

Lawsuit may hinge on whether Harrisburg U. is public or private

The financially troubled Harrisburg University of Science and Technology (HUST) has asked a federal judge to dismiss a retaliation lawsuit filed by a former professor. She claims she was fired over criticism she and her husband leveled against HUST officials.

The former prof's husband operates the watchinghu.com blog. He has often posted scathing criticisms of HUST administration with such headlines as "HU Leadership Still Stupid," "Harrisburg University: No Ethics, No Honesty and No Math Skills" and "We Need to Oust This Administration."

Although HUST is nominally a private institution, Dauphin County has intervened to make university bond payments on several occasions.

Because the professor's suit alleges interference with her free speech rights, the public/private issue is important. Private institutions do not have to guarantee free speech, but public institutions do.

The professor claims her firing was in retaliation for the blog posts.