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Gossip site banned at Tenn. State

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Tennessee State University (TSU) became the first public university to ban the collegiate gossip Web site JuicyCampus.com from its campus network on November 12, raising concerns over students' rights to free speech.

JuicyCampus claims to have over 150,000 posts and counting from students across 500 college campuses where anonymous posts often disclose personal rumors about other students.

Hampton University in Hampton, Va., and Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., are among several private institutions where the site has also been banned, according to the Associated Press.

The decision to ban JuicyCampus at TSU was in response to a parent's complaint to the university expressing concern for the child's safety after reading a targeted comment on the site, said Michael A. Freeman, vice president for student affairs at TSU.

"For our students to talk so openly and graphically, disparaging one another, brings shame and dishonor to this institution," said Freeman in a letter to students published in the school's student newspaper, The Meter. "A JuicyCampus gossip blog does not fit with the legacy, spirit, and reputation of Tennessee State University."

Matt Ivester, president & founder of JuicyCampus, told WXII12 news channel in North Carolina, "We don't believe that serious harm can come to a person's reputation as a result of postings on our site, because a reasonable person does not believe everything they read on a site like our's - it's unsubstantiated, anonymous gossip."

"We do not consider a person's full name to be "contact information", and we do not believe that regulating, aka censoring, our site any further is appropriate," he said.

The site does remove spam, illegal hate speech and contact information, Ivester said.

"To the extent that a user disagrees with something that is posted, they are welcome to reply with additional information or a differing opinion," he added. "Everyone has an equal voice on JuicyCampus, and we believe that additional speech, rather than censorship, is the answer to bad speech."

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Roster Breakdown: In-depth look at the roster
FEATURE: Breaking down the dribble-drive motion offense
COMMENTARY: Xavier still class of A-10; Temple, Dayton strong again

News

UM student to twirl at Macy's
Local charities need help more than ever
Mass. Ave goes pedestrian-friendly
Gossip site banned at Tenn. State

Arts & Living

Potential beneath the 'Furr'
Facts and fables for fueling your libido
UStyle at UMass: Fashion on campus
Ask Gwen: Your Advice Authority

Editorial / Opinion

Giving real thanks for Thanksgiving
After turkey, drive safe
The textbook-industrial complex

Sports

Hockey: UMass can't hold lead, tumbles in OT
Basketball: Starting from scratch
Basketball: Minutewomen rely on youth
CAA Football: Dukes Number 1

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