

NEWS

**PROFESSOR RESIGNS UNDER FIRE ... TWO AT UMSL ALLEGE SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

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Faced with potential dismissal, a tenured professor at the University of Missouri at St. Louis who was accused of sexually harassing women students has resigned.

Two students filed a damage suit Monday against the university system's Board of Curators, alleging that Jacob Orlofsky, an associate professor of psychology, had sexually harassed them. The suit asks for unspecified compensation.

Orlofsky, 45, a 17-year employee of the university, quietly submitted his resignation late last month, the university said in a prepared statement. He will continue to be paid his \$38,000 salary through the end of the academic year, the statement says.

Reached by telephone Monday night, Orlofsky denied sexually harassing the students.

"All I can say is that the allegations that were filed against me were false," he said. "I cannot comment further."

Orlofsky's resignation followed a yearlong internal investigation of sexual harassment charges that came to light in the fall of 1990 when he was being reviewed for promotion to full professor.

The allegations prompted E. Terrence Jones, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, to strip Orlofsky of his teaching duties and his directorship of the campus psychology clinic at that time, said a university spokesman, Bob Samples.

For the year that the university has investigated allegations against him, Orlofsky has been doing his own research. He will continue doing so until his resignation takes effect May 31, the statement says.

The suit was filed by two doctoral students, Carolyn West and a woman identified only by her initials. It alleges that Orlofsky's "conduct was unwelcome and offensive to each plaintiff as it would be to any reasonable woman. His conduct included but was not limited to physical touching of plaintiffs' bodies in a sexual manner, sexual comments and gestures."

The two women students had complained formally last year to university officials that Orlofsky touched them in a familiar manner, commented on their clothing and bodies, pressed them to socialize with him, inquired about their personal lives and made sexually suggestive comments.

West, a doctoral candidate in psychology, said in an interview that Orlofsky's overtures to her began in 1987.

She said she endured his behavior for three years, discussing it only with other female students. Last year, she said, she confided in two faculty members who seemed sympathetic, but she refused their offer to intercede with him on her behalf.

"It seemed really pointless," she said. "I did not want to face him in that situation, with two other faculty

A year ago, when students were invited to submit written assessments of Orlofsky to the faculty committee weighing his promotion to full professorship - a routine step in the process - West responded anonymously, she said. She said she detailed her experiences with Orlofsky and argued against his promotion.

A short time later, West filed an official grievance against him with the university.

With Orlofsky present, she told a committee of faculty members and university administrators her story. A few days later, West said, she was notified that the panel had ruled in her favor. When she was asked to sign a letter saying she was satisfied with the decision, she declined.

"I didn't know what [signing would mean," she said. "I didn't know what my other options were."

The other plaintiff in the suit, a doctoral candidate who is unwilling to have her name published, said in an interview that Orlofsky had behaved inappropriately with her for three years, beginning in 1987. For two of those years, she was his research assistant.

To avoid him, she said, she changed her academic specialty, adding a year to her studies and putting aside research she hoped to publish. His unwelcome attentions only "escalated" after that, she said.

A year ago, the woman said, she began writing to university administrators and, ultimately, to Chancellor Blanche M. Touhill about her experience with Orlofsky. None gave her any indication that the university had taken her claims seriously, she said.

Both women said they were relieved by Orlofsky's resignation, which was announced to faculty members in the psychology department Friday.

"It's certainly long overdue," West said.

"I'm pleased that it looks like he will no longer be allowed to engage in these activities in this department," the other student said.

But both women said the university was too slow to act.

In a prepared statement Monday, Touhill said: "It is my position that neither I nor anyone else at UM-St. Louis will tolerate any form of sexual harassment by faculty, staff or students and that cases brought to my attention will be dealt with promptly and fairly."

The psychology department's announcement of Orlofsky's resignation gave no reason for it and made no mention of the investigation leading up to it.

That investigation "sought out and found additional people with allegations [against Orlofsky," Samples said when asked about the delay. "The delay was partially caused by the unavailability of a key witness last summer."

He declined to detail the additional allegations, saying there were "some matters of privacy involved."

But, he said, "it was the university's belief and Chancellor Touhill's belief that the information gathered warranted cause for dismissal."

Presented with that information and notified that Touhill would start proceedings to dismiss him, Orlofsky resigned, the university's statement says.

The university's tenure regulations require that Orlofsky be paid through the spring semester, Samples said.

Since being relieved of his teaching and clinical duties, Orlofsky "has written a handbook on psychosocial research, revised two journal articles, prepared a new journal article and submitted several reviews to academic journals in his field," the university's statement says.

Orlofsky resigned quietly at the same time as allegations of sexual harassment against David McIntire, a vice chancellor on the university's Columbia campus, prompted cries for his dismissal and for the resignation of Chancellor Haskell Monroe. McIntire was accused of telling sexual jokes and making advances to women who worked for him.

A senior faculty committee appointed by Monroe decided last week that McIntire's actions did not justify his firing. He has resigned as vice chancellor and is scheduled to join the faculty next semester.

On the St. Louis campus, by contrast, the Orlofsky case drew scant notice. The campus newspaper, for instance, reported that West had brought a sexual harassment complaint against "a colleague," but it neither identified him nor provided details.

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