

While Searching for New General Counsel, Michigan State Settles Federal Nassar Inquiry



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By Sue Reisinger | August 13, 2019 at 05:16 PM



Michigan State University. Photo: Shutterstock

Still searching for a new general counsel, Michigan State University has reached a three-year agreement with federal civil rights investigators to resolve their probe into the [Larry Nassar sex abuse scandal](#).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights [announced](#) Monday that the school has agreed to several revisions after the sports doctor was imprisoned for the rest of his life for abusing hundreds of student-athletes in his care over decades.

The office noted that William Strampel, the former dean of MSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine, was recently convicted of felony misconduct for using his public office to sexually harass students, and of willfully neglecting to monitor Nassar when he was told to do so after an earlier investigation. Strampel was sentenced Aug. 7 to one year in prison.

The Office for Civil Rights, which investigates Title IX and sex discrimination complaints, said its "remedy is appropriate and effective in light of their gross misconduct," referring to Nassar and Strampel.

New Michigan State president Samuel Stanley, who took office Aug. 1, issued a [statement](#) Monday saying, "We must always look for ways to do more for those who trust the university with their health

and safety. The agreed-upon revisions ... further enhance the many protections and policy improvements MSU has made since Nassar's arrest."

Stanley added the school also plans to add "new positions dedicated to investigating HealthTeam grievances and complaints, as well as train HealthTeam staff and ensure compliance."

In the agreement, the university vowed to improve its processes for investigating complaints; provide chaperones to be present at sensitive medical exams; and make sure all Title IX sex discrimination complaints are handled by a "qualified, objective and independent health care investigator."

Roger Severino, director of the Office for Civil Rights, said in a statement, "Perpetrating and tolerating sexual abuse of patients is not only a heinous breach of trust, it's against federal law. While Nassar and the dean who oversaw him have been rightly convicted of crimes, the institutional reforms that MSU has agreed to undertake will help ensure that no patient is ever victimized like this again."

However, the office [imposed a similar remedy](#) and similar changes in September 2015 to correct non-Nassar-related violations of Title IX provisions addressing sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Those changes did not deter Nassar or Strampel. Federal investigators found last year that complaints against both men had been mishandled by the school despite the 2015 commitments.

In other fallout from the Nassar scandal:

- The university continues its search for a [new general counsel](#) after dismissing Robert Young Jr. in February after only eight months on the job. That means four lawyers have served in the post since February 2018, when Young's predecessor was dismissed. Deputy general counsel Brian Quinn has the interim job for now.
- Former school president [Lou Anna Simon](#), now a faculty member, awaits a court decision on whether she will have to stand trial for allegedly lying to state investigators in the probe. Meanwhile, the school disclosed it's paid \$672,000 in legal fees for her defense as of mid-June. Most of the money has gone to Grand Rapids, Michigan-based Silver & Van Essen. Simon recently agreed to retire from her faculty position effective Aug. 31, with a \$2.45 million payout from the university.
- After hearings, a county judge on Aug. 7 ordered former school gymnastics coach Kathie Klages to stand trial for allegedly lying to law enforcement investigators about whether some students told her about Nassar's abuse and she failed to take action.
- There are more legal fees to come: The board of trustees has agreed to hire [McDermott Will & Emery](#) to conduct an internal review of how the Nassar matter was handled. The university said the contract is not yet available.