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Ga. student who protested plans for campus parking garage contesting removal University president said student's posts showed he was a 'clear and present danger'

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GEORGIA — A Valdosta State University student who was removed from campus after the school's president declared him a "clear and present danger" will take his appeal to Georgia's Office of State Administrative Hearings, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education said Wednesday in a [press release](#).

Following a public campaign against the construction of a new parking garage on campus, student T. Hayden Barnes received a [letter](#) in May from University President Ronald Zaccari notifying him of "administrative withdrawal" from the university.

The letter claimed Barnes posed a "clear and present danger" to Zaccari and the campus and required Barnes to seek therapy from a non-university appointed psychiatrist before he could be readmitted. The letter also required that Barnes continue counseling during his stay at the university.

In March, VSU's student newspaper published an article about university plans to construct a \$30 million parking garage using student fee money. Barnes, an environmental activist, posted fliers around campus outlining possible alternatives. Barnes also e-mailed Zaccari, the Board of Regents and student governing bodies expressing his concern.

After receiving word Zaccari was upset about the fliers, Barnes removed them.

Barnes continued his campaign against the parking garage in April. He wrote a column in the school's newspaper critical of the proposed parking garage, and he wrote a letter to Zaccari asking to be exempted from the student fee slated to fund the garage. He also posted a [collage](#) on his Facebook page that included an image of Zaccari. The collage was critical of the president, implying the new building was an effort to cement the administrator's legacy at the university.

The collage was titled "S.A.V.E. - Zaccari Memorial Parking Deck" and featured slogans such as "No Blood for Oil" and "More Smog."

In response to the Facebook posting, Zaccari consulted with campus police and began having plainclothes police officers accompany him to high-profile events for the duration of the semester, according to [VSU's statement of appeal](#).

Barnes [appealed](#) his removal, stating that Zaccari did not follow the university's published procedures for due process in removing a student and did not name a disciplinary charge on which his removal was based. In his appeal, Barnes stated he had complied with the requirements set by Zaccari's letter and should be reinstated as a student, and he even promised to refrain from further political activity while a student at the university.

Barnes also contacted FIRE for assistance in his case.

In his appeal, Barnes said he was unaware his actions were perceived by Zaccari as

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a physical threat, noting that in his communication with Zaccari prior to being removed, the president did not make his feelings known.

Barnes' appeal was sent to the university's board of regents, who then referred the case to the state. Barnes since has decided not to return to VSU and instead will enroll at Kennesaw State University beginning with the upcoming spring semester, but he is seeking to have VSU reimburse him for moving expenses and the additional cost of attending Kennesaw. A hearing before an administrative judge is set for Nov. 26.

Barnes declined to comment to the Student Press Law Center on the advice of his legal counsel.

The office of the president at Valdosta also declined to comment about details of the case to the SPLC.

By Casey Wooten, SPLC staff writer

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