

LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

Embattled President of Adams State U. Says She's the Victim of Bullying

By *Fernanda Zamudio-Suaréz* | FEBRUARY 21, 2018

✓ PREMIUM

Beverlee J. McClure, president of Adams State University, is firing back at accusations that she bullied faculty and staff members and retaliated against her critics. McClure was placed on leave last week by the Colorado university's Board of Trustees while both parties agree on terms for her exit.

In a statement, the board said McClure's and the board's priorities were "no longer congruent," but an [article in *The Denver Post*](#) also ascribed McClure's suspension to her 2016 choice of Halloween costume, as an overweight plumber, and to accusations of bullying.

In an interview on Wednesday with *The Chronicle*, McClure said the allegations of bullying and intimidating critics are false.

"It absolutely didn't happen," McClure said. "Look at my past history, my past record. You know, why would I come here and suddenly exhibit those types of behaviors? It didn't happen."

McClure moved to Adams in 2015 as its first female president, and she inherited challenges, including scrutiny after a *Chronicle* investigation questioned some of its distance-education courses.

She told *The Chronicle* on Wednesday that some of her critics were not used to taking directions from a woman and that the institution was not ready for a female president.

"When you're a woman and you're having to stand in front of a campus and you're having to say, 'Guys, we are in a fiscal-turnaround position, and we're going to be right-sizing the campus,'" McClure said. "Those are the kinds of things that I believe there was pushback on, and perceived that way because here's a woman in leadership suddenly saying no to things that in the past just were allowed to happen."

The Critic



Adams State U.

Beverlee McClure, president of Adams State U., in an official portrait ...



Photo provided by Danny Ledonne

McClure said that she wasn't a bully but instead was a victim ... and in the overweight-plumber costume she wore to a Halloween party in 2016. of a former adjunct professor and blogger's cyberbullying. Some of the bullying wasn't only online. McClure said she'd had dog feces thrown at her home and her name tagged on about 100 pornographic websites.

Danny Ledonne, a former adjunct professor of mass communication, began the blog *Watching Adams* in 2015 to "communicate information, conduct investigative journalism, and facilitate discourse" about the university, according to the blog.

While McClure's leadership is frequently featured on the blog, he said he condemns the kinds of violent behavior that McClure has been subjected to. A recent post criticized her for engaging in "vindictive spats with her subordinates." At first, Ledonne's teaching contract wasn't renewed. But he continued to participate in meetings of the Contingent Faculty Instructor Council with what he said was the encouragement of other faculty members.

In 2015, Ledonne was banned from the campus. McClure said the move was based on advice from the state's attorney general. People were uncomfortable when he showed up at meetings as if he were a campus employee, she said.

The university eventually settled a lawsuit Ledonne and the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado had brought against Adams State to contest the ban. While the university agreed to lift the ban, the agreement did little to stop the feud. McClure said that his criticism of her only increased.

"The ACLU took his case, and our insurance company settled with him in hopes that he would move on and leave us alone," McClure wrote in a statement. "Instead, attacking me and the university became his full-time job. Ledonne is adept at using social media to spread his hate. I am not his first victim, and sadly I won't be his last."

Ledonne told *The Chronicle* that he was actually bullied by McClure, who had higher status on the campus.

"Unfortunately, if we're going down the road of accusing people of bullying, I was a guy who was out of the job and kicked off campus, and she was using the taxpayers' resources of the state of Colorado to serve me with a totally unlawful order to not trespass on public property," Ledonne said.

The Halloween Costume

In October 2016 McClure attended a Halloween party dressed as an overweight plumber. Her costume was complete with rotting buck teeth and a fat suit.

Watching Adams published pictures of the party in December 2016. Ledonne said he sent out a news release about the costume, but the local news media did not pick up the story.

Still, Ledonne told *The Chronicle*, he doesn't see a connection between McClure's leave of absence and the costume, but that local reporters have linked the two incidents. "It's certainly not my intention to consolidate the two items," he said.

After the party, McClure said, she consulted with her diversity liaison and the university's board chair about whether she should apologize. She didn't, after concluding that such a statement would only "validate" LeDonne's criticism.

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