

Adirondack Daily Enterprise

St. Lawrence University named in sexual assault lawsuit

CANTON — St. Lawrence University has been served with a lawsuit alleging the university ignored a complaint from a professor who claims she was raped by another professor who had influence over her career.

The complainant alleges in her suit that her colleague used a date-rape drug and assaulted her after a work meeting and dinner at his house on April 13, 2022.

The lawsuit alleges that the university encouraged the complainant to collaborate with the alleged assailant and that he held a position of influence over a decision to grant her tenure.

The 61-page lawsuit also claims the university failed to properly screen the alleged assailant's employment background before hiring and did not conduct a proper investigation after the complaint was made.

Kim Asch, a spokesperson for St. Lawrence University, issued a statement to news media on Friday.

“The University has a process for investigating misconduct allegations and retained an experienced independent investigator,” Asch wrote in an email. *“The University respects the right of all parties to receive due process and provided support when the faculty member notified us of the allegations.”*

The Canton Village Police Department reported an ongoing investigation and would make no comment.

Wigdor LLP, a New York City law firm representing the complainant, said in statement Thursday that St. Lawrence has failed to issue an investigative *“finding”* about what the alleged assailant did and continues to employ him. He is slated to teach a full course load in the fall of 2023 while forcing their client to work as if the incident never occurred, the law firm said.

Asch said SLU has a rigorous pre-employment referencing and background check process. Nothing in that background check process or anything the university has received since has established any prior employment-related misconduct as alleged in the complaint, she said.

“The accused employee is not on campus nor teaching courses at St. Lawrence,” Asch wrote in her statement. *“Within hours of receiving the complaint, the university quickly acted and issued an immediate no-contact order, and within days the university removed the accused*

employee from campus. He was ultimately placed on administrative leave. He will not be teaching classes this fall.”

On Thursday, SLU President Kathryn A. Morris issued a letter to students, faculty and staff.

“Last night, the university was named in a lawsuit related to (an) alleged sexual assault. We trust that members of our community will understand the importance of due process for all parties involved as the case proceeds through the legal process,” President Morris wrote. *“Such matters take months and sometimes years to resolve, and you should not anticipate hearing more from me about this matter because by practice we limit what we share regarding pending or active litigation. The University will respond to the complaint in court.”*

Morris said that since her arrival, the university has taken action to reaffirm its commitment to a safe campus community.

“Last year, we hired our first dedicated Title IX Coordinator/Sexual Wellness Educator, we have expanded the university’s educational awareness requirements, and we offer a range of support services to members of our community,” President Morris wrote.

The lawsuit seeks a jury trial and damages to be decided in court. It is filed in the United States District Court, Northern District of New York.

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