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21 May 2011

Provost and Executive Vice-President Academic  
Grant MacEwan University

Dr. Janet Paterson-Weir

**Re: Activities of Arts & Science administration**

On 14 April, I provided you with a snapshot of a document I am developing that details my relationship with several MacEwan administrators. At the advice of my physician, I have been on medical leave for the past six weeks. Quite simply: I still am unable to clear my mind of the events of the past two years, so I chose to expand on this document. The latest draft is attached, entitled *The Rocky Road to Grant MacEwan University*.

While *The Rocky Road* details facts and assertions, one question still hangs in the air: why? Why did Dr. Higgins, Dr. Sullivan, and Dr. Hilts suddenly and aggressively turn against my activities and my scholarly activities? I do not have an answer to why, but I believe I have found an answer that ties everything together: *workplace bullying*. While policy D1125 (Harassment) does define bullying, a broader definition appears more common.

The Wikipedia entry appears reputable and is well cited. According to Wikipedia,

**workplace bullying**, like childhood bullying, is the tendency of individuals or groups to use persistent aggressive or unreasonable behavior against a co-worker or subordinate. Workplace bullying can include such tactics as verbal, nonverbal, psychological, physical abuse and humiliation. This type of aggression is particularly difficult because, unlike the typical forms of school bullying, workplace bullies often operate within the established rules and policies of their organization and their society. Bullying in the workplace is in the majority of cases reported as having been perpetrated by management and takes a wide variety of forms. Bullying can be covert or overt.

I was surprised to find a Wikipedia entry on *bullying in academia*.

Attached are the Wikipedia articles and an Alberta Government document on workplace bullying.

- The Wikipedia article on workplace bullying lists 25 common bullying tactics. I can document instances where 19 of the 25 tactics have been used by Dr. Higgins, Dr. Sullivan, and/or Dr. Hilts. Of the six bullying tactics not yet applied, several apply to workload and performance reviews. Regarding these, I have not yet seen my 2011/12 workload and Dr. Higgins has already stated, "Your evaluations will be addressed [in] due time."
- The Alberta Government document lists 15 bully behaviors, I can document instances where 11 of the 15 have been applied by Dr. Higgins, Dr. Sullivan, and/or Dr. Hilts.
- The Alberta Government document lists nine physical and psychological effects of bullying. I exhibit all nine effects.

I want to emphasize that I have strong support from colleagues who are aware of this situation. Some have talked with Dr. Higgins and have been rebuffed. Others are, quite honestly, too scared to come forward because they fear they will be targeted next. However, there is no doubt in my mind that, were my situation to become generally known amongst faculty, there would be shock, anger, and additional strong support.

In March 2011, I was surprised to learn that the MacEwan Faculty Association believes that my situation is not a collective agreement issue and they have not been and will not represent me. Their presence at meetings may have given the false impression that they were there to represent me. However, the FA has stated that they only attended to ensure process was being followed. I have retained a lawyer who will advise me from this point forward. I am fully aware that I am at a significant disadvantage not having FA or legal representation, but what choice do I have?

Honestly, I am not looking forward to returning to work in June. When Dr. Higgins learned about the harassment complaint, he requested mediation and then asked that mediation be delayed. His actions as Dean then became increasingly aggressive. I am seriously concerned how Dr. Higgins will again retaliate when he learns that I am moving forward with the harassment complaint. I am not psychologically prepared to have any more meetings with Dr. Higgins, Dr. Sullivan, Dr. Hilts, or Brian Pearson. I am not prepared to address any additional allegations. I am not prepared to have Dr. Higgins aggressively explain to me how my perceptions in the *Rocky Road* and in this letter are *mis*perceptions and that he is just doing his job, and why can't I just recognize and accept this?

FYI: you are receiving this via my personal email because Dr. Higgins disabled my email account, network access, and phone access at the start of my medical leave. This type of action is not common with medical leaves. I believe that Dr. Higgins has subverted my medical leave into the 'lengthy suspension' he proposed in his letter of 01 April. From a bullying perspective, Dr. Higgins' action excludes me and isolates me from my coworkers.

I believe that it is important for you and I to meet to discuss this situation, and it is important that Dr. David Atkinson attend this meeting.

Thank-you,

Enclosure: The Rocky Road  
Wikipedia - Workplace bullying  
Wikipedia - Bullying in academia  
Alberta Government - Bullies at Work