

Former George Mason Law Professor Joshua Wright Drops Lawsuit Amid Misconduct Allegations



Joshua Wright, a former professor at George Mason University's Antonin Scalia Law School and a former Federal Trade Commission (FTC) member, has withdrawn his lawsuit against the university. This move marks the conclusion of a protracted legal battle following allegations of sexual misconduct leveled against him by multiple women.

Agreement Reached to End Legal Proceedings

According to court documents filed on November 27, Wright and the university agreed to end the case without further litigation. The filing, which did not disclose details of any potential settlement, stipulated that each party would bear its legal costs. U.S. District Court Judge Patricia Tolliver Giles, presiding in the Eastern District of Virginia, approved the agreement.

Neither Wright nor his attorney, Benjamin North of the Binnall Law Group, provided immediate comments. Similarly, George Mason University representatives have yet to issue a public statement.

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Background of the Allegations

Wright, who had an intermittent teaching tenure at George Mason University from 2004 to 2023, resigned after facing allegations of using his academic position to engage in inappropriate relationships with students. The most prominent accusation came from Elyse Dorsey, a former student and current partner at Kirkland & Ellis, who alleged that Wright sexually assaulted her early in their relationship and later used his influence to undermine her professional opportunities.

Dorsey's Title IX complaint, filed in 2021, led to a university investigation into Wright's conduct. She has praised the university for prioritizing student safety, stating in an email that George Mason "chose to protect its students rather than cave to Wright's frivolous threats."

Wright's Legal Claims and Counter-Accusations

In November 2023, Wright initiated a lawsuit against George Mason University, alleging violations of Title IX and institutional policies during the investigation. He claimed the university had mishandled his complaint, which accused Dorsey of sexually harassing and retaliating against him at the end of what he described as an 11-year, consensual, on-again-off-again relationship beginning in 2010. Wright asserted that the university's dismissal of his complaint constituted sex-based discrimination.

The university's motion to dismiss Wright's lawsuit argued that Dorsey, not being a university employee, could not be held to the same standards as Wright, a professor. In a September ruling, the court allowed the university's investigation into Wright to proceed but did not dismiss his lawsuit outright.

Additional Accusations

The allegations against Wright extend beyond Dorsey. According to media reports, at least two other women have accused him of misconduct. These accusations further intensified the scrutiny surrounding his resignation and subsequent legal actions.

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Legal Battle Comes to a Close

The legal proceedings spanned over a year, with Wright's lawsuit marking a significant development in the controversy. In October 2023, George Mason University renewed its request to dismiss the case, citing the conclusion of its investigation into Wright's actions. The recent stipulation to dismiss the lawsuit signals the end of a contentious chapter for both Wright and the university.

Implications and Reflections

This case underscores the complexities of addressing sexual misconduct allegations within academic institutions. George Mason University's handling of the matter highlights the challenges of balancing due process with the need to safeguard students and uphold institutional integrity.

As Wright's legal dispute with the university concludes, questions remain about how higher education institutions can better address power dynamics and protect vulnerable individuals in academic settings. For now, George Mason University's decision to prioritize student safety over reputational risks sends a clear message about its stance on such issues.

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