Palantir Co-Founder’s Undergrad Intern Ex-Girlfriend Drops Sexual Abuse Charges

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A Stanford graduate from 2004, he was to be her mentor. Soon, she was his intern. But Joe Lonsdale, a former executive at PayPal, a co-founder of Palantir Technologies, and a founding partner of venture-capital firm Formation 8, also formed a romantic relationship with Elise Clougherty, the Stanford student in the class of 2013 to whom he was assigned.

Then, in January, she publicly accused him of a period of rape and abuse in a civil lawsuit that roiled Silicon Valley. Lonsdale was even banned from appearing on the campus of his alma mater for a decade, at least.

But now those charges have been dropped according to a Reuters story that appeared in Business Insider, and Stanford has reversed itself according to the Daily, and said Lonsdale is welcome back on campus.

"Mr. Lonsdale continuously and systematically subjected Ms. Clougherty to repeated and incessant sexual assaults and abuse, employing psychological manipulation and coercion in order to confuse, isolate and otherwise disorient Ms. Clougherty from appreciating the true danger of her situation,” read the suit, alive with lurid detail. Lonsdale soon filed countersuit alleging defamation. Now, a court filing this week reveals that Clougherty's charges, as well as Lonsdale's, have been dropped.

"As a result of new evidence that came to light during litigation between Mr. Lonsdale and Ms. Clougherty, the investigator in a Stanford University Title IX matter involving both parties has determined that Mr. Lonsdale did not violate Stanford’s Title IX policy,” University spokesperson Lisa Lapin wrote in an email to th Daily. “Accordingly, there is no basis to support a ban from the Stanford campus.”

However, the University will not allow Lonsdale to return to the mentorship program. “Because Mr. Lonsdale and Ms. Clougherty engaged in a relationship and did not disclose it as per Stanford’s Consensual Relationships policy, Mr. Lonsdale has agreed that he will not challenge the temporary mentoring and teaching suspension that was imposed,” Lapin's statement continued.
In February, an extensively reported piece from The New York Times Magazine's Emily Bazelon shone a light on the black, white, and gray areas of the relationship. Bazelon followed up with an article about the "Lessons" of the case yesterday. "As long as universities are responsible for investigating and adjudicating rape accusations — and they are responsible, alongside the police and the courts, according to the federal Department of Education — they have to get better at it," she wrote. And of the case's nuances and its exceptionality, she added: 'It’s true that women don’t make a lot of false rape accusations to the police. That’s rare. But rare is not the same as never. Then there are the cases that fall into a gray area, because of uncertainty over the shifting definition of consent, especially on college campuses, or over whether the person who felt violated made that clear to the other person at the time.'

*The Charles B. Thornton Center for Engineering Management at Stanford University. Image via [Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects](https://sfist.com/2015/11/05/palantir_co-founders_former_intern/)*