submitted by anyone with an e-mail address. It seems that anyone anywhere can rank anything using any information — and student newspapers will write about how their schools fared while national media outlets will blog it as news.

If a ranking sparks outrage among students and alumni, that just means more social media buzz and Web traffic. So schools that have been unfairly slammed usually keep quiet and don’t fight back. That was the Johns Hopkins approach.

“The more you react, the more attention you call to the issue,” said Rae Goldsmith, a vice president at the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, which represents university media relations officers.

But universities crave buzz, too. Many are quick to promote wholly unscientific ratings that show them in a positive light.

“If schools get on a glorious list, those schools will trumpet out those accolades,” said Robert Franek, a publisher at the Princeton Review, a frequent college ranker that has no tie to the university of that name. “Some schools will stamp it right onto their marketing materials.”

One of the best-known lists is the U.S. News and World Report ranking of top schools, which has a complex methodology that takes 2,250 words to explain. Many university presidents slam U.S. News for measuring the wrong things — while quietly taking steps to help their schools climb higher.

But many rankings these days have nothing to do with academics. There are lists of friendliest students and hairiest students (Rutgers men are allegedly in dire need of razors). Biggest party schools and party dorms. Most significant architecture and schools most like Harry Potter’s Hogwarts (hands down, the University of Chicago). There’s even a ranking of the most unrated schools (ever heard of Madonna University in Michigan?).

Last year, the Web site Campus Splash released two rounds of dorm-related rankings generated solely from anonymous reviews. The site was created by a George Washington University student and a recent GW graduate, who did not respond to e-mailed questions.

Its first rankings of top dorms in March were picked up by Huffington Post, Time, USA Today and numerous blogs. Georgia State University issued a press release announcing one of its dorms had been “ranked best overall dorm in the country.”

Its September rendition of “The 15 Best Dorms in the Country” featured five halls in or near the District, including two at Catholic.
The ranking of “The 10 Most Hipster Campuses” by the Web site College Magazine took a different approach, mashing together statistics such as location, proximity to “hipster” shops, vegan dining options and how the student radio station fared in another ranking. Georgetown was No. 10, even though many say its collective style is more J. Crew than thrift store. The list quickly went viral.

“It was huge for us,” said Amanda Nachman, the magazine’s founder and publisher. “It was more hype than we’ve ever gotten.” Nachman, who graduated from the University of Maryland in 2007, added: “It’s fun for a student to see their school on a ranking.”

Unless it’s an unsavory ranking, such as least rigorous or “draggiest.” At the core of nearly two dozen such rankings compiled by the Daily Beast and Newsweek are letter grades assigned to schools by anonymous users of a site called CollegeProwler.com.

College Prowler founder Luke Skurman said he assumes that most survey-completers are students or recent graduates and that his data is “totally accurate.”

“It’s more of an honor system, in all honesty,” Skurman said. “I’m sure there are always people trying to game the system.”

Daily Beast and Newsweek spokesman Andrew Kirk said in an e-mail that College Prowler provides “the best data available offering first-hand perspective from students.”

Many schools learn of their latest ranking from a reporter or a Google alert. At that point, it’s difficult to get unranked. In December, the Daily Beast and Newsweek put Denison College in Ohio near the top of its “draggiest” list. The formula that produced the list used College Prowler “drug-safety grades,” campus arrest data, enrollment and the estimated rate of illicit drug use for all 18- to 25-year-olds in the state.

Denison President Dale Knobel was appalled. His campus had fewer than a dozen drug-related arrests in 2010. Knobel e-mailed his trustees to explain that some rankings are compiled by “the electronic equivalents of supermarket checkout line tabloids.”

In the e-mail, which Knobel shared with The Post, he wrote: “Should we all be outraged? Yes. Is there anything we can do about it? Sadly, no.”

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