

# Academic freedom or a step too far?

A controversy is brewing at DePauw University.

On Feb. 29, the DePauw, the college's student newspaper, ran a story about visiting assistant professor Mark Tatge. During his investigating reporting class, Tatge tried teaching his students about public records. He pulled out a 17-page packet that he handed out to his students, detailing the arrest of sophomore Alison Stephens for four misdemeanors involving under-aged drinking. ([DePauw story here](#))

The packet was full of public documents, including her Facebook and Twitter profiles, the police report and court proceedings. After Stephens found out about the class, she told her parents and her parents complained to the school. ([Jim Romenesko story](#))

How far does academic freedom go when it collides with the personal life of a student? Every document Tatge produced was public information so it is hard to consider it an invasion of privacy, but at the same time, some of the students taking that class knew Stephens personally and felt uncomfortable in the discussion. Journalists-in-training need to learn how to pull public records and, considering that Stephens plays basketball on the DePauw Women's basketball team, her arrest was most likely something that should have been in the DePauw when it happened. But it wasn't. And singling a student out to examine the public records on her seems a little out of bounds.

Tatge had the right to do what he did. In terms of academic freedom, he especially had the right. But it just seems wrong. Take a look at the two stories and tell us what you think? We'd like to know.