

Failure to Comply with Clery Act Costs Board of Regents President His Job at Eastern Michigan University

By Surajit Sen Sharma

Failure to comply with the Clery Act in the wake of 22-year-old Laura Dickinson's murder recently cost John A. Fallon his post as president of the board of regents at Eastern Michigan University.

On Friday, December 15, 2006, Laura Dickinson was found dead in her room on campus, lying face up on the floor, naked from the waist down, with her legs spread and a pillow over her face. Her keys were missing. However, on Saturday, December 16, 2006, John A. Fallon, as president of the board of regents of the university, approved and published a statement on the university's website that read, "At this point, there is no reason to suspect foul play."

The following week, an initial DPS incident draft report (IDR) on the event reached the student affairs office. Several student affairs administrators found and read the IDR-which graphically described the circumstances under which Dickinson's body was found-and brought it to the attention of Vice President of Student Affairs Jim Vick. Vick ordered immediate shredding of the IDR and did not inform Fallon of its destruction. The IDR never reached the university's general counsel or any other administrator, and the school's website continued to state, "At this point, there is no reason to suspect foul play."

An independent investigation prepared by Butzel Long, PC, reported, "In fact, a conscious decision appears to have been made by Mr. Vick and/or Chief Hall to label the ongoing investigation a 'death' investigation rather than a 'homicide investigation.' Furthermore, Mr. Fallon did not seek additional information from anyone other than Mr. Vick."

On February 23, 2006, EMU student Orange Taylor III was arrested and charged with the rape and murder of Dickinson. The university community was taken unawares and was outraged by the fact that the "death" of one of the school's students was actually a "murder" of which they had remained uninformed.

On Sunday, July 15, the board of regents of Eastern Michigan University unanimously voted for the removal of John A. Fallon from his post as board president and terminated his contract. Jim Vick, vice president of student affairs, and Cindy Hall, director of the university's department of public safety, have tendered their resignations.