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## ATHLETICS DEPT COMMERCIAL WEBSITE LINK FROM UNIVERSITY

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# ATHLETICS DEPT COMMERCIAL WEBSITE LINK FROM UNIVERSITY HOMEPAGE

Submitted by: John Dyer

2/25/2009

## **Question:**

Regarding the official university policies relating to the publishing of Websites, I am making inquiry regarding the Website found from the University Homepage link titled "Athletics," with the URL identified as <http://www.georgiasoutherneagles.com/>. This Website is owned and operated by a "for-profit" third-party vendor with advertising for private business and follows few of the policies set forth by the university and BOR. A few questions follow.

1. Is this an "Official" University Website?
2. Do the Georgia Southern and BOR policies apply to the aforementioned Website?
3. Why does a link from the university Homepage take one to a "for-profit" Website with advertising?
4. Does Georgia Southern pay for, own and regulate the contents of the Website?
5. Are there policy provisions for units (including faculty and staff) within the university to own commercial Websites registered to and linked from the university wherein revenue is generated for both the unit and 3-party businesses?
6. Are the pages in the Website exempt from policies regarding the following:
  - a. be located in the GeorgiaSouthern. EDU domain
  - b. have a clearly designated link back to the Georgia Southern home page
  - c. contain information for a point of contact concerning that web page
  - d. be in compliance with "Identification Standards"
7. Do the policies regarding copyrights, images and trademarks apply?

Regardless of the answers to questions 1 through 7, the additional questions follow;

8. Can faculty and staff from various colleges such as business, art, education, information systems, construction management, etc, have a link from "Academics" on the University Homepage to their own consulting and business Websites, or to E-Bay auctions and such?
9. Can other units have staff or faculty that can advertise their "for-profit" ventures on the Athletics Website or from anywhere within the .EDU domain?
10. Can any official university unit that has its own gifted subset of students have a link from the university Homepage to generate revenue to aid the students in their academic Endeavors?
11. If the link stays active will the university publish policies regarding how anyone can have a Homepage link to their own commercial concerns or revenue generating schemes?

**Rationale:** POLICY VIOLATION / VERIFICATION CONCERN

**Response:** 2/25/2009 from Steve Burrell, Vice President, College of Information Technology.

1. Is this an "Official" University Website?

<http://www.georgiasoutherneagles.com/> is the "Official Website of Georgia Southern University Athletics," as stated in its heading, but its purpose is not to function as an official webpage for the Athletics Department but rather to market intercollegiate athletics to fans, patrons, donors, and the public in general. For that reason, the website is hosted off of the University's server and has been designed differently.

2. Do the Georgia Southern and BOR policies apply to the aforementioned Website? Georgia Southern University and Board of Regents policies apply to all activities of the Athletics Department. Under Board of Regents Policy, Athletics is considered an Auxiliary Enterprise.

3. Why does a link from the university Homepage take one to a "for-profit" Website with advertising? The website itself is not "for profit." Under University policies, Athletics may offer sponsorship acknowledgements to businesses as a means of generating funds for the operation of its programs. These sponsorship acknowledgements include recognitions on scoreboards and other locations in the various home venues in

which our teams compete, recognition of sponsors by way of promotional activities within those venues, and by placement of recognitions on the website. All funds generated through corporate sponsorships are utilized for Athletics programs. The website was created and is hosted on behalf of Georgia Southern University Athletics by an outside, for profit vendor.

4. Does Georgia Southern pay for, own and regulate the contents of the Website? Content contributed by Georgia Southern University remains its property. Some content is generated by the contractor and remains the property of the contractor. The website's overall design is the property of the contractor.

5. Are there policy provisions for units (including faculty and staff) within the university to own commercial Websites registered to and linked from the university wherein revenue is generated for both the unit and 3-party businesses? No. In general, such activities are not permitted on the University's websites, except for Auxiliary Enterprises including Athletics.

6. Are the pages in the Website exempt from policies regarding the following:

- be located in the GeorgiaSouthern. EDU domain
- have a clearly designated link back to the Georgia Southern home page
- contain information for a point of contact concerning that web page
- be in compliance with "Identification Standards" Yes. The website is operated as a separate website marketing athletics programs to the public.

7. Do the policies regarding copyrights, images and trademarks apply? While the website is separate from the University's website, all uses of the University's names and logos are sanctioned by the University.

8. Can faculty and staff from various colleges such as business, art, education, information systems, construction management, etc, have a link from "Academics" on the University Homepage to their own consulting and business Websites, or to E-Bay auctions and such? No. These activities are prohibited under the University's Advertising, Sales, and Solicitation policy.

9. Can other units have staff or faculty that can advertise their "for-profit" ventures on the Athletics Website or from anywhere within the .EDU domain? No unit of the University operates for profit ventures of any kind. Units of the University that wish to receive recognition as sponsors of the University's Athletics programs may contact the Office of Athletics Marketing and arrange for such sponsorship. Upon agreement

between that unit and the Office of Athletics Marketing, the sponsorship may be acknowledged on the athletics website. No such recognitions would be available on any component of the .edu website.

10. Can any official university unit that has its own gifted subset of students have a link from the university Homepage to generate revenue to aid the students in their academic endeavors? No. These activities are prohibited under the Advertising, Sales, and Solicitation Policy.

11. If the link stays active will the university publish policies regarding how anyone can have a Homepage link to their own commercial concerns or revenue generating schemes? No. University policies currently in place prohibit such activities.

Minutes: 3/24/2009: Athletics Dept Commercial Website Link from University Homepage asked about commercial links on GSU's Athletics Department website and included fourteen or so questions. Vice President Steve Burrell's reply has eleven parts and explains that it is the official Website for GSU Athletics, but it is not an official webpage for the department. Instead, it is a commercially operated marketing tool, which is allowed to elements of Auxiliary Services, like Athletics, but to no other university entities.

### **Athletics Department Homepage Link**

**Response:** Minutes 2/16/2009: Senate Response: Athletics Department Homepage Link—A second RFI from John Dyer asked about the GSU Homepage of the Athletics Department link to a commercial website. Marc Cyr called on Dr. Steve Burrell for a response to the RFI, but Dr. Burrell was not prepared to respond at that time.