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Auditors of Public Accounts
20 Trinity Street
Hartford, CT 06106-1628

Attention: Maura Pardo, Administrative Auditor

Submitted by email to wbcomplaints.cga.ct.gov

Dear Ms. Pardo,

Pursuant to the Whistle Blower Act, Section 4-61dd of the Connecticut General Statutes and the instructions for reporting non-compliance with The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System Code of Conduct for Regents, Employees and Volunteers (**Exhibit A**), hereinafter referred to as the Code, contained in Section VII of the Code, I am filing a whistle blower complaint to report violations of the Code by Dr. Zulma R. Toro, President of Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). What follows is a detailed account the activities that led to actions made against me by Dr. Toro that were contrary to the policies set forth in the Code. At the end of this document is further information to demonstrate that the actions in violation of the Code addressed in this complaint were premeditated and malicious in nature, and that the type of violent behavior that I was subjected to was not an isolated incident but, rather, is part of a pattern of increasingly abusive and bullying behavior being exhibited by Dr. Toro.

I have been employed at CCSU since April 13, 1987. On May 30, 2017, I was elected by my peers in the State University Organization of Administrative Faculty (SUOAF) collective bargaining unit to serve as a Senator representing SUOAF in the CCSU Faculty Senate. On April 16, 2018 I was elected by the Faculty Senate to a three-year term representing SUOAF on the University Planning and Budget Committee (UPBC). The University Planning and Budget Committee is a standing committee of the CCSU Faculty Senate. Its charge is to advise the President, within the context of the University's Mission, through the Senate, on the long-term goals, strategic planning process, and budgetary priorities of the University. On September 18, 2018 members of the UPBC elected me to chair the University Planning and Budget Committee for the 2018-2019 academic year.

During the period August 2018 to early March 2019, the UPBC worked diligently to fulfil its charge, including the review of the FY20 budget requests submitted by members of the CCSU Executive Committee, which as of March 2019 consisted of:

- Dr. Zulma R. Toro, President
- Dr. David Dauwalder, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Dr. Christopher Galligan, Vice President for Institutional Advancement
- Dr. Michael Jasek, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Ms. Karissa Peckham, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management
- Ms. Charlene Casamento, Chief Fiscal Officer
- Ms. Anna Suski-Lenczewski, Chief Human Resource Officer
- Dr. George Claffey, Interim Chief Information Officer
- Mr. Salvatore Cintorino, Interim Chief Facilities Officer
- Atty. Carolyn Magnan, University Counsel

The UPBC submitted its FY20 Budget Recommendations memo to President Toro on Saturday, March 9, 2019. **(Exhibit B)** President Toro acknowledged receipt of the recommendations the following day, Sunday, March 10. **(Exhibit C)**

According to the FY20 Budget Calendar published on the UPBC's website (<http://www.ccsu.edu/UPBC/currentdocs/default.asp>), a meeting of the "President's Executive Committee (ExComm) members with significant FY20 Budget Requests" and the members of the Integrated Planning Council (IPC) was scheduled for March 29, 2019 from 1 – 4 p.m. in the President's Dining Room of Memorial Hall on the CCSU campus. The meeting was scheduled for several weeks after the UPBC submitted its recommendations in order to give ExComm members an opportunity to make changes to their requests after reviewing the UPBC recommendations.

The March 29 meeting was held as scheduled, with the following individuals in attendance:

- Dr. Zulma Toro – President, Member of the IPC
- Dr. George Claffey, Interim CIO (ExComm member)
- Ms. Charlene Casamento, CFO (ExComm and IPC member)
- Dr. Christopher Galligan, Vice President, Institutional Advancement (ExComm and IPC member)
- Dr. David Dauwalder, Provost (ExComm and IPC member)
- Ms. Karissa Peckham, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management (ExComm member)
- Dr. Michael Jasek, VP of Student Affairs (ExComm and IPC member)
- Mr. Salvatore Cintorino, Interim Chief Facilities Officer (ExComm and IPC member)
- Ms. Kassandra Fruin, President, Student Government Association (IPC member)
- Prof. Mark Jackson, President, Faculty Senate (IPC member representing Faculty Senate)
- Prof. Joseph Farhat, Vice Chair, UPBC (UPBC and IPC member representing AAUP)
- Lisa Marie Bigelow, Director, Institutional Advancement (UPBC and IPC member representing SUOAF)

This 3-hour meeting was scheduled to provide ample time for the ExComm members and IPC (a majority of which overlaps with ExComm) to review and act upon (accept/reject) the UPBC's *recommendations*, made exclusively in fulfillment of its charge as a standing committee of the Faculty Senate, concerning what the university should fund with its anticipated FY20 budget allocation. This meeting was scheduled to occur after President Toro and ExComm members had approximately 3 weeks to review the UPBC recommendations and make any desired changes to their budget requests.

During the first 10-15 minutes of the meeting, Toro went on what Mark Jackson, Senate President, later characterized as a “*tirade*” in which she was “*literally screaming about how the UPBC final report was insulting to her and the ExComm.*” [For a full account of how Jackson characterized the meeting, see the email from M. Jackson to the Senate Steering Committee dated April 18, 2019. **(Exhibit D)**] He called the meeting an “*ambush*” and said that “*Farhat and Bigelow did an excellent job explaining why each section said what it said.*” (Farhat and I were the only two representatives of the UPBC in attendance at the meeting.) After the tirade, the tone of the meeting was significantly subdued. The meeting continued until its scheduled conclusion at 4 p.m. and the goal of the meeting – to reduce approved budget requests to the amount of the expected allocation – was accomplished.

After the meeting, Farhat, Jackson and I remained in the room to discuss and digest the “tirade” by President Toro we had just witnessed. Jackson reached out and gestured to examine my left hand. I asked him what he was doing and he responded “I am checking to see if your knuckles are bleeding after the beating you just took.” This demonstrated how clear it was to people in the room that I was the target of the tirade. The three of us, stunned and bewildered, spoke for several minutes about the unexpected, unprofessional, uncivil and intentionally malicious outburst by President Toro and ultimately concluded we could not make sense of what had just happened and left campus. Speaking for myself, I left campus deeply traumatized.

Three business days later, on Wednesday, April 3, 2019, the Integrated Planning Council (see www.ccsu.edu/ipc), a body created by Toro to “advise the President on issues that affect the entire University, draw upon significant resources, and require input from across the institution,” held its next regularly scheduled meeting. The meeting took place at 11 a.m. in the President’s Conference Room in Davidson Hall. In attendance were the following:

- Zulma Toro – President (ExComm and IPC member)
- Charlene Casamento, CFO (ExComm and IPC member)
- Christopher Galligan, Vice President for Institutional Advancement (ExComm and IPC member)
- David Dauwalder, Provost (ExComm and IPC member)
- Michael Jasek, VP of Student Affairs (ExComm and IPC member)
- Salvatore Cintonino, Interim Chief Facilities Officer (ExComm and IPC member)
- Kassandra Fruin, President, Student Government Association Member of (IPC member)
- Prof. Mark Jackson, President, Faculty Senate (IPC member)
- Prof. Joseph Farhat, Vice Chair (ExComm and IPC member)
- Lisa Marie Bigelow, Director of Institutional Advancement (ExComm and IPC member)

This meeting was later described by Jackson, also in the April 18th email to the Senate Steering Committee (**Exhibit D**), in this way:

“This time there was another, longer, and more intense tirade that I estimate lasted 15-20 minutes and the accusations were escalated. This time there were accusations that the UPBC committee had conducted itself in an unethical and self-serving manner, and as a consequence she could not trust any of the advice given by the UPBC. She said several times that she could not let this go because multiple people, not from the UPBC, had been coming to her office with derogatory information about the conduct of the UPBC. But she will not name who those people are, or how they would know what the motivation behind the UPBC report was. We again argued in the UPBC favor, but from that point on, the IPC meeting took on the tone of a dictatorship. Votes were taken as a unanimous yes without ever waiting for the three of us [Jackson, Bigelow, Farhat] to respond, or giving the chance to abstain. After this meeting, Lisa Bigelow submitted her resignation from UPBC as chair and member because she felt it impossible to work with President Toro.”

Jackson didn't go into the subtle details of this second tirade; he left out the fact that nearly all the accusations in this “second round” were aimed even more obviously at me. Dr. Toro did not call me by name but, instead, referenced the positions I held at the time: President of the CCSU SUOAF Chapter and Director of Institutional Advancement/Assistant Treasurer of the CCSU Foundation. Prof. Jackson was also unaware at the time of the single reason I resigned as chair and member of the UPBC: Toro's behavior in the March 29 and April 3 meetings frightened, humiliated, and belittled me to the point that I had to protect myself from further bullying and abusive behavior by taking an action (resignation from the UPBC) that would ensure my emotional well-being and prevent a third (or subsequent) episode of her yelling and screaming at me in front of an audience at future IPC or Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) meetings, the two other shared governance bodies on which I sat as a derivative of my UPBC membership.

The abusive tone, loud volume, targeted content, and physical reactions of President Toro on March 29 and April 3 were in direct violation of the CSCU System Code of Conduct for Regents and Employees. These were not isolated incidents; they are recent incidents that are part of a larger pattern of behavior, mostly targeted to executive level staff. Recent attempts by Dr. Toro to improve the CCSU climate, as evidenced by her creation of a Task Force on Sexual Misconduct, Bullying, and Campus climate appear to me and others to be a tool she uses publicly to deflect away from the bullying behaviors she engages in behind closed doors. The tone, volume, words, and physical behavior of Dr. Toro on March 29 and April 3, exhibited malice and the behaviors were beyond what a reasonable person would consider within the range of acceptable professional communication standards. The volume of speech in the two “tirades” meets the definitions of “yelling,” “shouting,” and “screaming.” Beyond the verbal attack, the physical expressions of anger included an angry facial expression, including redness in the face, flaring nostrils, and raising clenched fists in the air as she screamed. The “tirades” clearly showed anger and aggression and sparked fear.

With regard to specific sections of the Code and violations of it:

Section III: Principles

Toro's words and actions on March 29 and April 3 demonstrated she has no tolerance for the role of reasoned argument as an essential component of *Pursuit of Knowledge and Learning* principle that underlies the Code; she shouted numerous recommendations that were included in the UPBC memo in a

tone and at a volume that was frightening (e.g. “Someone *even* had the nerve to suggest what union a particular position would be in!”)

Toro delivered her feedback on the UPBC memo March 29 and then again on April 3 by yelling and screaming, with fists in the air and nostrils flaring; her behavior lacked civility, an essential component of the ***Respect for Persons*** principle that underlies the code.

Toro’s words and actions on March 29 and April 3 did not demonstrate commitment to fostering a culture of ethics and compliance, an essential component of the ***Integrity*** principle that underlies the Code.

Section IV: Values

Toro’s words and actions on March 29 and April 3 did not reflect “maintaining appreciation for reasoned arguments to support claims of truth” a stated Value of the ***Pursuit of Knowledge and Learning*** in the Code. Farhat and I tried, to no positive outcome, to convey the rationale behind the UPBC recommendations. Toro virtually ignored us.

Toro’s words and actions on March 29 and April 3 were not consistent with espousing the ***Scholarly Inquiry*** value of “Maintaining respect for the rights of others to share and to argue for a perspective or a point of view with which one disagrees...” This is clearly documented in Jackson’s email to the April 18th email to the Senate Steering Committee (**Exhibit D.**)

Toro’s words and actions on March 29 and April 3 were bullying in nature and contradicted the ***Respect for Persons*** value in the Code. She used a tone that was frightening and used language that was humiliating, belittling, and degrading. Most individuals present in the room appeared visibly uncomfortable, staring at the floor or ceiling. Her loud volume and incredibly angry tone were aimed at me in such a way that it also appeared she was using it as an example of what could happen if anyone else in the room challenged her.

Toro’s bullying behavior toward members of the UPBC at a subsequent UPBC meeting on April 25, 2019 at 2 p.m. in DiLoreto Hall room D406, led to the committee rescinding its original memo and replacing it with a sanitized version (**Exhibit E**) void of any negative commentary directly conflicts with the ***Transparency*** component of the Code. Toro made it clear to the committee she would not accept the original memo because it contained too much information of a nature she did not want to be a part of the public record.

Toro’s words and actions on March 29 and April 3 conflicted with the Code’s ***Responsibility, Beneficence and Service*** that requires all CSCU employees to be “a good steward of public resources, maintaining healthy, inclusive and safe workplaces.” Toro’s volume, tone, words, behavior, and overall aggressive demeanor made me feel emotionally and physically unsafe in the workplace.

Toro’s words and actions on March 29 and April 3, and subsequent actions by Toro that directly impacted my employment, were certainly not consistent with the Code’s stance on the value of ***Shared Governance***. Her words and actions demonstrated I, and others on the UPBC, were not “free to voice [our] views and [our] dissent” within the context of having been “elected by [our] colleagues to serve on key governance committee.” Great harm has come to me in my employment at CCSU as a direct result of my participation in the University Planning and Budget Committee during the 2018-2019 year.

Section V: Standards

Toro's words and actions on March 29 and April 3 demonstrated numerous violations of the Standards set forth in Section V of the Code. Specifically:

A. Uphold Ethical Standards and Integrity

Toro's words and actions on March 29 and April 3 demonstrated her failure to "Act according to the highest professional standards of conduct." [A.1. of the Code] Her behaviors were grossly unprofessional.

B. Maintain and Treat Others with Dignity, Respect, and Civility

Toro's words and actions on March 29 and April 3 demonstrated that she violated the Code requirement that CSCU System employees "***Be respectful of the right of others to express their opinion.***" [B.1.] I and other members of the committee were not permitted to express our opinion in the form a recommendations memo. Dr. Toro has made it apparent that she only wishes to hear opinions that mirror her own.

Toro's words and actions on March 29 and April 3 demonstrated that she violated the Code requirement that CSCU employees "***Extend fundamental fairness to all persons.***" [B.2.] I was not treated fairly at the meetings, nor were the rest of the members of the University Planning and Budget Committee who worked diligently to conduct the committee's business. I, personally, have continued to be treated unfairly ever since the meetings of March 29 and April 3.

Toro's words and actions on March 29 and April 3 and on numerous other occasions prior to and since then demonstrated that she violated the Code requirement that CSCU System employees "***Avoid all forms of bullying ...***" [B.3.] I was bullied verbally and physically in the meetings on March 29 and April 3. Adverse employment actions directed toward me since are evidence of continued bullying behavior being directed at me by Toro.

Toro's words and actions on March 29 and April 3 and in subsequent meetings with Mark Jackson, CCSU Faculty Senate President, as outlined in Exhibit D, demonstrated that she violated the requirement that CSCU employees "**Support conflict resolution.**" [B.4.] Jackson states clearly in his exchange with Toro that she repeatedly refused to work with him to resolve the conflict that had arisen.

Toro's words and actions on March 29 and April 3, and in numerous other occasions prior to and since then, including especially meetings of the Integrated Planning Council, demonstrated that she violated the requirements that CSCU employees "**Foster an environment where people feel empowered to make decisions.**" [B.8.] Jackson's April 18th email to the Senate Steering Committee accurately depicts the dictatorial nature of IPC meetings.

C. Lead with Responsibility and Accountability

Toro's words and actions on March 29 and April 3 demonstrated that she violated the Code requirement that CSCU System employees "**Work collaboratively with others for the good of students and the community at large.**" [C.4.] – Jackson's April 18th memo to the Senate Steering Committee includes an email exchange between him and Toro. The exchange, which degraded over time, lacked a collaborative tone and, instead, took on a combative tone.

Toro's words and actions on March 29 and April 3 demonstrated that she violated the Code requirement that CSCU System employees "**Encourage a healthyatmosphere that encourages dialogue and is responsive to concerns.**" [C.8.] The atmosphere in the meetings of March 29 and April 3 was not healthy, nor did the tirades at the start of each meeting encourage dialogue. In fact, Toro's tactic screaming and yelling when she is not happy about something creates a toxic work environment.

As I mentioned at the outset of this letter, the actions of Dr. Toro, particularly those on March 29, were premeditated. On the morning of Friday, March 29, she and I both attended a meeting of the Strategic Planning Work Groups, held in the Constitution Room of Memorial Hall on the CCSU campus at 10 a.m. At one point during the meeting, when at the podium speaking to the group about the slow pace at which most changes happen in higher education, she implored the group to be nimble and quick in their work, to follow the FAST goals she had set and said that she would challenge anyone who tried to thwart progress closing with the statement "I like a good fight." She stared straight at me when she said, "I like a good fight." I found it a bit unsettling at the time, but tried not to read too much into it.

Our attendance at the meeting concluded at 11 a.m., just two hours before her first "tirade" aimed at me, at which time we were both walking back to Davidson Hall. It was raining and only I had an umbrella, so I offered to share it with Dr. Toro and we together walked back to the building in which both of our offices were located. She could have used this time to tell me that she was upset about the contents of the UPBC memo; instead, we had a cordial conversation not unlike many we had had previously. It is my assertion that she purposefully did not discuss it with me because she planned to attack me in a group meeting so that it would have a more significant impact on me.

I also said at the outset that her treatment of me on March 29 and April 3, 2019 were not isolated incidents. Her angry outbursts and bullying behavior are becoming increasingly well-known on campus. Individuals currently or formerly employed by CCSU who have been witness to it and in many cases victims themselves include:

- Ms. Charlene Casamento, Chief Financial Officer
- Dr. Christopher Galligan, Vice President for Institutional Advancement
- Dr. David Dauwalder, Provost
- Ms. Anna Suski-Lenczewski, Chief Human Resource Officer
- Ms. Karissa Peckham, Associate VP for Enrollment Management

- Mr. Salvatore Cintorino, Interim Chief Facilities Officer
- Ms. Kassandra Fruin, President, Student Government Association
- Prof. Mark Jackson, President, Faculty Senate
- Prof. Joseph Farhat, Vice Chair, UPBC
- Dr. Richard Bachoo, former Chief Administrative Officer, currently on paid administrative leave
- Dr. Laura Tordenti, former Vice President for Student Affairs (terminated in 2018)
- Dr. Peter Troiano, former Interim Vice President for Student Affairs (left office in July 2018)
- Ms. Rosa Rodriguez, former Chief Diversity Officer (terminated in 2018)
- Dr. Carl Lovitt, former Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (terminated in Spring 2017)
- Dr. Susan Pease, former President and Vice President for Academic Affairs (retired)
- Ms. Lynn Bonesio, former Chief Information Officer (retired)
- Dr. Michael Alfano, former Dean of the School of Education and Professional Studies (resigned)
- Dr. Farris Malhas, former Dean of the School of Engineering, Science, and Technology (resigned)
- Dr. Glynis Fitzgerald, former Dean of the Graduate School (resigned)

I ask your Agency to conduct a thorough investigation into the violations of The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System Code of Conduct for Regents, Employees and Volunteers by CCSU President Zulma R. Toro. The misconduct includes wanton, reckless and malicious behavior, as well as bullying, among other things. The messages against bullying and in favor of improving campus climate being delivered publicly by Dr. Toro are vastly different from her behaviors behind closed doors. These behaviors are negatively and significantly impacting people's health, lives, and careers, including my own. What is happening at CCSU is an abuse of authority in its ugliest form.

Sincerely,

Lisa Marie Bigelow