

## STATEMENT OF BEHALF OF PROFESSOR JOEL ELGIN

Professor Joel Elgin served the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse for over twenty (20) years teaching thousands of students. Ninety-nine-point nine percent (99.9%) of those students had no complaints about Professor Elgin or his teaching methods. Indeed, Professor Elgin consistently received glowing reviews from his art students. Now, just one student, along with her minions, has “cancelled” Professor Elgin, his career and his reputation. This student continued to take classes from Professor Elgin after the alleged incident (which allegedly happened four (4) years before her complaint) despite the availability of other art professors and other art classes. During that time, Professor Elgin had no power over her or her grades in other courses.

The University’s initial response to the complaint was to investigate. It did so and found that there was no evidence to support her claim. However, this student was unhappy about the response and so, another investigation began. Professor Elgin participated by spending several hours answering questions and claims asked by the University investigators, who were not independent. Despite his complete cooperation, most of Professor Elgin’s responses were ignored and not included in the report to Chancellor Gow. The report is anything but fair, balanced and independent.

Professor Elgin was prepared to talk with Chancellor Gow and to go to a University faculty tribunal to address the student’s charges when the University system’s attorney advised that Professor Elgin’s accumulated sick leave was at risk. That accumulated sick leave could be used to purchase health care coverage upon retirement and was worth thousands of dollars. Despite Professor Elgin’s desire to clear his name and reputation, he could not put his family’s economic future at risk. Thus, he decided to retire. Meeting with Chancellor Gow would have been pointless. Professor Elgin was not afraid to meet with him as Chancellor Gow implied in his email to students. Nor was he afraid to go to a hearing.

The vast majority of Professor Elgin’s past and current students stand behind him. Unfortunately, they are afraid to say anything publicly in case they get “cancelled” too. The “cancel culture” is so robust that at least one student was heard declaring that she would lie to get an “abuser” out of the University. This incident has been reported to the University. The question has to be asked, though: how many other students feel the same way.

UW-L faculty should be afraid, very afraid. A student could make a bogus claim at anytime and, unless you have video, the deck is stacked against you. The University appears to want fairness but, in the end, it will cave to a persistent complainant and/or threaten to eliminate economic benefits that were earned from years of work. While complaints of sexual misconduct should be investigated thoroughly, the credibility of the alleged harasser and the complainant should be considered. That wasn’t done in this case. And it probably won’t be done in the future.