# Targeted harassment of engineering education researchers: How to connect with community and support your colleagues under attack

**Dr. Alice L. Pawley, Purdue University-Main Campus, West Lafayette (College of Engineering)**

Alice L. Pawley is an Associate Professor in the School of Engineering Education and an affiliate faculty member in the Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies Program and the Division of Environmental and Ecological Engineering at Purdue University. Prof. Pawley's goal through her work at Purdue is to help people, including the engineering education profession, develop a vision of engineering education as more inclusive, engaged, and socially just. She runs the Feminist Research in Engineering Education (FREE, formerly RIFE, group), whose diverse projects and group members are described at feministengineering.org. She received a CAREER award in 2010 and a PECASE award in 2012 for her project researching the stories of undergraduate engineering women and men of color and white women. She has received ASEE-ERM's best paper award for her CAREER research, and the Denice Denton Emerging Leader award from the Anita Borg Institute, both in 2013. She was co-PI of Purdue's ADVANCE program from 2008-2014, focusing on the underrepresentation of women in STEM faculty positions. She helped found, fund, and grow the PEER Collaborative, a peer mentoring group of early career and recently tenured faculty and research staff primarily evaluated based on their engineering education research productivity. She can be contacted by email at apawley@purdue.edu.

**Dr. Erin A. Cech, University of Michigan**

Erin Cech is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Michigan. Before coming to UM in 2016, Cech was a postdoctoral fellow at Stanford's Clayman Institute for Gender Research and on faculty at Rice University. She earned her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of California, San Diego and B.S. degrees in Electrical Engineering and Sociology from Montana State University. Cech's research seeks to uncover cultural mechanisms of inequality reproduction–particularly gender, sexual identity and racial/ethnic inequality within science and engineering professions. Her current research projects focus on the recruitment and retention of women, Native Americans, and LGBT individuals, and the role of professional cultures in the inequality in STEM.

**Dr. Stephanie Farrell, Rowan University**

Dr. Stephanie Farrell is Professor and Founding Chair of Experiential Engineering Education at Rowan University (USA). Prior to 2016 she was a faculty member in Chemical Engineering at Rowan for eighteen years. Dr. Farrell has contributed to engineering education through her work in inductive pedagogy, spatial skills, and inclusion and diversity. She has been honored by the American Society of Engineering Education with several teaching awards such as the 2004 National Outstanding Teaching Medal and the 2005 Quinn Award for experiential learning, and she was 2014-15 Fulbright Scholar in Engineering Education at Dublin Institute of Technology (Ireland)tephanie Farrell is Professor and Founding Chair of Experiential Engineering Education at Rowan University (USA) and was 2014-15 Fulbright Scholar in Engineering Education at Dublin Institute of Technology (Ireland).

**Dr. Donna M Riley, Purdue University-Main Campus, West Lafayette (College of Engineering)**

Donna Riley is Kamyar Haghighi Head of the School of Engineering Education and Professor of Engineering Education at Purdue University.

# Targeted harassment of engineering education researchers

How to connect with community and support your colleagues under attack

Alice L. Pawley, Erin Cech, Stephanie Farrell, Donna Riley

# Building on prior discussions

- CoNECD 2018: "Refuse, Refute, Resist: Alt-Right Attacks on Engineering and STEM Education Diversity Scholarship"

- ASEE 2018 Diversity Committee Panel Session: "Targeted harassment in EER equity research"

- Forthcoming article in *Feminist Formations* by one of our panelists (Riley, 2019)

Riley, Donna (2018) "Refuse, Refute, Resist: Alt-Right Attacks on Engineering and STEM Education Diversity Scholarship." The Collaborative Network for Engineering and Computing Diversity (CoNECD), April 30 2018.

Pawley, Alice and Donna Riley (2018) "Targeted harassment in EER equity research," ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition, Salt Lake City UT, June 24 2018.

Riley, Donna (2019) "Pipelines, Persistence, and Perfidy: Institutional Unknowing and Betrayal Trauma in Engineering." *Feminist Formations,* 31(1) 1-19.

# What is "targeted harassment?"

How would you define it?

# What is "targeted harassment?"

Often virtual (phone, email, social media)

Personal

Threatening violence

Expressing misogyny, homophobia, or racism

Coordinated and repeated

# What does it look like in academia?

- All the same features, but focused on people's scholarship as unworthy

- Often related to scholars' efforts to raise questions about long-held privileges that threaten the status quo

- Threatening academic freedom

- AAUP reports incidences from both sides of political spectrum, and overwhelmingly from the political right.*

* AAUP Facebook Live with Henry Reichman and Joan Wallach Scott, accessed Jan 25, 2019 https://www.facebook.com/AAUPNational/videos/1819187414781402/

# Why now?*

- Increased role of social media, climate of anti-intellectualism, increased by Trump election

- Increased power of private corporations over university resources

- Increased university fear that their brand may be "tarred" - protecting brand is not the same as protecting academic freedom

- Increased strategic attacks by right wing organizations to undermine credibility of academia*†

* AAUP Facebook Live with Henry Reichman and Joan Wallach Scott, accessed Jan 25, 2019
https://www.facebook.com/AAUPNational/videos/1819187414781402/

†"Signal Boost: How Conservative Media Outlets Turn Faculty Viewpoints Into National News" by Chris Quintana and Brock, June 27, 2017, *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
https://www.chronicle.com/article/Signal-Boost-How-Conservative/240423?cid=rclink

# Who has studied targeted harassment?

- Sexual harassment in academia, particularly academic field work researchers - SAFE study by Clancy et al, 2014

- Academic "bullying" (drawn from workplace bullying studies) - internal to a university - Keashley & Neuman 2010
  - faculty bullying other faculty (particularly people of colour) - Finley, Gray and Martin 2018
  - faculty bullying graduate students, contingent faculty, staff

- Academic "incivility" and "mobbing" - Twale & DeLuca 2008

- Publications about the experience of being harassed - Gutiérrez 2017

- Recent *Journal of Academic Freedom* issue focused on topic, and AAUP efforts to collect data on specific cases

- Journalism documenting harassment of faculty, particularly at non-US institutions (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Education*, *Academe*, etc.)

  We're happy to share other resources, references, and URLs.

# What fields have faced targeting?

- Particularly Women's, ethnic, & critical studies scholars
- "Controversial" science – climate scientists in particular
- Disproportionately women and people of color

# What does targeted harassment look like in STEM ed research?

- STEM education researchers, particularly those focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion
- After decades of normalcy
- >50 incidents that we know of in STEM education research

# So what?

Snowflakes?

# So what?

Threats to academic freedom, to the credibility of academia, and to the notion of a public good*

* AAUP Facebook Live with Henry Reichman and Joan Wallach Scott, accessed Jan 25, 2019
https://www.facebook.com/AAUPNational/videos/1819187414781402/

"...continual and fearless sifting and winnowing..."
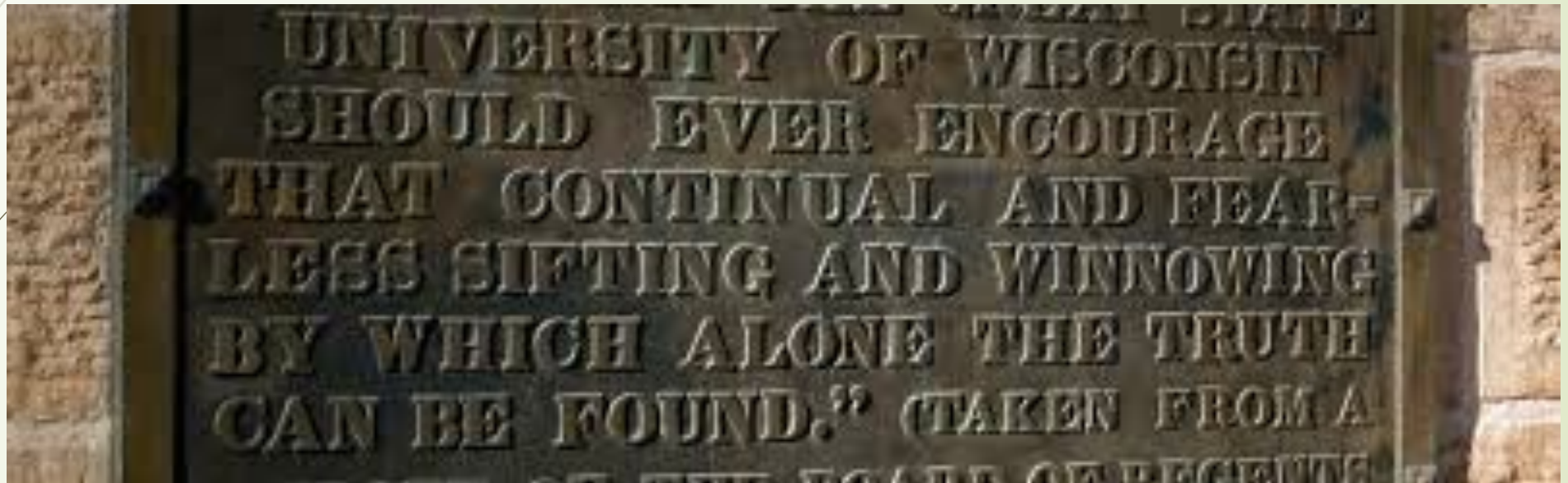
# How are academic freedom and freedom of speech different?

**academic freedom** - a protection of faculty rights based on disciplinary competence

**freedom of speech** - the right to express one's ideas, however true or false they may be.

"Academic freedom defends the pursuit of knowledge, wherever it leads. The pursuit of knowledge is not an elitist activity but a practice vital for the exercise of democracy and the promotion of the common good. Those values—knowledge, democracy, and the common good—must be reasserted in defense of the university and against the anti-intellectualism of the Trump administration." (Scott, 2017)*

* "On Free Speech and Academic Freedom," by Joan W. Scott, *Journal of Academic Freedom* vol 8.https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/Scott_0.pdf

# Panelists



**Stephanie Farrell**
Professor and Chair,
Experiential
Engineering Education,
Rowan University



**Erin Cech**
Assistant Professor,
Department of
Sociology,
University of Michigan



**Donna Riley**
Professor and Kamyar
Haghighi Head,
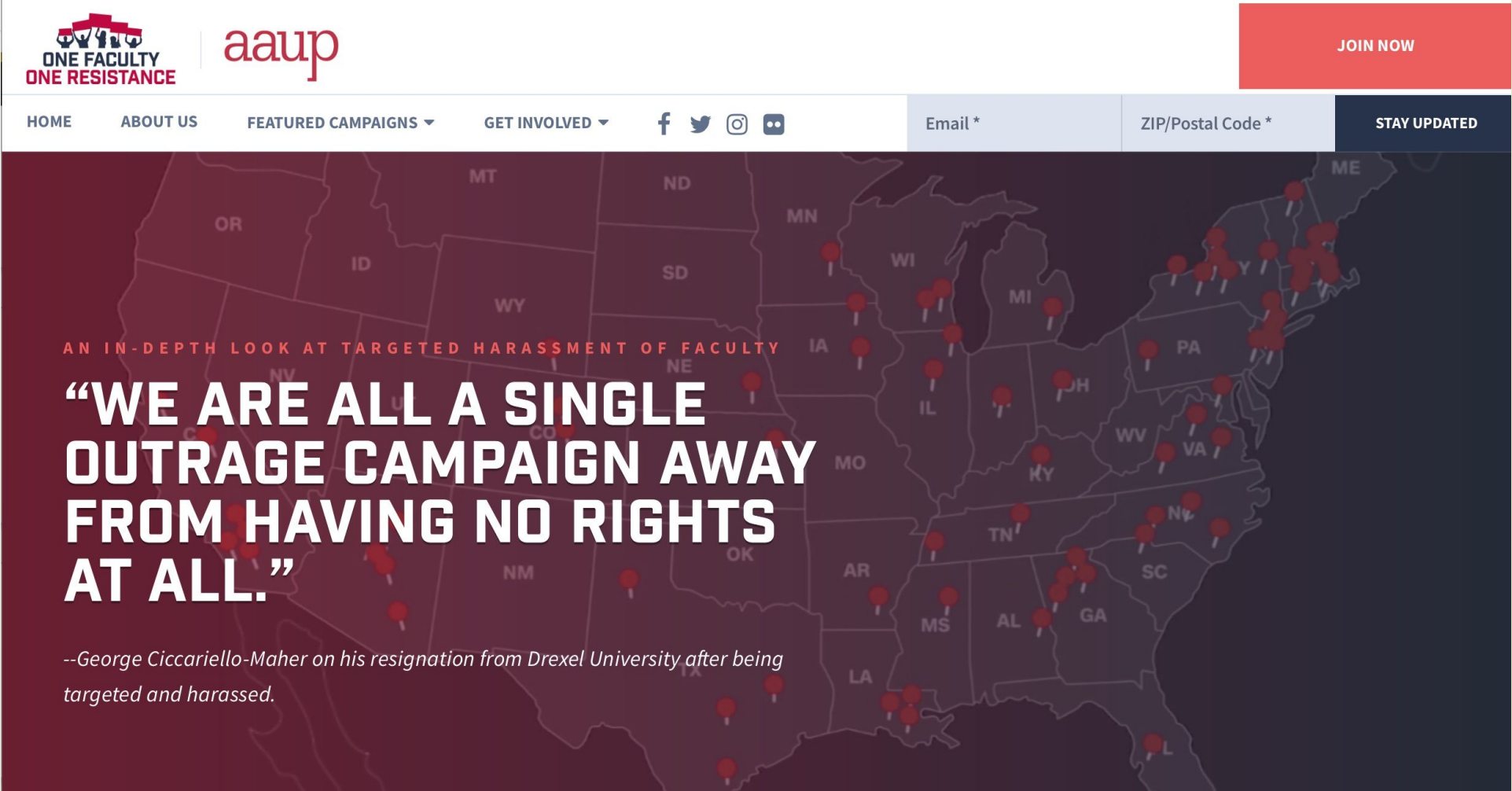School of Engineering
Education,
Purdue University

# Stories from the audience

# Our collective response

# AAUP's attention and efforts



onefacultyoneresistance.org

# One model of how to respond

**R**eport

**S**upport

**R**ecommit

# Report

- Unit, college, university levels

- Law enforcement: campus, local, state (state investigation unit), federal (FBI, Office of Civil Rights)

- Non-profits: SPLC, AAUP, AAC&U

- Other online harassment support orgs: Heart Mob, Troll Busters, Crash Override, Online SOS

# Support

- Physical and emotional safety of the target

- AAUP chapters – engage impartial observers in meetings with administrators

- ASEE Diversity Committee – sending indicators of support to target's supervisors, P&T committees, etc.

- Review other suggested plans and resources listed on handout

- Connect the target with us!

# Recommit

- University media emphasize value of the researcher and their expertise to the institution, research community
- Units name what happened, and recommit publicly to principles of academic freedom
  - Faculty senate
  - Might need to be independent from university communications
- Ex: ASEE statement published March 13, 2018

**March 13, 2018**

Over the past year, there has been a proliferation of targeted attacks on scholarly work addressing diversity and inclusion in STEM education, including work in engineering education specifically. Many of these attacks have appeared on conservative outlets and in broader alt-right media and social media networks. When specific faculty members are targeted, they and their colleagues are often subject to harassing and threatening calls, emails, tweets, and more.

Such attacks serve to undermine academic freedom. The principle of academic freedom is grounded in the professional status and expertise of faculty. More than mere tolerance of

https://www.asee.org/documents/about-us/the-organization/public-policy/LetterSupportingScholarlyResearchinDiversityandInclusioninSTEMEducation.pdf

# Other models

"Responding to Right-Wing Attacks" by Dana Cloud

Steps to follow in order:

1. Reverse the right's narrative
2. Find allies on campus
3. Gain the support of major organizations that defend academic freedom.
4. Obtain signatures from academics and allies everywhere.
5. Get help.

https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2017/11/07/tips-help-academics-respond-right-wing-attacks-essay

# Other models

Share models of how to respond with administrators at your university.

A good start: *Faculty Support & Safety Guidance,* University of Iowa

https://provost.uiowa.edu/sites/provost.uiowa.edu/files/Faculty_Support_Safety_Guidance.pdf

# Questions?

Then we're going to have you make a plan.

# Make a plan now

Handout:

1. Who do you know who might be targeted?
2. What people should be prepared to support them, and in what ways?
3. What SOPs can you develop around communication and physical safety?
   - How can you help connect them to us?
4. What step will you commit to taking before fall term?
5. How can we help hold you accountable to this commitment?
   - Leave a copy of handout with us

# Thank you for attending!

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Pass on the word - and grab a pin to show your support for defending academic freedom!

DEFEND ACADEMIC FREEDOM