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**February 19, 2014**

## **The administration is bullying the philosophy department at the University of Colorado-Boulder**

*By Thomas Farrell*

The administration is bullying the philosophy department at the University of Colorado-Boulder -- by unexpectedly making a report about the department public on Jan. 31, 2014. Six women teachers in the department have recently issued a public statement that has been reported in the local newspaper. They claim that only a small number of men in the department were involved in the behaviors mentioned in the report.

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Duluth, Minnesota (OpEdNews) February 19, 2014: In recent days the Daily Camera newspaper in Boulder, Colorado, has published two new pieces concerning the report about the Department of Philosophy that the administration of the University of Colorado-Boulder unexpectedly made public on Jan. 31, 2014:

Let's back up a bit and review. In the spring of 2013, the department understood that it was in hot water with the administration. At that time, the department came up with the idea of inviting the outside review. The dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the provost accepted this idea. The American Philosophical Association's Committee on the Status of Women was invited to send a three-member visitation committee to the campus. The site visit took place in Sept. 2014. The report was submitted in Nov. 2013. The department head, the dean, and the provost received copies of the report as email attachments. Then on Jan. 31, 2014, the administration unexpectedly made the report public (online).

### SARAH KUTA'S NEWS STORY

In a news story by Sarah Kuta, "Female CU-Boulder philosophy colleagues speak out on report," dated Feb. 18, 2014, she reports that six women with ties to the department have issued a joint statement about the report. According to Kuta, "The six women write that they believe a small number of men in the department are responsible for the sexual harassment or unprofessional sexualized behavior described in the report."

"'We are all distressed that the report may damage the reputations of male colleagues who are completely innocent of sexual misconduct,' the statement's authors wrote. 'It could also harm the prospects of our male graduate students currently on the market.'"

""We faculty women strongly believe that none of our currently untenured male colleagues or current male graduate students has engaged in sexual misconduct,' the women write. "We believe that many have heard about the problems, if at all, only through the rumor mill.""

Evidently, a certain number of women have been the alleged victims of sexual harassment by a supposedly "small number of men in the department."

According to the report made public by the administration, "at least" 15 complaints have been filed against individual members of the department with the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) -- evidently, since 2007. But the report contains no further information about those complaints or the outcomes of those complaints.

So if only a small number of men in the department are responsible for the department's problems that got it into hot water with the administration, then it would appear that at least some of them had more than one complaint filed against them with the ODH.

According to another published source, four out of the 24 tenure-track faculty in the department are women; 10 out of 53 graduate students are women; and four out of 13 non-tenure-track faculty are women. The four tenure-track women joined two other non-tenure-track women (one of whom is retired) to issue the statement reported by Kuta.

#### STEVEN F. HAYWARD'S OP-ED PIECE

In a strong op-ed piece titled "CU Philosophy: True accountability deserves greater transparency" in the Daily Camera, dated Feb. 19, 2014, Steven F. Hayward, the inaugural visiting scholar in conservative thought and policy at CU, examines the report's vagueness not only regarding the complaints filed with the ODH but also regarding alleged bullying.

Hayward says, "The experience of a small number of faculty whose intellectual contempt for colleagues generates a toxic departmental climate is hardly unique to CU. But a report that avoids disclosing facts and details but rests instead on survey responses -- an exceedingly weak form of evidence for charges so serious -- falls short of any reasonable standard of proof. Barring more transparency, I think the presumption should be reversed: the Philosophy Department is the victim of the increasingly Star-Chamber atmosphere of campus political correctness."

Let us note that Hayward assumes that only "a small number of faculty" is the problem regarding the charges.

In a similar way, the six women in philosophy assume that only "a small number of men in the department are responsible" for the department's problems mentioned in the report.

But clearly the department is in hot water with the administration -- not just "a small number of men in the department."

#### WHO'S IN CHARGE?

But let's review further.

QUESTION: Who's in charge of administering the Office of Discrimination and Harassment -- the administration, or the faculty in the Department of Philosophy?

ANSWER: The administration is in charge of administering the ODH.

QUESTION: Who has the authority to write new rules for ODH and submit the new rules to the Board of Trustees for approval?

ANSWER: The administration.

QUESTION: Who knows the basic details of the 15 (or possibly more) complaints against faculty members in philosophy filed with the ODH and the outcomes of each of those complaints -- the administration, or the 24 tenure-track faculty members in philosophy?

ANSWER: The administration.

QUESTION: If it is the case that only "a small number of men in the department are responsible" for the behavior criticized in the report that the administration unexpectedly made public, as the six women in the department claim, then exactly how are the 24 tenure-track faculty in the department supposed to proceed to deal with the culprits within the department -- whose identities they do not know for sure?

ANSWER: Beats me.

#### CONCLUSION

So the mighty administrators at the University of Colorado-Boulder showed everybody who's boss by making the report public on Jan. 31, 2014.

No doubt the administration can do more to hurt the department than the faculty members in the department can do to hurt the administration.

But the administration should not have made the report public.

Making the report public was not an intelligent, reasonable, responsible act.

On the contrary, it was an unintelligent, unreasonable, irresponsible act.

In plain English, the administration at the University of Colorado-Boulder bullied the philosophy department by making the report public.

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#### **Submitters Bio:**

Thomas James Farrell is professor emeritus of writing studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD). He started teaching at UMD in Fall 1987, and he retired from UMD at the end of May 2009. He was born in 1944. He holds three degrees from Saint Louis University (SLU): B.A. in English, 1966; M.A.(T) in English 1968; Ph.D.in higher education, 1974. On May 16, 1969, the editors of the SLU student newspaper named him Man of the Year, an honor customarily conferred on an administrator or a faculty member, not on a graduate student -- nor on a

woman up to that time. He is the proud author of the book [WALTER ONG'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO CULTURAL STUDIES: THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE WORD AND I-THOU COMMUNICATION](#) (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2000; 2nd ed. 2009, forthcoming). The first edition won the 2001 Marshall McLuhan Award for Outstanding Book in the Field of Media Ecology conferred by the Media Ecology Association. For further information about his education and his publications, see his UMD homepage: [Click here to visit Dr. Farrell's homepage.](#)

On September 10 and 22, 2009, he discussed Walter Ong's work on the blog radio talk show "[Ethics Talk](#)" that is hosted by Hope May in philosophy at Central Michigan University. Each hour-long show has been archived and is available for people who missed the live broadcast to listen to. Here are the website addresses for the two archived shows:

[Click here to listen the Technologizing of the Word Interview](#)

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