

- The Campanil - <http://www.thecampanil.com> -**Volunteer photographer asked to leave campus**

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Loeffler, after six years of athletic photography, was dismissed from his duties due to a photo caption. (Courtesy of Kurt Loeffler)

Kurt Loeffler, volunteer photographer for the athletic departmentt at Mills for six years, was recently relieved from his duties after writing a photo caption on his Facebook page.

According to Loeffler, he posted an action photo of two Mills soccer players who were positioned in a way that appeared as if one player were touching the other's hamstring. Loeffler wrote the caption, "I think I'll grab some a- at Mills today."

After APER and Human Resources found out about the comment two weeks later, he was told that he could no longer serve as a volunteer photographer and that all of his photos from the Mills website had to be removed, Loeffler said. He was unaware of who reported the photo caption.

Aurora Rezapour, Chief Human Resources and Compliance Officer, commented on behalf of the college's decision to relieve Loeffler from his duties.

"I determined it was in the best interest of the College that the College and the person whose conduct was reported, should not continue their relationship into the future," Resapour said in an email. "The inquiry and the college assessment was based on the best interests of our students."

The day Loeffler was dismissed from his photography duties, he had a phone call with Themy Adachi, director of athletics, who reportedly gave him no information about who made the decision.

Adachi declined to comment. Human Resources is unable to discuss personnel issues in detail due to legal reasons.

Loeffler felt that Mills overreacted in their decision-making. He believes that the school should

have confronted him about taking the picture down and how people could take offense to the photo comment.

"Especially after all the years of commitment, devoted commitment to the student athletes, I thought I deserved a little bit more than that," Loeffler said. "I just thought it was disrespectful and dishonest. That didn't feel good."

All photos that Loeffler shot were immediately taken down from the athletic department website as well as the walls in Haas Pavilion; APER will no longer provide athletes with Loeffler's photos. Many athletes expressed how they see the effect from his absence when they enter the training rooms.

The student body had varying reactions towards Mills' decision, ranged from believing the caption was a joke to being offensive.

"I think it is a huge loss for the community, Kurt did a lot and we all really appreciated the pictures," said Junior volleyball player Emma Baumeister. "He did a lot for the website and making posters to promote games, and he did a big slide show for the banquet. Those are all things that we don't have now."

Sophomore art studio major Nora Roth said Mills had students' safety in mind when they made their decision.

"As a photographer myself, I am well aware of the power dynamic that exists between a photographer and their photographic subject," Roth said. "Loeffler abused that dynamic by taking the image out of context and captioning it with a comment that demeaned the students themselves as well as their athletic ability. I'm appalled and disappointed by the lack of ethics here."

Many athletes were shocked by how Loeffler was treated after his Facebook post. They believe Mills should have conducted an open dialogue when it came to the decision.

"To go from 'you're a valued member of our community' to 'we are not even going to talk to you, you can't take pictures anymore, you can't continue to do your volunteer job' — you don't do that, that's so rude," Senior volleyball player Julia Harencar said.

While many athletes feel the loss, other students believe that there is a bigger issue on campus. They feel that micro-aggressions, like Loeffler's comment, goes against what students and the administration believes Mills' principles as a safe zone.

Sonj Basha, a senior women's, gender and sexuality major, was shocked by how someone who has spent time on Mills, knowing that social justice was one of its main principles, would write the caption. Basha believes that it is up to the community to educate each other on how these micro-aggressions are linked to greater issues.

"It's important that we recognize the obvious need for Mills to be more intentional with whom we allow to be part of our community," said Basha. "When it comes to faculty, staff and students, this incident and others like the racist incident last year are examples of how [and] why we need to acknowledge how oppression is played out on campus and have consideration for how ignorance affects our campus culture."

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