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## NKU attracting more free speech

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**HIGHLAND HEIGHTS** - Dr. W.A.S. isn't on Northern Kentucky University's payroll, but he's giving the students lectures nonetheless.

Dr. W.A.S., a 68-year old self-proclaimed futurist and activist who resembles Santa Claus, spoke in front of the University Center for a week recently. He spoke out about environmental issues and against war.

Speakers and protesters who are neither instructors nor students are common on many larger college campuses but historically haven't been at NKU. That has changed in recent years.

Chris Cole, NKU's director of media relations and communications, said the campus now has as many as 10 individuals show up each school year to speak their minds ranging from Dr. W.A.S. to fiery fundamentalist preachers.

"I'm sure the growth of the university has played a factor (in more speakers appearing on campus), but I believe this is a national trend that is influenced by federal issues such as Iraq/Afghanistan and the economic downturn," said Cole.

People like Dr. W.A.S. were once restricted to certain areas at NKU, but a new free-speech code allows them to speak anywhere so long as they abide by the policy.

"They're encouraged to notify our dean of students office, but not required to," said Cole. "As part of our commitment to unfettered free speech, our campus is a 'free speech zone' and thus these folks are free to come and share their ideas. However, of course if they violate any of the terms of our free speech policy, cause a disruption to campus activities or pose a threat to our students, our campus police would respond accordingly."

Cole reported that campus police response times were less than a few minutes to any place on campus.

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