

COLLEGE PRESIDENT ACCUSES PROFESSORS OF DEFAMATION

The president of Rio Hondo College, Ted Martinez Jr., has filed an internal grievance within his school. The grievance is against three professors at the college whom he claims have been critical of him. Another interesting tidbit from the complaint is that the professors created such a hostile work environment that the president even suffered a mild stroke because of it, according to the [Whittier Daily News](#). Martinez was hired back in June of 2007. He filed the complaint with the school's Human Resources Department within the previous month. This information was released by the director of marketing and communications for the school, Susan Herney. "The charges leveled against my colleagues are disparate treatment, character defamation, unfair treatment, creation of a hostile work environment and causing distress that resulted in a transient ischemic attack," said Vann Priest, professor of physics at Rio Hondo. A stroke occurs and ends quickly, and is caused by the blood supply to a part of the brain stopping for a brief moment. Priest referred to Martinez's complaint as a "complete surprise and unprecedented." Because the complaint contains personnel matters for the school, the document is not public record, even though Priest has seen a copy of the complaint. The three professors named in the complaint include Mike Javanmard, professor of economics; Colin Young, professor of political science; and Adam Wetsman, professor of anthology. "The matter is being investigated with interviews occurring over the past month," Herney said. "The college has hired an independent investigator." Angela Reddock, a labor law attorney working the case, did not mention how long it would take her to conduct interviews with those mentioned in the complaint and finalize her findings. "The college will be closed soon for winter break," Herney said, "but it would only be supposition on my part as to when and where the interviews will be concluded." According to Herney and Wetsman, the principles in the case are not commenting after taking advice from counsel. Herney said that Martinez experienced his stroke back in February and afterwards was out of work for quite some time, according to the [Whittier Daily News](#). Priest is only one of 20 witnesses who will testify during the investigation. "What was so surprising about my testimony is that the questions were not about my colleagues, but about my relationship with the president," Priest said. During the interview, Priest said that the morale amongst staff within the school is abysmal, which has changed greatly since Martinez became the president of the school. "We were all hopeful," Priest said. "But his management style alienated a lot of us." Priest described the managing style of Martinez as, "I am the president; I make the decisions." Priest also explained that governance of educations is supposed to be much more inclusive. "Our opinion hasn't been respected," he said.

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