

MSU to pay record \$4.5M fine in Nassar sexual assault scandal

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David Jesse | Detroit Free Press | Tribune News Service

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DETROIT — Michigan State University will pay a record \$4.5 million fine for its problems in handling the Larry Nassar case, the federal education department announced Thursday.

“What happened at MSU was abhorrent ... so was the university’s response to their (Nassar and Strampel) crimes,” U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said in announcing the findings.

In addition, the school must hire an outside law firm to review all sex assault case decisions made by the school’s Title IX office and issue a report to the federal government. MSU’s board and president must also receive a regular report of all cases and decisions.

In addition, MSU must conduct a sweeping investigation into who knew what and didn’t act on both the Nassar case and his boss, William Strampel, who was recently convicted of criminal charges.

That includes former MSU President Lou Anna Simon, who is currently facing criminal charges of lying to police in the Nassar investigation; current Provost June Youatt, who knew for years of sexual harassment claims against Strampel and cleared him; along with the Associate Vice President for Academic Human Resources, employees of the Office of the General Counsel, and the former head coach of the women’s gymnastics team.

“Because it failed to promptly and equitably respond to reports and grievances alleging sexual harassment perpetrated by Employee X (Larry Nassar) and the Dean (William

Strampel) and failed to take appropriate actions reasonably calculated to end the harassment, eliminate the hostile environment, and prevent the harassment from recurring," the Office of Civil Rights finding says.

Nassar was a doctor at MSU, as well as the team doctor for USA Gymnastics. He was sentenced to 60 years in federal prison on child pornography charges. He also faces a 40- to 175-year sentence issued in Ingham County and a 40- to 125-year sentence from Eaton County for sexual assaults. Those sentences will not begin until he finishes the federal sentence.

Strampel was sentenced to a year in jail in June, after jurors found he used his power as dean of MSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine to proposition and control female medical students.

The jury also determined there was enough evidence to support prosecutors' argument that Strampel displayed "complete indifference" about whether Nassar was following protocols meant to decrease risk for the university following a complaint of sexual assault in 2014.

MSU settled lawsuits by more than 300 Nassar survivors with a payment of \$500 million. However, there are lawsuits still pending by more than 100 Nassar survivors.

Late last month, MSU said in legal filings it shouldn't be held legally responsible for Nassar.

"Although Nassar's actions were repugnant and merit the heavy criminal penalties imposed upon him, the law does not support Plaintiffs' attempts to hold the MSU Defendants liable for his wrongs," the university said in a court filing of more than 100 pages, backed by nearly 900 pages of exhibits.