

# 3 student leaders fight SUNY

■ Student Association President Justin Holmes says he is being punished for his libertarian views — a charge the New Paltz college calls groundless.

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**NEW PALTZ** — Justin Holmes, the Student Association president at SUNY New Paltz, is appealing his suspension for allegedly harassing Residence Life Director Corinna Caracci the night he won the association election.

R.J. Partington III, the association's vice president, was expelled, and Dan Curtis, president of the statewide SUNY Student Assembly, also was suspended from the college over the same incident, which occurred April 27. The three are represented by civil rights lawyer Michael Sussman.

Holmes, who faces charges of harassment and possession of stolen property, said it is his political agenda and campus activism that led officials to press charges against him.

"I have never engaged in any kind of threatening or harassing actions towards Ms. Caracci or anyone else," Holmes wrote in an e-mail. "I have video evidence which documents the entirety of my involvement in the encounter — evidence she obviously did not realize existed when she filed a deceitful police report."

The college, in a statement on its Web site, calls the idea that students were being punished for their activism "unfounded."

"Just like any other student, student leaders are subject to campus rules and regulations," the college said.

"I don't think anyone should assume a 30-second video presented by someone in their own defense should decide anything," added Eric Gullickson, the college spokesman.

"I am quite sure the administration is at odds with the progressive/libertarian student movement, in which I have come to be seen as a leader, because of our use of and advocacy surrounding technology, drugs and transparent decision-making," Holmes said. "I have said for some time that SUNY New Paltz should join the rest of the SUNY system by ending our policy of mandatory expulsion for controlled substance possession."

Holmes also advocated for a student militia, which, in his e-mail, he called merely a "thought experiment" to expose the media's obsession with sensationalism.

Holmes was charged with possession of stolen property on May 9. He said he had been working late in the Student Association office and fell asleep on a sleeping bag that was left in the office when he was arrested by campus police.

"The sleeping bags had been in our office complex for about a year ... and never left the Student Union Building," he said. "I believe that this arrest ... is part of a systematic campaign to intimidate and humiliate student leaders in response to the large and growing progressive and libertarian movements on our campus."