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The Blade

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A University of Toledo student has filed a federal complaint against the school that accuses administrators of failing to investigate multiple reports of sexual harassment by a man who at the time was a communications department professor.



The case was filed in U.S. District Court in Toledo by a female student, represented by attorneys Peter Pattakos and Rachel Hazelet, against the University of Toledo.



Erik Tyger is named as the professor in the complaint, but he is not a defendant in the lawsuit. He was hired by the university in 2017 and he worked closely with students by assisting them with UT:10 News, the student-produced newscast, according to the complaint.

Attempts to reach Mr. Tyger for comment were unsuccessful. The university said Tuesday that it fired Mr. Tyger, and that his last day at the university was May 10, 2019.



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UT spokesman Meghan Cunningham on Tuesday told The Blade that officials would not comment on the pending litigation.

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“The University of Toledo strives to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment for all members of our campus community,” she said.

Mr. Pattakos said the university knew about the sexual harassment allegations involving his client as early of May, 2018, but it took a year for the administration to act on his employment. During that time his client was “effectively forced to avoid campus.”

He added two university professors also filed Title IX complaints against the man. Title IX is a federal law that prohibits educational institutions from discriminating against individuals based on their gender or sex.

“We had hoped a lawsuit wouldn’t be necessary, but the university has so far refused to offer anything to resolve this matter,” Mr. Pattakos said.

Mr. Tyger is accused in the complaint of making repeated unwanted sexual advances on the student while she was attempting to finish a project for his class on May 2, 2018. The advances included sexual comments and inappropriate touching, the complaint states.

“Despite the trauma caused by Mr. Tyger’s unwelcome advances, [the student] continued working on her project because she needed to submit it and leave to attend an off-campus exam in another course,” records show.

Mr. Tyger is additionally accused of sending the student text messages seeking details about her work schedule, to which the student did not respond

**LATES**

the student did not respond.

Soon after, the student contacted another professor, Kevin O’Korn, to discuss Mr. Tyger’s sexual misconduct. Both Mr. O’Korn and the student made a report to the University of Toledo’s Title IX Office, according to the complaint. However, despite the university’s own policies that it will take prompt action in response to reported sexual harassment, UT did not take any action or respond “to the first two reports until six months later, when it received yet a third report” of sexual misconduct by the same professor, court records allege.

During this time, the student avoided campus, sought to change her major, and enrolled in almost all online courses in fear that she would come in contact with Mr. Tyger, who was still employed by the university’s communication department.

The university’s Title IX Office asked the student whether she was “comfortable” attending a face-to-face interview on campus regarding the sexual harassment to which the student said she was not.

The student also did not indicate that she wanted the university to suspend its investigation. But weeks later, the student received notification from the office that the university closed its investigation into the professor and that no action would be taken.

Mr. Tyger is also accused of attempting to out the student as the one who reported him, publicizing the grades he gave her, and accusing her of lying.

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Mr. O’Korn and the student met with a more senior faculty member Deloris Drummond on Oct. 26, 2018 to discuss the issue. Ms. Drummond also submitted a report to the Title IX office concerning Mr. Tyger’s sexual misconduct involving the student.

On Nov. 7, 2018, the student received a letter confirming that the university’s office received an incident report naming her as a victim of sexual harassment.

The Blade is not identifying the student because of the allegations of sexual harassment.

On Nov. 27, 2018, Mr. Tyger was placed on administrative leave and prohibited from coming onto campus based on the allegations that he had “engaged in inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature toward a student, in violation of Title IX, and the university policies related to Title IX,” according to the complaint.

The student is asking for punitive and exemplary damages in an amount in excess of \$75,000. The case has been assigned to Judge James Carr.

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