Photo of the Day |



Student walks across campus on a chilly day in Storrs, Conn. on Sunday. As the weekend of Halloween ends, students prepare for their upcoming classes on Monday, Nov. 2nd. PHOTO BY MORGAN BLANCHARD, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

EDITORIAL:

UConn professor's sexual harassment case highlights university shortcomings

Content Warning: The following article contains discussions of sexual harassment and sexual assault. Student survivors of sexual assault can receive crisis counseling and a free sexual assault forensics exam through Student Health and Wellness. SHaW's 24/7 Advice Nurse can be reached at 860-486-4700.

On Tuesday, Oct. 20, the University of Connecticut terminated tenured history professor Ricardo Salazar-Rey after his third sexual harassment investigation.

The most recent investigation followed a complaint filed on April 15 by a student enrolled in one of Salazar-Rey's entry-level history courses at UConn's Stamford campus and stated that the professor began texting the student in February 2026. In one message — obtained by The Daily Campus through a Freedom of Information request — Salazar-Rey described his desire for a relationship and young children with the complainant. The student replied to the message, telling him that he "would be able to find that again." Salazar-Rey replied to this message by stating, "Unless it's you, I'm not sure that you can be sure."

This was far from the first complaint raised against Salazar-Rey throughout his time as a UConn employee. In 2023, a former student filed a claim stating that Salazar-Rey had complimented her appearance and writing abilities. The former professor referred to himself as "pre-seduced" by the compliment in a text message to her. He later openly admitted to "falling in love" with her, despite recognizing that what he felt "is wrong." Following this investigation, Salazar-Rey was temporarily placed on paid administrative leave, in accordance with his union contract.

The first investigation into Salazar-Rey's inappropriate relationships with students was filed in October of 2019. This complainant reported that Salazar-Rey attempted to kiss her in an instance of unwanted sexual harassment. In response, the former professor received nothing more than a month of administrative leave and written discipline from the university's Office of Inclusion and Civil Rights. In April 2020, less than a year after this complaint, Salazar-Rey was notified of his approval for tenure. To have approved a professor for tenure despite existing sexual harassment allegations was a severe lapse of judgment.

Officials at the University of Connecticut were aware of Salazar-Rey's history of sexual misconduct. In spite of the original complainant's report, a known perpetrator of sexual misconduct and direct violator of the university's Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Related Interpersonal Violence was promoted and further embedded in the university's community. Despite multiple complaints, there was no action taken until this year. The Editorial Board acknowledges that firing a tenured professor is complex, yet it is far from impossible.

The Editorial Board expresses our support for the complainants in this case and those impacted by Salazar-Rey's inappropriate behavior. Regardless of whether university officials believed the 2019 complainant, their handling of the situation sets a precedent. The 2023 complainant's report mentioned multiple students having similar negative experiences with this professor. How many more of Salazar-Rey's students were harassed and chose not to take legal action, out of fear of reliving the situation or that they would not be believed?

The 2026 complainant acknowledged their fear of retaliation and stated: "I would engage because that was the respectful thing to do. He is my professor, and you have to respond to your professors... I feel as though a line has been crossed, and I'm very uncomfortable going to his classes at this point because of the fact that he has leverage over me."

Multiple complainants described the long and difficult process of emails, meetings and continuously recounting their ordeals. Yet no legal action was taken until now — seven years since the original complaint was filed. No victim should have to wait this long for justice; no institution should see multiple victims and hesitate on acting against the aggressor. There is no excuse for perpetuating an environment of sexual harassment and assault, as it directly conflicts with UConn's policy.

The university was aware that former professor Salazar-Rey presented a threat to his students and did not take appropriate measures to protect them. If he had been dismissed after the first complaint in 2019, university officials would not have had to deal with the complications of firing a tenured professor.

The Editorial Board demands our university prioritize the protection of our community and respond accordingly to reports of sexual harassment and assault with the utmost seriousness and action. A professor gaining tenure despite reports of sexual harassment is unacceptable. Survivors of sexual harassment shouldn't be forced to watch their aggressor rise in the ranks. For a university with a policy that claims a commitment "to maintaining a safe and non- discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community," retaining Salazar-Rey in the face of several allegations is pure hypocrisy.