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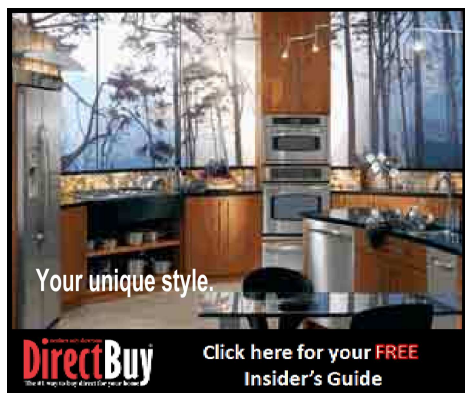
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Valdosta State student sues after he's expelled Parodied administration online

By **Brandon Larrabee** | Morris News Service | Story updated at 8:59 PM on Saturday, January 12, 2008



ATLANTA - A student expelled from Valdosta State University after posting an online parody that school officials found threatening filed a federal lawsuit Friday, saying the punishment violated his right to free speech.

Hayden Barnes is suing Valdosta State President Ronald Zaccari, the University System Board of Regents and the university itself. The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, where the University System of Georgia is based.

"VSU's concerted effort to silence and punish Hayden Barnes is an unconscionable attempt to violate his First Amendment rights - and VSU, as a public institution, is legally required to protect these rights," Greg Lukianoff, president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, said in a written statement issued by the advocacy group working with Barnes on the suit. "Now VSU must answer for its actions in court."

Zaccari expelled Barnes in May after the student posted an Internet collage protesting the university's decision to build two new parking decks. Zaccari said Barnes represented a threat to the university.

The image included a reference to the "Zaccari Memorial Parking Garage," though Barnes wrote in a letter to Zaccari that he wasn't aware that memorials are only named after people who have died.

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