

Some Skin in the Game:

Negotiating the End of a Campus Health Menace

**A Teaching Case From the Strategic Training Initiative
for the Prevention of Eating Disorders**

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SYNOPSIS

Sometimes a fresh pair of eyes is all it takes. Meredith Tang, coming from Australia to study law at Colburn University in Hamilton, the capital of the fictitious U.S. state of Columbia, is puzzled to see, among the shops and cafés of Colburn’s campus, a salon called College Tans. Is it possible Colburn could be the landlord? Amenities for students and staff are all well and good, in Meredith’s mind, but this is something else: a private business whose only purpose is selling students an unnecessary service that is dangerous for their health. Then Meredith meets Barbara Holly, a student of public health at Colburn from whom Meredith learns of the pernicious American variety of the “beauty myth” that leads so many young women to tanning salons. Together the women form a campus advocacy group, CASCET, short for “Colburn Against Skin Cancer Enabled by Tanning” – pronounced like *casket*, which tanning beds not so coincidentally resemble.

Meredith’s efforts to contact university administrators to press a case against College Tans, being undiplomatic, are unsuccessful. Furthermore the group lacks a strategic plan. College Tans is a legal business in the middle of a five-year lease and can’t simply be evicted as the CASCET activists would like. CASCET’s aggressive education campaign on campus leads to conflict with Colburn’s leadership, but also raises valuable public awareness throughout the state and unexpected support from a wealthy Colburn alumna, forcing Colburn’s leaders to give CASCET their serious attention and respect. At the close of the case narrative, CASCET has earned its place at the table with Colburn’s senior officials, all of whom together must negotiate an agreement that will address the issues of public health and student safety that the students care most about, but also fairly resolve the business and contractual aspects of a private university’s right to lease its own property to clients of its choice.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Meredith Tang – *a graduate student from Australia, studying law at Colburn University in Hamilton. Co- founder of Colburn Against Skin Cancer Enabled by Tanning (CASCET)*

Barbara Holly – *a graduate student from Texas, studying public health at Colburn; also a CASCET co- founder*

Sonya D’Alva – *a corporate lawyer from Hamilton and Colburn alumna*

Christina Slattery – *vice president for public affairs at Colburn University*

Bettina Ryan – *head of university real estate at Colburn*

Rob Di Maria – *vice president and general counsel for Colburn University*

Leo Higuaín – *a Hamilton businessman*

Also appearing or mentioned:

Sam Monti, Yasmine Ross – *Colburn students and members of CASCET*

And assorted members of the university and local communities.

SOME SKIN IN THE GAME

Negotiating the End of a Campus Health Menace

The small college from before World War II had started as one red-brick building, Colburn Hall, with Roman-style columns flanking the portico, on historic Route 4, which ran from one edge of downtown's Alexander Park in a straight path to Hamilton's western suburbs, right along the trolley line that brought students to its doors. But when in the '50s the road was widened and many of the spaces filled with parking lots, a new generation of students started commuting in their cars, and little Colburn College in time became sprawling Colburn University, the largest private university in the state of Columbia, with one box or tower for offices, classrooms or labs built next to another all along Route 4, which in this part of Hamilton was known as Alexander Avenue, or, in local parlance, Alex Ave, pronounced as one word. Basically whatever Colburn didn't use it still owned, up and down the Ave for nearly one mile. Slowly half the parking lots of the '60s and '70s were filled in with big blocks of dorms to house the students who formerly drove. No more was it just the college. Over there was the Bettelheim School of Law; here was Baines School of Management and Business Practice; and just across the street, the Weston Institute of Medicine and Public Health, all named for donors. Interspersing all of it were shops and restaurants, what were now called "amenities," chains, mostly: Starbucks, Big Bad Burger, and Naples Pizza. A CVS and a cellphone store. Two banks. A burrito joint. And College Tans.

It was the last of these establishments that threw Meredith Tang when she arrived at the Bettelheim School in August as a first-year law student. Her bemusement grew over Orientation Week. The plastic bag of goodies distributed to all the new students included a coupon booklet with tear-off discounts mostly for ice cream and bike locks and hair salons, but there was also one offering a free month at College Tans if you bought a student school-year membership (*"valid for 9 consecutive months at any starting date of your choice!"*). The same booklets were stacked in help-yourself piles in the Student Center and the massive Won-Binstock gym, Colburn's new palace for sport and recreation. The convenience store in the Student Center didn't sell tobacco, a large sign declared. But still there was this tanning salon permitted to advertise. . . was it possible, in fact, that the university was its landlord? It seemed to own everything else on the block.

"I don't get it," Meredith said to one of her new friends. "Where I come from, we would not have these tanning salons being allowed to advertise on school property."

She was from Australia, where all commercial salons would, by law, be closing by January 1, 2015.

“Why not? It’s normal everywhere else I’ve been.”

“It’s cancer,” Meredith replied. “It’s like cigarettes. But melanoma instead. I’ve read it in lots of places.”

“It’s just like how people tan anyway. What’s the difference between them laying out in the quad in their bikini and doing it indoors on a tanning bed?”

Meredith admitted she didn’t have a good answer; not yet. But she was sure there was something different, something quite different, between the two.

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To Barbara Holly from Texas, beginning her second year studying public health at Colburn, tanning salons were a longtime aggravation. In high school she’d seen the cheerleading squad visit *en masse* for tans before the Friday night games played under floodlights.¹ Most of her friends had done it before their junior and senior prom; their moms were tanners, too. As editor of her high school newspaper she’d written an op-ed denouncing the local salons that advertised in their pages. “If you weren’t such a pretty girl,” her own mother told her, “they’d have your head on a stick,” explaining the relative indifference (as opposed to outright hostility) with which her column had been received. She’d thought it would be different up north, or more northerly, as Columbia was, compared to Texas. Not so much vanity up here, she believed, or skimpy clothing for hot weather requiring, supposedly, a consistent year-round tan; but they did it here, too, and just as often. Indeed her own bias was turned on its head when one of her classmates, from Maine, said, “Well, sure we do it up here because it’s so cold and we never see the sun! But why would people in the South do it when it’s sunny all the time?”

For Barbara her first year in grad school had flown by. All she’d had time for was work, exercise, and weekend visits to a boyfriend in another state. She didn’t want her second year to be like that; she was used to *doing* something, as with her high school, and college, newspapers. A health student should be involved in a health campaign. She just never expected it to be tanning salons.

¹ In 2013, Texas banned “the use of tanning salons for those younger than 18. It also requires tanning facilities to keep a record of a person’s first three visits.”

(<http://www.texastribune.org/2013/08/30/minors-no-longer-allowed-use-tanning-salons/>)

What made up her mind was the Australian woman named Meredith, in the LL.M. program in the law school, who'd stood two spots ahead of her in the line for new student IDs and made such a fuss about the "Colburn Cash" loaded into the cards, so that they could be swiped for purchases in just about any of the restaurants and shops on Alex Ave, including, apparently, College Tans.

"You mean you can just swipe your card at that awful cancer salon and it takes money from your student account for suntans?"

"Yes," the woman at the counter replied rather excitedly. "And there's this app that makes reloading the card just the easiest thing."

"Excuse me," Barbara interjected as Meredith turned away in a rage. "I was hearing what you said."

"Please don't try to convince me about tanning salons," Meredith shot back.

"Why do you think I would? Because I'm blonde?"

Meredith laughed, and as they talked, and talked more, they thought they would take it over to coffee and sandwiches at one of those campus cafés where they could swipe their Colburn cards. Meredith was especially interested in Barbara's health studies.

"So this place has a medical school, a public health school, they tell us in Orientation about these programs and counseling for alcohol abuse, sexual assault, pregnancy and mental health. But they just let that foul place sit there right in the middle of everything."

It was Meredith's intensity that got to Barbara. Foolish is how she might say she felt—here was this foreigner stating all the things she believed, yet had never articulated or even thought to herself so forcefully or deeply. This was a serious person! Barbara told Meredith, "You know, I just took these things for granted. You're the first person I met who thinks even their existence is not OK."

They talked about forming a group. It began as a bit of a joke: the kind of thing where there's more fun making up the name than doing any actual work, which is how they emerged with CASCET, or Colburn Against Skin Cancer Enabled by Tanning. Said Barbara, "We'll pronounce it like *casket*. Just like what those tanning beds look like."

In short time, a third student, Sam Monti, joined the group, then a fourth, Yasmine Ross, and they began taking action. Meredith Tang sent multiple inquiries to

the university's real estate office about College Tans' sitting on Alex Ave among all the Colburn-owned buildings, but no one was willing to meet with her; and the same happened again—nothing—when she tried, next, the general counsel's office. Perhaps, Sam suggested, she would have better luck with Colburn's president. Every semester this remote figure held a single hour-long session of office hours, but slots had to be signed up for two weeks in advance; there were only six of those slots, and they went fast. Unfortunately CASCET was shut out, but Meredith pleaded, by email, with the president's assistant, "Can you put me on the waitlist? Who else is going?" She thought if she could learn the name of a student, or one of the student groups, on the list, she could get them to ask some questions. But the president's aide wouldn't give her the information, nor put her on a waitlist. "There's no waitlist," he wrote.

"Can you at least give her the FDA report that I sent earlier, that just came out?" Meredith replied, desperate not to lose what seemed her sole human connection to authority. "Which report was that?" the aide wrote back. So Meredith resent it,² along with a cover note. The aide promised he would share it with the president.

Meanwhile Barbara and Sam Monti started a CASCET website. First they stacked it with information, all the reports and studies and newspaper accounts they could find about tanning salons, including that recent FDA report of Meredith's that recommended, for one thing, that no minors be allowed admission to tanning salons even with parental consent. Then, having garnered their research online to be easily accessible by dozens of clickable links, they started a Twitter handle, @CASCET, and from their own accounts began tweeting with the #CASCET hashtag, but after a month nothing was catching on. "People just don't care much about this," a student told Barbara. "Being against tanning doesn't seem serious. It's like being against vanity—or telling girls not to wear lipstick or makeup or do their hair. Because none of those things are necessary either, but they make us feel good."

Such words, heard often, infuriated Barbara. As a lipstick-wearing, occasionally made-up Texan with expensively maintained hair, she pointed out, she wasn't courting, by any of those habits, tanning's deadly consequences: the 75% increase in melanoma among indoor tanners below the age of 30; or the six-times higher rate of the most

² "Indoor Tanning Raises Risk of Melanoma: FDA Strengthens Warnings for Sunlamp Products," 29 May 2014, <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm350790.htm>

serious skin cancer among those, under 30, who had tanned at least 10 times, as opposed to those who never had.

But it was more than that, as Barbara increasingly came to feel and, occasionally, with someone she trusted, tried to explain. Here was this beauty industry run amok. We couldn't just accept the natural beauty of women or their skin color or tone just as it was: We had to believe that there was something better, more attractive and desirable about making a fair-skinned woman's skin darker, through a process that just happened to bear lethal risks. Somehow this conception of "beauty" trumped health. Who got to define women this way—and how dare they?

"How dare they?" Barbara said to Meredith, as if to mean the entire world. To which Meredith replied, "No, how dare *they*?" She meant Colburn. She had confirmed, through a basic search of online property records, that the landlord of College Tans was the same one who owned all the other real estate on that half-mile of Alex Ave, Colburn University itself.

"Not a slumlord, but a tanlord," Barbara exclaimed. It was a phrase that would be furiously used in the weeks to come.

*

Soon the four members of CASCET convened to review their progress. No meetings with administrators had been held or arranged. Of invitations made, none were accepted. On Twitter the number of followers had risen to 36. Website traffic was maybe 2-4 visitors a day, on average, with at least one of them likely to be Meredith, Barbara, Yasmine or Sam. Number of surveys conducted: none.

"This is what we haven't done," Barbara said. "We haven't surveyed or educated our public. We haven't engaged the administration, or the enemy. We haven't even gone in to talk to those guys at the salon."

Actually one of them had. Meredith, of course. But it had not gone well. Surprised straightaway with an aggressive question ("Why are you guys in this business?"), the teenage girl at the desk had gone for her manager, who turned out to be a young man in sleek clothing named Chelly, who enjoyed a bit of banter, as when he told Meredith, "There's no evidence that tanning causes cancer," or, "If there was this evidence, they wouldn't allow us to do it," or, "It's not addictive at all," or, "Better in here where we control the UV radiation and not outside"—all lies, misinformation. But after a few minutes Chelly tired of the game and grew short with Meredith, suggesting she should leave.

“What are we trying to achieve here?” Yasmine was asking her CASCET comrades. “Is it education about the beauty myth and what the culture does to girls? Are we trying to turn women away from this place, one by one—is it health? Or do we just want to shut the place down? What’s our strategy?”

They decided, among the four of them, that it was all three. While Sam and Yasmine cultivated the website and pondered social media, Barbara, the public health student, would figure out ways to work—perhaps with Colburn faculty?—to get Colburn students to stop frequenting College Tans and other places of their ilk around Hamilton. And, although her failures in engagement were more notable than her successes, Meredith would persist in her goal, now an official CASCET objective, of persuading Colburn University “on medical grounds and for reasons of public health and protecting women” to break its lease with College Tans, driving them off campus at the very least.

Among themselves, especially Meredith the lawyer-in-training, they knew a contract like this one couldn’t simply be broken. But maybe it could be slowly battered by a hundred whacks, so that when the time came Colburn would reject the salon’s option to renew the lease. Maybe Colburn would promise never again to lease to tanning sites. Or maybe Colburn would suspend payment privileges to College Tans by student ID using Colburn Cash. Or maybe Colburn could mount an official health campaign for its own students against tanning while still serving as College Tans’ landlord. It could instruct its campus police to enforce the Columbia law that forbade under-16s from tanning salons. There was a lot of negotiating room to play with, so long as they could get to the table with Colburn’s leaders, but it seemed worthwhile to start with the ideal solution, which from their point of view was throwing College Tans off Alex Ave as quickly as possible.

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Soon posters went up all over campus. “Colburn Kills?” they said on top. (There had been considerable internal debate about whether to use a question mark or exclamation point, the group having decided on the former as less confrontational.) Each poster had, superimposed over a ghostly image of a tanning bed that looked very much like, well, a casket, an indoor tanning fact—about melanoma risk for young women, for instance—with a supporting citation in tiny lettering at bottom. Below the image and the fact was the tagline, “Your College, Tanning’s Landlord,” along with the admonition, “Tell @Colburn what you think! #CASCET.”

“Pretty clever, eh?” Meredith said as she admired one of the posters stapled to an outdoor kiosk. “Notice how we got that shoddy place’s name right in the poster without actually naming it!”

The posters got some attention, virtual and real. A supportive op-ed in the undergraduate newspaper, *The Colburnian*, helped, too, although it scolded CASCET for bypassing the topic of men who tanned “of whom there are far more than is widely known.” Suddenly the CASCET team had a lot on their hands: lots of emails, tweets and retweets, and more. But it was as nothing compared to the second wave of posterizing that began the next week. In the same style and typography as the first posters, the new ones shouted, “Beauty Kills!” No question mark here—the tanning bed was no longer arguably a casket, it was quite clearly a tomb, as the headstone above it made clear. Written on the headstone, depending on the poster, were more tanning facts:

-- “90 percent of tanning salons told Congressional investigators that indoor tanning poses no health risks. 78 percent claimed tanning was beneficial for a fair-skinned teenage girl’s health”³;

-- “In 2013 nearly 17,000 tweets referred to senders burning themselves on tanning beds”⁴;

-- “Thanks to ‘beauty’ standards created by media and advertising, self-described ‘more feminine’ girls are 32 percent more likely to use tanning beds than other girls”⁵;

-- “Tanning beds are a Group 1 carcinogen, like asbestos, arsenic and tobacco smoke, says World Health Organization—even a single visit increases risk of basal cell carcinoma.”⁶

The tagline was still, “Your College, Tanning’s Landlord.”

Now attention came from outside campus, from local TV and the big daily newspaper, the *Hamilton Daily Caller*, where Meredith was quoted at length by a reporter quite taken with her Australian background. Six more activists, two of them males who had their own stories of tanning addiction among gay men and body

³ U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce, “False and Misleading Health Information Provided to Teens by the Indoor Tanning Industry: Investigative Report,” (2012), p. 2 (<http://democrats.energycommerce.house.gov/sites/default/files/documents/False-Health-Info-by-Indoor-Tanning-Industry-2012-2-1.pdf>).

⁴ Seidenberg A, Geller A. Tanning salons spur thousands of tweets among users. (In preparation.)

⁵ Roberts AL, Rosario M, Calzo JP, Corliss HL, Frazier L, Austin SB. “Masculine boys, feminine girls and cancer risk behaviors: An 11-year longitudinal study,” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2014; 55(3):373-379 ([http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(14\)00109-8/pdf](http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(14)00109-8/pdf)).

⁶ U.S. H.R. report, pp. 4-5.

builders, had joined CASCET's team. At this stage, the group decided the timing was right to renew their request for a meeting with Colburn's leadership.

But it was the Office of Student Life that responded with its own summons. CASCET did not appear to be a registered student organization, which meant it was in violation of University poster rules. Which, at \$50 per infraction, of which there were 20 documented cases, meant CASCET owed Colburn the sum of one thousand dollars.

Meredith, Barbara, and the rest of their gang couldn't have hoped for a better punishment. The letter, quickly scanned, took pride of place on the CASCET website, soon to be blasted across the country by social media, with a strong helping hand from a famous TV actor in California, whose retweet of a message by his sister (a Colburn student) was seen by his half-million followers. Traffic to CASCET's website slowed Colburn servers briefly to a crawl—possibly another infraction, Barbara hoped—and trying to be a normal student going about the place proved difficult for some of them, their faces now known to most of their peers. For the first time, a senior public relations officer was trotted out to speak to the press, with a message that appeared in the *Colburnian*:

“We regret the conflation of the two issues of rules for registered student organizations; and the sincere desire of our students to seek a platform for their advocacy of important issues in student health. The letter was meant as an advisory, to remind the group of basic rules (but also benefits) for all campus organizations who officially register. It was not meant as a fine or a bill. Our Office of Student Life will be happy to meet with the members of CASCET to resolve these issues.”

A message that was all well and good, but somewhat beside the point when, the next day, an op-ed appeared in the *Daily Caller*, whose daily circulation across the state of Columbia was 250,000, with twice that number of online viewers. Written by a woman, Sonya D'Alva, who identified herself as a partner in a Hamilton law firm and member of the Colburn class of 1989 whose reunion was in the fall, the essay recounted the experience of a beloved niece, now 27, in her second bout with skin cancer stemming from a thrice-weekly tanning habit starting when she was 14, “because she always felt so pale, glum, heavy and unhealthy next to the other girls.” Her essay saluted “these few brave students determined to do something about this travesty for which they have been fined by the university that extracts rent from one of these killer-salons.”

But then she had written, “If Colburn is serious about enforcing this stupid and vindictive penalty, I present it with a choice. I have made out two checks to Colburn, one for \$1000, and one for \$20,000. Make CASCET pay for their impertinence, and the \$1000 will cover their costs. Do the right thing, and Colburn can spend the twenty grand on something that will actually help students—something truly in keeping with its mission, first proclaimed in 1919, “to educate, to reach, to make prosper and thrive.”

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After fourteen months at Colburn, Christina Slattery wasn't all that new at her job but still she needed help finding the Office of University Real Estate. It wasn't a place she'd ever had to visit or inquire about. As vice president for public affairs, she normally would have conferred with her counterpart, the vice president for campus services and facilities; but with that position vacant for the last four months, she'd suggested, and the president had agreed, that she would make her own inquiries. She was a few minutes late, first on account of getting off the elevator on the wrong floor, and, second, by turning right on the correct floor when she should have turned left, but when she managed to sit down with the leasing manager, Bettina Ryan, she got quickly to the point.

“So I'm surprised to learn that we've been leasing to a tanning salon.”

“But you must have seen it. It's been on Alex Ave next to the CVS for nearly three years.”

“I confess it never registered. I suppose I saw it, but somehow it just didn't occur to me that we owned the space.”

“We own the block.”

“So first of all, this place—when its lease is up—we won't renew it?”

“I don't think we can say that just yet, but it's not my call.”

“We can't break the lease?”

“We could if they defaulted. If they were secretly subletting, for instance. Or running a business we weren't aware of. If they were breaking the law—letting under-16s in, for example.”

“Do our police pay attention to things like that?”

“You’ll have to ask Rob.” She meant the general counsel, Rob Di Maria, the university’s chief lawyer—another vice president.

“What if we wanted the space? For student purposes, part of our educational mission, etcetera?”

“That’s the only other way we can shorten the tenure. Even then, it’s 12 months’ notice with the buyout clause.”

“So we *could* get them out in a year?”

Ryan hesitated. “We’d have to be careful. It has to be genuine. People will notice. No one’s ever proposed using that space for students or faculty. It’s small, it’s dark . . . it’s just not a lot of usable room, to be honest. It would cost hundreds of thousands to refurbish just to do something useful with it.”

Taking notes on everything as they spoke, Slattery felt all she needed was twenty minutes with her colleague Rob the general counsel, whom she wouldn’t get lost trying to find, since like all the vice presidents they shared the same suite of offices in red-brick Colburn Hall, Colburn’s original building on the hill above Route 4. But while returning to her office to pick up her purse and keys for the drive home, she flicked eyes at her oversize computer screen to see a message that drew her to the D’Alva op-ed, posted late afternoon on the *Daily Caller* website. It didn’t change her mind, but it did accelerate things.

She had already decided it was time to meet the students . . . CASCET, was it? Clever of them. But if it happened in two weeks, or a month, fine. Now she thought it was time to sit down together as soon as possible, ideally this week.

Of course, Meredith asked if the president would come.

“No,” Slattery replied. “That’s what she has vice presidents for.”

“And you’re one of them?”

“Public affairs, yes. Includes communications, external relations, all that.” Slattery, who used email within administrative circles, used the telephone with everybody else. First she’d tried Barbara, whose phone went to voicemail, then Meredith. “I’d like to invite you to a pre-meeting,” she said. “As many of you who want to come, as long as it’s not more than six. That’s all I can fit in my office.”

“Wouldn’t a pre-meeting be an actual meeting?”

Slattery laughed. “Yes, the pre-meeting is a meeting. But it’s just with me. The meeting itself would include colleagues who handle real estate for Colburn, and our legal work.”

“Are they also vice presidents?”

“Some of them, yes.”

As soon as she got off the phone, Meredith called Sonya D’Alva, who hadn’t wasted any time finding the CASCET leaders and offering her own legal advice, *pro bono*, as they wished and needed it.

“Interesting,” D’Alva said. “They want this to go away. They’re embarrassed by the salon on campus, and they’re embarrassed it was students who uncovered it. But they can’t break a lease.” Through her own sources D’Alva had learned there were two years left to run.

Barbara was on the call, too. D’Alva turned her attention to her, the health student. “You’ll have to face the strong likelihood that that place will stay two more years. What attainable goals can you pursue instead? I would think they should be health-related. The salon stays, but can you ask for something that makes up for it?”

“We’ve been thinking about it,” Meredith cut in. “Our position is that we want College Tans closed.” In one of her law classes she had been reading the negotiating handbook, *Getting to Yes*. “Our *interest* is that Colburn students not be exposed to unnecessary health risks.”

“Furthermore,” Barbara added, “that we hold up for young women that some bizarre idea of beauty is what made them pursue this risk in the first place. Many of them never thought about it before—we know that. But getting tans and aiming to be oh-so-thin is something they were *taught*.”

“Excellent,” D’Alva said. But when Meredith asked if D’Alva would attend the pre-meeting with the CASCET group, she was not so enthusiastic.

“You can ask them whether I should come,” D’Alva finally said. “But be careful pushing it.”

Meredith, of course, pushed it. The result was immediate: the pre-meeting was cancelled. Not because of Slattery, but because her colleague, Rob Di Maria, the general counsel, was put out. “Look, this is an escalation,” he told her. “They are a student group. And they want to bring in an alum, who happens to be a big-shot corporate litigator, and who happens to have written a pretty strident piece in the state’s biggest newspaper blasting all of us to pieces. You can’t meet them on your own, Christina. Not like this.”

“Rob, what do you suggest?”

“Why do you want the pre-meeting at all?”

“This is their university. We bring them into HQ, sit them down, we hear them out. They can bring some members of their group. They see the photos of my kids on the desk. They see I’m not wicked—Colburn isn’t wicked—none of us are. We try to de-escalate.”

“Yes, but what *result* do you want? Apart from good feelings all round? Are you offering them something, besides a hearing? Are you actually negotiating?”

“Rob. No real university—especially one with a med school and a health school—should be landlord to a tanning salon. Would we rent to a place selling guns and ammo? Because that’s legal, too. Someone slipped up here. These students have the high ground.”

“Is that what the boss thinks, too?” He meant the president.

“Yes. But please ask her yourself.”

To the student activists of CASCET, it was all very confusing. Anticipating success, they had turned to the positive. Their fine having been quashed, their organization now officially registered, no more did their posters look like coffins or tombs; nor did their tweets snarl with hashtags like #BeautyKills. Instead “a joyful message,” as Barbara called it, took over: #loveyourskin. And then it took off, with colorful plastic bracelets three inches wide each with those “loveyourskin” letters picked out so that the lovely skin was visible underneath, given out freely and starting to be seen on wrists all over campus. They planned to present one to Slattery, the communications veep.

Looking forward to their pre-meeting, the CASCETeers were stunned when it was brusquely cancelled by an assistant in the communications office; and for a week after

that Slattery did not return calls or emails asking why. But after the week's silence, Slattery's assistant was in touch about what she called "the meeting."

"Not the pre-meeting but the meeting!" Meredith was euphoric.

"We'd like the two of you to attend. Christina will be there. And two others you probably don't know. Bettina Ryan, who heads University Real Estate. And Rob Di Maria, our general counsel."

Meredith knew both names. She had emailed them both, multiple times, never hearing back. Now they would all be sitting together at a table in Colburn Hall.

"What about our advisor? Sonya D'Alva, from the class of '89. She has a lot to offer."

Slattery's assistant hesitated. "I'll have to get back to you on that," she said.

As was to be expected, the request did not go down well with Rob Di Maria, the university lawyer. Slattery was less perturbed. She wondered more about Bettina Ryan, whose life had been spent in commercial real estate prior to coming to Colburn, and who, perhaps, was not yet completely attuned to the culture of a university or the idea of students being a major constituency. Slattery's sense was that Ryan was displeased about what was, to her mind, an assault on a client. But Ryan operated in a vacuum, with no real boss until a new vice president for campus services and facilities was appointed. In the hierarchy, Slattery and Di Maria carried greater sway; but maybe the president would be needed to exert her influence.

When the day of the meeting came, the president indeed had exerted influence; as the countenance on Ryan's face made clear. She would not be attending the negotiation session after all. Di Maria was looking grim, too. CASCET had offered to give up one of its two seats if D'Alva could attend with, they decided, Barbara Holly; and on Slattery's advice, and furthermore after speaking to another vice president, the one for alumni and development, the president had confirmed the choice. ("Rob, if we don't do something about this, we're going to get sued, just like colleges are now being sued for not protecting students from sexual assault or binge drinking," she told him.) Meanwhile Barbara and Meredith believed that, with D'Alva alongside, they were all peas in a CASCET pod, perfectly aligned and united.

But there was to be a fifth person at the table, too. Leo Higuaín, proprietor of College Tans and franchisee of a dozen coffee shops around town, was a late invitee. Someone high up in administration had said, "Call it a teachable moment. You can't just

go around insulting people”; and the others agreed. Barbara and D’Alva were informed by text two hours before they were to arrive in Colburn Hall. Barbara was rattled, but D’Alva laughed. “I know Leo,” she said. “He’s done our firm’s breakfast catering for years. A very nice man!”

Meredith had given Barbara three #loveyourskin bracelets for the three Colburn executives they would shortly be meeting. Taking her own off her wrist, she handed it to Barbara. “This is for the cancer man. Although you probably shouldn’t call him that. If he’s as nice as Sonya says, he’ll wear it. And maybe get out of the business altogether. If he opens another coffee shop there instead, tell him CASCET will host his opening day party!”

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A LOCAL UNIVERSITY BETRAYS ITS OWN

By Sonya D'Alva

My niece, Alma, is a beautiful young woman of 27 in her second bout with melanoma, the deadliest skin cancer. The first episode, which we thought had resulted in a cure, was at age 23. Young women don't normally get stricken like this with skin cancer; when they do, the dermatologist will always ask, "Are you an indoor tanner?"

In Alma's case, the answer, sadly, is—or was—yes. Alma (who has given me permission to discuss her story in public) was 14 when she started tanning in salons. At the time, there were no age restrictions on this practice; even now, in Columbia, the age limit is 16. Before it was legal for her to buy cigarettes, the smoking of which is known to increase hugely the risks of lung cancer and other diseases, it was legal for her to lie on a tanning bed and be exposed to ten to 15 times the UV radiation of regular sunlight that is the leading cause of skin cancer for women in their twenties.

Why indoor tanning? Who does it anyway? The answer is almost certainly several people you know, all probably young women. Forty-three percent of college students in the United States used a tanning bed in the last year. Inexplicably, our culture, through suggestive advertising and marketing of products like cosmetics and swimsuits, has created the idea that a bronzed girl is a beautiful girl, and just look around at models and actresses and the girls on the beach if you don't think so. Alma confesses that, as a young teenager, she started visiting salons because she always felt so pale, glum, heavy and unhealthy next to the other girls. Her parents had recently divorced; she wasn't doing so well in school. She exhibited the classic signs of an eating disorder: an ordinary girl, of healthy weight, who felt she was fat. Her girlfriends said joining them for tanning would make her feel better. By junior year of high school, she was going three times a week, fairly common usage among tanners.

The good news is that life for Alma settled down; she did better in school, and got into the honors program at Colburn College. During her sophomore year, she stopped tanning. One week after her graduation, however, she was diagnosed with cancer. Her second diagnosis came a month after her wedding—on occasion for which, it should be said, she warned her friends that they shouldn't even *think* about tanning so they would "look good" in their purple bridesmaids' dresses. She knew through hard experience that tanning was no answer for anyone's body image or emotional woes.

In recent weeks Alma and I, also a Colburn graduate, have been encouraged to hear of a new student organization at Colburn, called CASCET, fighting the tanning scourge by trying to evict from their campus, and our alma mater, a salon that sits on university-owned property. Why should a

university rent to just any small business willing to pay for the space? It is a reasonable question, one that we should all be asking. CASCET is just asking it that much more assertively, with forthright, angry posters containing facts about tanning, body image myths, and cancer. Admittedly, CASCET has been careless, failing to fill out the two-page registration form for student organizations before starting their campaign, and thus every single one of those posters on Colburn property is deemed “improper.” Apparently those poster violations are more worrying to university officials than the number of its students frequenting the salon every day and exposing themselves to near-term cancer risks, and CASCET’s students have been fined \$1000. My twenty-fifth Grand Reunion takes place in fall; Colburn administrators can be sure that I will have no qualms telling my classmates about their treatment of public-spirited students, and this distasteful salon hosted on university property.

Speaking for Colburnians a generation apart, Alma and I salute these few brave students determined to do something about this travesty for which they have been fined by the university that extracts rent from one of these killer-salons. If Colburn is serious about enforcing this stupid and vindictive penalty, I present it with a choice. I have made out two checks to Colburn, one for \$1000, and one for \$20,000. Make CASCET pay for their impertinence, and the \$1000 will cover their costs. Do the right thing, and Colburn can spend the twenty grand on something that will actually help students—something truly in keeping with its mission, first proclaimed in 1919, “to educate, to reach, to make prosper and thrive.”

Sonya D’Alva is a 1989 graduate of Colburn University and a partner at the law firm Winthrop, Keller and Moore in Hamilton.

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