

Office of the Chancellor



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March 29, 2024

Dr. Joseph D. Gow
N2116 Valley Road
La Crosse, WI 54601-7116
Sent by email to: jgow@uwlax.edu
Re: UWS 4 Investigation

Dear Dr. Gow,

Jay Rothman, President of the Universities of Wisconsin, filed a complaint against you under Wis. Admin. Code Ch. UWS 4 (copy attached) on December 27, 2023. I notified you of the complaint and directed you to cooperate with an investigation on December 29.

On March 15, 2024, I provided you with a copy of the investigation report and attachments. I offered to discuss the matter informally with you in accordance with UWS 4.02. You declined to meet through a March 18 email.

I have now reviewed the investigation and concluded that your unethical and potentially illegal conduct, violations of my directives, and violations of applicable technology use policies have given me just cause to pursue tenure revocation and termination from your position as a professor in the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL) Communication Studies Department. Your conduct has damaged the university's reputation, negatively affected its commitment to accountability and integrity, and caused leadership at the UWL to lose trust in your ability to carry out duties as a Communication Studies professor. Your continued presence on campus will be disruptive and interfere with the ability of the university to fulfill its mission.

In accordance with Wis. Admin. Code § UWS 4.02, I therefore issue this,

Statement of Charges

Charge 1: Unethical and potentially illegal conduct.

1. You have appeared in and posted numerous pornographic videos on publicly accessible websites (both for free and for payment) in which you are clearly identifiable and reference both your midwestern location and your academic career (mentioning, e.g., the "President," "student enrollment," and the "Provost").
2. In a pornographic video posted for sale on November 2, 2023, your spouse, Dr. Carmen Wilson, states, "Joe gets recognized all the time when we go out. He is the head of a university. Everywhere we go it's 'Oh, that's Joe Gow.'"
3. Since the Universities of Wisconsin discovered your pornographic production activities in December of 2023, you have acknowledged the activities, have expressed your desire to continue engaging in the activities, and have promoted your content.
4. You continue to receive earnings from viewings of your pornographic videos.

5. You had clear knowledge of the potential damage and disruption from your conduct and continued to engage in it. Both in your published books and in your podcast, you made statements acknowledging your attempts to hide your pornographic activities from UWL because you knew that those activities would not be considered acceptable and would cause a “big scandal.”
6. You have stated in your books (originally authored under a pseudonym), *Monogamy with Benefits* and *Married with Benefits*, that “all the events described are true,” and that you are telling a “true story” with only names and identifying characteristics changed. In those books you admit to engaging in several instances of apparently illegal conduct including:
 - a. You paid \$400 to have oral sexual contact with a stripper in Hollywood, Los Angeles.
 - b. You paid \$500 to have oral sexual contact with a stripper in New Orleans and paid an additional \$50 to penetrate the stripper. You admitted that some people would conclude you had broken the law.
 - c. On three separate occasions, you paid a stripper to have sex with you and/or your spouse.
 - d. You paid an escort to have sex with you and your spouse somewhere less than an hour’s drive from your home.
7. At other places in your books, you describe a dereliction of your duties such as:
 - a. You planned a pornographic video shoot around travel for a business conference in Los Angeles.
 - b. You ignored work calls regarding arrangements for an event where UWL was hosting a visit from “a famous politician,” and delegated the preparation to your direct reports because you did not want it to be a “distraction” for your pornographic video shoot.
8. You arranged for a paid campus presentation by Nina Hartley, a pornographic actor and pornography industry educator and advocate without disclosing that you had a prior professional relationship with her. You developed the idea of inviting Hartley to campus while on the set with her shooting a pornographic video. You did not disclose this information at the time you were disciplined thereby misleading the Universities of Wisconsin into believing that you did not know Hartley before she spoke at UWL.
9. Following your termination as chancellor, you received a payout of unused vacation in the amount of 166.65 hours (\$21,048.56). However, you were often unavailable as chancellor and out of the office without any clear indication that you were working and without claiming vacation. On numerous occasions you reported six hours only of vacation time when the rules required you to report eight hours.
10. You traveled with your spouse, Dr. Carmen Wilson, and charged her expenses to the UWL Foundation. Her business purpose in accompanying you was often undocumented or unclear, and it appears that some of these trips included a deviation to make pornography.
11. Following at least two UWL football games you took a large volume of leftover catered wine from the Chancellor’s Box for your own personal use.
12. You instructed your Executive Assistant, Sara Olson, to print a 200-page vegan cookbook on UWL equipment, which you said was for Dr. Wilson.

These unethical and potentially illegal behaviors are harmful to UWL’s reputation with the public, potential donors, students, parents, and elected officials with whom the university works. The actions have generated a substantial amount of negative media attention. These behaviors violate the trust of the university necessary for your continued employment and, specifically violate the following:

- Wis. Admin. Code § UWS 8.025 (“However, no member of the unclassified [faculty or academic/administrative] staff may engage in an outside activity if it conflicts with his or her public

responsibilities to the University of Wisconsin System or the institution at which the unclassified staff member is employed.”)

- Declaration of Policy in Wis. Admin. Code § UWS 7.01 (“University faculty members are responsible for advancing the university’s missions of teaching, research, and public service. The fulfillment of these missions requires public trust in the integrity of the institution and in all members of the university community. The university’s effectiveness, credibility, and ability to maintain public trust are undermined by criminal activity that poses a substantial risk to the safety of others, that seriously impairs the university’s ability to fulfill its missions, or that seriously impairs the faculty member’s fitness or ability to fulfill the faculty member’s duties.”)
- UW System Administration Policy 1292, Workplace Conduct Expectations, including the duties to protect and preserve UW System Resources, act ethically and with integrity, and promote a culture of compliance.
- UWL Employee Handbook and Related Employment Policies, Section E-12, which states, “Employees shall respect the rights of others, exhibit a level of behavior supporting the university mission, the best interests of the university, perform assigned duties in an orderly and efficient manner, and adhere to all state, UW System, and UWL policies and directives.”
- Paragraph 13 of your Chancellor’s Employment Agreement (“The Chancellor may not engage in any activity that may be adverse to, or competitive or inconsistent with, the interests of the University of Wisconsin System.”)

Charge 2. Violation of the Interim Chancellor’s work directive to cooperate with investigation.

1. You were instructed, in writing on December 29, 2023, by the Interim Chancellor, that “[a]s a condition of your employment you are required to give [the identified outside investigators] your full cooperation.”
2. You refused to schedule an interview with the investigators or otherwise communicate with them until you had hired an attorney.
3. From December 29, 2023, to February 6, 2024, you apparently did not hire an attorney and still refused to speak with the investigators.
4. You rejected the investigators’ request to provide releases so that investigators could verify whether you had made sufficient earnings from outside activities to trigger ethics reporting requirements.
5. You deleted information from your university issued computers prior to returning them for the investigation.

Your failure to follow clear directives to cooperate with investigators is insubordinate and harmful to the university because the university was unable to ask you questions about the complaint and was unable to verify many of your activities or your outside income sources. You have been on paid leave since late December, and your sole employment obligation has been to cooperate with the investigation. Insubordination and refusal to follow specific directives because they were inconvenient for you violates your obligations as an employee and the trust necessary for your continued employment at UWL, and specifically violates the following:

- UW System Administration Policy 1292 (Promote a Culture of Compliance including “Learn and follow applicable laws, regulations, and UW System policies and Procedures.”)
- UWL Employee Handbook and Related Employment Policies, Section E-12, which states, “Employees shall respect the rights of others, exhibit a level of behavior supporting the university mission, the best interests of the university, perform assigned duties in an orderly and efficient manner, and adhere to all state, UW System, and UWL policies and directives.”

Charge 3. Violation of information technology use policies.

1. In the summer of 2023, you received dozens of vendor emails on your work account (jgow@uwlax.edu) for sex toys and other sex products which included graphic and pornographic imagery. You did not, apparently, take timely action to eliminate the vendor emails.
2. You used your work account email to purchase two books from Amazon.com relating to pornography in 2016.
3. You used your UWL iMac computer to download and a UWL network printer to print out a pre-filled PDF "Co-Performer Consent and Release Form" for a pornographic website known as xHamster.com in November 2023.
4. On UWL-issued MacBook laptop computers you and/or your spouse, Carmen Wilson, configured your Safari web browsers to autofill username and password credentials for many websites including at least seven pornographic websites. The only reason for the autofill information to exist would be to access the websites from the computers in question. You attempted to hide this use by manually clearing the saved credentials prior to returning the computers to UWL.

Your use of computer resources to access pornography and pornographic materials is unacceptable, and specifically violates the following:

- Board of Regents Policy Document 25-3 forbidding the use, as unacceptable, of UWL IT resources for "Storage, display, transmission, or intentional or solicited receipt of material that is or may reasonably be regarded as obscene, sexually explicit, or pornographic . . ."

You may appeal these charges by requesting a hearing from the UWL Faculty Senate Hearing Committee, directing your correspondence to Faculty Senate Chair Stephen Mann within twenty days of this notice. Because I am serving you by electronic means under UWS 4.02(3) on March 29, 2024, your hearing request must be filed by Thursday, April 18. If you do not request a hearing, as per UWS 4.02(1), ". . . action shall proceed along normal administrative lines . . ."

If you would like a paper copy of this communication, please let me know and one will be mailed to you.

Respectfully,



Betsy Morgan, Interim Chancellor