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Early this morning a complaint was filed on behalf of a number of victims with the Office of Civil Rights against Occidental College for violating Title IX.

The complaint documents violations involving 37 Occidental College students, who were allegedly raped, sexually assaulted, battered, harassed, and/or retaliated against for speaking out against sexual violence. We represent a number of victims whose complaints are documented in the Title IX complaint.

The Title IX complaint sets forth details of rapes, sexual assaults, and sexual batteries that have occurred at Occidental and the ways in which Occidental, a college which President Obama once attended, has failed miserably to abide by federal law which guarantees each and every student the right to an education free from violations of their human and civil rights.

The last reported rape occurred this past Friday night and was reported to the police on Saturday and to Occidental College this past Sunday.

Another student, a freshman who alleges that she was raped less than two months ago is also here today. Her rape led to a public protest after Occidental failed to send out a campus wide alert because, according to Jonathan Veitch, the President of Occidental College, “there was no ongoing danger of an unknown repeat offence because the student involved was immediately identified and interviewed by the police and by Student Affairs.” President Veitch’s statement in an open letter was shocking since some perpetrators have been accused of sexual assaults towards multiple victims. What was even more shocking is that although there has not been a hearing yet with regard to the alleged rape it became known that the alleged rapist was one of a group of individuals who had been invited to the President’s home. When the Occidental Sexual Assault Coalition, a group that had been formed to protect women on campus, informed the President that it was inappropriate to have this alleged perpetrator in his home while these serious charges were pending and had not yet come to a hearing, his response was to uninvite several of the women who had been on the invited list and were members of the Occidental Sexual Assault Coalition.

With respect to each instance in which a report of rape or sexual assault was made, Occidental had an obligation to conduct a prompt, impartial, and thorough

investigation to determine what happened and to take appropriate steps to resolve the situation. The School was also required by federal law to take prompt and effective action to prevent its recurrence in order to comply with its obligations under Title IX.

As is detailed in the Title IX complaint, time and time again Occidental failed miserably in meeting those obligations.

Rape and sexual assault investigations have dragged out. Often, by the time that they occur, the perpetrators have been allowed to graduate and/or remain on campus and finish the semester while their victims live in fear and have difficulty concentrating on their studies.

Those that are found guilty are given the lightest punishments imaginable such as in one case in which the perpetrator, who was found guilty of non-consensual sexual intercourse and also admitted to sexually assaulting another young woman, was told that his punishment was to write a paper, an apology to the victim, and resign from the leadership positions he held on campus during his final semester at Occidental before he graduated.

Even in the most extreme cases involving a single perpetrator and multiple incidents of sexual abuse towards different female students, in which the perpetrator has admitted and/or been found guilty by the college and the perpetrator was "expelled," Occidental has nonetheless informed the perpetrator that he will be allowed back to the college to complete his education after the victim(s) graduate.

Those that have had the courage to publicly speak out feel that they have not been supported and in some instances have been retaliated against by the college.

We believe that the university's response has been deliberately indifferent towards the victims and have magnified their suffering.

It is not easy to have the courage to come forward and report a rape or sexual assault, particularly on a small campus. Occidental only has about 2,000 students.

The young women who finally find the courage to do so should have a right to expect that the College will make them feel safe and protected until their hearing.

Instead, in many cases, these young women feel as though they have been further victimized by the school after they reported.

Going through this type of process for a victim is extremely difficult and once the perpetrator is found guilty one would expect that the school would take appropriate action, but that is not the case. Time and time again the school has failed to take strong action against the perpetrators.

In another recent case, the perpetrator was found guilty of nonconsensual sexual intercourse and was given a sentence of one semester suspension, 50 hours of community service and he was required to write a book report. He appealed and, although he was again found guilty, the suspension was removed and he was allowed to remain on campus. His punishment was 50 hours of community service and a book report for a rape. What message does that send to the male and female students at Occidental?

So while it is business as usual at Occidental that is not the case for the young women that are the victims. They have to live with what happened to them day by day, trying to deal with the terrible effects of the rapes and sexual assaults and having to deal with the college's failure to protect them and the college's deliberate indifference.

These rapes and sexual assaults have created a climate of fear and apprehension amongst many female students at this college. It has ruined their college experience, but that is going to end.

Occidental needs to be investigated by the Department of Education. They cannot conduct business as usual while women are being raped.

We believe that if Occidental had done more to educate its students, taken appropriate action when rapes and sexual assaults were reported, and meted out appropriate punishments when perpetrators were found guilty, that many of these rapes and sexual assaults would never have occurred.

We are asking the Department of Education to take swift and immediate action- to force the college to do what they are legally required to do or lose their federal funding.

It has been open season on the female students at Occidental. I wish to let Occidental know that it will be open season on Occidental in our criticism of them until they do their jobs and stop the rapes and sexual assaults. If they do not know how- let me give them a primer- call every person including students, faculty and administrators into a school meeting- be open and transparent about the problem and the depth of the problem- declare an emergency and let everyone know that Occidental is committed to ensuring a safe campus for every student. Use this as a teaching opportunity to ensure that Occidental educates their student body so that everyone understands what constitutes a sexual assault, what constitutes a rape, and what their rights are under those circumstances. Encourage victims to come forward and ensure them that they will be given every consideration while at the same time assuring the accused individual of due process as well. Let everyone know that if there is an accusation of rape or sexual assault that it will be promptly investigated and that investigation will be given priority over every other activity at that college- that the investigation will be done promptly and fairly- but finally that if a student is found to have sexually assaulted or raped another student that they will be thrown out- period- end of story.

Let me be clear that the alleged perpetrators are entitled to due process - but if found guilty or responsible they need to know that they will be expelled. Zero tolerance means exactly that.

To the rapists at Occidental, the college should send the following message: the party is over. You will be held accountable and you will be prosecuted and thrown out of school if you assault a female student.

These rapes are shameful indictments of this college – and must and will stop- President Veitch- you and I have never met- but I can assure you that when we do I will ask you to explain how so many rapes and assaults can occur on such a small campus and how you can continue to go on without declaring an emergency. If you have to shut this campus down for a brief period of time while you try to figure this out- do it.

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Representing five victims who they sexually  
assaulted or raped while they were students at  
Occidental College  
April 18, 2013