

Concerns about Dr. Renae Watchman's Complaint

External

Inbox



Frances Widdowson <fwiddowson@mtroyal.ca>

Mon, Jul 19, 9:37 AM

to Mark, Geoff, Derrick, Annalise

July 19, 2021

Mark Friesen
Acting AVP, Human Resources, MRU

Geoff Hope
Partner, Field Law

Dear Mr. Friesen and Mr. Hope:

I am writing to you about the concerns that I have with respect to the harassment complaint that has been filed by Dr. Renae Watchman. Dr. Watchman is no longer an employee at MRU, and appears to be using its policies to retaliate against me.

On June 23, 2021, I sent an email to Ms. Macdonald stating the following: "The 'procedures' that you provided me with state that 'Human Resources conducts an initial assessment to determine that the facts alleged, if true, would result in a breach of University policy or are contrary to workplace expectations'. Could you please let me know whether an initial assessment was done?" In response to this question, Ms. Macdonald stated the following on June 24, 2021: "In accordance with our procedures, HR's initial assessment resulted in a determination that an external investigator was best suited to investigate the complaint." This reply does not answer the question.

I also asked the following question of Mr. Hope on June 23, 2021: "Are you under the impression that Mount Royal University (MRU) has vetted this complaint to ensure that it rises to the threshold of personal harassment specified by MRU's Personal Harassment Policy? The 'procedures' that MRU claims to be following assert that 'Human Resources conducts an initial assessment to determine that the facts alleged, if true, would result in a breach of University policy or are contrary to workplace expectations'". Mr. Hope replied to this question by stating that "it is a fairly safe

assumption that the matter would not be in my hands if MRU had not determined that it met the appropriate standard to investigate, however that is something that you will need to address directly with them if you want some definitive indication in that regard.”

It is not “fairly safe” to assume this, as Ms. Macdonald did not answer this question. On the contrary, it appears that MRU sends all complaints that have been made against me to an external investigator without any attempt to vet them. Therefore, before we proceed, could Mr. Friesen please confirm or deny whether Dr. Watchman’s complaint “met the appropriate standard to investigate”?

I would also like to state the following facts:

- 1) Dr. Watchman made her complaint on March 18, 2021, one week after she received a Notice of Investigation from Human Resources that informed her that she would be investigated on the basis of allegations that I had made against her;
- 2) On March 29, 2021 or before, it became publicly known that Dr. Watchman was leaving MRU to start a position at McMaster University on July 1, 2021 (<https://indigenous.mcmaster.ca/news/mcmaster-welcomes-two-indigenous-scholars>);
- 3) The Investigator of my complaint, Steve T. Eichler, reached a finding against Dr. Watchman “of Ostracism for amplifying the call to silence Dr. Widdowson by threatening her Publishers” on May 31, 2021; and
- 4) Mount Royal University sent me a "Notice of Investigation" about Dr. Watchman’s complaint on June 2, 2021.

On the basis of these facts, it appears that MRU is complicit in Dr. Watchman’s harassment of me and is in violation of Section 22.2.1 and 22.3.1 of the Collective Agreement: “[t]he Parties are committed to providing a working and learning environment that is free of harassment and which allows for full and free participation of all Employees” and “[t]he Board shall make reasonable and proper provisions for a safe and healthy workplace environment”.

Could you please answer my question and confirm whether Dr. Watchman’s complaint has been assessed?

I have cc'd Annalise Van Ham (as well as Derrick Antson) on this email, as Trika Macdonald is no longer employed at MRU.

Sincerely,

Frances Widdowson

Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies

Mount Royal University

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"It is error only, and not truth, that shrinks from inquiry." - Thomas Paine

Mark Friesen

Wed, Jul 21, 5:00
PM

to me, Geoff, Derrick, Annalise

Hello Dr. Widdowson,

Thank you for your email. Yes, an assessment was completed in alignment with the Standard Operating Procedure which you quoted, which in turn led to the current Investigation Phase:

"Human Resources conducts an initial assessment to determine that the facts alleged, if true, would result in a breach of University policy or are contrary to reasonable workplace expectations."

Regards,
Mark

Mark Friesen | Interim Associate Vice-President

Human Resources, Mount Royal University

For information about the various resources available to employees, please visit our **Wellness at Work** [website](#)

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Mount Royal University is located in the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of the Treaty 7 region in southern Alberta, which includes the Siksika, the Piikuni, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina and the Iyârhe Nakoda. We are situated on land where the Bow River meets the Elbow River. The traditional Blackfoot name of this place is "Mohkinstsis," which we now call the city of Calgary. The city of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation.

Frances Widdowson <fwiddowson@mtroyal.ca>

Jul 23, 2021, 10:41
AM

to Mark, Geoff, Derrick, Annalise

Dear Mr. Friesen and Ms. Van Ham:

Could you please tell me what "facts alleged" by Dr. Watchman "if true, would result in a breach of University policy or are contrary to reasonable workplace expectations".

Sincerely,

Frances Widdowson
Associate Professor
Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies

Frances Widdowson <fwiddowson@mtroyal.ca>

Aug 18, 2021,
3:51 PM (19
hours ago)

to Mark, Geoff, Derrick, Annalise

Dear Mr. Friesen and Ms. Van Ham:

This is just a reminder that I still am waiting to hear from MRU's Department of Human Resources as to what "facts alleged" by Dr. Watchman "if true, would result in a breach of University policy or are contrary to reasonable workplace expectations".

Sincerely,

Frances Widdowson

Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Justice,
and Policy Studies

Mark Friesen

8:31 AM
(23
minutes
ago)

to me, Geoff, Derrick

Hello Dr. Widdowson,

The assessment regarding these allegations was completed by the previous AVP, Human Resources. The investigator that has been tasked with investigating these allegations will discuss the facts and details with you. You are expected to engage with the investigator directly.

Thank you,

Mark

Mark Friesen | Interim Associate Vice-President

Human Resources, Mount Royal University

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