

Statement by University of Rochester EEOC claimants

September 10, 2017

We are disappointed in President Seligman's statement on the EEOC complaint we filed, which has overlooked and misread many of our claims. He clearly has a different perspective on the ethical standards that an institution of higher education should promote. We fundamentally disagree with his dismissive attitude about how Professor Jaeger's behavior has hurt so many students.

He stresses the thoroughness of the University's investigations into the matters we raised, but the complaint itself has already demonstrated how those investigations were deeply flawed: they failed to consult important witnesses; they dismissed a major witness, now herself a professor at UR, without any discernible basis; they truncated the conversations with witnesses to avoid difficult facts (some interviews lasted just ten minutes); they focused only on whether Professor Jaeger had violated Policy 106 as if that were the only policy implicated by his conduct, not whether the cumulative effect of his recurring actions has led to a hostile environment for students in his department. The complaint relays the accounts of 11 women who altered their studies, sometimes giving up years of work, to avoid him. The University's investigations never considered this hostile environment question at all, which President Seligman also ignores.

If the University's investigations were as thorough as he maintains, they would have easily found all the things we detailed in our complaint. But they did not. He points to multiple levels of appeal and review, but they cannot make up for a fundamentally flawed foundation. Our complaint is not based on hearsay, as an earlier University statement argued; it is based on multiple witnesses who offered testimony based on their first-hand experiences, which have been carefully noted in footnotes. Just because Rolling Stone made an error in its story on the University of Virginia because it relied on a single source, which President Seligman cites in UR's defense, does not mean the many faculty and students who have given witness statements supporting our complaint are all liars. Nor are we.

Significantly, President Seligman's statement also fails to respond at all to the other half of our complaint, which details the systematic campaign of retaliation against us after we raised these issues. Our university emails have been secretly combed by university lawyers trying to find things to embarrass us -- is this how universities are supposed to operate when professors raise questions about sexual harassment? We have been denounced as liars and untrustworthy at a faculty meeting by our department chair, based on a misreading of those emails. Some of us have been forced to leave the University. Those who remain have been systematically ostracized. The President has ignored all of this.

We believe that the President has been ill-advised by the University Counsel's office. The result is that the University is doubling down on the fundamental errors of understanding that have brought it to this unhappy place. The facts simply do not support the robust confidence President Seligman asserts for how the University has conducted itself. In the last two days, many other women have come forward

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with further relevant information concerning Professor Jaeger's conduct, confirming the wealth of evidence in the complaint about his pattern of harassment. We are grateful for their courage in coming forward, and for the outpouring of support we have received from the UR community and colleagues around the world.

President Seligman says that the University is now going to fight us at the EEOC, rather than talk with us directly or take steps to address the underlying problem. This is depressing and self-defeating for the University, to whom we are all committed, and to which some of us have devoted most of our careers. There are many positive steps he can take, and we are glad to help shape them. We respectfully suggest that President Seligman needs to take a step back and demonstrate a different order of leadership, in circumstances we understand are difficult.

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