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$50 Million And An Apology Resolve Suit Over USC ‘Raid’ on Alzheimer’s Program

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A confluence of events unique to the University of Southern California (USC)—an incoming president, multiple scandals—may have ultimately prompted a $50 million settlement with the University of California San Diego (UCSD), but the costly lesson it sends is likely to ripple across many other institutions.

USC had been continuing to battle against UCSD’s claims that it violated multiple laws and ethical norms when it hired Alzheimer’s disease researcher Paul Aisen, M.D., and eight others in 2015. A trial in the case was set to begin August 9.

But in early July, both universities announced they had settled the case, with USC’s statement sounding like an apology. Neither’s public statements mentioned a payment, but news reporters given access to the full settlement—*RRC* among them—learned USC had agreed to wire UCSD $50 million within 30 days of the July 1 settlement.

While the $50 million is half or less than losses UCSD said it suffered as a result of USC’s actions, it is still a significant sum. The apology, though, as the cliché goes, may be “priceless” and the real prize gained from the four-year legal battle.

Beyond the payment, the settlement itself calls for little else to occur. UCSD agreed to transfer control of a previously disputed Amazon account and the electronic data capture system to USC so that USC can conduct “research studies at the USC Alzheimer’s Therapeutic Research Institute,” as the program Aisen now directs is called.