

Hi Teresa & David,

In responding to the exit survey provided by Human Resources, I thought it was important to report the hostile work environment that has led to my decision to resign from my role to officially document this situation on the record for the necessary follow up from the institution. In addition to sharing this information in my exit survey, I am sending this email to you, Teresa, due to the gender-based negative treatment I have experienced. I am also sharing this with you, David Miller, as the Director of HR. And, I have copied Peter Hart-Brinson as the Union President to keep all parties informed. In doing so, I hope others are protected from further hostile environments like this.

Immediately upon beginning to report to Albert Colom in the summer of 2019, with regular individual meetings with him beginning on 6/18/19, I started to be spoken to with a pattern of disdain and treated as if I was not competent. This is despite 18+ years in education and all former evaluations by supervisors (at UWEC and other campuses) being rated as exceeding expectations. Immediately upon meeting with Albert Colom he began repeatedly stating that neither I nor the team that I supervised was working hard enough and that he “never hears anything good about advising.” As these statements were made, I shared extensive data with him as evidence to the contrary. In addition, he continuously told me that the advising team and I were failing because the institution had not yet reached the 90% retention goal. When I attempted to engage him in conversations about the complexities of retention that cannot be controlled by advising, he would repeatedly interrupt me. Overall, he would speak at me in our individual meetings for approximately 95% of the time and I would only have space to try to respond a few words at a time, nearly always being interrupted by him.

Early in our meetings over the summer of 2019, Albert began demanding that I rank from 1 to 30 the 30 academic advisors I supervised from best to worst. When I would inquire about what metric he wanted this done, he would huff and say, “from best to worst.” When I would explain this was an impossible task as they were all very different and excelled and struggled in different ways, he would become frustrated and imply or say explicitly that this was an indication that I was a weak leader.

In addition, he regularly disparaged other female leaders on campus in meetings with me. He often openly critiqued the Provost and would attempt to engage me in those critiques with comments like, “Don’t you think so?” When I would not agree, he would become further agitated. When discussing EDI initiatives (always in critical ways) he also referred to “Jodi Thesing-What’s her Name” in a meeting with me. I have never heard him critique, in any way, a single male leader on campus. He also regularly referred to “Jim” and how he would support him in any decision he wanted to make in reference to the Chancellor. In particular, he would make comments about having “Jim’s support” when threatening in veiled ways the job security of me and the team I supervised or recently when talking excessively about uncoupling all things in Enrollment Management from Academic Affairs due to his frustration over that division not embracing his ideas. In this conversation, he went on and on about how we would just advise how/when we wanted to and not be connected to the academic calendar in anyway.

Albert would often tell me angrily how he resented how he was treated at UWEC. He complained how we all seem to think everyone is equal here and we’re not. He would motion to his office that they “put him in” and say that a Vice Chancellor deserved better. He also angrily mentioned having to participate in the sustainable printing project and said that he should be exempt as a Vice Chancellor.

In relation to possible witnesses, these conversations were rarely made in front of anyone else as they were typically in individual meetings behind his closed office door. However, some of these patterns emerged in less overt ways in meetings that included [REDACTED]. In addition, some of the general hostility was displayed in meetings where other Enrollment Management Directors were present, but on a significantly reduced scale. One example that the entire Enrollment Management Directors could attest to in the 'negative working environment' category is Albert's texts and emails (at all hours of the night) that are simply '???. ' He tells everyone openly this stands for 'What the F#\$%' only he doesn't censor the phrase. It means he felt he was left out of the loop and shouldn't have been. Each time I have received this message I had actually looped him in (and could document that case) and he had forgotten or not listened. The hostile pattern has been ongoing and pervasive and therefore outlining specific incidents with dates is challenging. I can outline a few specific examples based on the notes I kept from our meetings below.

On 11/1/19, Albert told me that despite the evidence I had shared previously with him, he still saw the advisors and I as "passive." He said it was my job to provide an HLC accreditation style argument to the contrary and prove otherwise.

On 11/12/19, I had an on-campus interview for the ARCC Director position. Albert did not attend any portions of that interview despite being the hiring manager.

I prepared an infographic for our 11/15/19 meeting to outline the many ways that the advising team and are proactive including citations and data/evidence. When I presented him with this document, as he had requested in our 11/1/19 meeting. He tossed it aside and refused to look at it. Instead, he handed me a word document (which I have a copy of) with large font on it that listed 7 items he expected of me, some of which were outside the scope of my role. He started this conversation by saying in a very shocked tone, "You're really well respected on campus" because he had reviewed the campus feedback about my public presentation as a candidate on 11/12/19. He proceeded to say, "And, Billy sure seems to think your competent, but I haven't seen it." I asked him what competence looked like to him and he outlined 3 items. He said I needed to agree with his ideas, "have his back over the backs of the team" that I supervise, and "play a more active role in the division." I explained that since Billy had moved from the ARCC Director role I was directly supervising 34 individuals and overseeing multiple budgets totaling over \$3 million dollars and due to this there was not capacity for "more." Again, while refusing to review the documents I had created for the meeting at his request in the prior meeting, he said he "never hears anything positive about advising" under my leadership.

On 12/9/19, people on campus began mentioning to me that the ARCC Director role had been reposted and were inquiring about my status as a candidate in that search. I emailed Albert to request an update as a candidate in that search. On 12/10/19, Albert and I met and he informed me that he was failing the search because he didn't like the other candidates and he "already had me." I explained to him that my current workload since the late June transition of Billy to his new role was not something that was sustainable for me and if this was to be the plan going forward, I would need to move on. He agreed to

leave the salary for the Director position in the ARCC for a re-organization to relieve the workload concerns for myself and those on my team in that meeting.

On 1/9/20, in a meeting including [REDACTED], we proposed a draft re-organization plan to Albert. In that conversation, Albert suggested that student affairs graduate interns should supervise the academic advising team. When we both said this was not the path forward, he said, "What? It will upset their delicate sensibilities?" I explained that he was proposing that a student who had just completed their undergraduate degree supervise professionals with master's degrees and in some case 2+ decades of experiences and therefore would not have the skills to be successful. In that conversation, he made it clear he had no intention of making any decision anytime soon or relieving any workload concerns for either of us or the teams we supervised anytime soon and began talking about reposting the ARCC Director position. In doing so, he said he wanted someone without advising experience or career services experience in the role. He also said he wants an Admissions director without admissions experience and a new assistant director of orientation without orientation experience. In this meeting he talked about how frustrated he was with "this place" and that he wanted people who would not just parrot best practices to him but would support his ideas.

On 1/10/20, I shared the draft recommendations that had thus far come from the Excellence in Academic Advising (EAA) process. (EAA is a partnership between NACADA The Global Community for Advising and the Gardner Institute is a competitive program that includes an intensive self-study and then implementation of strategies to lead to excellence in advising across campus. UW-Eau Claire was selected from the application written by Billy Felz and me as one of only 12 schools selected across the country for the inaugural cohort. The Provost's Office and UW-System split the fee to participate in the project prior to Albert's start at UWEC.) When I shared the draft, Albert became visibly upset and said, "When do I get to weigh in on this?" I explained that the process had started before he was on campus and he answered, "Yes, it's the Provost's project. NOT MINE." I explained that the next step for the EAA Steering Committee was to organize and prioritize the recommendations into a final report for review by him and Executive. He became more angry and said, "Not executive. Me. I will decide what gets shared with executive." He went on to say he would shelf the whole report/project if it didn't agree with what was "between these two ears" motioning to his head. I explained that the Provost's Office had paid a portion of the fee and he scoffed. I then said that he should know that UW-System had paid half of the fee and wished to see us complete the project. He said, "System. You know how I feel about them. So, I pay them back then, what \$13,000? I don't care." (In reference to the "you know how I feel about System, he also regularly ranted about his anger with System policies in our meeting previously.)

On 1/14/20, he talked continuously about how he was going to uncouple advising and all aspects of enrollment management from academic affairs. He angrily said we would advise separate from "the academy" because he was frustrated that his ideas had not yet been implemented. I was unable to say nearly any words in this entire meeting due to his angry ranting about academic affairs. But, when I said anything, he would tell me how "Jim" (referring to the Chancellor) supports him.

On 1/15/20, when [REDACTED] and I met with him, he wanted to discuss the request by the co-chair of the EDI task force, Kim Wudi, to meet. He was reluctant for us to meet with her at all. We explained

that she wanted to understand summer orientation to help shape their recommendations. He said only his ideas would be implemented at orientation because it was his program and that we were not to agree to anything from EDI being added to the program. In this meeting, he again talked about only ideas from “between these two ears” would be implemented.

For me, the decision to leave my role was not taken lightly. Prior to this hostile environment, I had planned to retire from UW-Eau Claire. I have worked nearly my entire career in the UW System. I own a house that is intentionally just a few blocks from my husband’s entire extended family’s homes and we may now have to relocate for me to find suitable employment. I hold our health insurance and I do not have another job lined up; so, do not know what is next for our health coverage. However, being in this environment was starting to break my spirit. Anyone who knows me will attest to my positive attitude and belief that I can make a positive impact in even the bleakest of situations. My partner was the first to mention to me that this situation was taking a toll on me beyond work when witnessing me completely withdraw and be unable to answer the typical, “how was your day today?” at the end of a day because it was too traumatic to even recount. When I did feel able to discuss the situation with my partner, I would sometimes say it felt like a verbally abusive relationship. At that point, my partner began imploring me to leave. It took me several more months to be ready to do so because I was mourning the loss of a job I loved up until this supervision transition took place to report to Albert Colom. I am now able to accept that this job that I loved no longer exists. Recently someone shared with me the “Workplace Power and Control Wheel” by Patricia Barnes adapted from the Duluth Model Power and Control Wheel and it was an illustration of my experiences the last several months with Albert Colom.

I have heard from many individuals within the Enrollment Management division and elsewhere on campus about their own volatile interactions with Albert Colom that have gone unreported. In discussing with people on campus whether to file this complaint, I was repeatedly given advice to not do so if I ever wished to work at UW-Eau Claire again. In hearing this refrain repeated and the fearful nature of so many wonderful professionals still employed on campus, I knew I had to proceed with documenting this situation in an official capacity. My experience only tells a part of the story, but I know it will be an uphill (if not impossible) task to prove the gender-based aspect of his behavior because it is typically behind closed doors with only one person present. However, I have heard countless concerning stories from those who report to him and others across campus that certainly meet standards for bullying and negative work environments at the minimum. I hope that the fear of losing one’s job and never being able to return that is the lore regarding reporting doesn’t prevent the truth from being discovered and followed up upon. My only goal in documenting this situation is to protect those who remain from this hostile work environment.

I do not personally require any follow up regarding this complaint. But, since today is my last day, should anyone need to reach me in following up on this complaint, I can be reached at [REDACTED].

Angie