



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
PLATTEVILLE
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

April 23, 2015

Sabina Burton, Associate Professor
Department of Criminal Justice
University of Wisconsin-Platteville

Re: Complaint filed Against Dean Elizabeth Throop dated April 2, 2015

Dear Dr. Burton:

This letter serves as my official findings and determination in regard to a complaint filed by you against Dean Elizabeth Throop on April 2, 2015 (via email). In your complaint, you allege that Dean Throop falsely accused you of cancelling your classes on December 12, 2014 which you believe resulted in defamation against you.

Upon receipt of a complaint, I have the authority to investigate the complaint and issue a determination, dismiss the complaint, or submit the complaint to a standing committee for review. Upon receipt of this complaint, I chose to conduct an internal investigation into the allegations with the assistance of Dr. Dominic Barraclough, Director of Graduate Studies and Academic Projects. Dr. Barraclough conducted an investigation into the complaint and provided his written findings to me on April 8, 2015. Based upon his written findings, I have concluded that the initial allegations against you for cancelling classes on December 12, 2014 were not substantiated by factual evidence which was acknowledged by Dean Throop to you via an email on December 19, 2014. Therefore, no disciplinary action was issued against you.

In regard to your allegations against Dr. Throop, as a dean of a college, Dr. Throop is responsible for assuring that faculty members are conducting their official duties in accordance with their professional obligations, including conducting classes as expected. When information is obtained by a dean or chair that creates a reasonable doubt to whether a faculty member is fulfilling his or her professional duties, the dean or chair has an obligation to address the issue. In this case, that is what Dr. Throop attempted to do. However, admittedly, she failed to obtain sufficient information prior to issuing her email to you on December 12, 2014. In response to her failure to meet with you first, I have directed Dr. Throop to modify her approach to allegations involving faculty member misconduct in a manner that will include discussing the allegations with the faculty member (if the situation warrants such, which in this case, it did) prior to taking any type of action.

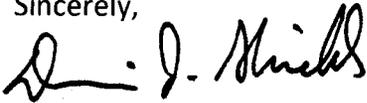
As to whether her conduct rises to the level of defamation, I find that such allegation is without merit. Dr. Throop based her accusations against you on a good faith belief of wrongdoing. Further, as an administrator, Dr. Throop is expected to address this type of alleged misconduct. In addition, she did not publish this information to an uninvolved third party. Finally, I find no

evidence of any actual harm caused to you or to your reputation by this incident. Therefore, I hereby dismiss your complaint against Dr. Throop and consider this matter closed.

I want to commend you for immediately responding to Dean Throop by stating you had taught class on the day in question. However, I do not condone involving students in these types of matters unless it is absolutely necessary. In this case, I believe both you and Dr. Throop could have handled the situation differently to avoid any direct student involvement.

If you have any questions or concerns in regard to my decision, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. J. Shields". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the first name.

Dennis J. Shields
Chancellor

Joyce L Burkholder

From: Sabina Burton
Sent: Thursday, April 02, 2015 5:14 PM
To: Dennis J Shields
Cc: "sabinaburton "; Mittie Den Herder; Jennifer M DeCoste; John A Lohmann; Charles Cornett; Teresa Burns; Elizabeth A Throop
Subject: Complaint and Request for Investigation into Defamation

Chancellor Shields,

I respectfully request a formal investigation into Dean Throop's false allegation that I cancelled classes on Dec. 12, 2014. Dean Throop reprimanded me in her Dec. 16 email and threatened disciplinary measures against me without having talked to me first or properly verified her facts. Dean Throop again included the allegation in her UWS 6.01 complaint about me.

I now want to file an official complaint as the false allegation constitutes defamation. To this day I have not been shown the courtesy of being told who made the false claim. I taught both of my courses that day, held an unscheduled office hour afterwards and left campus after 1:30 pm. I have emails from 30 students verifying that I taught my classes and an email verifying that I held office hour afterwards.

I don't think you need any other information from me to conduct an investigation into this matter. I am still on medical leave but will monitor my email account. Please do not delay this investigation.

I request that you do not assign this investigation to Provost Den Herder. As I have expressed to you previously I believe Provost Den Herder is biased against me. I have learned that she stated at an unofficial department meeting in front of my colleagues that I am "alone on a sinking ship." I find this statement to be inappropriate and unprofessional.

Workplace stress, caused by acts such as Dean Throop's defamation, has contributed greatly to my severe health problems and required me to go on extended sick leave.

Respectfully,

Dr. Burton

cc:
my private account,
Provost Den Herder,
Assistant Chancellor DeCoste,
HR Director Lohmann,
Faculty Senate Chair Cornett and
Faculty Senat Vice Chair Burns



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
PLATTEVILLE
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

TO: Dennis J. Shields, Chancellor

FROM: Dominic Barraclough, *DB*
Director of Graduate Studies and Academic Projects

RE: Investigation of Complaint filed by Dr. Sabina Burton by Dean Elizabeth Throop

DATE: 8 April 2015

At your request I have investigated the complaint that Dr. Sabina Burton sent to you by e-mail on April 2, 2015. Dr. Burton's complaint against Dean Elizabeth Throop is for making false allegations. Outside of the scope of this investigation was whether those false allegations constitute defamation, or how Dean Throop gathered the information that ultimately proved to be false.

In large part, the information needed for this investigation was already documented within the complaint that Dean Throop filed against Dr. Burton on January 5, 2015. The only additional work required was to interview Dean Throop to confirm what had previously been reported.

After interviewing Dean Throop I can confirm the following aspects of Dr. Burton's complaint:

- 1) Dean Throop sent an e-mail to Dr. Burton on December 16, 2014 informing Dr. Burton that she was in violation of UW-Platteville policy for having cancelled her classes on Friday, December 12, 2014 without asking permission or even informing Dr. Burton's department chair. Dean Throop indicated that she would, "... be forced to pursue disciplinary measures as a result."
- 2) Dr. Burton responded to Dean Throop on December 17, 2014 saying, in part, "You are incorrect in your assertion that I canceled class." In addition, Dr. Burton solicited e-mails from students in those classes she had presumably missed to "... please reply to this e-mail with your confirmation that I did teach my class last Friday, Dec 12, 2014 to prove to Dean Throop that I did not cancel the class." It was this interaction which drew students into the dispute that Dean Throop included as part of her complaint on January 5, 2015.
- 3) Dean Throop sent an e-mail on December 19, 2014 in which she acknowledges having received student reports that conflicted with what she had earlier been informed. She clearly states that, "As a result, I withdraw my admonition to you regarding cancelling class."

In conclusion it is clear that Dean Throop did incorrectly admonish Dr. Burton for having cancelled her classes on Friday, December 12, 2014.