



CALIFORNIA

## Former CSU campus president accused of harassment to earn \$343,920 in new university job



Cal State San Bernardino's president announced last year — before a lawsuit was settled — that he was stepping down at the end of the 2023-24 academic year. Above, the campus in 2019. (Allison Zausa/For The Times)

By Andrew Khouri  
Staff Writer | [Follow](#)

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- CSU will pay more than \$340,000 to outgoing Cal State San Bernardino president Tomás Morales — named in a discrimination and harassment civil suit CSU settled for \$12 million — for a yearlong transition post.
- Faculty leaders criticized the compensation.
- Morales will advise incoming campus president Terri Gomez and receive emeritus status.

The California State University system will pay \$343,920 in compensation to the outgoing president of Cal State San Bernardino — who was named in a discrimination and harassment civil suit that CSU settled for \$12 million — as part of his one-year “transition” assignment, Chancellor Mildred Garcia announced Wednesday.

Garcia praised President Tomás Morales during a board of trustees meeting for his “outstanding leadership at Cal State San Bernardino and systemwide.” She did not mention the lawsuit.

That suit, filed in 2023 by two former Cal State San Bernardino administrators, accused Morales of gender discrimination and alleged “ranting” at female employees. It also alleged that he failed to approve salaries on-par with male colleagues and created an environment where harassment is “standard operating procedure.” In addition to Morales, the suit named a former dean under him and the CSU Board of Trustees.



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The suit said Morales' alleged actions were reported to then interim Chancellor Jolene Koester, who “did absolutely nothing,” and that the university allegedly retaliated against the administrators for raising concerns about Morales and the former dean.

Morales did not respond to emailed requests for comment. In court documents Morales, the former dean and the Board of Trustees denied all allegations in the lawsuit.

In a statement sent by CSU spokeswoman Amy Bentley-Smith, the university said the lawsuit against Morales and CSU “did not result in any findings against him individually, and litigation outcomes do not determine an employee’s standing.”

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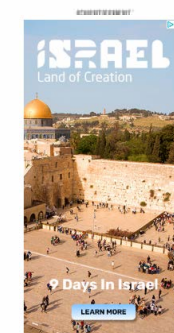
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The statement said Morales remains in "good standing," a classification that makes him eligible for the new transition job.

The university system, which has been dogged by [sexual harassment scandals](#) in recent years, [settled the case in March](#). In its statement, CSU denied all wrongdoing and said it "entered into the settlement to avoid further costs of litigation."

The transition plan for Morales has drawn outrage from faculty leadership groups.

Morales announced last year — before the suit was settled — that he was stepping down as president at the end of the 2025-26 academic year.

On Wednesday, CSU announced the appointment of a new president for the San Bernardino campus. Terri Gomez, a 27-year veteran in higher education and a lifelong resident of the Inland Empire, is currently the provost and vice president for Academic Affairs at Cal Poly Pomona, a university statement said. She is a first-generation college graduate who began her higher education journey at San Bernardino Valley College.

She joined Cal Poly Pomona in 1999 as a faculty member in the Department of Ethnic and Women's Studies. Her academic leadership roles at the university have included those of interim associate dean, associate vice president for Student Success, and associate provost for Student Success, Equity and Innovation, the statement said.

Morales, as part of his transition job, will be available to advise Gomez. He will also "focus on advancing the CSU's international engagement and strengthening global partnerships," Garcia said.

She said Morales' pay was consistent with the university's "transition program" for executives that CSU has said helps recruit for high-level posts in a competitive market and ensures institutional knowledge is retained once university leaders step down from their posts.

Andrew Friedman, a lawyer who represented the two former administrators in their lawsuit, called the payout to Morales a "real shame."

"CSU has a significant problem when it comes to dealing with gender discrimination and harassment and retaliation and we've seen nothing to date to show that it's taking this issue seriously," said Friedman, a partner with Helmer Friedman LLP.

In a news release from May, the California Faculty Assn.'s San Bernardino Chapter President Tiffany Jones said rewarding Morales would be a "stunning failure of accountability and a direct betrayal of students, faculty, and staff."

"At a time when campuses face budget constraints, staffing shortages, and growing student needs, CSU resources must not be used to provide a financial cushion for failed leadership," Jones said in a news release.

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The transition program at CSU began in 1981.

In 2022, the Times reported that [CSU routinely approved transition plans](#) for former executives, including those accused of wrongdoing, that allowed them to collect salaries for a year for work such as providing "advice and counsel" to CSU. The transition program at CSU began in 1981.

In 2022, the Times reported that [CSU routinely approved transition plans](#) for former executives, including those accused of wrongdoing, that allowed them to collect salaries for a year for work such as providing "advice and counsel" to CSU administrators, but did not track what officials do while being paid.

Following the Times investigation, CSU said it was [halting the program](#) until the Board of Trustees reviewed a task force's recommendations.

The university later decided that executives hired after March 2022 would no longer participate in the program.

CSU spokeswoman Bentley-Smith did not immediately respond to questions about what other reforms, if any, were put into place.

The 2023 lawsuit against Morales also named Jake Zhu, the former dean at Cal State San Bernardino's Palm Springs campus who reported to Morales. The suit accused Zhu of harassment and fostering environment where harassment was allowed.

After reporting concerns about harassment to Zhu, associate dean Anissa Rogers was forced to resign, the suit alleged.

Zhu could not be reached for comment.

Rogers' claims went to trial and a jury awarded her \$6 million, which was negated by the settlement. Rogers no longer works at CSU.

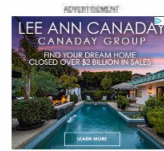
At Cal State San Bernardino's main campus, the former Vice Provost of Academic Affairs Clare Weber alleged in the 2023 lawsuit that Morales harassed and discriminated against her and other female employees and was retaliated against when she raised concerns.

Weber alleged that after she raised concerns about gender pay disparities, she was pressured to resign her vice provost job and was fired when she refused to do so.

The settlement agreement, provided by Weber's lawyer, required her to resign from her faculty position.

In a written comment to the board of trustees before the Wednesday meeting, both Weber and Rogers called for further scrutiny of Morales' record.

"I am not clear ... how the review for the president being in good standing was conducted," Weber said in an interview after Morales' yearly assignment was announced. "It feels like a slap in the face."



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Hours after Garcia announced Morales’ transition job, the Board of Trustees gathered to vote on granting him the honorific title of professor emeritus. Before the vote, Garcia once again praised Morales, called him a lifelong friend and said that during his time leading Cal State San Bernardino, graduation rates rose and “equity gaps” narrowed.

The board then voted unanimously to grant him the emeritus title and gave him a standing ovation. Morales said he was “grateful for this recognition.”

*Times staff writer Colleen Shalby contributed to this story.*

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Andrew Khouri covers education for the Los Angeles Times. He previously covered housing and homelessness at The Times and holds a master's degree in journalism from the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication.

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