

# Lawsuit: CSUN discriminated against fired communications director to escape public image problem

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, USA, September 7, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The former Director of University Communications at California State University, Northridge, says administrators wrongly fired him in an apparent attempt to escape a public image problem they face due to today's highly-charged political environment, according to a lawsuit.

Jorge Martin joined his alma mater to head the Communications department in 2014. He received excellent performance reviews throughout his tenure. Even so, he was terminated without warning in June, after CSUN's [student newspaper](#) printed stories based on unsubstantiated accusations against him that embarrassed University administrators.



"These articles painted CSUN in a bad light, yet I was not allowed the opportunity to respond to the false allegations and clear the university of wrongdoing," Martin said. "These are not the journalistic standards I was taught at CSUN, where I learned to verify facts and get both sides of a story. Because I was silenced, members of the outside community felt these articles were true, and rather than support me, the administration fired me."

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*Los Angeles employment attorney Bryan Lazarski*

In his lawsuit, Martin says he was the target of bias due to his gender, race and sexual orientation.

In March, 2016, one of Martin's employees filed a complaint with the CSU Office of Equity and Diversity, alleging that Martin and other administrators

discriminated, harassed and retaliated against her on the basis of her race.

A seven-month investigation resulted in Robert Gunsalus, CSUN's vice president for University Advancement and President of the CSUN Foundation, issuing a 10-page memorandum determining there was "insufficient evidence to conclude that (Martin) discriminated against or harassed (the complainant) based on her race, or that (Martin) retaliated against (her) for filing a complaint with E&D."

Further, Gunsalus wrote that concerns about the complainant's work performance problems were raised by the two people who immediately preceded Martin as heads of the CSUN

Marketing and Communications department; that she often called others “racist” without evidence; and that she declined to take a lateral position she was offered that would have shifted her away from Martin’s supervision.

CSUN currently is fighting a lawsuit brought by the woman based on her 2016 complaint, throughout which CSUN has maintained its position that Martin did nothing wrong toward the woman at any time during her tenure.

When the complainant took a leave of absence in July 2016, Martin and Jeff Noblitt, associate vice president of Marketing and Communications, hired a temporary employee to do some of her work. The woman was familiar with the complainant. One week after CSUN’s investigation determined the accusations against Martin were unsubstantiated, the temporary worker filed a new complaint against him.

Yet another lengthy investigation revealed that the temporary employee attempted to coach witnesses she provided, and that the investigator declined to interview witnesses suggested by Martin. It concluded only that he’d made a single joke about an employee’s planned Halloween costume, so he was asked to refresh his training in leadership and diversity, according to [the lawsuit](#).

Unsatisfied by the university’s investigations and conclusions, the lawsuit says the university’s student-run newspaper, The Sundial, was then used by his two media-savvy accusers as a mouthpiece twice in May 2018 to publish one-sided articles that appear to take the women’s allegations as true. Notably, both worked for the Sundial as student journalists and realized administrators would likely prohibit Martin from speaking to reporters, according to the lawsuit.

Within a month of the articles’ publication, Martin was fired without warning. He was given no reasons for his dismissal despite posing the question to university administrators several times, the lawsuit states.

Los Angeles employment attorney [Bryan Lazarski](#) filed the lawsuit Aug. 15 in Los Angeles Superior Court.

“It is Mr. Martin’s summary contention... [that] demographically [he was] the perfect sacrificial lamb in response to claims against CSU of discrimination by groups of which he is not a member,” Lazarski wrote. “Indeed this is the very definition of discrimination – that he was selected for termination because of his immutable characteristics, not because he did anything to deserve it.”

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