

Student leader fights punishment

Administration stands by decision

By Paul Brooks
Times Herald-Record
pbrooks@th-record.com

New Paltz — Three SUNY New Paltz government leaders face expulsion or suspension in a battle with campus administrators.

The students say the threat to their educational careers is retaliation for their progressive political tactics and agenda. The administrators say the students have harassed and frightened people on campus, and that needs to stop.

Woven among the allegations are video tapes, audio recordings and a student-driven Web site that catalogs every step the administration takes.

The three students are Justin Holmes, R.J. Partington III and Dan Curtis. Holmes is president-elect of the Student Association; Partington is vice president. Curtis is the new president of the statewide SUNY Student Assembly.

They are controversial. They have pushed the administration

to ease up on penalties for drugs on campus and advocated a militia to defend students.

The current crisis grows out of a clash on April 27, the night Holmes and Partington won election.

Resident Life Director Corina Coracci said the male students surrounded her, threatened and harassed her during the clash in the hallway of the Student Union Building. She did not know Holmes had videotaped part of the confrontation and later posted it on www.wikipaltz.com. She could not be reached for comment.

A June 2 campus hearing found grounds to expel Partington and suspend Holmes and Curtis for one year. On Friday Holmes filed an appeal with the campus provost, asking for a new hearing and procedural changes. Civil rights lawyer Michael Sussman of Goshen has told

administrators the students might sue the university.

Caracci is only one of many people on campus to feel intimidated by the student leaders, according to professor Glenn McNitt, president of the local United University Professors.

"There are at least four incidents that I am aware of, some going back more than a year," McNitt said.

Eric Gullickson, spokesman for the university, said the expulsion and suspensions have nothing to do with the students' activism. "They have to comply with the rules and regu-

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— Eric Gullickson,
SUNY New Paltz spokesman

lations."

Holmes said there is no real evidence of harassment or intimidation by him or his two friends. "We engage in political activism. We do not engage in harassing people."

The students have faculty who support them. Associate professor Eugene Heath knows Holmes. "Something doesn't smell right here," he said, "but it is very hard for me to know."