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SLU, professor named in lawsuit alleging sexual assault & rape



St. Lawrence University Campus (wnny)

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Published: Apr. 10, 2023 at 11:48 AM EDT

CANTON, New York (WWNY) - A St. Lawrence University assistant professor alleges another assistant professor raped and sexually assaulted her a year ago and is suing both the college and the other professor.

Identified in the lawsuit only as "Jane Doe," the sociology professor says assistant professor Ernesto Moralez invited her to his home on April 12, 2022, where he insisted on serving her a mixed drink.

Afterwards, the lawsuit says, Doe lost control of her body movements and speech and couldn't remember much of what happened over the next several hours. The complaint says she was subjected to various sex acts while she was incapacitated.

The lawsuit said Doe had wanted to meet in a public setting to discuss courses she taught that could satisfy requirements for public health majors, the department of which Moralez was co-chair, but Moralez insisted they meet at his off-campus home.

The lawsuit also says Doe felt pressured by her superiors to meet with Moralez. She was told at a tenure review meeting a week earlier that she was not interacting with other faculty as much as the university expected her to.

She reported the incident to police and had a rape kit performed. She also suffered from vomiting and diarrhea, which the lawsuit says are common symptoms of date-rape drugs.

She reported the incident to the university on April 15. The suit alleges the university engaged in "textbook victim blame and shame conduct," failed to immediately remove Moralez from campus, and also failed to seize Moralez's university-owned devices for a forensic review of his internet history.

According to the suit, the university characterized Doe's hazy memory of the event as inconsistencies in her statement.



"SLU's conduct sends a message to all victims of sexual assault at SLU that it is better to remain silent than to speak truthfully about what you remember," the lawsuit says.

The lawsuit also says the university failed to investigate Moralez's background thoroughly. The suit claims there were allegations of sexual harassment against Moralez at other institutions he worked for.

In a statement, university spokesperson Kim Asch said the university's "rigorous" background check found no records of employment-related misconduct and that an experienced outside investigator looked into the Doe's allegations.

Also, the statement said Moralez was removed from campus with days of the complaint. According to the lawsuit, Moralez was removed from campus on April 20.

A small blue text box with the words "Relax", "Receive", "after opt", and "eligible" stacked vertically.

Asch said in the statement Moralez “was ultimately placed on administrative leave” and will not be teaching classes in the fall. As of Monday morning, Moralez was still listed [on the university’s website](#).

“The university believes there are substantial defenses to this complaint and will respond in court,” the statement said.

“I want to state clearly that sexual misconduct is unacceptable, both on our campus and everywhere,” St. Lawrence President Kathryn Morris said in a separate statement. “Since my arrival at the university, we have taken action to reaffirm our commitment to a safe campus community for our students, faculty, and staff.”

The lawsuit was filed last week in U.S. District Court. The amount of any damages would be determined at trial.

You can read the lawsuit [here](#).

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