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# Suspended professors sue Ave Maria law school, dean and founder

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By [The Associated Press](#)

Three suspended [Ave Maria School of Law](#) professors have filed a whistleblower lawsuit against the school, its dean and board chairman.

Stephen Safranek, Edward Lyons and Phil Pucillo allege in the suit filed Wednesday in [Washtenaw County Circuit Court](#) that they were unlawfully discharged for reporting on the school's administration to law enforcement and legal agencies.

Dissolution order for Unification Church

The men also allege conflicts of interest among the school, organizations and Tom Monaghan, the school's board chairman and founder of Ann Arbor-based [Domino's Pizza Inc.](#)

Monaghan has pledged more than \$250 million to construct [Ave Maria University](#) in Florida. The school, located between Naples and Immokalee, is scheduled to open in the fall of 2009.

Ave Maria University's board of governors voted in February to move the law school from Michigan to Florida. Monaghan, a former owner of the [Detroit Tigers](#), initially intended to build a permanent campus for Ave Maria in Michigan, but he couldn't secure the necessary rezoning rights.

Deborah Gordon, the Detroit-area attorney representing the plaintiffs, told the [Naples Daily News](#) for a story published Thursday that Monaghan's involvement with multiple organizations -- including those in which he has financial interests -- violates the law school board's independence from his "tentacles."

Brandon Blackmur, a spokesman for Monaghan, told The Associated Press on Friday that Monaghan was out of the country and unavailable for comment.

"We are confident that the actions of the school of law were both proper and legal and we look forward to the court coming to this same conclusion," law school Dean Bernard Dobranski said in a statement.

Safranek, a tenured professor, was suspended with a recommendation for termination and barred from campus at the end of July. Lyons and Pucillo were denied tenure and placed on administrative leave of absence in August the Daily News reported.