USC president ousted over doctor scandal

2018-05-28

China Daily USA |  
 Updated: 2018-05-28 14:03

The University of Southern California board of trustees announced Friday that C.L. Max Nikias will step down as the school president amidst heightened criticism from students and faculty over his handling of a case involving a former physician accused of sexually abusing patients for decades.  
George Tyndall, 71, a veteran gynecologist at the student health center, had been accused of misconduct, such as improper behavior during pelvic exams and making suggestive sexual comments.  
Complaints about Tyndall started in the 1990s, but the school did not publicly acknowledge the history or reveal a report about his misconduct until it was contacted by Los Angeles Times a few weeks ago, according to the Times.  
"Today, President Nikias and the executive committee of the board of trustees have agreed to begin an orderly transition and commence the process of selecting a new president," wrote board member Rick J. Caruso in a statement Friday. "We recognize the need for change and are committed to a stable transition."  
Nikias' resignation comes just days after several hundred faculty members asked him to step down for prioritizing the school's reputation over the safety of students. An online petition started by a former student calling for Nikias' departure had also garnered more than 4,000 signatures.  
Tyndall reportedly targeted Chinese students because of their limited understanding of the English language and US medical procedures.  
On Tuesday, three former Chinese graduates filed a civil lawsuit against USC through the Deng Law Center and law firm Girardi and Keese. At least seven other female students had filed separate lawsuits against USC for allegedly neglecting complaints.  
Daniel Deng of the Deng Law Center told China Daily on Friday that the school should be held responsible for mishandling the case.  
"A lot of the complaints were filed by staff members, but the school management team neglected them and did not take the necessary measures to investigate," Deng said. "I totally agree with the faculty members who called on Nikias to step down."  
He said Chinese students were especially vulnerable to Tyndall's advances because all international students are required to purchase health insurance, and many did so through the school health system. Victims had no choice but to see Tyndall, who was the only full-time gynecologist on campus for years.  
There are 45,500 students enrolled in the 2017-18 academic year at the private school in Los Angeles, including about 5,400 from the Chinese mainland.  
Deng said he had received a dozen inquiries on the case, including some from Chinese former patients who are still in Los Angeles, but none had filed a lawsuit. He said he expected more students to come forward in the future. Deng is gathering evidence for the case and preparing paperwork to bring the plaintiffs to the US for further investigation.  
Nikias became the 11th president of USC in 2010. He was known for extending USC's ties to China and the Pacific Rim.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201805/28/WS5b0b9bc5a31001b82571cb3a.html