

persons, the rights and property of others and demonstrate concern for others' feelings and their needs for conditions which support their work and development).”

Students report that a Joint H

While Robinson may well have been offended by the profile, the students' actions, confined as they were to the Internet, simply could not have created an "intimidating, hostile, or offensive" work environment, nor could they have interfered in any substantial way with Robinson's ability to work. Robinson's exposure to the profile was not unavoidable but in fact required that she seek out the correct profile on MySpace's Internet site. Further, Wilson's policy goes on to state that "[t]his definition will be interpreted with sensitivity toward academic freedom and freedom of expression." By equating expression that is simply opinionated or potentially offensive with harassment, Wilson dangerously trivializes actual harassment, which is a serious and potentially very harmful offense.

Finally, Wilson's persistence in leveling charges of slander, identity theft, and harassment against the students, despite two JHC hearings in which sufficient evidence to find the students responsible of these charges was not found, represents a disturbing attempt to intimidate the students into confessing to having created the profile. Threats and intimidation are not tactics that any institution of higher education, especially one that purports to uphold high standards of honor and respect, should use.

FIRE strongly urges Wilson College to make a clear distinction between actual illegal activity and the expression of potentially insulting ideas by dropping the charges of slander, identity theft, and harassment. Please do not let one administrator's feelings of offense trump students' ability to engage in parodic and satirical expression. FIRE hopes that this situations will be resolved thoroughly and swiftly; however, we are committed to using all of our resources to seeing this process through to a just and moral conclusion.

Because of the serious nature of the allegations against these students, FIRE requests a response on this matter by May 9, 2006. Enclosed are waivers of rights under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) signed by Kathryn Webber, Daniella Care, Miranda Fuller, Jacinta Reeder, and Ashley Culligan, allowing Wilson College to communicate with FIRE about the current case involving these students.

Sincerely,

Tara Sweeney
Program Officer

cc:

Tammy Samuels, Dean of Students, Wilson College
Elisa Harding Hunt, Assistant Dean of Students, Wilson College
Mary Hendrickson, Associate Dean of the College, Wilson College
Selena Robinson, Director of the Women with Children Program, Wilson College
Ginger Fisher, Chair of the Faculty Committee on Student Affairs, Wilson College