



Lawrence M. Krauss  
*Professor, SESE and Physics*  
*Co-Director, Cosmology Initiative*

October 14, 2018

Michael Crow  
President, Arizona State University

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Michael

I am writing to inform you of my decision to retire from my position as Professor in the School of Earth and Space Exploration and Physics Department at ASU at the end of this academic year, May 16, 2019. Following my retirement I will take advantage of all standard retirement benefits.

As this retirement may be my last opportunity to correspond with you before I retire, I want to relate to you my thoughts and perceptions following my decade at the University. I am frankly outraged, but my purpose here is not to disparage the institution or anyone in it, or simply to vent. During the past year, no one in the University administration has asked for feedback on my experience. This is perhaps my sole opportunity to do so and I hope that my reflections will encourage actions that can positively impact on the ASU's future and help better safeguard the University and its community.

I recognize that because of my high public profile, the current climate, and the significant publicity, the University was under great pressure to ensure that my case reached a pre-ordained conclusion, independent of the evidence, or, in my case the lack of evidence. **A concerted effort by a group of individuals to impugn my integrity was met with University violations of due process, ignoring evidence, extreme bias, distortions, violation of ABOR regulations, hostile actions, and an Office of Equity and Inclusion which is out of control, that your administration supported. This sets a precedent that must not be repeated, for the well being of everyone at ASU. Someone with integrity needed to oversee this process, and you certainly didn't seem to do that.**

You brought me here to create and lead the Origins Project and create and help lead a new cosmology initiative, recruit world-renowned faculty, and create new research and teaching programs, and I am quite proud of what we accomplished. Over the past decade the most talented and influential scientists and scholars in the world have graced our campus in dozens of transdisciplinary workshops and associated events that broke new ground for higher education. Origins public programs have been witnessed by literally millions of people, and exciting new research and teaching programs have been created in Origins and in Physics and SESE, and new high quality students have been recruited and exposed to truly transformational foundational concepts. In the process, the international academic profile and distinction of ASU was significantly raised.

But the University has been willing to throw most of this away merely to cater to appearances during a time of neo-puritan moral panic. You know that not a single one of my students, no staff in

any of my academic departments, none of my faculty colleagues, none of my postdoctoral researchers, and not a single participant in a host of Origins events over the past decades has complained to the University about my behavior, my teaching, or my research. Quite the contrary. Most important, you also know me. You have witnessed my behavior, and know that I am not the person being painted by the press and the OEI.

The OEI twice investigated a ludicrous claim that has been dismissed by other institutions. A woman on a vendetta claims I touched the breast of another woman during a selfie photograph at a private atheist reception in Melbourne? I have taken literally tens of thousands of selfies with fans over the past decade, without a single other complaint. The individual who was allegedly touched refused to file a complaint, refused to suggest she was a victim, and when finally contacted by OEI refused to divulge her identity! The complainant has been shown to have lied about key facts, and the key bit of photographic evidence she presented turns out not to support her claim at all. She has since claimed that the only other alleged witness interviewed by the OEI was not a witness at all. And in order to justify even considering this nonsense, the University makes the ludicrous claim that my attendance at this event was supported and sponsored by ASU when none of my round-trip travel between the United States and Australia travel to the event was supported by the University and my hotel expenses and local transportation were paid by the organizers. The University did pay for part of my travel to leave that location during my trip and go to Canberra, where you know I collaborate with colleagues at Mt. Stromlo Observatory. And the University covered meal expenses during this time so while in Melbourne I could leave the event, meet colleagues at the University there, and also eat and work in my hotel. This was as much a University event as my going to a restaurant with my wife during the term, when the University is paying me. And tAnd amazingly, he kicker is that the Provost specifically said to me that everything I do, anywhere I do it, represents the University because I have a public profile. So the University can police anything I do and anywhere I do it. If the faculty at the University found out that if they achieve sufficient prominence they suddenly become vulnerable to indiscriminate University investigation of any claim by anyone, anywhere, no matter how ludicrous, you won't have many prominent faculty left.

When it became clear to BuzzFeed during their trolling that the University would be unlikely to take any serious action unless they found someone to complain inside the University, they found disgruntled former staff of Origins to make a combination of ludicrous, and demonstrably false, claims, which OEI entertained with out an ounce of skepticism or logic. After deciding we would run an event to explore the science of transgender issues at the same time as the bathroom debacle in North Carolina, I am labeled as gender-biased? Why? Because at some point during our preparations I bring to my staff's attention a New York Times magazine spread on transgender couples and I point out that transgender people can be extremely attractive! When praising a transgender speaker (with whom I developed a highly respectful relationship during our events) after she pushes the edge of the envelope in her requests for travel and lodging, I say, "She has balls." My staff, all adults who have been trained to think outside the box and speak and debate respectfully during our group meetings, laugh (as does the speaker later when I tell her the joke I said about her), but somehow that is also taken as harassing? When during a staff lunch we are talking visual drawing illusions I demonstrate the only one I could produce which I say was a silly trick using set of sketches learned to draw in grade school, transforming a box into a book into a music stand into a light bulb, into the figure below, and I am accused of distributing "inherently sexual" drawings? Come on.

**Commented [JD1]:** I think going back into the merits isn't useful or what you want to do with this letter, and it will make him pay less attention to the parts that will be new to him.

Justin Dillon  
2018-10-14 21:24:00

**Commented [JD2]:** Also cutting here to make it less a reiteration of the merits.

Justin Dillon  
2018-10-14 21:25:00

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Then, when the same staff members describe supposed harassment of others that they observe—describing how I disrespected and poked in the chest a respected female scientist (who I recruited to come to ASU for an event, and recruited to join another Organization I was chair of!), during one of our Origins events for example—once again the crack OEI investigator decides it is too much trouble to *actually seek out the individual in question* and ask them if it actually happened—*until I forced the issue, leading her to discover that the purported victim did, in fact, say it never happened.* And even after *I do the legwork, and the woman in question vehemently contradicts that claim—that*, the investigators, who *appear to* have been trained to always believe accusers, *decide there is no reason* *saw no reason* to question the credibility of other ludicrous claims made by the same *individual disgruntled former employee.*

No instances of unwanted touching *or*, inappropriate sexual propositions—, in short, nothing that smacks of harassment at all at the University! But apparently gently addressing the attire *of* a student intern who is inappropriately dressed at an Origins event, and who *went on to worked* for Origins *for a year later*—without incident was viewed as an example of severe and pernicious, when such a conclusion was necessary for a process where guilt appeared to be pre-ordained.

Both the Dean and General Counsel were made aware of BuzzFeed's claims during their *five-5* month period of trolling, and in a private meeting in December they recognized what they were—, unsubstantiated smear tactics involving unsubstantiated, dubious, and sometimes otherwise innocuous allegations. But in this new world, the same Dean now has decided that the same set of ludicrous, false, trivial, and unsupported claims are sufficiently severe and pervasive to warrant dismissal? *It is a sad situation when Universities abandon reason, evidence, honesty, and due process in favor of a public show.*

And that is the saddest and perhaps **most disgusting aspect of the charade** the University describes as an 'investigation' followed by a 'determination'. Accusations are shielded and evidence is withheld from the accused. Others and I were **badgered with inappropriate and hostile questions**, and I was only provided with the detailed accusations and evidence *after* the Investigator had drawn her conclusions and completed her investigation. And these conclusions could not be appealed! **And Plus**, even after I provided new exculpatory evidence to the Provost to urge him to try and bring some sense to the process, **he refuse~~s~~s to reopen the investigation, or, as far as I can see, even read and understand what I presented.**

**Commented [JD3]:** I forget who this was, but anyway, the point is to distinguish the accuser from the woman whose chest you allegedly poked.  
Justin Dillon  
2018-10-14 21:28:00

The violations of due process, of standards of inquiry, determination of evidence, ability to cross examine witnesses inherent in the OEI investigation sets an extremely dangerous standard, and one that I know the Federal Government and the Courts are currently investigating across the country. Allowing a single investigator free, unsupervised rein to act with impunity, and to draw conclusions that cannot later be questioned, is a recipe for disaster and injustice, and ASU will inevitably be called to task for it at some point if you do not restructure the way you handle matters like this.

And then there is OEI, Erin Ellison, the Director of OEI. About her, I will simply say this: you should pay careful attention to how she runs that office is run and approaches these cases. I think an investigation of OEI and its leadership is required. Words that come to mind about my experience with OEI include biased, hostile, dishonest and incompetent. My due process rights were regularly violated. Often my questions weren't answered until I got a lawyer to ask them. I certainly wasn't given access to either all of the accusations or all of the evidence associated with them. I was told that OEI did not go on a 'fishing' expedition for complaints, but later documentation demonstrated that was not the case. Employees were brought in for questioning under false pretenses. Often hearsay complaints were not followed up with the people actually involved. Exculpatory evidence and testimony was often ignored. It seemed as if the role of the office was not to explore the truth or presume innocence in advance, but rather to establish guilt.

In my opinion, Erin Ellison, the Director of OEI, is a disgrace. She needs to be investigated and possibly suspended. If this letter can be considered as an official complaint, consider it to be the case. The most generous descriptions of her actions that I can come up with include the words biased, hostile, incompetent, and dishonest. My attorney, who I had to employ at great financial cost because Ms. Ellison often refused to even answer my questions about process until he contacted her, has litigated cases at Universities around the country has said he has never interacted with an official that hostile and uncooperative. Routinely she lied to others and me about the process—On one case she assured that her office did not go out and seek individuals to solicit complaints about me but in the documentation I was provided after the investigation was completed there is an email from January where Ms. Ellison writes to BuzzFeed to try and solicit names of possible University employees who they may have contacted. On another occasion she asked one of my employees for a second interview in which she claimed she would simply follow up on some issues about me that she had dealt with in the first interview, and then when the employee appeared for the interview the employee was confront for 2 hours with accusations about her behavior! When questioning me about allegations, many of which I was not provided with in the past, she would often provide me only part of the evidence in her possession, hoping to trip me up. And in drawing her conclusions she did not provide me any opportunities to directly question individuals involved or reach out to third parties who might be able to invalidate claims. In her report she glossed over, ignored, or discounted individuals whose impression of events at Origins differed from those of the accusers she chose to believe. She never met an accusation she didn't like, including her outrageous determination that the photograph below represented an example of harassment by me. Her role, as she carries it out, is clearly not to explore the truth, or presume innocence, but to demonstrate guilt. She strikes me as an inappropriate person to be employed at OEI, much less to lead it.

**Commented [JD4]:** In some ways, this is the most dangerous part—he could screw you and think of himself as chivalrous for protecting her honor from your disparagement.  
Justin Dillon  
2018-10-14 21:35:00



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There are a host of other abuses experienced at the hands of the University over the past year that have served not only to help destroy my reputation, but sadly also have dismantle the legacy and impact of Origins—abuses that sometimes not only violate ABOR policies, but also free speech rights, due process rights, and common decency. [as I outlined in depth in my appeal of the decision. Here are a few not directly related to OEI:](#)

[Here are a few that I think should make you ashamed.](#)

[a.](#)—I was put on administrative leave at 430 pm March 6<sup>th</sup> without warning, even though an investigation had been ongoing for over 3 weeks which had not uncovered dangerous or disruptive behavior in any of my academic departments. ABOR 6-201 regulations imply I was supposed to be able to confront allegations before such a leave is imposed. Yet within an hour the University had sent out a press release picked up by the New York Times and others that described the University action and effectively hung me in the court of public opinion, resulting in immediate negative actions by other organizations I am associated with. ABOR 6-201 states that even in the case of emergency, when the President can impose such a leave, the individual involved must be allowed to confront allegations within 15 days. That never happened.

[b.](#)—With consulting me or my staff, the Origins 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration events, planned for April, were cancelled. My staff was well aware of the brewing BuzzFeed smear campaign, and we had arranged contingency plans for all events so I would not be involved. But no one at the University ever asked about these before unilaterally cancelling the events, and disinvited over 65 prominent academics and celebrities were had arranged to attend the events, none of whom had cancelled because of the BuzzFeed story. More tragic [still](#) was the fact that the planned event for 8 Nobel Laureates to speak to a group of over 1000 inner-city students at North High School—an event that surely would have changed some lives for the better—was summarily cancelled by the University [when the University cancelled along with](#) the celebration, even though my staff

**Commented [JD5]:** I've deleted these because they're just rehashing the merits, and I think they detract from your point.  
Justin Dillon  
2018-10-14 21:37:00

had previously communicated with North High about the potential problem, and had indicated that I would not moderate the event, and as I understand it that was acceptable to North High. So much for any alleged effort for ASU to reach out to otherwise underserved populations.

~~And so much for the hard work of a staff of 7 innocent people who had devoted a year of their life to producing something wonderful for ASU, the greater Phoenix community, and the world.~~

c. ~~The violations of due process that began with the imposition of administrative leave took on new depth with the OEI investigation as I have described, and continued after the OEI investigation it was completed. That I was not given access to accusations and evidence until after the proceeding was concluded, could not cross examine, and in many cases was not told the identity of witnesses, and I could not appeal its conclusions was something that Stalin would have been proud of, but is disgusting to see in inappropriate for an institution that is supposed to herald free speech, mutual respect and enlightenment.~~

~~At every stage of interaction Throughout the process, the University created a hostile adversarial environment and exerted undue, unfair, and illegal pressure on others and myself. Just last week your office gave me 2 hours to come to contractual agreement with the University lawyers on a Conciliation agreement, even though the recommendation of the Conciliation committee was sent to you a week earlier and were not forwarded to me until the day before this outrageous request, and the content of their recommendations was not reflected in the details of the proposed agreement, and moreover that I was required to claim that my lawyer had [REDACTED] the document even though at the time it was sent to me, it was almost 6 pm on the East Coast, where my lawyer resides. Even though it was after business hours on the East Coast, I was able to reach my lawyer. Happily I was able to reach him and he contacted the University, who then lawyer and demanded a legitimate contractual procedure, which has now completed with this letter.~~

d.

e. ~~Gender bias was frequent. None of the supporting statements provided by any of my male colleagues who were intimately familiar with the workings and atmosphere of Origins were included in the University determination regarding the allegations investigated by OEI. It was claimed I was sexist when I described to my staff the historically accurate fact that the movement for gay and lesbian rights really took on momentum in NYC when gay men began to publicly protest. And so on.~~

~~Double standards were applied. I was held accountable for not reporting apparent harassment about which I was unaware. Meanwhile a complainant who claimed that she had heard about apparent harassment by me 8 years earlier (a claim that later turned out to be false) was not held similarly accountable.~~

~~Moreover, in an action reminiscent of 1984, the University has erased all evidence that the Origins Project ever happened on its web pages. What makes this particularly tragic is that the Project had built up a remarkable storehouse of material of great interest and relevance for researchers, students, teachers, and the general public on its website. All these with the resources that should be available for students, educators, and the general public, are now absent on the University site. Why? I assume it~~



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because my presence infused much of the material. **Shame on you** for deciding that public image is more important than substance and benefit for the community.

-Finally, throughout this process, I maintained confidentiality, as requested, even though it was incredibly difficult not to speak about what I felt to be outrageous and inappropriate goings on at the University. Yet the University showed no such restraint. Indeed, when it suited them, and when that ultimately helped irredeemably destroy my reputation, or compromise the possibility of unbiased conclusions, the University chose to speak to the press about the process or leak information about the process. Indeed, just last week in the midst of the Conciliation process, for reasons known only to yourself, you **yourself** chose to inform the *State Press* that the Dean had requested my dismissal in July. **I do not see how that is at all consistent with In-so-doing-you-unnecessarily-compromised** the Conciliation process, and **it** further damaged my reputation.

During the past year, **the university, and you, have** ASU has passed up numerous opportunities to behave responsibly, humanely, and fairly towards me, with no apparent interest in protecting my rights or my dignity. **Your office has provided little or no leadership to ensure a just and fair process.** Reflect for a moment on how you would wish yourself and your family to be treated in similar circumstances, or how all other University employees would want to be treated, and how ASU's policies should be reshaped to protect them. If faculty at ASU find that innuendo and unsubstantiated allegations are sufficient to destroy their academic careers at the University they will think twice about remaining. If students and parents learn that the OEI functions as **a kangaroo court**, they may choose to go elsewhere.

**It is unfortunate that this letter has had to be harsh, but I think it is truthful** have not meant to be **unduly harsh, but rather truthful—to tell you, someone I have known for years, how this process affected me and how I think it needs to be changed going forward.** **Its harshness** My tone stands in reverse measure to the pride I felt in my relationship with the University and its senior administration before this year. Even as I reflect on all we have done here, and a decade over which I can look back and feel proud to have been an active part of the ASU community, working with integrity and dedication that have now both been so viciously questioned and disparaged, is it any wonder I now feel it would be unsafe for me to continue my active teaching, research and service activities on campus- **at this point past the end of this academic year?**

Thank you in advance for accepting my retirement request, and for carefully considering the issues I have raised here, with the goal of ensuring a better future for the University community.

Sincerely,

**Commented [JD6]:** Technically, you can't do any of those things starting as soon as you sign this, hence this edit.  
Justin Dillon  
2018-10-14 21:42:00

Lawrence M. Krauss