



News | Dec 2, 2011

Court upholds Seattle Community Colleges emergency rule to prohibit camping on campus

SEATTLE – A Thurston County Superior Court judge today upheld a Seattle Community College District emergency rule that prohibits camping on Seattle Community Colleges property.

The Emergency Rule had been unanimously approved at a Nov. 23 special meeting of the Board of Trustees of the three-college district, which includes the campus of Seattle Central Community College, the site of the Occupy Seattle encampment since Oct. 29. District Chancellor Jill Wakefield brought the measure to the board following reports from the college community, the neighborhood, and the Seattle-King County Environmental Health Services Division, which noted numerous health and safety issues, including garbage accumulation, improper food handling and disposal of wastewater, evidence of human and animal waste, and drug and alcohol use.

“Our primary concern has been the safety and well-being of our students, employees and the campers,” Dr. Wakefield said at the meeting. “Public safety and health violations have been increasing, and I’m convinced we have reached a state of emergency.”

Immediately following the Nov. 23 meeting, one of the members of the Occupy Seattle group filed a motion for a temporary restraining order to prohibit enforcement of the rule. The Superior Court set the matter over to today.

The Emergency Rule is an amendment to Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 132F-136-030 outlining permissible activities on Seattle Community Colleges property. The new rule, which becomes Section 14, states: “College property may not be used for camping, defined to include sleeping, carrying on cooking activities, storing personal belongings, or the erection of tents or other shelters or structures used for purposes of personal habitation.”

It will be in effect for 120 days. The college district has started the process to adopt a permanent rule.

Early next week, the college plans to post the rule at the campground and meet with the campers to let them know they need to move.

At their Nov. 23 board meeting, college officials pledged to work with Occupy Seattle on an orderly process to close the camp, and they have continued to meet with camp members throughout the past week. Seattle Central President Dr. Paul Killpatrick addressed the group’s general assembly meeting on Dec. 1. The district has also been talking with city, county and state agencies that could be impacted by the presence of the camp.

“We haven’t been waiting for a court decision to find a solution,” Dr. Wakefield said. “The camp has been attracting people who are not part of the Occupy Seattle movement, including those who

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break the law and cause harm to others. Reports of neighborhood crime are going up. I feel even more strongly than ever that safety and security are being threatened.”

The Seattle Community College District:

The Seattle Community College District educates and trains more than 51,000 students every year at Seattle Central, North Seattle and South Seattle Community Colleges; the Seattle Vocational Institute; and four specialized training centers, including the Seattle Maritime Academy, Wood Construction Center, New Holly Learning Center and the Georgetown Campus.

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