

Former Title IX officer accuses Baylor of discrimination, intimidation

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A second former [Title IX](#) officer at Baylor University has filed complaints with federal officials saying she faced discriminatory treatment and intimidation while she tried to investigate sexual assault cases -- especially those involving football players -- during her seven months at the university.

Gabrielle Lyons told [Outside the Lines](#) this week that she left Baylor in November 2015 after senior administrators ignored her and other investigators' complaints that they were short-staffed and needed mental health services to cope with the emotional stress of having to hear so many stories of abuse.

Last spring, Lyons reached out to a campus sexual assault advocacy group called [End Rape on Campus](#) to file a Title IX complaint against Baylor on her behalf to the U.S. Department of Education Office for [Civil Rights](#). She worked with the group rather than file her own complaint because at the time, she feared retaliation and hoped to remain anonymous.

The filing, on April 27, 2016, came about a month before Baylor released top-line findings from an internal investigation by Philadelphia law firm [Pepper Hamilton](#) that revealed failures to implement Title IX and

other laws pertaining to the university's handling of sexual assault and other sexual violence cases, including violations specific to the school's football program.

The Baylor Board of Regents fired head football coach Art Briles, demoted President Ken Starr and sanctioned athletic director Ian McCaw; Starr and McCaw would later leave the university. In December 2016, Briles sued three regents and a top Baylor administrator for libel and conspiracy in keeping him from getting another coaching job.

In October 2016, Baylor's Title IX coordinator, Patty Crawford, resigned after filing a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, claiming that Baylor was continuing to violate Title IX provisions despite a commitment to enact recommended changes after the Pepper Hamilton investigation. She stated that senior leaders, specifically senior vice president for operations and chief financial officer Reagan Ramsower, stood in her way of implementing Title IX and did not adequately fund her office.

Ramsower and Baylor have refuted Crawford's claims, pointing to several instances in which they increased the Title IX budget and Crawford's own salary. Baylor officials have said that Crawford struggled to manage her office and, in a timeline posted on the school's website in November, noted that a Title IX investigator had resigned "after expressing frustration working for Baylor and Crawford in particular."

That investigator was Lyons, and she told *Outside the Lines* this week she "was hurt and in disbelief" when she read that statement because she said she left

"because of Baylor's noncompliance. If anything, I always asked for more support for Patty and [the Office](#)."

Baylor issued a statement to Outside the Lines that said during her time at Baylor, Lyons "never raised with Baylor the complaints that she is now making," and pointed out that she left in November 2015, ahead of the university making significant changes to its implementation of Title IX and sexual assault response in general.

Lyons said she was handed sexual assault cases to investigate her first day on the job, April 1, 2015. Although Lyons did not have prior Title IX experience, she had worked several years as an investigator for the federal government, including four years with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Chicago, investigating employment discrimination. She said nothing prepared her for what she experienced at Baylor.

"The violence is what took me back," she said. "My limited understanding was that it was a great Baptist institution. Me, being a Christian myself, I was just appalled at the level of violence taking place so rampantly at the institution."

Lyons said her first hunch that there had been a history of noncompliance with Title IX came after she heard from several women that they had told someone at Baylor, such as a dean, about their assault years ago, but no action was taken.

While Lyons said cases involving football players comprised less than a third of her workload, she said she received the most pushback from Baylor officials on getting police records and arranging interviews on those cases. Baylor officials have previously noted that Waco, Texas, police -- who handle most but not all of the sexual assault cases involving students that are reported to law enforcement -- are the ones putting restrictions on the release of police reports and that Baylor police must honor Waco police guidelines.

Lyons said she met regularly with top law enforcement officials at Baylor, and she was told during one conversation that it was not safe for her to interview certain alleged perpetrators by herself because they have "a potential for violence." She said she believed that the comment was made to try to intimidate her, which is the basis for an employment discrimination charge she filed Dec. 8, 2016, after initially contacting the EEOC in June 2016.

Baylor's statement to Outside the Lines says that Lyons' exchange with law enforcement was not as she described.

"Based on feedback they had received from the Title IX office, the officials offered to accompany Ms. Lyons any time she felt a situation might escalate

and become difficult for her. They offered the same support to other Title IX staff members -- and it is a service the law enforcement officials also provide to other departments across campus. Far from intending to intimidate Ms. Lyons, the law enforcement officials were trying to do everything they could to help her be successful in her work," the statement read.

Crawford's attorney shared with Outside the Lines a copy of the U.S. Department of Education's acknowledgement of receiving the Title IX complaint in April, but the agency did not launch an investigation of Baylor until after Crawford filed her complaint in September. Lyons said she has been engaged in regular conversations with education officials.

A spokeswoman for the department declined to answer questions on Lyons' complaint, citing a department policy to not comment on possible investigations.

Lyons said the final straw for her came after an Oct. 5, 2015, meeting with Ramsower, Crawford and another Title IX investigator, Ian McRary, who resigned in December. Lyons said she told Ramsower that "we are suffering," and the staff needed more support as "it's keeping me up at night. I felt that if I had the support, I could do it."

Lyons described Ramsower's response as "cold" and dismissive.

"At night, I was having nightmares about rape and then I was getting a little paranoid," Lyons said. "And then the police were saying, 'You're not safe to do your job. Look over your shoulder when you go to the parking lot.'"

Lyons' attorney, Dallas-based Rogge Dunn, who also represents Crawford, said Baylor officials did not respond to his efforts to reach out to the school in November to discuss a settlement. Lyons said one reason for filing the complaints was to get outside scrutiny of Baylor by government regulators.

"I don't think self-regulation in this case is going to be effective for the students," Lyons said.

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