

## THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

<http://chronicle.com/daily/2007/07/2007071701n.htm>

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### *Today's News*

Tuesday, July 17, 2007

## **Regents at Eastern Michigan U. Fire President and 2 Others in Aftermath of Murder Investigations**

By [SARA LIPKA](#)

Eastern Michigan University, still reeling from the apparent cover-up of a student's murder in December, announced on Monday that it had fired its president, its vice president for student affairs, and its campus-police director. But the chairman of the university's Board of Regents said, without elaborating, that the president's dismissal was not related to the murder case.

The president, John A. Fallon III, was fired on Sunday afternoon by a unanimous vote of the regents, who informed him of the dismissal in a letter delivered by courier to his home that evening. The board re-enacted the vote before a crowd of 200 in the university's main administrative building on Monday.

At the same time, the regents also announced the "separation from the university" of James F. Vick, the vice president for student affairs, and Cindy L. Hall, the director of campus police.

Both Mr. Vick and Ms. Hall knew that Laura Dickinson, a freshman at the university, was killed in her dormitory room in December, according to recent investigations by the [U.S. Department of Education](#) and by [Butzel Long](#), a Detroit-based law firm.

But for two months -- between the gruesome discovery of Ms. Dickinson's body on December 15 and the arrest of another student, Orange Amir Taylor III, on charges of rape and murder in the case on February 23 -- the administrators failed to correct the university's public statement that there was "no reason to suspect foul play" ([The Chronicle](#), March 23). Mr. Fallon has said he did not know Ms. Dickinson's death was a homicide until the arrest of Mr. Taylor.

The university's reassurance that Ms. Dickinson had died naturally betrayed students' and employees' trust and violated federal law, the investigative reports concluded ([The Chronicle](#), July 5). The campus-crime-reporting law known as the Clery Act requires colleges and universities to disclose information about crimes on their campuses and to warn students and employees of threats to their safety.

The regents also announced on Monday that they would place a disciplinary memo in the permanent employee file for Kenneth A. McKanders, the university's general counsel.

### **A Betrayal of Trust**

Faculty members and students outraged by what they saw as a betrayal of their trust had expected the regents to sack Mr. Vick and Ms. Hall. Mr. Vick had been on paid administrative leave since March, and Ms. Hall had stopped reporting to work last week.

As for Mr. Fallon, some faculty members have argued that if he did not know Ms. Dickinson's death was being investigated as a homicide, he should have.

Twenty professors signed a letter to the regents last month calling for Mr. Fallon's ouster, and the Faculty Council passed a no-confidence vote in the president the following day.

"He was either willfully ignorant, or grossly incompetent, or he's been lying to us all," Mark D. Higbee, a professor of history, said of Mr. Fallon's conduct in the case. "Either way he's unfit for the job."

Mr. Higbee, who attended the meeting on Monday, said that one of the regents, James F. Stapleton, had suggested that Mr. Fallon was threatening imminent action that would hurt the university. The regents did not elaborate on Mr. Stapleton's statement, the professor said.

After the meeting, the chairman of the board said that the Dickinson case was not the cause of Mr. Fallon's dismissal. "It was not the reason why John's contract was terminated," Thomas W. Sidlik, the chairman, said in an interview with *The Chronicle*. Mr. Sidlik said the decision had been based on a "difference of opinions" about the "general philosophy of the university."

"I think John's actions over the next couple of days will probably indicate what his plans are," Mr. Sidlik said. He refused to be more specific.

But on Sunday night, Mr. Fallon told [The Ann Arbor News](#), a local newspaper, that "as a citizen, I am disappointed in this hastily called meeting, without any opportunity to be present or to respond."

"I have a story to tell and intend to tell it," he said.

### **A President Under Fire**

Mr. Fallon was under fire before Ms. Dickinson's death. Three regents resigned in early December to protest what they said was ineffective university leadership. In the fall, a faculty strike delayed the start of classes after negotiations between professors and administrators collapsed.

Mr. Fallon did not return multiple calls to his home on Monday. The letter he received on Sunday evening informed him that his office had been secured, and that he would be allowed to retrieve his personal belongings at a later date, *The Ann Arbor News* reported.

The terms of Mr. Fallon's seven-page contract state that he may be "terminated at any time by the board" and must leave the university-owned president's residence within 60 days. The board must pay him a severance equal to his base salary, which was \$225,000 in 2005, according to the contract.

Raymond D. Cotton, a lawyer in Washington who specializes in presidential contracts and compensation matters, said it would be difficult for Mr. Fallon to challenge the firing if the board followed the procedures in the contract.

"He's history," Mr. Cotton said. However, he criticized an apparent lack of due process by the board in firing Mr. Fallon over the weekend and failing to give him a formal opportunity to defend himself.

Until the regents name an interim or permanent president, a committee of four administrators will lead the university. Donald Loppnow, provost and vice president for academic affairs, will become the executive vice president and chairman of the temporary "executive council."

That committee will also include Freman Hendrix, chief government-relations officer; Joseph F. Pollack, director of the university's charter-schools program; and Janice Stroh, vice president for business and finance.

*Paul Fain contributed to this article.*



<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-dickinson17jul17,1,5587020.story?coll=la-headlines-nation>  
From the Los Angeles Times

### 3 lose school jobs in slaying cover-up

Eastern Michigan University's president is fired; two officials must resign. They had said Laura Dickinson didn't die of foul play.

By P.J. Huffstutter  
Times Staff Writer

July 17, 2007

CHICAGO — Eastern Michigan University has fired President John A. Fallon III and dismissed two other top officials, less than two weeks after a federal investigation found that administrators broke the law by covering up the rape and slaying of a student in her dorm room.

The head of police on the Ypsilanti campus, Cindy Hall, and the vice president of student affairs, James Vick, were forced to resign, school officials announced Monday afternoon.

A day earlier, the Board of Regents held an emergency telephone conference and unanimously voted to end Fallon's five-year employment contract. School officials said they spent weeks unsuccessfully trying to negotiate with Fallon a suitable punishment for his role in the scandal over the death of Laura Dickinson, 22.

In December, Dickinson's body was found inside her room at Hill Hall. For 10 weeks, university officials told the Dickinson family, students and the community that no foul play was suspected.

School officials did not acknowledge that Dickinson had been slain until student Orange Amir Taylor III was arrested Feb. 23 and charged with murder and sexual assault.

An Education Department report and a separate investigation commissioned by the regents concluded that the university staff had violated the federal Clery Act, which requires colleges and universities to disclose information about campus crimes and warn students of threats to their safety.

Some university officials did not know there was a criminal investigation and unknowingly passed along misinformation, according to both reports. But others, including Vick and Hall, consciously decided to not warn students or tell Dickinson's family that they believed she was the victim of a crime, according to the regents' independent investigation.

The federal report also said Dickinson's death exposed problems in the school's reporting of campus crimes. One example: School officials labeled eight cases of sexual assault as "nonforcible" encounters in campus crime statistics. Those figures are often used by parents and would-be students when weighing college choices.

"As a university, we've gone through enough pain," said regent James Stapleton on Monday. "There was a breakdown in the fundamental governance of this school, and these staffing changes had to happen."

Regents have appointed Provost Donald M. Loppnow as executive vice president. He will act as the school's chief executive as officials try to find an interim president before classes begin in September, Stapleton said.

For months, Eastern Michigan has been dogged by bad press because of the murder case and a staff strike over soured contract negotiations.

Vick said Monday that he didn't regret his actions.

He had told the Dickinson family that no foul play was suspected in Laura's death. He also had directed school staff to shred a police report about the investigation into Dickinson's death as part of "damage control," according to a 568-page report for the regents by the Detroit law firm of Butzel Long.

"I didn't do anything wrong. I stand by what I've done," said Vick, 59.

He said that he had become a scapegoat for the university's Board of Regents and that he had taken a polygraph test showing that he was innocent of the allegations.

"I'd like to return to E.M.U., but that's not going to be possible now," Vick said.

"Sometimes stuff happens and you have to deal with it, I suppose."

Fallon could not be reached for comment Monday.

The Ann Arbor News in Michigan reported that Fallon said he had relied solely on Vick for information about the case.

"I am disappointed in this hastily called meeting, without any opportunity to be present or to respond," he told the newspaper Sunday.

Hall did not return calls for comment Monday.

The Butzel Long report found that she had told school staff members — and at least one of her own officers — that they should not deviate from the assertion that no foul play was suspected.

She told them to describe their efforts as a "death investigation" rather than a "homicide investigation" while officers searched for the perpetrator.

The fallout from Dickinson's death has stunned the community of Ypsilanti, a suburb of 22,000 southwest of Detroit. Students taking classes this summer say the mood is grim.

"It's all anyone's talking about," said Jessica Richardson, 19, a junior studying political science. "The reaction? Shock."

One of the concerns is whether, or how, the federal government will penalize the school. In violating the law, board officials say, the university could face financial sanctions.

Fallon has repeatedly said that university staff members misled him and that he was unaware that Dickinson's death was a homicide. In the months that followed the discovery of Dickinson's body, Fallon told the public and local media that university officials did not suspect a crime.

Late last month, after Fallon issued a public apology, he met with Dickinson's parents, Bob and Deb, for the first time at the family's cafe in Hastings, Mich.

Bob Dickinson said Fallon cried and told them that he was sorry.

"Deb told him that what they did really hurt our family. That every day, she wakes up and has to choose to forgive him, because it's the only way she thinks it'll help ease the pain," said Dickinson, 51.

"So far, we're still hurting."

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July 17, 2007

## University Fires Officials for Concealing Killing

By NICK BUNKLEY

YPSILANTI, Mich., July 16 — Six months after a female student was raped and killed in her dormitory room, Eastern Michigan University said on Monday that it had fired three administrators, including its president, who are accused of covering up the fact that a crime had been committed.

The president, John A. Fallon III, was ousted exactly two years into his five-year contract. The university's Board of Regents also dismissed James F. Vick, vice president for student affairs, and Cindy Hall, the public safety director, and reprimanded Kenneth A. McKanders, the general counsel.

The actions follow reports, including one by the federal Department of Education and another commissioned by the university from investigators at a local law firm, that said university officials had violated federal campus crime reporting law by waiting more than two months to tell other students and the public that the student, Laura Dickinson, 22, had been killed on Dec. 12.

University officials had insisted that foul play was not suspected even as the police were investigating several suspects, and only revealed the circumstances of Ms. Dickinson's death to her family and the campus community after another student was arrested in February.

The arrested student, Orange Taylor III, has been charged with murder and is scheduled to go on trial this fall. He has pleaded not guilty.

The university expects to find out within two months whether it will be fined by the Education Department for the administrators' actions.

"We are committed to regaining the trust of all E.M.U. stakeholders, and all of the people of the great state of Michigan," Thomas W. Sidlik, the board's chairman, told about 200 people crowded in the regents' meeting room Monday. "This board will not tolerate anyone who sabotages the educational mission of this university by participating in these destructive behavior patterns."

Mr. Fallon has maintained that he was unaware that the student's death was being investigated as a crime because his subordinates did not tell him, and that he acted to the best of his ability. He was not singled out for wrongdoing in either of the reports but has been the primary target of outrage expressed by parents and faculty members.

The departures of Mr. Vick and Ms. Hall were agreed upon several weeks ago but not revealed until Monday. The board decided to oust Mr. Fallon during a Sunday meeting by telephone, after learning that he "may have been contemplating additional action that would have further damaged this university," said James F. Stapleton, a board member who led the university's efforts to investigate the handling of Ms. Dickinson's death.

Mr. Stapleton declined to elaborate on his comment, saying that Mr. Fallon would probably make a public statement in the coming days.

Mr. Fallon did not respond to messages left Monday at his university-owned home, which he has 60 days to vacate. The evening before his ouster was announced, he told The Ann Arbor News, "I have a story to tell and intend to tell it."

Mr. Sidlik said in an interview, "There was a general falling apart of the relationship over the last few days."

Even before Ms. Dickinson's death, Mr. Fallon was a controversial figure at the university. Faculty members went on strike for 12 days last fall after he halted contract negotiations. In December, three regents resigned, saying the campus was filled with distrust and open animosity.

Some professors said they were relieved that Mr. Fallon was leaving.

“It’s unfortunate, but it had to happen,” said Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott, a political science professor who said Mr. Fallon headed “a really incompetent presidential administration.”

Board members said that since the killing, the 23,000-student university had taken many steps to improve security, including changing locks on office doors and beginning a complete audit of safety at university facilities.

Robert Dickinson, Ms. Dickinson’s father, said he was pleased to see the university making changes, but he declined to say whether he was satisfied with the board’s actions. Mr. Dickinson said that Mr. Fallon had visited him to apologize but that he had had no other contact with university officials.

“If there’s another university that can benefit from seeing these mistakes and taking care of their own, that would be good,” said Mr. Dickinson, who owns a coffee shop in Hastings, Mich., a small town about 120 miles northwest of the university.