

August 17, 1993

Dear President Rupp:

This letter is regarding the malicious and illegal destruction of my school records by one of your administrators. I request you to reply to this as soon as possible.

I was a student at Columbia University from September, 1985 to October, 1988 of which period I was at Columbia College from January, 1988 through October, 1988.

While at Columbia I had been involved in a dispute with certain Columbia College administrators, and I had typed out and handed a complaint against these administrators to then President Michael Sovern in January 1989, as well as to then Provost Robert Goldberger and to then Vice-President for Arts and Sciences Jonathan Cole. This complaint was dismissed in a letter I received from then Provost Goldberger in February 1989.

I have reason to believe that the investigation into my allegations was "fixed" and was a fraud and cover-up. Further Goldberger's letter dismissing my complaint against the administrators was written in bad faith and he hid substantial knowledge that he had gained regarding my allegations. I also have reason to believe that this knowledge was shared by then President Michael Sovern and then Vice President for Arts and Sciences Jonathan Cole who is now your Provost. These and other charges were now to be resolved in a court of law. My student file and the large number of documents it contained supporting my claims was central evidence needed to be presented before judge and jury.

Because of the unusual and lengthy contact between me and the Columbia College Deans Office my file at the school was uniquely voluminous and contained an extraordinarily large number of documents written by me and the deans.

On May 26, 1993 I gave in a request to inspect my student file at Columbia College. The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 requires the University to grant the request within 45 days. I learnt that Mary Dooley in the Columbia College Dean of Students Office is the one who normally handles requests to review the file and assigns a dean to be present during each review. As the 45 day deadline approached and then passed I called the Dean of Students Office repeatedly day after day and left messages with the secretaries requesting that someone return my calls and complaining about no one returning my calls and informing the secretaries that I would like access to my records without further delay and that I was being inconvenienced by the University's non-compliance with the law. I even complained to Giesla White at the Office of the General Counsel, who on calling the Columbia College Dean of Students Office was told by a person whose name she (White) pronounced as "Sheri" that she ("Sheri") and Mary Dooley were aware of my request and had worked on it in the past and would be getting back to me soon. It was not specified what work they had done, and why they had not been returning my calls.

Even after these vigorous pleadings and reminders my calls were not returned by officials from the Dean of Students Office until Friday, July 16, 1993 when I finally got to talk to Mary Dooley who informed me that Karen Blank is handling my request to review the file. At the time Blank was Associate Dean of Students at Columbia College. I told Dooley that I definitely want to review my records on Monday and no later, and that if Blank can't do it then she can find another dean to do the review. She said she would let Blank know. I was granted an appointment by Blank for Monday, July 19, 1993 at 2:30 pm. This was well in excess of the 45 day period and was in violation of the law. This law and the 45-day requirement set by the law were acknowledged on the aforementioned official form that I had submitted. On that form I had also

specifically requested that the University please grant the request at the earliest, thus making clear my need for a timely response.

According to information I have, it seems that on July 6, 1993 Karen Blank learnt of my May 26, 1993 request to review the file. She took control over my file and decided to handle the review matter herself. From July 6 through July 19 she carefully studied the file and my case against the deans and removed and tore up all material that would go against the deans or would be in my favor. In effect her aim was to end the case by destroying central evidence. She needed time to review and choose documents to destroy and I was stalled by her staff and my repeated calls to Mary Dooley were not returned. Each day Blank could get extra counted in giving her the time she needed to carefully choose the documents. Mary Dooley would be in the office on some of the occasions when I called but would not take my calls or respond to my messages, and thus would not inform me that the matter had been taken out of her hands and that my file was with Blank. Please ask Blank what instruction she gave to Dooley and others regarding how to deal with the fact that I kept calling up the Office and Blank kept needing more time.

The fact that the deans office had shifted to temporary quarters because of asbestos abatement and that was causing them severe problems is an excuse that I have heard, but I do not find that to be sufficient explanation.

When I reviewed my file on July 19, 1993 I discovered that a large number of documents were missing from my file. The missing documents seem to have been logically and carefully chosen so as to scuttle any attempts to prove the deceit and corruption of involved Columbia administrators. Below is a description of my two meetings with Blank.

First Meeting with Blank. July 19, 1993.

Much of the time I was reviewing the file Blank was on the phone. She was seated behind me and to my left. I began to look through the file and studied some of the documents and noticed that a large number of documents were missing. I went through the file several times, reviewing and searching.

I mentioned to Blank that there are loads of documents missing. I mentioned to her that I had gone through the file with Wiggins when he had conducted an investigation and do not see the documents I had then seen, and do not see a host of other documents. She asked me which ones. I began looking through and naming missing documents. The removal knew no moderation -- it was massive destruction of documents and notes and correspondence written by various people including me.

Then I noticed a document lying a short distance to my left under a stack of office documents. A part of the document was projecting out and I recognized the document as belonging to my file. I pointed the document out to Karen Blank who too saw the document. She pulled the document out saying that she was supposed to tear the document, and she gripped it with both hands and stood over the waste-paper can and was about to tear it. I told her not to tear it, and she said she is going to tear it. I got ready to stop her if she began to rip it. She said that the document was not supposed to be around, and I told her I want the document to stay in my file. She started an argument saying isn't there another copy in the file. I told her there isn't another copy in the file. She then said that she was supposed to tear up the document and it is part of her duty during the file review process to choose and remove documents. She said that this document was supposed to be torn up and she is going to tear it. I told she can't tear that document. Finally she decided not to risk a possible physical struggle and gave up and handed the document over.

The document was 15-20 pages thick and on the top left bore a tag saying "The President's Room" and the former President's name (Michael I. Sovern). The documents was the aforementioned complaint against the Deans' Office that I had submitted to the President Sovern in January 1989, alleging deceit and other misbehavior by various deans. Handwritten on the document was the response of the deans to some of my allegations. This document probably served as her basis to decide which documents from my file should be destroyed.

I asked her to state how many documents she removed during her review and which ones they were. She said she does not remember but that there was justification for destroying all documents that she removed. She said she had done it in the last few days, and it was normal procedure that all the deans carry out as part of the review process. She said the dean in charge of the review is expected to use her judgment regarding which documents to remove, and she had done what any other dean would do.

I asked her how she knew to choose this particular document (the one she tried to tear up). She mentioned that it was accusations against the office, and that the matter had been investigated and closed so the document was irrelevant. I asked her why she did not remove other documents regarding closed matters, and she said she used her judgment.

She said that my time was about over and she had "open hours" next and so I should wrap up. Then a few minutes later I still wasn't done and she said I had to leave but can continue it later and gave me an appointment on Wednesday July 21 at 3:30 pm. While leaving I gave her a copy of a letter addressed to the General Counsel, which I had handed to the General Counsel earlier that day. Among the things the letter complained about was Columbia's noncompliance with the 45 day limit .

Second Meeting with Blank. July 21, 1993.

Some of her behavior in the second meeting seemed preplanned. She began the meeting as if nothing extraordinary had occurred in the last meeting. She walked out of the office on two or three occasions for large periods of time and left me alone with my file. I believe she may have wanted to create "doubt" and allow herself the claim that I may have been removing some documents while she was innocently away. While in the office she sat facing away from me. The way we sat we had our backs towards each other.

Finally I began a discussion with her regarding the documents. We talked about the contents of the document she almost tore up in the first meeting on July 19, 1993. She informed me that she was going to seek permission from the president before destroying that document with the "President's Room" tag on it, and for that reason the document was not in my file. She explained that she had kept it on top of the table for the purpose (as described above it was under a stack of other office documents with just a piece protruding out). In the first meeting nowhere in her desperation to tear it did calling the President for permission come up -- she determinedly held it over the wastebasket with both hands and wanted to tear it right then, and was prevented from tearing it as described above. Throughout the first meeting the idea of her getting permission from the president was never mentioned at all.

I mentioned to her some of the missing documents. She still did not remember which documents she had torn up. She said that when someone wants to review a file this has to be done. She said that another dean would have done the same.

We discussed my request, in my July 19 1993 letter to the General Counsel, for copies of documents.

While leaving I made it a point to pick up and open my bag (which was empty) fully in front of her and place in it the couple of pages I had brought to take notes.

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[Rest of Letter Deleted]

Sincerely,

(Ashish Sirohi)