News



by James Dearie

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SHAWNEE, Okla. — Two women have filed lawsuits against St. Gregory's Abbey and St. Gregory's University, for improperly handling allegations of sexual abuse, Oklahoma Watch reported April 9.

The university, which had been struggling financially in recent years, closed at the end of the 2017 fall semester.

The women allege that Benedictine Fr. Nicholas Ast, former vice president for mission and identity and university chaplain, would inappropriately hug and touch them, and that he directed conversations, including in the confessional, toward previous boyfriends and relationships in a way that made them extremely uncomfortable.

One of the women claims she reported the abuse, only to be told by abbot Benedictine Lawrence Stasyszen not to report Ast's behavior and that he would take care of it.

In addition, former St. Gregory's professor Sean Connolly claims that he received several complaints of sexual abuse from female students. When reporting the complaints to administrators and to the board produced no results, Connolly says he began warning students himself of the complaints he had received and of the

university's inaction. The university fired him for unprofessional conduct.

Attorneys for the abbey and the university denied all allegations.

ERIE, Pa. — Mercyhurst University is scrubbing the name of late former president William Garvey from memorials on campus after decades-old reports of abuse came to light for the first time.

The university's action comes after the Erie Diocese issued an update to its child protection policy April 6, along with a list of names of people associated with the diocese "accused of actions that, in the diocese's judgment, disqualify [them] from working with children." Garvey appeared on the list, identified as a "former lay teacher/coach (later served as college president)."

"Beginning today, the Administration and Board of Trustees are making arrangements to remove all honors and tributes to Dr. William Garvey, former president of then-Mercyhurst College, from its campuses," university president Michael Victor and board chair Richard Lanzillo wrote in a letter April 9.

"The first course of action will be to remove Dr. Garvey's presidential photograph from the library and to expunge the name 'Garvey Park,' " they continued.

"We must move forward in a way true to who we are and what our Mercy heritage compels us to do. It is our hope that the actions of the current administration and the board will help bring healing and restoration to the victims."

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SEATTLE, Wa. — The Korematsu Center for Law and Equality at Seattle University Law School has joined an amicus curiae group in filing a brief at the U.S. Supreme Court arguing against the Trump administration's travel ban, the law school said in a press release dated April 5.

The brief argues that the ban "violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment as well as the Immigration and Nationality Act," the press release says.

The center joins Gordon Hirabayashi, Minori Yasui and Fred Korematsu in filing the brief. All three are children of parents who resisted the forced incarceration of

Japanese-Americans during World War II.

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Canisius College has named Denise Rotondo as dean of its Richard J. Wehle School of Business, Buffalo Business First reported April 9. Rotondo will be the first women to hold the position.

"The thing I'm most excited about is the opportunity to get alumni back to campus and engaged with students both in and out of the classroom," she told the site. "That's a real advantage this institution has and it's something that is hard for other colleges to replicate."

Rotondo was removed as dean of State University of New York at Geneseo's business school earlier this year, for reasons which remain unclear. Canisius says that it investigated the situation and is satisfied with what it found.

[James Dearie is an NCR Bertelsen intern. Contact him at jdearie@ncronline.org.]

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