

Judge Rules Suit against Saunders and University of Wisconsin at Whitewater to be Decided by a Jury

Litigation seems to follow President Saunders. While Chancellor at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater ["UWW"], she supervised removal of long time Dean Howard Ross from his position based on false claims that Dr. Ross had misappropriated university resources and misused university funds. "The judge ordered a trial on [Former College of Letters and Sciences Dean Howard] Ross' claims that he was singled out by a racist auditor and later demoted because he is black." [[Associated Press](#)]

"Ross claims that he and the school's only other black dean at the time, Lee Jones, were singled out for unprofessional, inaccurate audits. He also claims he was retaliated against after complaining about their treatment in an interview with The Associated Press."

"[U.S. District Judge J.P.] Stadtmueller found that Ross' claims may have merit, saying he and Jones were the only two deans in the last 20 years targeted with special audits... [Stadtmueller wrote that] A jury should decide whether the audit and demotion were driven by racial animus and whether Ross faced retaliation for speaking out." ([Court's decision in Ross v. Saunders, et al.](#))

Ross' complaint against Saunders and UWW asserts, "[I]n or about March 2006, Dr. Ross was informed by then UW-Whitewater Chancellor Martha Saunders that the audit would not be publicly released if he agreed to resign from his position as dean. Dr. Ross refused to resign." Furthermore, Dr. Ross' complaint states that "Saunders terminated Dr. Ross via memorandum, citing the false and pre-textual accusations of financial impropriety."

Apparently one of Dr. Saunders' favorite defenses is "I know nothing and simply relied on what others told me," or as one of her Mississippi lawyers characterized her "a blank slate". Just as she did at UWW, Dr. Saunders claimed in pending litigation at USM, she took action to punish a faculty member relying on the claims of others – even though those claims were unsupported by fact.

Leaders have a responsibility to do more than rubber stamp mere accusations. They have a responsibility to investigate and act in accordance with rules and law. They have the opportunity to make decisions based on reason and evidence.

The question remains whether Dr. Saunders learned anything from her tenure at UWW.

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