



Ex-Salve Regina professor accused of sexual misconduct

By Daily News staff

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A former professor at Salve Regina University has been accused of sexual misconduct stemming from a reported incident in Ohio in 1982.

Sister Lisa Zuccarelli, 65, who taught biology and chemistry at Salve Regina from 2003 until she resigned earlier this year, allegedly molested a girl while teaching at Fisher Catholic High School in Lancaster, Ohio.

The statement from the university said its investigation found no evidence that Zuccarelli acted in an inappropriate manner toward any student or employee at Salve Regina in her 15-year tenure.

According to a statement from the Dominican Sisters of Peace, located in Columbus, Ohio, the alleged victim wrote a letter to the congregation in July recounting the incident more than 35 years ago. Officials at the Dominican Sisters of Peace filed a report with police and with the Diocese of Columbus within 24 hours upon receiving the letter.

Zuccarelli was removed from her ministry and immediately was restricted from unsupervised contact with any minor or former student. An investigation was completed in October, when the claim was deemed credible, the statement said.

“We sadly acknowledge that a credible allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor was made against Sr. Lisa Zuccarelli, OP, by a former student, at Fisher Catholic High School, Lancaster, OH,” Sr. Patricia Twohill, prioress of the Dominican Sisters of Peace, said in the statement. “Sr. Lisa was a teacher there and lived at St. Mary Convent in Lancaster at the time.”

According to online reports in Ohio, citing a police report, the victim left her home because of abuse, and Zuccarelli allowed her to stay in her room that evening at St. Mary Convent. That night is when the alleged incident occurred, according to the police report, which said Zuccarelli told the victim to sneak out of the room in the morning.

Salve Regina acknowledged the incident and confirmed the resignation of Zuccarelli.

“Dr. Zuccarelli was placed on an immediate leave of absence from Salve Regina prior to the fall semester upon notification from the Dominican Sisters of Peace of an allegation of improper sexual contact with a minor more than 35 years ago in the state of Ohio,” a statement from the university said.

Salve Regina said it conducted an investigation in conjunction with the Dominican Sisters of Peace, fully cooperating with authorities “while also balancing the needs of transparency and respectful privacy for the victim.”

The Dominican Sisters of Peace said it has reached out to the victim, and is encouraging other victims who may have experienced sexual misconduct by a member of the congregation to come forward by contacting law enforcement or the congregation.

Zuccarelli taught at Fisher Catholic High School from 1980-85.

“We consider this conduct reprehensible, and we are deeply sorry for the pain it has caused,” Twohill said in the statement. “We have approached the situation with as much transparency as possible, while being respectful of the privacy of the victim. We are doing all that we can to support the healing of all involved.”

Zuccarelli, who was first assigned by the congregation in 1975, is undergoing psychological assessment at a center that specializes in therapy for the religious and clergy members.