

Position Paper 7 – Chapter 9: Internet Indiscretions

This is a sensitive situation indeed. Because there are still questions about how to handle freedom of press issues in the now technology intensive society it's the answer to such situations are not very cut and dry. Although the damage appears to be minimal up to this point the situation could very easily change. I did a good job assuring that there are no links from the official college pages to the professor's site and that that he removed anything that associates him with the school. The fact is, however, the website is a sub site of the school's website so it can still be traced back to the school so more must be done. The fact that this professor plans on going further is reason enough for concern. Spam is unacceptable and he is taking advantage of the resources made available to him.

The very next order of business would be to develop and implement an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). It should be required that all faculty, staff and students agree to the AUP before doing anything else with their web space. The consequences for failure to comply should be clearly stated. In this situation, especially, it would be important to emphasize that the site should not be used for extensive communication of non curriculum-related material which is obviously the case here. The AUP will go into effect immediately and the next time users attempt to sign onto their web space the policy will appear and require acceptance to sign in. If the policy is not accepted, the user will not be able to login successfully. Once accepted, the AUP is a binding contract between the university and the user. The AUP will clearly state that if there are violations to the rules set forth, the website may be removed without warning. Although a warning will not be needed to remove content, I will give violators one warning, allowing a week before further action is taken. This gives the user an opportunity to remove unacceptable content before their site is removed. This seems to be the best way to handle the situation at hand.

The standards of acceptability will be decided by the institution. Colleges have an image to maintain and anything that goes against their mission and goals must not be allowed. Individuals should not be allowed to use institutional resources to say things that the institution would object to or that contradict the image of the institution. Although we have a right to freedom of speech and expression, we must be mindful of the impact we potentially have. Most organizations, corporations and institutions do outline unacceptable behaviors for their employees. Even in an academic environment it's important. I do feel that it is different when it comes to your personal property, you do not have the same guidelines restricting certain behaviors. However, if you are involved with the production or affiliation with offensive messages and it still somehow associates you with an organization, that still poses a problem in my opinion. The important thing is that there are policies in place that everyone is aware of. In the AUP for Kent City Schools, I especially like the statement that, "The District reserves all rights to any material stored in files which are generally accessible to others and will remove any material which the District, at its sole discretion, believes may be unlawful, obscene, pornographic, abusive, or otherwise objectionable."

There definitely should be more stringent standards in regards to push technologies vs. those of pull technologies. People seek out the information that is relevant or useful to them, we don't like being the

target of large numbers of unsolicited materials. However, in certain settings, such as schools there must also be standards in place in regards to pull technologies. It is important on both ends of the spectrum.

So to revisit the issue of the professor at the university, I would seek removal of his site if he has not complied with the AUP that appears the next time he attempts to log on to his web space. Given his plans to spam the university mail, there may also be a need to place email related polices into the AUP or have a separate policy that covers email usage. The bottom line is the school should have the authority to say how university supplied technologies can and cannot be used.