

Academic group criticizes UO for punishing law professor for blackface costume



A University of Oregon professor is being investigated for wearing blackface to a Halloween party. (Beth Nakamura) *(The Oregonian)*



By **Andrew Then** | [The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

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The University of Oregon's decision to place a law professor on **administrative leave for wearing blackface** to a Halloween party at her own home was "unwise" and "appalling," according to professors group.

UO law professor Nancy Shurtz apologized for her costume, which she said was intended to spark a "thoughtful conversation" on racism.

But the **Oregon Association of Scholars** said while Shurtz's "choice of protest tactics may have been unwise," the university's response was "even more unwise."

Shurtz is owed an apology by UO administrators for being bullied and attacked by President Michael Schill and others in Eugene, the group said.

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"This attack on Dr. Shurtz's academic freedom is a direct consequence of the environment of politically correct partisanship and the ideological narrowing of higher education in the state that needs to be changed," said Bruce Gilley, the president of the Oregon chapter of the National Association of Scholars.

Gilley said Shurtz should be immediately reinstated by the university. School of Law Dean Michael Moffitt said Nov. 4 Shurtz would be on administrative leave pending an investigation by the school's Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity.

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Gilley is a political science **professor at Portland State University**. The Oregon group counts 16 professors as members. The national association has 2,300 members on college campuses, according to Gilley.

The association is described on its website as a nonprofit that "upholds the standards of a liberal arts education that fosters intellectual freedom, searches for the truth, and promotes virtuous citizenship."

In its statement issued Tuesday, Gilley's chapter said it "hopes that Professor Shurtz will vigorously defend her legal rights in the case. "OAS reminds university officials that they undermine the purpose of higher education when they cower before ideological enforcers on campus and bully university members into conforming with their demands."

-- Andrew Theen
atheen@oregonian.com
503-294-4026
@andrewtheen

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