

CU NEWS

CU-Boulder prof Alison Jaggar had concerns about retaliation more than a year ago

Jaggar accused of defaming David Barnett, enmeshed in termination battle with CU

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A high-profile feminist philosopher at the University of Colorado raised concerns about professor David Barnett's behavior toward a sexual assault victim as early as 2013.

According to an email obtained by the Daily Camera, professor Alison Jaggar told several colleagues in the department and then-chairman Graeme Forbes in May 2013 that she suspected Barnett had retaliated against a female graduate student.

The female graduate student reported being sexually assaulted by a male graduate student in the department in the fall of 2012. After CU found the male graduate student responsible for the assault, Barnett began looking into the university's investigation and sent a 38-page report to university leaders.

CU began the process to fire Barnett, a tenured professor, in July after paying the female graduate student an \$825,000 settlement for claims that Barnett retaliated against her.

This week Barnett accused Jaggar, along with Chancellor Phil DiStefano, of making false and defamatory statements about him. He is seeking \$2 million from the university.

Jaggar declined to be interviewed for this story. Campus officials also declined to comment.

Barnett claims that Jaggar made false statements about him in the May 2013 email, which was sent to Forbes and faculty members Mitzi Lee, Robert Pasnau, Michael Tooley, Kathrin Koslicki and Carol Cleland.

In the email, Jaggar wrote about a meeting with those faculty members in which she expressed concerns about Barnett's conduct.

She wrote that while looking into the university's investigation of the sexual assault, Barnett questioned witnesses and then began telling philosophy faculty members a "tale" about what happened on the night of the assault. She wrote that he placed "much of the blame" on the victim.

In conversations with various people, Jaggar wrote, Barnett focused on the woman's sexual behavior that night and how much she'd had to drink.



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Alison Jaggar, a philosophy professor at the University of Colorado, raised concerns about the behavior of professor David Barnett more than a year ago. Barnett is involved in a termination battle with CU and has accused Jaggar of defaming him. (Courtesy photo / University of Colorado)

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" ... The smearing of her reputation has hurt (female graduate student) very badly," Jaggar wrote. "I am wondering if it could be construed as creating or contributing to a hostile environment. ... I am also wondering if (Barnett's)



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David Barnett, shown Sept. 18 (Mark Leffingwell / Daily Camera)

activities seeking to discredit (the student) might fall within (the Office of Discrimination and Harassment's) definition of retaliation."

Jaggar wrote that by raising her concerns about Barnett, she hoped to protect individuals "who may be especially vulnerable or even targeted because of their gender or race."

"When women are victims of assault and rape, it is extremely common for their reputations to be smeared," she wrote. "This is a major reason why victims often fear to report assaults."

Jaggar, who joined CU's faculty in 1990, was a pioneer in the field of feminist philosophy. She helped found the Society for Women in Philosophy in 1971 and helped establish the Committee on the Status of Women in the American Philosophical Association, according to the committee's website.

She was named a "Professor of Distinction" in 2008 by the College of Arts and Sciences at CU. In 2011, she won a CU system award for her efforts to advance women in academia, scholarly contributions and distinguished teaching.

'Barnett did not intimidate any students'

Jaggar also claims that in speaking with witnesses, Barnett "may have intimidated at least one student."

Barnett declined to comment for this story. His attorney, Brian Moore, said statements made by Jaggar were false.

"We have not the slightest idea what professor Jaggar is alluding to, which makes a meaningful response impossible," Moore said. "Professor Barnett did not intimidate any students."

Pasnau, who met with Jaggar last spring and received her email, said he doesn't have any knowledge of Barnett "blaming the incident on the victim."

"I have not experienced him blaming the victim," Pasnau said Wednesday. "As far as I know, he just hasn't."

Tooley, another faculty member who received the email, said he had one conversation with Barnett about the incident and that Barnett focused "entirely" on flaws in the university's investigation of the sexual assault.

Barnett claims that he wrote the 38-page document to report the "misrepresentation of evidence" and witness testimony in CU's investigation. The female graduate student, however, claims that in the course of his inquiry, Barnett invaded her privacy and defamed her by talking about her sexual behavior and marital history.

"On no occasion did (Barnett) tell me any such 'tale,'" Tooley said. "I had one conversation with (Barnett) on the matter, and that conversation focused entirely on the conduct of the investigation by (the Office of Discrimination and Harassment). When I asked (Barnett) what he thought had taken place on the night in question, his response was that he didn't know."

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