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## Column: 'Times' article appears to blame victims for professor's suicide

By ANNELEISE ORLECK and IVY SCHWEITZER (/byline?byline=By ANNELEISE ORLECK and IVY SCHWEITZER)

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To the Valley News

### Hanover

The Dartmouth College community has been shocked and devastated by the suicide of professor David Bucci, which was described in a Jan. 4 *New York Times* article by national correspondent Anemona Hartocollis.

Bucci was chair of Dartmouth's Psychological and Brain Sciences Department when nine courageous women, mostly graduate students, broke the silence about the regime of sexual harassment that had persisted in the department for many years and was allowed to go unchecked. They filed a Title IX complaint and then a lawsuit against three professors in the department, alleging sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment and rape.

After Dartmouth investigated, one of the professors retired, two resigned. The lawsuit, too, was finally settled, but many questions and much grief remain.

Missing from the *Times* article was any discussion of the ongoing pain of the young women who were targeted by the predatory behavior of their male professors, as the lawsuit alleged, or of the misogynist culture in the Psychological and Brain Sciences Department and across the college that sparked the suit.

The *Times* article cites friends and family members who see Bucci as "a casualty of a scorched-earth legal strategy to pin blame on the Ivy League college." But sadly, his heartbreaking death is not the only tragedy that followed in the wake of these events. Several of the plaintiffs became suicidal. Their careers were thrown off track. They were disparaged, threatened and discouraged from speaking out. They were "slut-shamed" by Dartmouth College's response to the lawsuit, which can be seen as a scorched-earth legal strategy to pin the blame on 17- to 23-year-old female students groomed for abuse by professors who were supposed to mentor them.

Hartocollis' article, however faintly, leaves the impression that the plaintiffs were #MeToo radicals gone too far. Since the publication of this piece, people have been sending the plaintiffs hate mail, blaming them for Bucci's death.

While any suicide is a terrible loss, it is dangerous to suggest that David Bucci's death was a result of the lawsuit against Dartmouth.

We do not know why he chose to take his life. This is a complicated situation with many questions still unanswered. We remain unsatisfied with how the college handled these complaints, which forced the victims to sue and deprived Bucci of a chance to clear his name.

Blame and cruelty are not a just response.

We must support professor Bucci's family and also the young women whose lives were so cruelly transformed — not only by the predatory behavior of older men, as alleged in the suit, but also by the culture of impunity in which they operated.

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Annelise Orleck is a professor of history and Ivy Schweitzer is a professor of English at Dartmouth College. This column was signed by 30 other Dartmouth faculty members, including: Randall Balmer, Ann Bumpus, Alexander Chee, Mary Coffey, Charles Cole, Laura Edmondson, Ann Barry Flood, Nancy Fraser, Matthew Garcia, Louise Hamlin, Douglas Haynes, Susannah Heschel, Alexis Jetter, Nelson Kasfir, John Kulvicki, Eng Beng Lim, Christopher MacEvitt, Bethany Moreton, Giavanna Munafò, Abby Neely, Graziella Parati, Colleen Randall, Nicholas Reo, Adina Roskies, Walter Simons, Silvia Spitta, Roberta Stewart, Pamela Voekel, Lee Witters and Melissa Zeiger.

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