

NEW JERSEY RECORD

THE RECORD PE/PM

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1988

College radio back on the air

School silenced it last week

By **Stephanie Stokes**
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"Inappropriate" and "offensive" programming at William Paterson College's radio station prompted the school to pull WPSC's plug a week ago, but apologies and a change in management have brought it back on the air.

The furor arose over an afternoon program that had aired regularly since last semester with a single disc jockey.

But when members of the administration who had

received a stream of complaints tuned in to the program Feb. 10, they decided it had to go.

"It wasn't the music, it was the comments — the talk — that was offensive to some groups," said Dennis Santillo, spokesman for the college administration.

"It was offensive to a wide variety of groups on campus," said Arthur Gonzales, a junior and president of the Student Government Association (SGA).

Santillo and Gonzales declined to characterize the program.

With the SGA's support, Dean of Students Dominic Baccollo decided to shut down the station —

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known as the Voice of William Paterson College — at 2 p.m. Feb. 19.

The low-wattage cable carrier signal normally is heard from 7 a.m. to 3 a.m. on campus and in surrounding apartment buildings.

The station was permitted to resume broadcasting Wednesday morning. One of the several conditions was a pledge that members of its executive board attend an affirmative-action workshop sponsored by the administration.

The workshop "deals with sensitivity to students, covering a number of various groups," Santillo said. "We want to make sure that they go to this."

The radio station is a SGA-sponsored club with 60 or 70 members. Because of the offending program, four students were suspended from the club; one may be permitted to return. No other action is expected to be taken against the students.

Santillo said the decision to shut down WPSC wasn't made lightly. "We took into account all considerations of First Amendment rights. This was not an attempt to censor, by anyone in the administration or anybody else," he said.

Other conditions to be met by WPSC include airing an apology for the program every

day for a week and writing apologies to those who have complained.

Santillo described the offensive program as symptomatic of a deeper problem at the station. "There was disarray that was not permitting the station's executive board of advisers themselves to exercise their own judgment," he said.

Just how the programming got out of the board's control is still under investigation. WPSC members couldn't be reached for comment.

Problems at the station began to surface in December, when the faculty advisor, John Kiernan, quit, complaining that it wasn't operating professionally.

Complete programming logs weren't being kept, the list of club members wasn't kept up to date, and "there was some question about how well the books have been kept," Santillo said. "There's no evidence of anything improper or illegal — it was just not managed very well."

Santillo said Kiernan has indicated that he is willing to return as adviser.

WPSC will be under "tighter management," Santillo said. "Obviously we're going to continue to monitor the station, but we expect that everything is going to work out fine."

The station was briefly shut down less than a month earlier. In late January, the theft of about \$4,000 worth of broadcasting equipment took it off the air for a day. Santillo said the

One of several conditions for resumption of broadcasting was a pledge that members of the station's executive board attend an affirmative-action workshop.

two incidents were unrelated.

WPSC is planning to make the switch from cable transmission to FM broadcasting in September. Broadcasting would allow its signal to reach 20 miles from campus.

Santillo said he doesn't think the recent flap will jeopardize the station's chances for federal approval.

"The FCC [Federal Communications Commission] will judge the FM station on the basis of its first six months of broadcast," he said.

By FCC standards, the transgressions "were minor," Santillo said. "I think 'an aberration' is the best way to describe them. We have a very strong communications program that's intact and improving, and the FM station will add to that."