

Three Women Accuse Baptist Seminary President of Sexual Harassment

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Arlington, VA – Three women who allege they were [sexually harassed](#) by the President of John Leland Center for Theological Studies were unsatisfied with the school's response to so they reached out to the college's accreditors to evaluate their sexual harassment policies.

The three women accused Leland President Mark J. Olson of hugging and touching them inappropriately on different occasions.

One of the women said in her complaint that during her first meeting with Olson, he refused a handshake and embraced her instead. During that interview, Olson allegedly sat between her and the door which apparently made her feel intimidated. She wrote in the complaint, "this was a professional interview and he was in a position of power in deciding the fate of my application for admission," [Inside Higher Ed reported](#).

The same woman said on a different occasion when she was alone with Olson he “grabbed her” and placed her in a headlock, kissed the top of her head and held her for “too long.”

Another woman accused Olson of “excessive touching on the arms, backs and rubbing of the hands upon meeting a person,” and said he “kissed and caressed the back of her neck.”

After filing their complaints, the three women left campus.

Upon hearing, their complaint, Leland administrators chose to warn Olson instead of punish him because he was not accused or soliciting sexual favors and the complainants did confront him about his inappropriate behavior. In accordance with Leland’s policies, a complaint of sexual harassment must include solicitation of sexual favors to warrant formal punishment.

According to Inside Higher Ed, the three victims and some staff members were dissatisfied with the Leland’s response to the sexual harassment allegations. Administrators at the religious college felt that firing President Mark J. Olson was an overreaction, but three complainants and a handful of staff members would like to see Olson removed.

Accreditors made it clear they were not investigating the women’s complaints; they were there to determine if administrators appropriately followed the school’s sexual harassment policies.

Olson admitted to hugging students and making the women feel uncomfortable, which he attributed to his years of experience in Baptist Church where embraces are a part of everyday fellowship.

The way in which colleges and universities, religious or otherwise, handle sexual harassment complaints have been under a microscope lately. Whether or not Leland properly addressed this set of sexual harassment complaints is up to the accreditors and the reader.

Students at other colleges have faced far more egregious acts of sexual harassment by faculty and other students which colleges have woefully mishandled. Complaints are often disregarded and the harassers hardly

face punishment, if any at all. As a result, the Department of Education and the Department of Justice began [investigating 55 colleges and universities](#) across the country.

Mishandling of sexual harassment complaints occur in the workplace as well. But fortunately, employees who face this inappropriate behavior can retain a [sexual harassment attorney](#) and ask for compensation if their employer fails to address their complaints.