

The 'Keg Lawyer' Writes the Book on Students' Legal Rights

BY JAMIE SCHUMAN

How do I throw a big party without attracting the police? Who do I call to resolve a dispute with my landlord? What should I do if I have been caught plagiarizing a term paper?

Those are some of the questions college students regularly ask C.L. Lindsay III, also known to students as the "keg lawyer" because of the advice he provides on alcohol laws.

Mr. Lindsay is the founder and executive director of the Coalition for Student & Academic Rights, a nonprofit organization based in New Hope, Pa., that offers free legal advice to students and professors. Known as Co-Star, the group gives students specific answers to age-old problems, including how to fool bouncers with a fake ID and what to do if caught with one.

In August Mr. Lindsay, 34, published his first book, *The College Student's Guide to the Law* (Taylor Trade Publishing), a compendium of information about students' legal rights and the consequences of breaking different laws.

With its irreverent tone and pop-culture references, the book speaks the language of today's students. But it is also dense. The 310-page volume begins with an overview of the U.S. legal system, and covers a variety of student issues, including alcohol, dorm-room privacy, and free speech.

In one chapter, Mr. Lindsay describes how lawyers shut down the student-run Web sites NotHarvard.com and UNCgirls.com for trademark infringement. He then advises students that starting sites titled MyCollegeSucks.com or HotGuysFromMyCollege.net could lead to legal trouble.

In another chapter, he warns students that "false paraphrasing," or citing the source of a direct quote but not putting it in quotation marks, is a punishable type of academic dishonesty. He then describes how professors catch plagiarists or, as he puts it, how they "nab your lying, cheating, low-down, dirty, double-dealing asses."

LEGAL TIPS

About 100 lawyers throughout the nation help Mr. Lindsay with legal research. But he does most of his work with the help of one assistant in a small office, which he uses rent-free, in New Hope, about 40 miles from Philadelphia. The free work space is important because campus seminars on legal issues are the organization's only big money maker.

It is a far cry from his previous jobs as a labor lawyer at firms in Cincinnati and Manhattan. After graduating from

the University of Michigan's law school, Mr. Lindsay spent four years handling cases involving discrimination or harassment claims. That work got discouraging. Writing briefs, he says, was like "writing the same book report over and over." He also wanted a job in which he could help people directly.

Mr. Lindsay started his organization in 1998 after one of his former undergraduate professors, at Denison University, called him for legal advice. The English professor was upset because his colleagues had told him to change the content of his courses. Mr. Lindsay suggested that an outside expert arbitrate the disagreement, and

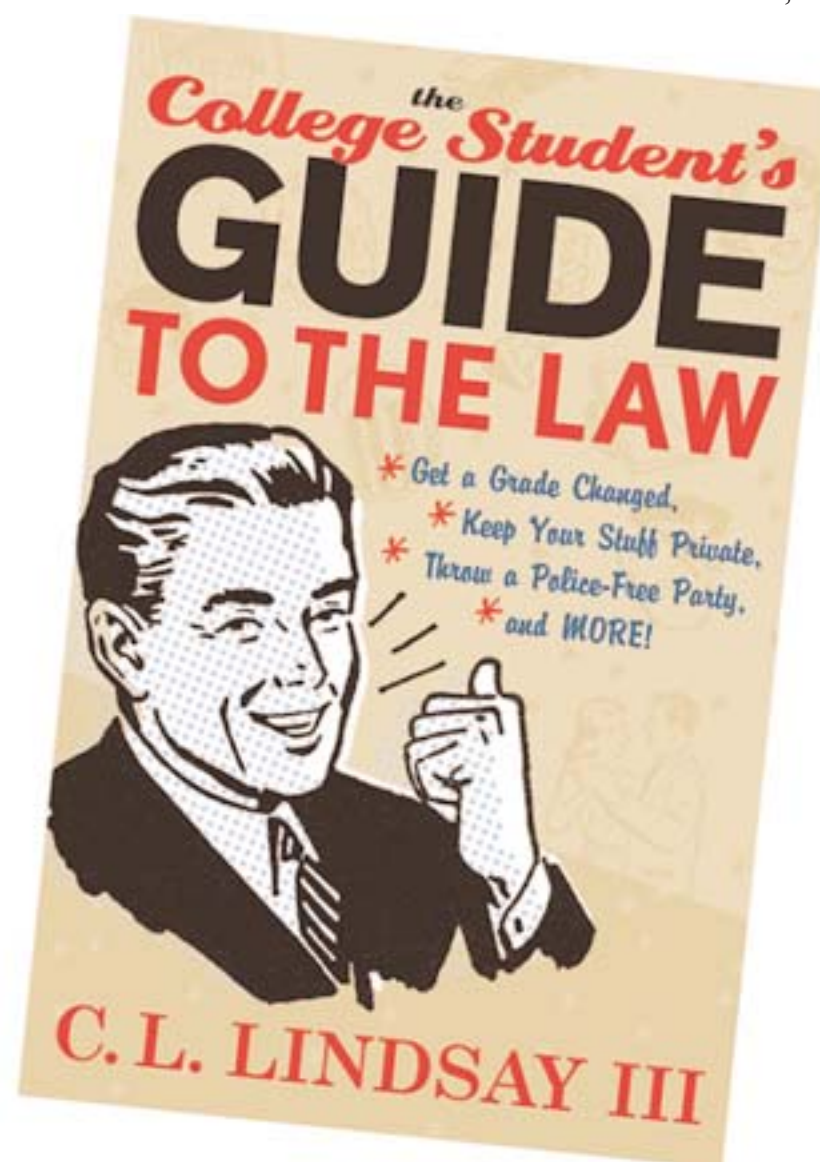
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the professor ultimately was allowed to teach the way he wanted.

Most of Mr. Lindsay's clients have been students, however. Although he does not represent students in lawsuits, he advises them by answering about 1,500 e-mail messages and telephone inquiries each year.

Many students have asked him if they will lose their driver's licenses for underage-drinking convictions. The answer: In most states they will if a police officer rather than a campus security officer writes up the violation.

Others have asked him if they can sue a professor who gives them a low grade. Mr. Lindsay tells them that they generally have little legal recourse. Sometimes Mr. Lindsay gets a curveball. A mortuary-science student once called to complain that his professor



was storing medical tools in cadavers as if they were pincushions. After Mr. Lindsay helped the student write a complaint to the university, the professor had to find a new repository for his instruments.

Mr. Lindsay answers students' questions in a weekly advice column, "Ask Co-Star," which is syndicated nationally in college newspapers. Last year he and his colleagues also gave about 50 lectures on student life and the law on college campuses. He is planning more lectures this year, in part to promote his book.

The book's longest chapter, and the one Mr. Lindsay believes is the most marketable, is on alcohol and parties. Some student-affairs professionals, he says, have questioned whether the advice might encourage students to break laws. But Mr. Lindsay says he

wrote *The College Student's Guide to the Law* in an effort to help readers avoid legal problems altogether.

Elise M. Bruhl, a Philadelphia lawyer who attended law school with Mr. Lindsay, says the book's advice does not promote unruliness, but shows students that their actions have consequences. "College students sometimes think they live in a law-free zone," says Ms. Bruhl.

Yet Mr. Lindsay says he would have had little use for many of the book's tips when he was an undergraduate student at Denison. He attended few wild parties and spent most of his time studying in hopes of getting into law school. As a resident assistant and a peer counselor, he was part of the system—not a troublemaker.

"I was such a boring student in college," says the keg lawyer. ■