

Utah State student gets \$500K after lawsuit brought police chief's comment on sexual assault to light

The settlement in Kaytriauna Flint's case comes after years of concerns with how Utah State University handles reports of sexual assault. The school has again promised to improve.



(Leah Hogsten | The Salt Lake Tribune) Kaytriauna Flint poses for a photograph in her attorney's office, Dec. 13, 2021. She has settled her case against Utah State University.

By [Courtney Tanner](#)

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A Utah State student — whose lawsuit brought to light [damning footage of the university police chief's comments about sexual assault](#) — will get \$500,000 from the school in a settlement, ending her high-profile case.

Kaytriauna Flint's suit was originally filed against the university nearly a year ago. It reignited allegations that USU was protecting its football players and deliberately brushing aside women when they reported being sexually assaulted by a member of the team, which Flint said happened to her.

“There was a huge lack of urgency and structure and accountability when I was going through my process with Utah State,” Flint said this week. “It just felt like they were never hearing me. Going into the lawsuit, I felt that was the only way they would hear me.”

She said she was frustrated to see how her report was handled after USU had promised significant reforms in light of several other assault cases in recent years, including multiple women reporting being raped by then-USU football linebacker Torrey Green. [Green was convicted in 2019](#), after his graduation, of sexually assaulting six women while he was a student at the Logan school; [he is now asking for a new trial](#).

The school was also [investigated and chastised by the U.S. Department of Justice](#) for how it mishandled sexual assault reports and left additional students vulnerable.

But Flint, now 23, said she felt like attitudes at the university never changed.

Her filing pointed to a recording later obtained by *The Salt Lake Tribune* of [then-USU Police Chief Earl Morris talking to members of the football team last fall](#). Morris warned players that Latter-day Saint women “may have sex with you,” but then tell their religious leaders that it was nonconsensual. The women, he said, might be “feeling regret” for having sex before marriage, which goes against the faith's teachings of abstinence, so they'll say it was assault.

A second recording featured USU head football coach Blake Anderson, who told his players it “has never been more glamorized to be a victim” of sexual assault.

USU launched an investigation, calling the remarks “reprehensible and unacceptable.” Before that concluded, [Morris resigned from his position](#). And Anderson [issued a public apology](#).



(Utah State University) Pictured is former USU police Chief Earl Morris, who resigned Dec. 16, 2021.

Flint said she was glad to see those actions but questioned why the university — or at least some staff members — still didn’t seem to take sexual assault seriously. She said the university’s process took two years for her and ended in nothing.

“How many chances did they have before me to make those changes?” she asked. “I hope that they make the change that needs to happen now.”

The Tribune obtained a copy of her settlement through a public records request. Though it does not require the university to make any specific reforms, the school said in a statement that it has taken action “to improve its prevention of and response to sexual misconduct.”

The school said it has increased staffing in its [Office of Equity](#), which includes the Title IX team that responds to cases of sexual assault, harassment and discrimination. USU also said it has “simplified university procedures.” But it

also said: “This work has been complicated by changing regulations and legal expectations.”

“Though we know that individuals may not receive the outcome they hoped for at the conclusion of the administrative grievance process, our goal is to make sure they feel it was fair and that they were heard,” the school said. “We are disheartened that Ms. Flint did not feel this way about her experience.”

Flint’s experience

Flint had pointed to the complicated process at USU for slowing down her case and leaving her confused and feeling like she had no options.

In November 2019, at the start of her sophomore year, she said she was raped by a member of the football team. Flint went to an emergency room for a sexual assault examination, and the hospital reported the case to Logan police, where officers opened an investigation. Shortly after, Flint reported the assault to USU’s Title IX office.

She was forced to switch between multiple investigators and had to repeat what happened to her again and again, she said. [Her lawsuit also noted](#) that the school lost the recordings of her interviews more than once. At one point, she said, a school investigator told her it would “probably be easiest” if she just left USU.

In December 2020, the university president finally ruled, in the alleged assailant’s appeal, that the accused student hadn’t had enough opportunity to present his side. President Noelle Cockett sent the case back to the Office of Equity to start over.

Meanwhile, Flint said, she continued to pass the alleged perpetrator on campus. And it took a toll on her mental health. The Tribune generally does not identify alleged victims of sexual assault, but Flint agreed to the use of her name.

Her alleged assailant was not identified in her lawsuit, and The Tribune is not identifying him because he was never charged with a crime. While Logan police submitted the case for potential prosecution, the Cache County attorney declined to move forward with a case.

By the start of 2021, when the Office of Equity began to review Flint's case a second time, new federal rules complicated the case. Under then-President Donald Trump, schools were expected to allow students the opportunity to cross-exam their accuser, which meant an alleged victim could be questioned directly by the alleged perpetrator or their attorney.

Flint didn't want to do that, so she said she tried to reach an informal conclusion, where both students would sit down with a Title IX staffer and agree on a resolution. That didn't work.

[Then a federal court stuck down part of Trump's order](#) and informed schools to stop requiring that victims be cross-examined. However, Flint's lawsuit states, USU didn't adjust and never informed Flint of the change. She said she felt she didn't have access to an advocate on her side to help her through the process. And it seemed like USU, she said, wanted her to drop the case.

In October 2021, she did. Flint emailed the school's Title IX coordinator and said it was going to be too difficult for her to continue. Her case was dismissed the next month — around the same time that the police chief and football coach made their comments to the team.

'Some healing' and what's next

In the settlement, Utah State does not admit any guilt in the case. And Flint agrees to drop all claims in exchange for the payout.

She said while she's glad to have the case resolved now, with a judge signing off on the settlement this week, she still worries that USU will not do better in the future.

"It's not my responsibility to ensure that an entire university follows through with necessary change," she said. "But it's hard."

In its statement, Utah State said it is committed to "to supporting survivors and reducing barriers to reporting to ensure individuals can continue working and learning at USU."

It is at least the second prominent settlement with the school over a sexual assault case in the last five years. In 2018, [former student Victoria Hewlett agreed to a \\$250,000 settlement](#) that required USU to enact a series of reforms after she was raped at a fraternity house.



(Trent Nelson | The Salt Lake Tribune) Victoria Hewlett recently settled a rape case against Utah State University. Hewlett was photographed in Salt Lake City, Thursday July 5, 2018.

Flint's case has "brought some healing for me," Flint said. "It's going to take time, but it's helped me get back my voice and have courage to speak."

Flint, who is majoring in sociology and is in her senior year now at USU, said she originally went to college wanting to work in a Title IX office. After her experience, she no longer intends to pursue that.

Instead, she's now thinking about law school and possibly working, she said, to make the law better for women who are assaulted.

"I do want to be a part of change on a large scale," she said. "That's my hope."

Editor's note: This story discusses sexual assault. If you need to report or discuss a sexual assault, you can call the Rape & Sexual Assault Crisis Line at 888-421-1100.



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