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## IRCC blows its lines

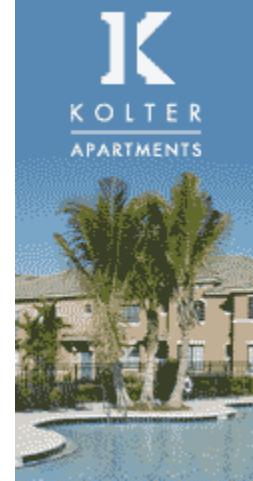
By Palm Beach Post Editorial

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Friday, January 21, 2005

Indian River Community College administrators owe their students at least one plausible explanation for refusing to allow a campus Christian group to show *The Passion of the Christ*. So far, the college has come up only with embarrassing cover stories.

The college has maintained that the group, Christian Student Fellowship, could not show the movie because its R rating violates school rules. But it turns out that IRCC has no written rules on movie standards. Administrators said they were following something called "long-standing practice" that guided student organizations for years. If IRCC is being run by unwritten rules, the college's leaders need to put that policy in turnaround.

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After protests from students and organizations, IRCC then tried a new script, saying that the college was trying to protect high school students who come to campus through dual-enrollment programs. High school students who have watched the award-winning and R-rated *Schindler's List* or *Saving Private Ryan* in their classrooms don't need IRCC's kind of protection.

Reprisals seem to have become part of the school's response, too. Some club members say they were called out of class and told to write apologies to the president. Here's a better idea: Administrators write apologies to the student body for being heavy-handed and narrow-minded. The college has announced the hiring of a constitutional-law expert in Tallahassee to help review its policies on student activities. It would have done IRCC more good to hire a common-sense expert.

The college could have spared itself the drama over *Passion of the Christ* by acknowledging the institution's flawed policy and the mistakes defending it, then allowing students the intellectual freedom that college life is supposed to embody. Instead, it's a thumb down — way down — for IRCC.

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