



*Business Ethics*

# JUICYCAMPUS

**Prepared by Andrew Born, Gordon Closter, and Austin Esecson  
under the supervision of Professor Wayne Norman**

In the fall of 2007, an interactive website launched at seven college campuses around the country with little fanfare. Within six months, JuicyCampus.com was the talk of school administrators, students, media, and lawyers alike, having meanwhile spread to over sixty colleges and universities nationwide. “C’mon. Give us the juice,” urges JuicyCampus as it solicits anonymous gossip from any and every source.

JuicyCampus is designed as a website where students can go to school-specific pages and post comments about anyone or anything whilst remaining entirely anonymous, and it has caused a stir of controversy amongst even the most ardent defenders of First Amendment rights to free speech. From a legal standpoint, JuicyCampus remains covered under new laws protecting bloggers and other Internet Service Providers, but many have raised the question as to who might be ethically or socially responsible for this user-driven frenzy and the damage it can cause to the reputations of individuals and institutions.

This case was prepared as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either the effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation.

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## JuicyCampus: “Always Anonymous, Always Juicy”<sup>1</sup>

“College students are clever and fun-loving, and we wanted to create a place where they could share their stories.”  
– JuicyCampus Founder and CEO, Matt Ivester.<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

In the fall of 2007, an interactive website launched at seven college campuses around the country with little fanfare. Within six months, JuicyCampus.com was the talk of school administrators, students, media, and lawyers alike, having meanwhile spread to over sixty colleges and universities nationwide. “C’mon. Give us the juice,”<sup>3</sup> urges JuicyCampus as it solicits anonymous gossip from any and every source.

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### JuicyCampus: A Brief History

#### Founding

JuicyCampus was founded on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 as a Web 2.0 website owned and privately held by Lime Blue, LLC, a Reno, Nevada, company.<sup>4</sup> Matt Ivester, the CEO and founder, is a 2005 Duke University graduate with an economics and computer science background. “I got the idea during a brainstorming session thinking about all the hilarious stories we used to tell during college, and how there’s not a place to share them on the web,”<sup>5</sup> explains Ivester. According to Ivester, JuicyCampus was thus created with the intent to have “a fun place where college students can share personal stories,” and “hang out on the Internet.” The website declares that JuicyCampus’s mission is merely to enable “online anonymous free speech on college campuses.”<sup>6</sup>

#### Website Operations & Features

The website is open to anyone. Its main feature is a message board that is divided up by college, with threads that can be sorted by categories such as “most discussed,” “most viewed,” and “juiciest.” People may anonymously post anything they want, implicitly agreeing that they will not post anything “unlawful, threatening, abusive, tortuous, defamatory, obscene, libelous, or invasive of another person’s privacy,”<sup>7</sup> as per the JuicyCampus Terms and Conditions. Since the JuicyCampus team guarantees that it does no posting, editing, or altering of its own, all

<sup>1</sup> “JuicyCampus”. Available from [www.juicycampus.com](http://www.juicycampus.com). Accessed on March 23, 2008

<sup>2</sup> Pope, Justin. “Juicy Web site proves popular on campus, but many students fight back”. *Rocky Mountain Collegian*. (February 20, 2008)

<sup>3</sup> JuicyCampus”. Available from [www.juicycampus.com](http://www.juicycampus.com). Accessed on March 24, 2008

<sup>4</sup> Ivester, Matt. Phone Interview. February 8, 2008

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> “JuicyCampus”. Available from [www.juicycampus.com](http://www.juicycampus.com). Accessed on March 24, 2008

<sup>7</sup> “Terms and Conditions”. Available from [www.juicycampus.com](http://www.juicycampus.com). Accessed on March 23, 2008

content is user-generated – in Ivester’s words, “created by our users, for our users.”<sup>8</sup> In addition, as indicated on the site, people are free to reply to original posts, but the threads that have been posted cannot be edited or deleted. With a word of warning, Ivester writes “once it’s out there, it’s out there. So be careful what you say.”<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, when asked about whether site operators do any sort of content censoring, Ivester replied that there is no pre-screening mechanism in place, “though on a very rare occasion we will remove a post . . . but it is rare.”<sup>10</sup>

As the website prides itself on its most provocative posts, users are also able to vote on comments they think are “juiciest” and may use the “juiciest tab” which organizes threads in order of percent agreement (with a minimum requirement of five votes). Aside from the message boards, the website also features: a juicySTORE, where people may purchase JuicyCampus apparel and accessories, including t-shirts sporting the expression “sluts are funny”<sup>11</sup>; a juicyNEWSLETTER, where users may sign up to receive email updates; and a juicyBLOG, which includes messages from the JuicyCampus team and numerous links to online articles about the site.

### **Corporate Culture**<sup>12</sup>

The JuicyCampus offices are based out of Los Angeles, California. Although Ivester was hesitant to talk too much in detail about the corporate culture of JuicyCampus (including office structure and number of employees), he did say that the atmosphere, “is very fun, and [has] a lot of young people.” He also acknowledged that he had a strong team of technology advisors and great lawyers that understand what the JuicyCampus team is trying to do. He described the office setting as, “very laid back, but driven towards a specific vision.”

### **JuicyBusiness**

The JuicyCampus business model is structured like most other websites, with advertising being the main source of revenue. The website is not publicly owned so there are no shareholders investing in the company. Ivester explained that they initially received funding through fundraising and networking to get things started.

### **Initial Expansion**

JuicyCampus.com was created in August, but not officially launched until October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007. There were initially eight colleges selected for the “trial period”, including five local Los Angeles schools, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, College of Charleston, and Duke University (the last three were chosen since they were the alma maters of JuicyCampus employees). The JuicyCampus team personally began spreading word of the site, and the methods varied from campus to campus. At Duke, Matt Ivester emailed and called people he knew and asked them to check out the site and pass it along to friends. He also relied heavily on his fraternity, Sigma Phi Epsilon, to spread the word. The JuicyCampus team also incorporated online Facebook ads and student newspaper ads at several launch campuses. Though slow at first, more and more students began viewing and posting on the website, and it experienced rapid user growth during the month of December. Once JuicyCampus received local and national media coverage, user frequency snowballed.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Ivester, Matt. Phone Interview. February 8, 2008

<sup>9</sup> “Official Juicy Campus Blog”. Available from <http://juicycampus.blogspot.com>. Accessed on March 24, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Ivester, Matt. Phone Interview. February 8, 2008

<sup>11</sup> “JuicyCampus”. Available from [www.juicycampus.com](http://www.juicycampus.com). Accessed on March 24, 2008

<sup>12</sup> Ivester, Matt. Phone Interview. February 8, 2008

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix for graphs and related information.

## The Juice

Though the idea of JuicyCampus may have started as an innocent attempt at publicizing secret crushes and hilarious weekend accounts, the posts almost immediately devolved into hateful diatribes and shockingly revealing accounts of sex and drug use.

On a random day in February 2008, these were just a few of the postings on the JuicyCampus main page:

“D\*\*\* H\*\*\*\* You are mother f\*\*\*\*\* sl\*\* a\*\* fat hoe bag piece of sh\*\*”

“Rich P\*\*\*\*\* is a f\*\*”

“Philip V\*\*\*\*\* this guys is a f\*\*\*\*\* homo”

“Liz S\*\*\*\* easy to get into this asian slu\*\* pants, hard part is getting her out, a couple of beers and this head case is easy for the picken”

“Hottest A\*\* on Campus”<sup>14</sup>

JuicyCampus does not pre-screen any content, leaving full names, locations, and explicit profanity readily accessible to the general public. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008, a Yale sophomore was identified by his full name as being on a pornographic website with three other men. Included with the post was a link to the website and the phrase, “pictures don’t lie.”<sup>15</sup>

After learning about the post from a roommate, the student spent most of that evening panicked and dispirited. In the days that followed, he pored over study materials for his midterm exams and did his best to focus on his coming spring vacation. “I’m trying to zone it out,” he said in a telephone interview. “What else could I really do?”<sup>16</sup>

Another student, a Duke University senior, was falsely accused of indulging in cocaine:

I’m sitting in front of my computer with a box of tissues wondering how this will change the rest of my life. I have applied to the best law schools in the country, but someone has intentionally defamed my character by explicitly stating I use cocaine, which is simply untrue. I’m left wondering what admissions officer (or employer) is going to admit some ‘cokehead.’<sup>17</sup>

Although JuicyCampus has thus far been able to guard its direct content from online search engines like Google and Yahoo!, any potential employers could easily peruse the annals of the site by using the search bar provided at the top of any page.

## Legality of JuicyCampus

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> “JuicyCampus”. Available from [www.juicycampus.com](http://www.juicycampus.com). Accessed on March 20, 2008

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Morgan, Richard. “A Crash Course in Online Gossip”. *The New York Times*. March 16, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Young, Jeffrey. “Web Site Promising ‘Juicy’ Campus Gossip Faces Backlash”. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. (February 12, 2008)

<sup>18</sup> United States Constitution, The First Amendment in the Bill of Rights. Available at <http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/constitution.billofrights.html>. Accessed March 24, 2008.

## Supreme Precedent

As the original draft of the United States Constitution did not include a concrete guarantee of civil liberties, the First Amendment, stated above, was put in place to protect the valued ideal of free speech and expression. Moreover, citing that “anonymous pamphlets, leaflets, brochures and even books have played an important role in the progress of mankind,” and that “anonymity has sometimes been assumed for the most constructive purposes,”<sup>19</sup> the United States Supreme Court, in *Talley v. California*, held anonymous free speech as a protected entity under this Amendment as well. Finally, as of 1997 in *Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union*, the Supreme Court fully extended the protections of the First Amendment to the Internet and other forms of electronic communication.<sup>20</sup>

## Communications Decency Act

Although the First Amendment is responsible for the virtually uncensored dialogue that is deemed legal in the United States, it is not the only governmental protection that has been afforded to sites like JuicyCampus. Ironically, though the Communications Decency Act of 1996 (CDA) was supposed to be the first attempt to regulate sexually explicit material on the Internet, Section 230 of the Act granted legal immunity to Internet Service Providers from any torts that their users committed, thus granting freedom for online forums. It states that “no provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider.”<sup>21</sup>

The distinction here between publisher and distributor is an important one. Whereas a distributor such as a library or newsstand holds virtually no liability regarding the content of the material that it carries, a publisher has the same liability for any statement that is printed as if he or she had originally created it.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, JuicyCampus holds a unique third party stance where it is merely distributing access to user-generated conversation. As Matt Ivester puts it, “ultimately, JuicyCampus is created by our users, and we ask that [they] please take this responsibility seriously.”<sup>23</sup>

Thus, although laws such as CDA Section 230 shield *websites* from liability, the users themselves are not as protected. As Justice Holmes comments in *Schenck v. United States*, “the most stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theater and causing a panic.”<sup>24</sup> What this implies is that the First Amendment does not give the right to engage in “obscenity, libel, copyright infringement, misleading or commercial speech, or use of ‘fighting words.’”<sup>25</sup> As such, those who are wronged by anonymous speech on the Internet have the ability to pursue legal action and even unmask the anonymous speaker.

## Application of the Law

This, however, is not as easy as one might think. First, in order to prove that defamation has occurred, one must show that the statement is published, false, injurious, and unprivileged.<sup>26</sup> As JuicyCampus is both published and unprivileged, the victim in this case would have to prove that the statement was not merely opinion, that it caused some sort of tangible injury, and that it was entirely misleading. Second, once defamation has been determined, a

<sup>19</sup> *Talley v. California*, 362 U.S. 60 (1960)

<sup>20</sup> *Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union*, 521 U.S. 844 (1997)

<sup>21</sup> “Primer on Immunity and Liability for Third-Party Content Under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act”. Available from [www.citmedialaw.org](http://www.citmedialaw.org). (January 29, 2008)

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> “Official Juicy Campus Blog”. Available from <http://juicycampus.blogspot.com>. Accessed on March 24, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> *Schenck v. U.S.*, 249 U.S. 47 (1919)

<sup>25</sup> *Mobilisa, Inc. v. John Doe and the Suggestion Box, Inc.* Superior Court, Maricopa County, Arizona. Cause No. CV2005-012619

<sup>26</sup> “Can I Say That? Defamation Law Made Simple”. Available from [www.findlaw.com](http://www.findlaw.com). Accessed on March 22, 2008

court will decide via a series of tests whether the anonymous speaker should be unmasked. Although there lacks consensus among the states, generally these tests will require that the victim should have made all reasonable efforts to notify the anonymous speaker and give the opportunity to defend his or her anonymity. Furthermore, the court will hold the claim to a “standard of discoverability” to protect anonymous speakers against individuals whose true motives are only revenge or retribution.<sup>27</sup>

The unique difficulty for a victim in the context of JuicyCampus is that the website claims that it only keeps a random log of IP addresses and doesn’t associate them with any specific post. What’s more, the Privacy and Tracking Policy JuicyCampus has “tips for the extra-cautious” pointing users in the direction of IP cloaking programs that would make anonymity nearly a guarantee.

Given this context, students have yet (after the first six months of operation) to file a single defamation suit against JuicyCampus or any of its users.

## Backlash

### Pepperdine: A Christian School Fights Back

Nestled in the picturesque Oceanside valleys of Malibu, California, is Pepperdine University, one of several aforementioned “seed schools” for JuicyCampus. This suburban campus with an undergraduate population of approximately 3,000 sports a longstanding Christian tradition. Pepperdine’s stated mission is to strengthen students for “lives of purpose, service, and leadership” through the “highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values.”<sup>28</sup> In spite of its Christian roots, dry campus, and mission to lead purposeful lives, JuicyCampus rapidly took hold of the Pepperdine community. The forum created there quickly evolved to resemble the sordid affair produced at the other testing grounds for JuicyCampus, as anonymous posters called out fellow students on race, physical appearance, and sexual promiscuity.

### The Students React

Pepperdine’s story differs from the other JuicyCampus start-ups in the swift response of its Student Government Association (SGA) to the negative impact the site seemed to be having on the community. Following an online poll in which 85% of the 453 participants said they were in favor of a ban on JuicyCampus at Pepperdine, the SGA brought the issue to a vote at its January meeting. During the meeting, views were expressed both for and against the site from a variety of students and faculty. One senior, Danae Melirrytou, urged others to vote as if they were one of the defamed, stating, “[P]ut yourself in their position and how you would feel if you saw your name and did not see truth but something disgusting about yourself.”<sup>29</sup> Several students affected directly by the site also spoke at the meeting. SGA Vice President of Administration Austin Maness explained how she, as a former sufferer of the eating disorder bulimia nervosa, felt outraged by an anonymous online suggestion to the Pepperdine females to “develop anorexia so that they could look sexy.”<sup>30</sup>

However, others like Mike Masten opposed an outright ban of the site, believing instead that the Pepperdine community needed to address the deeper issues that created such a hateful online environment in the first place:

<sup>27</sup> Mobilisa, Inc. v. John Doe and the Suggestion Box, Inc. Court of Appeals, Division One. No. 1-CA-CV 06-0521

<sup>28</sup> “Welcome”. Available from [www.pepperdine.edu](http://www.pepperdine.edu). Accessed on March 24, 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Yearout, Brittany. “Juicy online site runs dry”. Pepperdine University: *The Graphic*. (January 24, 2008)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

“I by no means support this Web site, but the reason I opposed the movement was because I guess you can call it a faith in our student body and that they do have the capability to take responsibility for this.”<sup>31</sup> Still some opposed the site simply based upon their First Amendment rights to free speech.

After several hours of debate, the SGA members were all in agreement with President Andy Canales and his belief that JuicyCampus “has the potential to be very destructive for the community.” The members eventually voted 23-5 in favor of the ban, making Pepperdine the first school to take such a decisive stance via a major student governing body, and they encouraged other universities to follow suit. A similar SGA proposition was passed unanimously at Texas Christian University shortly afterwards.<sup>32</sup>

## University Inaction

Despite the powerful statement by Pepperdine’s SGA, the student government alone does not have the ability to block URLs from University servers. Following the vote, the University set up a subcommittee, composed of several undergraduate deans, the provost, and a representative from Pepperdine’s IT department, to decide what actions, if any, the University would take.<sup>33</sup> This committee concluded not to ban the website, fearing that such an action would display “distrust of our students and a lack of appreciation for freedom of expression,” said Dean of Student Affairs, Mark Davis. Such a move would also potentially set a dangerous precedent of university administrations censoring information, however hurtful, from its students. Thus, instead of an outright ban, Pepperdine officials hoped that the ugly language and malicious intent found on the website would be best fought by addressing the underlying issues on campus which fueled the hateful culture found on JuicyCampus, instead of temporarily obscuring them with a ban.

## A Biblical Approach

Given the University’s stance, student initiatives, such as the “429 Campaign,” aimed to address the underlying issues posed by JuicyCampus. The campaign was the brainchild of aforementioned senior class senator Mike Masten. Taking its name from a bible passage, Ephesians 4:29 (“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”<sup>34</sup>), the 429 Campaign was a weeklong event held in March 2007 to increase awareness of the real hurt that virtual gossip can cause. Masten, along with the rest of the campaigns’ organizers, asked students to “‘pledge 4:29’ and to help stop hateful language in [their] community.”<sup>35</sup> However, many were not optimistic that a simple pledge would bring an end to the insidious cyber bullying and gossip at Pepperdine, including Student Government President Andy Canales. “People who will respond to this campaign are people who already feel this way,” he said. “We can’t win against the people who hide behind their computers.”<sup>36</sup>

## Google Pulls Out Advertisements

As a business, JuicyCampus operates by providing free content, paid for with advertising revenue based upon the number of visitors the page receives. The site was originally serviced by Google’s ubiquitous, AdSense,<sup>37</sup> which examines the content of a webpage and supplies relevant advertisements in an “Ads by Google” frame.<sup>38</sup> Realizing

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Hall, David. “Resolution aims to hush college gossip Web site”. Texas Christian University: *Daily Skiff*. (February 20, 2008)

<sup>33</sup> Franklin, Jaimie. “Administration snubs ‘juicy’ SGA decision”. Pepperdine University: *The Graphic*. (February 14, 2008)

<sup>34</sup> Ephesians 4:29, *New International Version Bible*

<sup>35</sup> Theden, Flora. “SGA confronts crisis with cash, Juicy backlash”. Pepperdine University: *The Graphic*. (January 31, 2008)

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> “Official Juicy Campus Blog”. Available from <http://juicycampus.blogspot.com>. Accessed on March 24, 2008.

<sup>38</sup> “Inside AdSense”. Available from <http://adsense.blogspot.com>. Accessed on March 23, 2008.

that JuicyCampus was legally sheltered in its position as a mere distributor of the site's content, embittered students and university officials alike sought to fight back against JuicyCampus by targeting its ad agency and bottom line.

Angry parties wrote letters to Google threatening boycotts and asking Google to cease its support of JuicyCampus.<sup>39</sup> With the external pressure perhaps outstripping the tangible benefit realized through JuicyCampus, Google heeded these warnings and subsequently severed ties with the website in February 2008. Google spokesman Daniel Rubin said in an e-mail that Google withdrew its service because JuicyCampus violated Google's Terms of Service.<sup>40</sup> According to the Terms, the list of content that sites with Google ads are barred from displaying includes:

- Violent content, racial intolerance, or advocacy against any individual, group, or organization
- Pornography, adult, or mature content
- Excessive profanity<sup>41</sup>

All of the above are found in abundance on JuicyCampus. Despite losing its most important source of revenue, Ivester didn't seem concerned about Google's withdrawal. "We knew this was coming," he said. "Our option with Google was either to censor our content or not display their ads."<sup>42</sup>

It took only a matter of days for JuicyCampus to find an alternative advertising service. It settled on AdBrite, a smaller, rival service. AdBrite's Terms of Service only disqualify a site if it *promotes* explicit or adult content.<sup>43</sup> JuicyCampus, in providing blank forums to be filled with user-generated content, is not considered a promoter of said material, and it is therefore not in violation of AdBrite's Terms. When asked if he was worried about similar pressure from universities and student groups who might again sever ties between AdBrite and JuicyCampus, Ivester stated that he didn't expect any future issues because AdBrite was "completely aware of the content."<sup>44</sup>

### Guaranteed Anonymity?

JuicyCampus arrived in the wake of an October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007, suicide by a teenage girl who was the victim of cyberbullying on the social networking site myspace.com.<sup>45</sup> Many students were thus shocked to find the candid nature with which murder threats were mentioned on the JuicyCampus website. The first threat occurred at Loyola Marymount University. Twenty-year-old Colgate University student George So wrote:

I wonder if I could shut down the school by saying I'm going to shoot as many people as I can in my second class tomorrow. I hope I get more than 50. For liability reasons and IP tracking I will leave it at that. But seriously, this site is ridiculous, if it got big, and someone put the effort into writing a big long serious suicide note informing all readers that he would kill over 100 kids, they could shut down the school. Nice.<sup>46</sup>

Although JuicyCampus claims that it does not keep specific records of users, So was tracked down via his IP address, arrested, and later released without charge. In regard to this issue, Ivester commented, "As for the dumb\*\*\* who posted the message that has garnered so much attention on CNN . . . he deserved what he got. Do you really

<sup>39</sup> Franklin, Jaimie. "Administration snubs 'juicy' SGA decision". Pepperdine University: *The Graphic*. (February 14, 2008)

<sup>40</sup> Hall, David. "Google pulls ads from college-gossip Web site". Texas Christian University: *Daily Skiff*. (February 26, 2008)

<sup>41</sup> "Program Policies". Available from [www.adsense.com](http://www.adsense.com). Accessed on March 24, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Hall, David. "Google pulls ads from college-gossip Web site". Texas Christian University: *Daily Skiff*. (February 26, 2008)

<sup>43</sup> "Publisher Acceptable Use Policy". Available from [www.adbrite.com](http://www.adbrite.com). Accessed on March 22, 2008.

<sup>44</sup> Hall, David. "College-gossip Web site finds new advertising, plans expansion". Texas Christian University: *Daily Skiff*. (February 29, 2008)

<sup>45</sup> Shaw, Dwani. "Juicy Campus Gushes Gossip". *The Daily Princetonian*. (February 22, 2008)

<sup>46</sup> Cheng, Jacqui. "Threat on Juicy Campus Gossip Site Lands Student in Jail". Available from <http://arstechnica.com/news.ars/post/20080313-threat-on-juicy-campus-gossip-site-land-student-in-jail.html>. Accessed on March 24, 2008.

think Juicy Campus is going to stand up to the police on privacy issues, compromise their web site, and defend a student like that? Pshhhhh.<sup>47</sup>

A post remained on the JuicyCampus Frequently Asked Questions forum inquiring, “Is this site really anonymous?” Despite these events, the JuicyCampus team tritely responded, “yes.”<sup>48</sup>

### **Duke University: The Juiciest Alma Mater**

In 2008, Duke University received two notable rankings. According to the *U.S. News & World Report*, Duke was the eighth best national university.<sup>49</sup> It also ranked first for “Most Active Schools” on JuicyCampus.<sup>50</sup> During the months of December and January, when posters actively speculated on upcoming fraternity and sorority rush results, posts amassed hundreds of views within hours of their addition to the site. The results were bigoted, sexist, and hateful as with nearly every other schools’s forum. It appeared that some Duke University students were more than willing to take advantage of the promise of anonymity and use it toward malicious ends.

### **Community Responses: Condemnation to Cyber-Terror**

In public forums, the student and administrative responses to the site’s arrival on Duke’s campus were overwhelmingly negative. “I found it absolutely repulsive,” said Stephen Bryan, associate dean of students and director of judicial affairs. “I’m extremely disappointed that some of our students have chosen to post such material specifically where individuals are named.”<sup>51</sup> The editorial board at the student newspaper, *The Chronicle*, took a firm stance against the site, believing that in the Duke community’s struggle to “redefine its campus culture, the site not only is a roadblock but in fact sets [Duke] back in that effort.”<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, on a campus that prides itself on its Community Standard (see Appendix), members of the Honor Council remained distraught as to how students chose to “reveal prejudices that they would never espouse publicly. We, as Duke students, should take pride in holding ourselves and each other to a higher standard of respect.”<sup>53</sup>

Ironically, one novel (yet unlawful) way that an anonymous Duke student took it upon himself to fight back against JuicyCampus after a friend of his was personally attacked on the site was through an act of cyber-terrorism. He designed a program to post on the site up to 300 times a minute with the sentence, “You have been pwned,” eventually forcing the site to be temporarily taken down.<sup>54</sup> Although JuicyCampus resolved the problem by adding CAPTCHAs to the posting process, the unnamed hacker vowed, “She is coming down again soon.”<sup>55</sup>

### **Beyond JuicyCampus**

Rising junior Josh Parker believed that the site’s removal, through legal means or through being spammed to oblivion, would solve little on campus. In a November letter to *The Chronicle*, he wrote:

<sup>47</sup> “Official Juicy Campus Blog”. Available from <http://juicycampus.blogspot.com>. Accessed on March 24, 2008.

<sup>48</sup> “Frequently Asked Questions”. Available from [www.juicycampus.com](http://www.juicycampus.com). Accessed on March 24, 2008.

<sup>49</sup> “Best Colleges: National Universities”. Available from [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com). Accessed on March 24, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> “Official Juicy Campus Blog”. Available from <http://juicycampus.blogspot.com>. Accessed on March 24, 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Clark, Joe, and Shreya Rao. “Gossip Web site sparks uproar”. Duke: *The Chronicle*. (November 9, 2007)

<sup>52</sup> “Gossip Web site abuses free speech”. Duke: *The Chronicle*. (November 9, 2007)

<sup>53</sup> Clark, Joe, and Shreya Rao. “Gossip Web site sparks uproar”. Duke: *The Chronicle*. (November 9, 2007)

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

The anonymous gossip occurring on JuicyCampus.com reflects what a subculture of students are thinking and talking about every day. The Web site actually does us a favor, allowing concerned observers to see these disgusting thoughts, so they actually can combat them . . . Silencing the commenters on JuicyCampus.com would only internalize their abhorrent views; the mindset that is prompting these views is what needs to be eradicated.<sup>56</sup>

His belief was one shared by many campus administrators, who felt that banning the website, if feasible, would merely be patching the surface of an issue whose roots ran much deeper than a few nasty comments.

## JuicyCampus Today

Though the reactions from Pepperdine and Duke University have been notable, schools across the nation are discussing ways to deal with the controversial website. On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2008, the Columbia College Student Council held a meeting to propose a ban of JuicyCampus on its university network.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, at colleges with less proactive student governments, there are numerous Facebook groups created by students including those titled “BAN JuicyCampus,” with 837 members; “Boycott JuicyCampus,” with 407 members; and “Students Against JuicyCampus,” with 510 members.<sup>58</sup> Some of these groups are calling for such extreme measures as marching in protest or creating a parody website called “JuicySweet,” which would feature a server containing only positive comments.

Despite the negative media attention and active attempts to hinder JuicyCampus’s success, the website is healthier than ever and shows no sign of slowing down. In an interview with CNN, Ivester hinted that, “While there has been much attention given to the critics . . . [t]housands of students from across the country have written in to request that their campus be added.”<sup>59</sup> In terms of popularity, after March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008, user viewing increased exponentially. According to one source, JuicyCampus.com receives 159,480 monthly visits and 131,611 monthly unique views<sup>60</sup> (for a graphical view of user frequency, see Appendix). Additionally, with a vote on JuicyCampus’s blog surveying “How many times a week do you check juicycampus?,” the results (with 267 votes total) were 34% checking 1-2 times, 12% checking 3-6 times, 10% checking 7-13 times, and 40% checking 14+ times.<sup>61</sup> Finally, as further proof of the increasingly heavy traffic, at the time of this case study, the JuicyCampus team posted a notice to users stating, “We are SOOOO popular! While we upgrade our technology (again), we’ve temporarily disabled some features so that everyone can still have a chance to experience the Juice!”<sup>62</sup>

As Matt Ivester puts it, although JuicyCampus has had its difficulties, “We’re learning from our mistakes to make it better. Once we’ve got it right, we’re heading to your campus. And believe us, we’re moving as fast as we can.”<sup>63</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Parker, Josh. “Combat hate with free speech on JuicyCampus.com”. Duke: *The Chronicle*. (November 12, 2007)

<sup>57</sup> Hogarty, Dave. “Columbia Council DIDN’T Vote to Block Juicy Campus”. *Columbia Gothamist* (March 23, 2008)

<sup>58</sup> “Facebook Groups”. Available from [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). Accessed on March 24, 2008

<sup>59</sup> JuicyCampus March 3rd in an interview with CNN

<sup>60</sup> “JuicyCampus: traffic statistics”. Available from [www.quantcast.com](http://www.quantcast.com). Accessed on March 24, 2008

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> “JuicyCampus”. Available from [www.juicycampus.com](http://www.juicycampus.com). Accessed on March 22, 2008

<sup>63</sup> “Frequently Asked Questions”. Available from [www.juicycampus.com](http://www.juicycampus.com). Accessed on March 24, 2008

## Appendix I: Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
August 1, 2007	Website founded by Matt Ivester.
October 24	JuicyCampus.com launched.
December 8	Loyola Marymount University student Carlos Huerta arrested after posting on JuicyCampus that he planned to shoot people on campus and then himself.
January 2008	Pepperdine University's student government passes a resolution asking the administration to block the site from the campus network.
January 27	JuicyCampus receives so many visitors the site had to shut down for a day due to server overload.
February 2008	Google pulls its ads from JuicyCampus, claiming the website violated its Terms of Use, specifically "excessive profanity."
February 7	JuicyCampus adds 50 more colleges.
February 12	JuicyCampus switches to ultra-fast mega-server.
February 19	CNN publishes an article about JuicyCampus. The article is the top most popular article for most of the day and JuicyCampus.com is consequently overwhelmed with hits. The server nearly shuts down.
March 2008	Colgate University student George So arrested for posting a thread on JuicyCampus stating he planned to kill 50 people.  Baylor University student government votes to ban the site from the university's network.  Columbia University votes on proposal to ban JuicyCampus from undergraduate network.

## Appendix II: List of Similar/Rival Sites

- <http://www.campusgossip.com> – more story oriented than JUICYCAMPUS
- [www.xoxohth.com](http://www.xoxohth.com) – “the most prestigious college discussion board in the world”
- [www.truemors.com](http://www.truemors.com)
- [www.collegehumor.com](http://www.collegehumor.com)
- [www.perezhilton.com](http://www.perezhilton.com) and [www.tmz.com](http://www.tmz.com) – both celebrity gossip sites
- [www.camfess.com](http://www.camfess.com) – site where users can anonymously share secrets
- [www.autoadmit.com](http://www.autoadmit.com)
- [www.gossipreport.com](http://www.gossipreport.com)

## Appendix III: JuicyCampus Screen Shot

**Juicy Campus Beta**

C'mon. Give us the juice.  
 Posts are totally, 100% anonymous.  
 See our privacy and tracking policy [here](#)

*Always Anonymous... Always Juicy...*

Choose Your Campus:

Some features so that everyone can still have a chance to experience the Juice! Share your SPRING BREAK stories on the new SPRING

You are viewing: Duke

Latest Posts | Latest Replies | Most Discussed | Most Viewed | Juiclest

**New Post**

Post Title	JUICY %	JUICY Votes	# Replies
<b>I am in love with Oliver Brooks</b> 03-16-2008	0%	0 votes	4
<b>anyone been inside lucy coassin?</b> 03-16-2008	100%	1 votes	2
<b>Paulus is gay?</b> 03-16-2008	42%	7 votes	2
<b>duke athletes...overall</b> 03-16-2008	100%	1 votes	3
<b>Which football players should Duke girls stay away from??</b> 03-15-2008	0%	0 votes	3
<b>why are the black kappa's (kappa alpha psi) so wack?</b>	50%	2 votes	4

Navigation: All | Alumni | Athletes | Faculty Administration | Greek Organizations | Overheard on Campus | Spring Break | Students

juicyBLOG  
juicyNEWSLETTER  
Tshirt Tank.com  
T-SHIRTS BANNED FROM CAMPUS  
click here to see

## Appendix IV: Supported Campuses

(As of March 16, 2008)

Air Force	UC Santa Barbara
Arizona State University	UCLA
Auburn University	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Baylor University	University of Florida
Bob Jones	University of Illinois
Boston College	University of Miami
Boston University	University of Nevada - Las Vegas
Boulder	University of Pennsylvania
Brown	University of Pittsburgh
BYU	University of San Diego
Cal State - Long Beach	University of Virginia
Chapman University	University of Wisconsin - Whitewater
Colgate	USC
College of Charleston	Vanderbilt University
Columbia	Virginia Tech
Cornell	Wake Forest University
Dartmouth	Yale
Davidson College	
DePaul University	
Duke University	
Emory University	
Harding University	
Harvard	
Indiana University	
LMU	
Michigan State	
MIT	
Navy	
New York University	
Notre Dame University	
Penn State University	
Pepperdine	
Princeton	
Southern Methodist University	
SUNY - Brockport	
SUNY - Buffalo	
Texas AM	
Texas Christian University	
The Ohio State University	
The University of Arizona	
Tulane University	
UC Berkeley	
UC Irvine	
UC San Diego	

## Appendix V: The Duke Community Standard<sup>64</sup>

Duke University is a community dedicated to scholarship, leadership, and service and to the principles of honesty, fairness, respect, and accountability. Citizens of this community commit to reflect upon and uphold these principles in all academic and non-academic endeavors, and to protect and promote a culture of integrity.

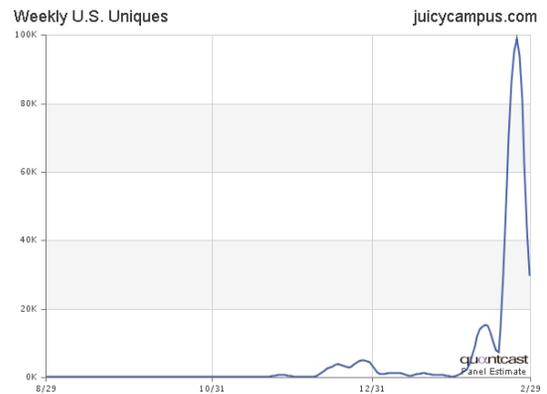
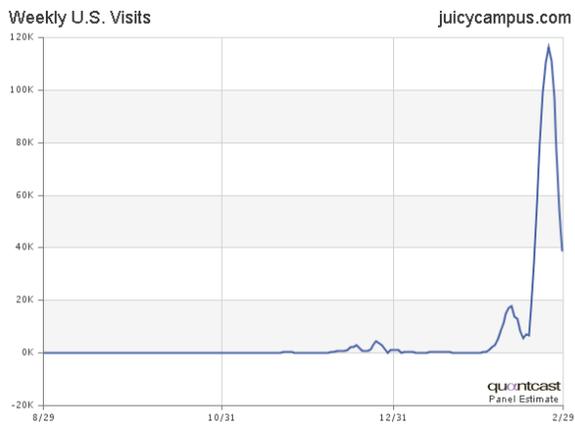
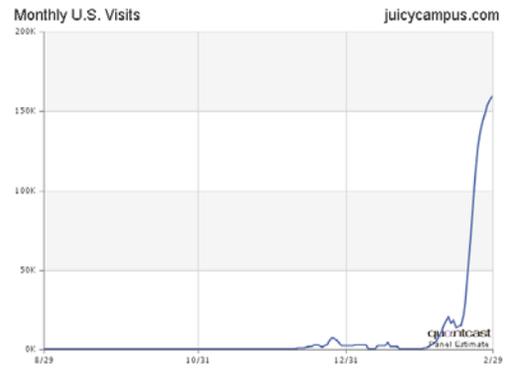
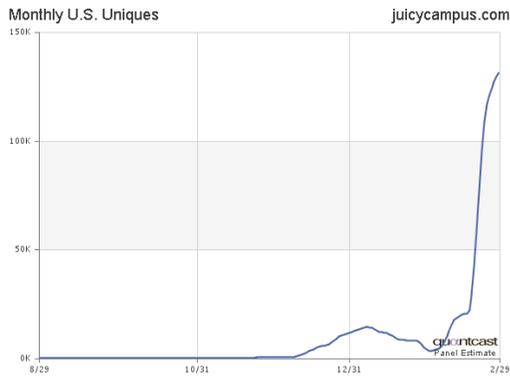
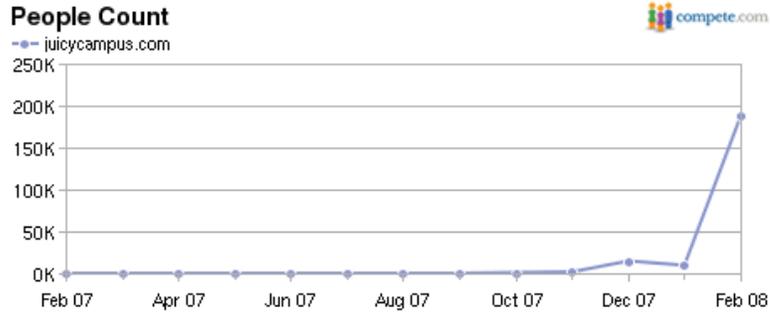
To uphold the Duke Community Standard:

- I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors;
- I will conduct myself honorably in all my endeavors; and
- I will act if the Standard is compromised.

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<sup>64</sup> "Community Standard". Available from [www.duke.edu](http://www.duke.edu). Accessed on March 24, 2008

## Appendix VI: Site Traffic<sup>65</sup>



<sup>65</sup> "JuicyCampus: traffic statistics". Available from [www.quantcast.com](http://www.quantcast.com). Accessed on March 24, 2008

## Study Questions for JuicyCampus

1. To what extent is JuicyCampus accountable for the content of their website? What content, if any, should be removed from the site? Does the website's format itself influence the content? To what extent is JuicyCampus ethically responsible beyond the scope of the law? Should the law be altered to account for this new application of free speech?
2. What fuels the continued success of JuicyCampus? How does the impersonal nature of an online forum influence the content of the posts? Furthermore, how does the anonymity of the site affect the character of the posts?
3. What are the harms and benefits of JuicyCampus? What can be done to minimize the harm and maximize the benefit?
4. What prevents runaway gossip and defamation in normal face-to-face communities? How does a site like JuicyCampus manage to undermine these factors? Would you expect new social conventions against malicious gossip to re-emerge and eventually dampen the popularity of sites like JuicyCampus?