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MERCED SUN-STAR

UC Merced faculty had 7 sex cases

Statewide, system counted 113 at its 10 campuses in three-plus years

BY THADDEUS MILLER tmiller@mercedsunstar.com

The University of California said this week it investigated 113 cases of sexual misconduct involving staff and faculty members at its 10 campuses - including seven reports from

UC Merced - over a recent three-year period, according to hundreds of pages of internal documents released Tuesday.

The information was released to The Associated Press and other news organizations Tuesday following a public records request made amid a string of high-profile cases at UC Berke-

ley last year.

Many details and personal information in the documents are redacted, but the records give an overview of how many sexual harassment cases were investigated systemwide at the University of California in recent years.

The 113 cases occurred from January 2013 through April 6, 2016, and include allegations that range from inappropriate conduct to sexual assault, according to a summary from the

office of UC President Janet Napolitano. All 113 cases involve employees found to have violated the University's Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment policy.

About 58 percent of the cases came from complaints by staff members, while 35 percent were from students. The rest were unknown or anonymous.

It said 7 percent of the cases involved sexual assault, "including the touching of intimate body parts."

The summary also said that approximately two-thirds of the people accused of misconduct no longer work for the University of California.

UC Merced administrators did not respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

One report from 2015 focused

SEE HARASSMENT, 6A



LOCAL

CRAB SANDWICH FOR MCDONALD'S

Los Banos native-turned-celebrity chef Ryan Scott partners with the fast-food giant to create a new menu item. 2A



THADDEUS MILLER tmiller@mercedsunstar.com

A churchgoer places ash on the head of 3-month-old Isabella Soto of Atwater during an Ash Wednesday service at St. Patrick's Catholic Church on Wednesday.

Faithful mark the beginning of Lent with Ash Wednesday

BY BRIANNA CALIX bcalix@mercedsunstar.com

On Ash Wednesday, hundreds of parishioners were reminded to pray, fast and practice alms-giving during a Mass at St. Patrick's Parish in which a symbolic wall appeared at the altar.

The wall, which will evolve during the season of Lent, was the idea of Father John Fluetsch. A large cross was drawn upon it to symbolize Ash Wednesday.

"To me, it means don't build a wall between you and Jesus," said Mark Lewis, the administrative assistant at the church.

More than 200 people attended the noon Mass in Merced to take communion and receive ashes, a symbol to the public that they are followers of Jesus Christ. It was the first day of the Lenten season, or the days preceding Easter, when many



Father Thomas Thippabathini places ash on a parishioner during the Ash Wednesday service.

Catholics fast and refrain from eating meat on Fridays.

"We are all human beings subject to sin, and we will fall again and again," said Thomas

Thippabathini, the parish's parochial vicar who led the ceremony. "The ashes indicate that we accept Christ as our savior and our commitment to a

change of heart."

The practice is a tradition instilled in two UC Merced students, Victoria Valle and Maria Aldaco, both 21.

"I was raised through the church, and it was a big part of my life growing up," Valle said. "This season helps me stay connected."

Lucy M. Ortiz, a Merced resident, said the Lenten season is how she began attending Mass every day.

"I'm fortunate that I'm retired so I can do that," she said. "Last year, the Lord had drawn on me during the time of Lent, and that's when I decided to come to church every day."

During Lent, Ortiz said, people should remember to show love instead of hate.

"We need so much more love in this world instead of hate," she said. "We need to be united and have love and pass it on to others."

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