Howard Univ. president expels editor of student newspaper

By Andrea Lang Foster

A student group at Howard University in Washington, D.C., charged the university's administration with censorship and demanded his resignation after he expelled the editor in chief of the student newspaper, The Hilltop.

"In a private institution when someone is denied a financial aid and other support for the student newspaper, the university is publisher and the First Amendment rights belong to the University," said Howard University President James E. Cheek.

University officials claim the editor in chief, Janice McKnight, was expelled Feb. 1 for falsifying information on her 1979 admissions application in which she failed to note a year she spent at Syracuse University where she had a poor academic record.

McKnight, however, said she was not given a formal hearing concerning her expulsion and was expelled only because of certain articles appearing in The Hilltop.

McKnight filed a suit in District of Columbia Superior Court seeking to have herself reinstated as both a student and as editor in chief of The Hilltop. Judge George Goodrich granted McKnight a 10-day injunction maintaining both her student status and her editorship until the hearing of her case.

Student protesters did not come to testify at McKnight's formal expulsion hearing. They claim McKnight's expulsion was prompted by her refusal to discontinue coverage of a news story at Cheek's request. McKnight's articles concerned a discrimination complaint filed by university attorney Michael Harris with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The complaint claims Dorsey Lane, director of student grievances, removed McKnight's 10-day suspension.

The Coalition to Save Howard University, comprised of about 10 students, insists the Howard administration complied with five demands, according to Roxanne Jones, director of student grievances at Howard.

The coalition demands the resignation of Cheek, the reinstatement of McKnight, and the removal of all university policies censor student expression, better housing conditions and better academic equipment such as scientific laboratory supplies.

The Coalition, formed two weeks ago, has the backing of the student government and most of the student body, Jones said.

There has been much protest at the university since McKnight's expulsion, including "marches, rallies and demonstrations," said Jones.

An estimated 800 students demonstrated at the university's administrative offices Feb. 4. The protesters shouted slogans including "We want Cheek out" and carried banners, one of which proclaimed, "Freedom of speech is dead at Howard!"

Cheek and Howard Student Association President Howard Newell spoke through an electric bullhorn to another angry crowd of 500 demonstrators. Feb. 7, Newell charged Cheek with curtailing free expression, and intimidating the faculty members, and precipitating "the mediocrity that has crept up on this university."

Cheek refused to resign and said he wished he could have prevented the McKnight incident.

"Cheek is in the doghouse with students," Quill said. He is "playing a tactical waiting game to see how far he can push the student body."

"There have been a lot of complaints in the last 10 to 15 years," Jones said. "Students want more input in the university decisions. We are the reason the university exists."

E-Systems continues the tradition of the world's great problem solvers.

Maxwell's electromagnetic field theory led to huge practical scientific advances. His light theory led to his own development of one of the first color photos and the kinetic theory of gases.

Scientists and engineers at E-Systems are still solving Maxwell's genius. Today, they are solving some of the world's toughest problems in electronically steered phased array antennas, electromagnetic scattering and solar ray concentration, using his findings as tools.

E-Systems is main-