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Wisconsin Watchdog.org

Criminal Justice professor alleges intimidation by UW-Platteville's top cop

Posted By [M.D. Kittle](#) On November 29, 2016 @ 8:35 am

Part 8 of 16 in the series ['Troubled' Campus](#) ^[1]

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MADISON, Wis. — A criminal justice professor alleging intimidation and retaliation at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville now claims she was threatened by the institution's chief of police.

It's the latest chapter in what has been described as a criminal justice department with a ["troubled and troubling past."](#) ^[2]



Professor [Sabina Burton](#) ^[3] tells Wisconsin Watchdog that [UW-Platteville Police Chief Joe Hallman](#) ^[4] confronted her on her way to class last week. She said the encounter quickly turned from introduction to intimidation.

"When I proceeded to open the door the officer addressed me. 'Hello, Dr. Burton, I am Joe Hallman, the new UWP police chief. Can I talk to you for a moment?'" Burton said. She told the chief that she was on her way to class and Hallman asked to walk with her.

"Then he said something to the effect, 'You make people very uncomfortable. People feel threatened. Be aware of that,'" Burton recalled.

Hallman told Burton he had read [Wisconsin Watchdog's investigative stories](#) ^[3] on allegations of misconduct and retaliation at the southwest Wisconsin university. She told him, "Well, I have been made uncomfortable for years. I was threatened. Nobody here cared or came to my help, so what do you mean?" Hallman didn't answer, Burton said.

POLICE REPORT: UW-Platteville Professor Sabina Burton claims her recent encounter with the university police chief is just the latest incident in a long line of campus intimidation and retaliation she has experienced since 2012.

What he meant to do, according to Burton, was to "target" an outspoken professor that the university administration has found to be an irritant over the past four years — a professor who insists she had been repeatedly retaliated against for standing up for a student and standing against campus corruption and cover-up.

Hallman said he meant nothing sinister by the conversation.

In an email to Wisconsin Watchdog, the chief, who began in July, said he has been trying to "meet and get acquainted with as many faculty and staff members as time allows by walking around campus."

He said he was walking through the university's [Ullsvik Hall](#) ^[5] when he "noticed Dr. Burton walking down the hallway towards the exit."

"I waited for her in the foyer and took the opportunity to reach out and introduce myself to her," Hallman said.

During the "brief" walk, the chief said he did mention that he has had "other colleagues in the Criminal Justice Department contact me and express concerns over some of the ongoing issues." Hallman did not specify what he meant by "issues."

"In telling her that, I was simply trying to convey that I am available if needed. My mission here is to ensure the safety and well-being of all students, faculty and staff, which I do not take lightly," Hallman said.

"You should know that I also clearly stated to Dr. Burton that her dealings with the University were not a police matter. Our conversation was what I characterize as very cordial and very brief lasting 2 -3 minutes tops," the chief said.

Burton claims there was nothing friendly about Hallman's introduction.

"He wanted to catch me there," she said. "He was standing there like he was guarding that exit. ... He had a mission that was very clear to me."

Hallman was in full uniform at the time of the conversation.

Burton believes the new chief was sent by administrators to play the heavy. It was a curious move, using such law enforcement tactics on an instructor of criminal justice — a formal law enforcer and counter-terrorism expert, Burton said.

She said Hallman approached her like some standard "perp," like a gang member, to let her know the chief was watching her.

"I understand intimidation. I understand how these things are done," she said.

[RELATED: UW-Platteville Criminal Justice chairwoman resigning amid campus controversy](#)
[2]

Burton claims her encounter with Hallman was just the latest incident in a long line of harassment and intimidation she has experienced since October 2012, when the professor helped a [student who alleged that she was sexually harassed](#) [6] by another criminal justice professor.

Burton [filed a federal lawsuit against the university](#). [6] The judge tossed out Burton's complaint, but she has taken the case to an appeals court. The lower court took both parties to task on a variety of legal questions. Burton said her attorney at the time failed to include key evidence of retaliation.

She has documented hundreds of emails and depositions that raise serious questions about the conduct of administrators and faculty.

Beyond losing out on key committee work, teaching assignments and grant presentations, the tenured professor says she has been physically threatened by a former interim chair of the Criminal Justice Department and told by a colleague that she must immediately remove allegations about him from her case website, [universitycorruption.com](#) [7].

"Your failure to comply will result in consequences of my choosing," wrote [Professor Patrick Solar](#) [8] in a Nov. 19 email to Burton's husband, Roger.

A university spokeswoman did not respond to Wisconsin Watchdog's email seeking a response to Burton's claims of intimidation and a hostile work environment. The professor also has filed an [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint](#). [9]

Earlier this month, Criminal Justice Department chairwoman [Staci Strobl](#) [10] resigned her leadership position.

"Unfortunately, recent events have made clear that there is no institutional support for me to take the necessary step to help this department move on from a past that is both troubled and troubling," Strobl wrote in the email to [Melissa Gormley](#) [11], interim dean of UW-P's College of Liberal Arts and Education. "Under those circumstances, I feel unable to do my job and would better serve the institution and my colleagues as a tenured member of the department."

Burton said Strobl has not been in her office in weeks, that she is "off the grid."

Administrators have downplayed Burton's allegations, saying the initial sexual harassment complaint occurred four years ago, that the professor accused in the incident is no longer with the university, and

that Burton earned tenure during the period.

But Burton claims her tenure was unnecessarily held up over a professional vendetta, that she has remained in a professional holding pattern at UW-P despite a long list of accomplishments, and that the university's chancellor hired an investigator to interrogate Burton at her home in an attempt to get rid of her.

The professor said UW-Platteville administrators never cease to amaze her.

"I can't believe the administration sends a police chief to me because I exercise my First Amendment rights after having been threatened with job termination," the professor said. "I believe he was there to put pressure on me because corrupt people are now uncomfortable. For goodness sake, what country is this? It can't be the United States."

"I grew up next to socialist East Germany. I had relatives living in East Germany. They reported these types of harassing visits by police after receiving mail from capitalistic West Germany," she added. "My grandfather was visited by Hitler's Secret Police because he spoke up against the Nazi regime. I now get visits like that too."

Part of 16 in the series ['Troubled' Campus](#) ^[1]

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- [1] 'Troubled' Campus: <http://watchdog.org/series/troubled-campus/>
- [2] "troubled and troubling past.": <http://watchdog.org/280902/uw-platteville-criminal-justice-staci-strobl/>
- [3] Sabina Burton: <http://watchdog.org/279977/uw-platteville-sabina-burton-harassment/>
- [4] UW-Platteville Police Chief Joe Hallman: <https://www.uwplatt.edu/news/hallman-selected-next-chief-police>
- [5] Ullsvik Hall : <https://www.uwplatt.edu/explore/ullsvik-hall>
- [6] student who alleged that she was sexually harassed : <http://watchdog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2016/10/Peterson-ruling-UWP.pdf>
- [7] universitycorruption.com: <http://universitycorruption.com/>
- [8] Professor Patrick Solar: <https://www.uwplatt.edu/distance-education/solar-patrick-dr>
- [9] Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint.: https://www.eeoc.gov/federal/fed_employees/filing_complaint.cfm
- [10] Staci Strobl: <https://www.uwplatt.edu/news/pioneer-spotlight-dr-staci-strobl>
- [11] Melissa Gormley: <https://www.uwplatt.edu/history/melissa-gormley>
- [12] University treads lightly on 'slut-shaming,' retaliation charges at student forum: <http://watchdog.org/281641/retaliation-uw-platteville-forum/>
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- [17] UW-P calls student forum on troubled department for same time as accuser's class: <http://watchdog.org/281538/uw-p-forum-students/>
- [18] Embattled UW-Platteville provost leaving for higher ed job in Maryland: <http://watchdog.org/285068/uw-platteville-provost-elizabeth-throop/>
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- [20] UW-Platteville whistleblower professor ordered to clean out office: <http://watchdog.org/286192/sabina-burton-uw-platteville-professor/>
- [21] Chancellor of troubled UW-Platteville looking for new job: <http://watchdog.org/287859/chancellor-uw-platteville-job/>

[22] Embattled UW-P criminal justice professor: 'I have been treated like a criminal':

<http://watchdog.org/290862/uw-p-sabina-burton-professor/>

[23] UW-P professor blames union attorney with political ax to grind for appeals court loss:

<http://watchdog.org/291971/whistleblower-appeals-court-union/>

[24] UW-Platteville chancellor prepares to fire whistleblower professor:

<http://watchdog.org/292432/whistleblower-sabina-burton-targeted/>

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