

LAWSUIT TAKES LCC TO TASK FOR NOT STOPPING STALKER STUDENT

Nadia Raza's lawsuit against Lane Community College, filed Jan. 21, alleges that the administration failed to protect the tenured instructor from an aggressive student felon and stalker.

Raza's 19-page complaint, filed in U.S. District Court in Eugene by attorney Jennifer Middleton, is not the first attempt to get the LCC administration to adopt immediate measures to better protect its staff from sexual advances and physical threats from students.

The suit calls for LCC to drastically change its sexual harassment policies, as well as its "unlawful discrimination" based on sex or race. Raza is Pakistani, American and Muslim.

Her lawsuit also seeks economic compensation for her lost work hours — she switched to teaching online classes part-time for the past year and a half — resulting from fear that the student, identified in the lawsuit as "S.S.," would be able to locate her on the LCC campus. The suit does not detail a dollar amount.

"Nadia's frustration, to put it mildly, with the administration is consistent with a pattern we've seen for years," says LCC's faculty union president Jim Salt. "We've had a long-standing issue with the administration in how they respond to situations like this, where faculty members are facing harassment or threats from students."

Salt, who works as an instructor in the Sociology Department with Raza, watched in 2014 as Raza stopped being able to hold office hours, stopped signing up to teach in the classroom and eventually moved out of her own home after multiple run-ins with the stalker.

The administration, the suit alleges, consistently refused to give Raza information about S.S., including his enrollment status and whether he had been kicked off campus. This made it difficult for Raza to attain documentation for a restraining order.

It wasn't until three months into Raza and others sending emails to the administration, the suit says, that LCC Public Safety performed a background check on the student and found he was a convicted felon with multiple restraining orders. Raza obtained her own restraining order against S.S. in late April 2014.

S.S. was arrested on May 5 of that year at an apart-

'We've had a long-standing issue with the administration in how they respond to situations like this, where faculty members are facing harassment or threats from students.'

— LCC UNION PRESIDENT JIM SALT

ment complex, where he told police he was looking for Raza, the suit says.

Salt says, "She was looking for ways to try to minimize her susceptibility to attack. As a friend and colleague, I was very concerned for her."

Raza's complaint alleges that, at one point, "LCC gave Nadia Raza a pre-printed 'personalized safety plan' that was designed for domestic violence victims. The pamphlet contained advice like keeping loose change with her at all times in case she had to make an emergency phone call." Another suggestion was to download

a "safety-related app recommended by Dr. Phil for her phone."

In April 2014, the faculty union, Lane Community College Education Association, pushed through a bargaining agreement for faculty that spells out the same concerns addressed in Raza's lawsuit: Faculty members don't feel protected or informed against sexual harassment from students.

"If you make a complaint or ask for help, the administration is very forceful in telling you that you aren't allowed to talk about this with anybody else, because to do this would violate the confidentiality agreement," Salt says.

When Raza was receiving almost daily emails from the student stalker, four other LCC instructors had already reported similar disturbing emails from the same student. But because of the administration's policy, only two of the four women even knew about the others' situation.

"It wasn't broadly known," Salt says.

The union's bargaining agreement was eventually written into the faculty's contract in the spring of 2014. "The key piece allowed the faculty member to request a different assignment if the administration hadn't solved the issue. It's a fallback position," Salt says.

Salt sent out a faculty-wide email on Jan. 22 in support of the lawsuit, writing that "the association strongly supports Nadia's courageous refusal to let the administration avoid their responsibilities ..."

LCC declined to comment on the case. "We don't comment at all on lawsuits or pending litigation," says Joan Aschim, public information officer for LCC.

Middleton tells *EW* that her legal team sent out a press release to the media about the lawsuit to "start a conversation."

"It's an important issue that I think the community needs to know about, particularly after [the] UCC [shootings] and the concerns about safety on campus," Middleton says. — *Jeslyn Lemke*

EDITOR'S NOTE: The lawsuit discusses that Nadia Raza's stalker attempted to contact Raza via EW. Raza has written viewpoints for this paper. Jennifer Middleton, Raza's lawyer in the suit, is part of Johnson, Johnson and Schaller, the law firm of EW co-owner Art Johnson.

Eugene Ballet Company
TONI PIMBLE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

WORLD CLASS DANCE
EUGENE BALLET COMPANY @ HULT CENTER
TICKETS 541-682-5000 eugeneballet.org

BUY FIVE OR MORE PER SHOW AND SAVE \$10 PER TICKET!

CARMINA BURANA
orchestra NEXT
FEB 13-14

THE GREAT GATSBY
orchestra NEXT
APR 9-10

BODY VOX
artistic directors Jamey Hopman • Ashley Roland
MAY 14 ONE SHOW!

Placido's
PASTA SHOP

Stellaria Building
150 Shelton McMurfhey Blvd
Suite 103
Eugene, OR

Serving
HOUSE-MADE FRESH ORGANIC PASTA

11-2 & 5-9 Tuesday-Friday
5-9 Saturday-Sunday

458-205-8092
facebook.com/Placidospastashop

GLOBAL AWARENESS • PROJECT-CENTERED CURRICULUM • ADVANCED PLACEMENT

Where kids LOVE school!

Open House Tour
Tuesday, February 16
Drop in 5-7pm
Meet teachers and parents

Drinking Gourd ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Class of 10 students
Low tuition on a sliding scale

689-5255 • dgschool.org

MUSIC • PEACE EDUCATION • DRAMA • SPANISH • SMALL CLASSES • FRIENDLY KID CULTURE