

June 14th, 2018

Dean Waugh,

Per your request, we are writing to provide a formal letter of resignation. We have decided to forgo the generic resignation letter recommended by the University of Rochester counsel's office and instead be clear about the reason for our departure.

When we came to the University, we worked hard to help raise it up. We did high-impact research and helped recruit students and faculty. We built up vibrant, interdisciplinary collaborations. We brought in millions of dollars in grants. Undergraduates we mentored earned the highest research awards in the University and prestigious fellowships from the National Science Foundation. We worked day and night because we believed in this university as an institution. As it turns out, we believed in it only because we did not know what the people in charge stood for.

University of Rochester President Richard Feldman has declined to sanction, much less fire, T. Florian Jaeger, a professor who sent an unwanted picture of his penis to a student; made insulting and objectifying comments about female students' sexual desirability, appearance, and vaginal taste; used drugs at a lab retreat with students; and had sex with an undergraduate student, among many other unethical behaviors. These are not accusations. These actions were *confirmed* by the University of Rochester's own investigation. The University also verified that such behavior led *at least ten* women to avoid Jaeger to the detriment of their careers.<sup>1</sup> President Feldman declines to take responsibility for his own refusal to punish Jaeger, instead blaming the faculty senate, a body which he knows has no authority to impose sanctions. Unbelievably, Former President Joel Seligman and Brain and Cognitive Sciences Department Chair Greg DeAngelis both publicly defended Jaeger's tenure—to the media and faculty senate respectively—by an appeal to the sanctity of "academic freedom."

After we filed complaints and participated in University investigations about Jaeger, DeAngelis and the administration responded by trawling through the emails of six faculty who complained, including the emails of a thirty-year department veteran and National Academy of Sciences member. Though they found nothing damaging, DeAngelis held a meeting in which he falsely accused us and other faculty of harming Jaeger's students' (double-blindly reviewed) conference submissions, without any basis whatsoever. DeAngelis also falsely accused us and others of getting Jaeger uninvited from a conference. Following that, we and four others who complained about Jaeger were excluded from a key faculty meeting that determined the future

<sup>1</sup> President Feldman returned Jaeger to teaching undergraduates shortly after the University's own investigation defended him with the argument that "A combination of Jaeger's harsh and demeaning language, flirtatious behavior, use of sexual innuendo, promiscuous reputation, open relationships with students and blurring of social and professional lines all contributed to some extent [to students avoiding him], but we cannot unravel the degree to which women avoided Jaeger because of the sexual elements in his conduct, as opposed to other simply offensive or unappealing aspects of his personality."

of the department. DeAngelis' ballistic attack ruined our careers here and led others to shun all who had complained. He later apologized specifically for unfairly damaging our reputations, but you wouldn't know that from the arguments the University has been making in the media and the courts, calling the attacks and defamation we experienced perfectly normal "workplace criticism." Still, the University has refused to apologize to four women—all victims of Jaeger and alumnae of the University—for de-anonymizing them after explicitly guaranteeing their confidentiality. President Feldman's vow of a "culture of respect" seems to apply everywhere except where it counts.

Nearly all university employees who helped cover for Jaeger are still in their positions. Vice President Gail Norris, who told the faculty and deans that it was *normal and acceptable* for University of Rochester investigators to turn down evidence—as the University confirmed its attorney Catherine Nearpass did in our case—appears, beyond all reason and ethics, to still be functioning as head legal counsel for the University. Norris so relentlessly defended a serial sexual harasser that Jaeger was handing out her phone number to people in the field. Even after the faculty senate condemned her office's role in searching the emails of legally protected complainants, the administration apparently still trusts her. Dean Gloria Culver, Dean Peter Lennie, and Provost Robert Clark sheltered Jaeger by unleashing memos about how those complaining about Jaeger were spreading "gossip" and "misinformation," defaming the numerous women who came forward in the case. Dean Culver's response to a retaliation complaint from four faculty was to tell us to "mend fences" in the department ourselves, while she simultaneously forbade us from talking about what happened. Culver also promoted Jaeger without even waiting to see the outcome of the University's investigation. Why are people who intentionally looked the other way and then steamrolled the women who complained *still* in trusted positions?

Now, one face of the University is racing to change its policies. But it is clear that policies are worthless when they are implemented by people like DeAngelis, Norris, Nearpass, Culver, Lennie, and Clark. Incoherently, the University's other face is arguing to the media and the courts that everything that happened in our case was perfectly acceptable. Why change the policies then? If our case has been handled well, why has the University refused to release the original internal report that cleared Jaeger—a professor who sixteen women have now complained about on-record—by saying he merely had a "colorful" past? Why is the attorney who wrote that report still employed by the University? What is she trusted to handle? Most recently, the University has engaged a "restorative justice" team to help the community recover. While it's not widely known, months later this team has yet to engage with *any* of the sixteen women who came forward to speak about the harm Jaeger caused them. President Feldman sustains Seligman's legacy: administrators are never responsible, sexual harassers face no consequences, and women who are harassed get no support.

Now, five of our collaborators have been pushed out. Altogether the department has lost six faculty, including its two National Academy members. We estimate that faculty leaving over the case have taken upwards of \$10 million in grant funding with them. With our departure, DeAngelis' leadership will have winnowed the number of female tenure-track faculty to just two—one recent hire whose primary appointment is in the medical center, and one who is Jaeger's partner. This should not be surprising given the Department's stance on women's issues, such as DeAngelis' repeated insistence that Kidd was entitled to only two weeks of pregnancy leave.

Now, we have to uproot our labs, families, and lives. Jaeger got a semester of paid leave. The sixteen women who complained about him got nothing, not even an administration who was ethical enough to say that what they experienced was wrong. We do not leave with the

bitterness or anger that you might expect from some of the nine faculty and students who are suing the University over this mishandling. We leave only with unshakable sadness that students at the University of Rochester have no one in the administration who will support them.

These events have given us no choice other than to resign our faculty positions, effective at the end of the month.

Celeste Kidd  
Assistant Professor  
Brain and Cognitive Sciences  
University of Rochester

Steven T. Piantadosi  
Assistant Professor  
Brain and Cognitive Sciences  
University of Rochester