

THE ITHACAN

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2018 • VOLUME 85, ISSUE 15



Ithaca College President Shirley M. Collado speaks at an MLK Week event Jan. 23. Collado released a statement Jan. 16 that said she pleaded no contest to sexual abuse charges.

CAITIE IHRIG/THE ITHACAN

Collado has sex abuse conviction, denies guilt

BY AIDAN QUIGLEY
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Ithaca College President Shirley M. Collado was accused of sexually abusing a female patient while working as a psychologist in Washington, D.C., in 2000 and was convicted of sexual abuse in 2001.

Prosecutors argued Collado took advantage of a vulnerable sexual-abuse survivor with mental illness by entering into a monthslong sexual relationship that started when Collado was the patient's therapist. Collado denies having any sexual contact with the patient.

Collado admits to living with the patient after the latter was discharged from The Center at the Psychiatric Institute of Washington. This violated her employment contract at The Center — a program specializing in post-traumatic and dissociative conditions at a private psychiatric hospital — as it was considered to be an unethical outside relationship and grounds for immediate termination. Collado said she was trying to help her by providing her a place to stay.

Collado pleaded *nolo contendere* — no contest — to one count of misdemeanor sexual abuse in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia in August 2001 for a sole charge of placing her hand on the patient's clothed breast with sexual intent while Collado was her therapist. Collado knew, or had reason to know, that the sexual contact was against the patient's permission, as the patient was an inpatient at a psychiatric hospital, according to the charge against Collado.

"The laws and ethical rules prohibiting sexual and outside relationships with former or current patients are designed to prevent the

very activity that occurred in this case," Assistant U.S. Attorney Sharon Marcus-Kurn, the case's prosecutor, wrote in the Government's Memorandum in Aid of Sentencing. "The law recognizes that individuals that are wards of psychiatric institutions are extremely vulnerable to being abused and taken advantage of. The laws are designed to protect them and punish anyone who violates the

therapist/patient relationship."

By pleading *nolo contendere*, Collado did not admit guilt but accepted a conviction. After a defendant enters a *nolo contendere* plea, the case moves forward as though the

"The laws are designed to ... punish anyone who violates the therapist/patient relationship."

— Sharon Marcus-Kurn

defendant pleaded guilty. With this plea, there is no trial.

Collado maintains her innocence and said she never had any sexual contact with the patient.

"I didn't have the legal resources; I didn't have the financial resources to, and I didn't have the emotional wherewithal to really take this on the way I would have preferred," Collado told *The Ithacan*. "So I took a different route. And like many people in this country, young people in this country, people of color, people who don't have networks, that was me. This happens all the time, where you make this really difficult choice, even if it goes completely against the truth of who you are."

Collado was one of the patient's treating therapists when the patient was an inpatient between May 12 and June 9, 2000, at The Center, Marcus-Kurn wrote.

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IC community has mixed reaction to Collado news

BY SOPHIA ADAMUCCI
AND CELISA CALACAL
NEWS EDITOR AND SENIOR WRITER

Following Ithaca College President Shirley M. Collado's statement about a 2001 sexual abuse charge and *The Ithacan's* in-depth article about the case, members of the college community are expressing mixed reactions to the information.

Collado was accused of sexually abusing a female patient while working as a psychologist in Washington, D.C. in 2000, and pleaded no contest to one misdemeanor charge. Collado denies that any sexual contact occurred, and she said she pleaded no contest because she didn't have the resources to fight the claims. She said she allowed the patient to move into her home — considered an ethical violation by Collado's employers and professional guidelines — because the patient had nowhere to go.

The Ithaca College Board of Trustees and the campus members of the Presidential Search Committee both released statements expressing confidence in Collado and stand by their decision to hire her.

An open letter in support of Collado with 275 signatures from faculty and staff was published online by *The Ithacan* on Jan. 23. The letter states that Collado did not hide this information during the hiring process, that the case was settled in court and that Collado has unified the campus in the five and a half months she has held office. The letter was primarily crafted by Claire Gleitman, professor in the Department of English; Carla Golden, professor in the Department of Psychology; Jennifer

Tennant, associate professor in the Department of Economics; and Julia Lapp, associate professor in the Department of Health Promotion and Physical Education.

"She has rapidly gained our affection, our admiration and our trust, and these recent disclosures have not altered that, though they will no doubt spark productive and nuanced conversations on our campus about how people move forward after terrible events, recover and learn from their own failings and those of others, and need not be defined by the worst thing that ever happened to them," the letter states.

Gleitman was a member of the presidential search committee, and she said she was not taken by surprise by Collado's statement because the search committee was aware of the information during the hiring process. Gleitman said one of the central points in the letter is that the court case was resolved approximately 20 years ago.

"It is bringing out the racism and sexism and just the hatred that people have."

— Asma Barlas

Tom Swensen, professor and chair of the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences and chair of the Faculty Council, was also on the search committee. He said the search committee did not see the court documents for the case during the search process, but he does not think it was necessary for the committee to see

the documents.

"The board thoroughly went through everything," Swensen said. "We made the best choice."

Title IX Coordinator Linda Koenig said her initial reaction to the news was to identify how to continue supporting a campus culture where students feel they can come forward with reports of sex offenses.

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TAKING THE STAGE

Three students prepare for their performance at a global music convention in Anaheim, California.

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DIALOGUES

The Ithaca College community has to confront tough questions to move forward after allegations.

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THE ROAD TO 308

Men's basketball head coach Jim Mullins becomes the winningest coach in program history.

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