

## **Investigation Shows ECU Records Most Internal Judicial Violations**

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April 2008

At least one university in the North Carolina university system keeps meticulous records on its students' actions – East Carolina University. In a recent investigation of internal judicial cases at several North Carolina universities, ECU recorded the highest number of both academic and non-academic violations for the past five years.

“The majority of issues we are dealing with are non-academic issues,” said Margaret Olszewska, director for the ECU office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Other schools may choose to focus solely on academic issues in their internal judicial system for various reasons, she said, while ECU records every known violation involving an ECU student, on or off campus.

The broad range of violations that gets recorded by the ECU judicial board includes actions such as “deception,” which is when students lie to a police officer or resident advisor, or file a false report, all the way up to assault and driving while intoxicated. No other university had as many violations as ECU, which yielded between 2,471 and 3,543 violations per year for the past five years.

The other universities that provided information were UNC-Wilmington, UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC-Greensboro, Western Carolina and North Carolina Central. These universities listed between three and 1,019 violations per year, according to records provided following an official records request. At many of these universities, it is possible that more violations occur but that these are the only cases held by each school's internal judicial review board.

Not surprisingly, alcohol is one of ECU's main concerns. “The largest violation of our code is alcohol. About a third of our cases deal with alcohol,” said Olszewska. A majority of those violations involve underage drinking and drunk driving, she said.

As a result, as of this summer, all incoming students will be required to take a course that educates them on the basics of alcohol use. She says it is amazing how little many students know about alcohol, adding, “There are many students out there who do not know you can die from alcohol poisoning.”

Many of ECU's cases involve freshmen students.

Freshmen “don't have past experience and, developmentally, there is a huge gap between freshmen and seniors,” said Olszewska.

Not all ECU students use alcohol carelessly. “If alcohol is used responsibly it can lead to positive behavior, but if it's misused it leads to poor grades, higher dropout rates and a

general downward spiral,” said Ben Russell, a junior at ECU. “The kids here need to start focusing more on their education.”

But some things are getting worse, said Olszewska. “When I first got here, someone drinking a 12-pack of beer was unusual. Now, it is the norm,” she said.

In her seven years of experience at ECU, she has noticed that cases are becoming more intense, there are more assault cases and parents are making more excuses for their children. “More and more parents are getting involved, which is contrary to my philosophy, because I think you need a certain freedom to decide for yourself,” she said.

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 prohibits parents from getting access to their child’s grades and medical records, but according to Olszewska, the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities will inform parents if their children have alcohol or drug violations. She reasons this by saying that troubled students help define the worth of an ECU diploma, and ECU is responsible for teaching students to be upstanding citizens.

“When ECU grants a degree, they are saying two things: you have completed the required courses and you are a responsible member of the community,” she says.

Repeat offenders who return to Olszewska’s office for counseling are given the nickname “frequent flyers,” partly in jest. Her frustration with them is that they are not learning from their mistakes. “Part of going to college is growing into adulthood and getting educated,” she said.

Some students, however, have learned from their past mistakes. “I was a troublemaker in high school and when I got to ECU I guess I was kind of still a troublemaker, and got wrote up a lot of times because of what I was doing, which was partying a lot, drinking a lot, and getting in a lot of trouble,” said Jacob Deloatch, who is a sixth-year senior at ECU. Deloatch said he has learned how to behave the way the administration wants him to, but he had to make personal sacrifices and decide what was important to him – having a good time or graduating.

Olszewska offered advice to older students who still haven’t learned from their mistakes. “Seniors should be able to use their experience to make behavioral decisions.”