

Student sues Rutgers over grade dispute

Published in the Home News Tribune 10/17/03 By SARAH GREENBLATT STAFF WRITER

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY: A Rutgers student has filed a lawsuit claiming professors falsely accused him of plagiarism and that administrators refused to reinstate his grades after a disciplinary panel found him innocent.

The complaint, which was transferred to U.S. District Court after being filed in state Superior Court, accuses Rutgers of breach of contract and violating the student's right to due process.

Rutgers violated its own procedures for convening student disciplinary hearings, and officials disregarded the unanimous finding of a university hearing board appointed to review the matter, according to the suit.

Defendants include Rutgers President Richard L. McCormick, the boards of governors and trustees, Vice President of Student Affairs Emmet Dennis, Rutgers-Camden Provost Roger Dennis, College of Nursing Dean Felissa Lashley, professor Nancy Redeker and clinical instructor Connie Kartoz.

The student, identified in the complaint by the initials M.Z. to protect the privacy of his academic records, was two courses away from earning a master's degree at the Graduate Program of Nursing in Camden in May 2002 when he faced plagiarism charges by a professor.

A practicing nurse and police officer from Willingboro, M.Z. had earned his bachelor's degree in nursing at Rutgers in 2000 -- garnering a 3.5 grade-point-average -- and had accrued a 3.75 average in his work toward a master's degree.