

College station goes big time

By The Record's staff

When Scott Schaefer finished his weekly shock radio show at William Paterson College, his mouth needed a good washing. As soon as school administrators heard his obscenity-ridden hour last year, they shut down the college closed-circuit station for two days, and banned Schaefer from the microphones.

No student at the college would dare take that chance again.

The school now operates an FM radio station serving northern New Jersey, and such antics could jeopardize WPSC-FM's new Federal Communications Commission license. And, they would provoke the wrath of the students' tough professional manager, John Kiernan.

Expanding signal

In his decade at the college, Kiernan has always demanded the highest standards of radio broadcasting from his students, student radio managers said. But until December, the station had few to please, since its signal did not extend beyond the Wayne campus.

After a 16-year battle to win the license, construction of a 200-watt transmitter was completed in December. It can send the signal as far south as Newark, west to Morris County, and east to the Hudson River. With a current potential audience of 3 million, the buzzword at 88.7 is professionalism.

"There is a lot more pressure on us now. If I screw up, I get a call from John," said newscaster Liz Cotter.

She said Kiernan goes easier on the station's female staff.

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Buzzword is professionalism at college's new FM station

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"He'll give me advice. If the guys make a mistake, they're going to be chewed out," she said.

Her older brother, Dave, the station's operations manager, said Kiernan has required much more than just a smooth delivery from station staff.

Professional radio stations have strict programming formats designed to capture a specific audience for the benefit of advertisers, Cotter said. Most college radio stations disregard market concerns, and let disc jockeys air their personal favorites or an eclectic mix, known as "alternative" music.

Although WPSC-FM cannot accept advertising because it holds an educational license, Kiernan advised the students to stick with a format to help them get the most realistic radio experience, Cotter said.

They chose to air a combination of the two most commercially successful radio formats, Top 40 and album-oriented rock. The only diversion from the format comes on Sundays, when the station airs five special shows.

Several students complained about the loss of artistic freedom when the station went FM in De-

ember, Cotter said. They liked choosing their own music.

But even though some of the fun is missing, he said, most agree that learning to work under professional operating standards will pay off when they enter the job market.

"I see FM as a slap in the face," Cotter said of commercial radio stations. "You learn that management picks the format, and you're there to rotate the carts."

Now William Paterson disc jockeys will not be overwhelmed by the shock of commercial stations.

"Fast Eddie" Schanil, a William Paterson alumnus who works as a disc jockey at Power 103 in Newton, said Kiernan has the right attitude.

"They need to get an idea of what they will be in for," Schanil said. "They need to know they will be working under rules and restrictions. DJ's can't mouth off and ramble on."

Kiernan, he said, is tough with the students, but they respect him because of his expertise in radio broadcasting and engineering. Last year, Kiernan constructed and wired the new FM studio with its three control booths.

Cotter, known as "Dancing Dave Adams" on the air, said pro-

fessionalism has not entirely killed creativity.

He routinely runs a sound-effect imitation contest. Last week, listeners were asked to imitate a Model T Ford and a cattle stampede, and winners were given albums.

Students must apply for on-air jobs at WPSC. Students train at a closed-circuit station the college retained.

Matt Locker, the 21-year-old student program director, is in charge of hiring. Locker, who speaks in the measured tones of a professional DJ, said he listens for "a deep tonal quality."

"A modeling agency looks for 'the look.' We look for 'the sound.'"

There are slots for 20 disc jockeys, four sports announcers, and 25 news reporters and newscasters, student general manager Joe Schilp said.

Since the station went FM, Schilp, a graduate student, said he has not had a day off. While his peers fled the campus for Christmas break, he stayed behind to manage the station. The FCC license requires WPSC to broadcast 365 days a year.

Schilp will head for Florida during spring break, but he will not be



ROBERT S. TOWNSEND/THE RECORD

No rest for the weary at WPSC. Since William Paterson's campus station went FM, general manager Joe Schilp hasn't had a day off.

lounging on the beach. He will broadcast basketball games the college team is playing there.

The students said they believe several thousand listeners are tuning in based on the constant stream of requests and growing number of area companies that have asked to sponsor programs.

Though the station cannot accept advertisements, it can accept payment in return for the mention of a sponsor's name.

WPSC would attract even more listeners, the students say, if they

could promote the station with things like bumper stickers and T-shirts.

No money was budgetted for promotion. But sports director Ron Colangelo said he believes that money will be budgetted once the college administration realizes that students can handle the responsibilities that come with public broadcasting.

"They just want to make sure we get off on the right foot," he said.