

Statement on Allegations of Misconduct in the Athletics Department

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It has now been nearly three weeks since we first learned of allegations against Coach Gregg Marshall involving physical violence and a pattern of verbal and emotional abuse targeting undergraduate students at Wichita State. Among other incidents, it is alleged that Coach Marshall punched a former player, that he choked an assistant coach, and that he used racially insensitive language and ethnic slurs to demean players.

Yet today Coach Marshall remains on campus, continuing to work with undergraduate students. We have been told by the administration that the university will take no administrative action until the formal investigation has been completed. This is a completely inadequate response from the university administration. Across the country, people are observing this situation, scratching their heads over this inaction, and drawing conclusions about the character of our university.

The investigation should proceed. The investigation may ultimately conclude that the allegations against Coach Marshall have no basis in reality and were completely fabricated. If that is the case, he should be loudly and publicly exonerated, and in my opinion he would deserve a loud and sincere apology from his accusers.

However, while that formal investigation is ongoing, the nature of the allegations—physical violence and racist verbal abuse against undergraduate students—is such that we cannot in conscience act as if they don't exist while the investigation proceeds.

[Chapter 3, Section 41 of the university's Policies and Procedures manual](#) states explicitly that “Involuntary Separation may occur at any time and may result from a first-time action or violation, or as a result of ongoing coaching or corrective action.” And that, “If the situation warrants review or investigation, the Employee may be placed on Administrative Leave.” The manual specifies that “Examples” of situations in which administrative leave may be appropriate “include, but are not limited to, when an Employee is involved, as a complainant, as a respondent, other interested person, during an internal review or investigation of alleged behavior and/or action that may violate University policy, procedures, applicable laws and/or employment expectations.”

In our previous (October 12) meeting, it was requested that a discussion of this matter be put on the Senate agenda for this meeting, yet the Executive Committee decided against that, because, as I was told, it was unclear what the relevance of this situation is for the faculty. I will tell you. These are our students. They sit in our classes. Over the past several years, there has been a contentious debate about the role and the rights of student athletes. In general, I tend to be of the opinion that when, through their labor, elite student athletes generate millions of dollars in revenue for their schools, they ought to be paid. But the main argument against that is that these athletes are amateurs, that they are first and foremost college students, and I think that that is a persuasive and compelling argument. If that's true, though, then let's prioritize their needs as students. If our students are being subjected to emotional abuse and, potentially, physical abuse, they are likely to bring those traumas into our classrooms. It will affect the ability of our students to succeed in our classes, and as we expend the necessary effort to support those students, it will make our jobs as faculty members harder.

More broadly, we are all part of the same university community. When the reputation of this university is tarnished, it affects our ability to recruit and retain high-quality faculty, not to mention the impact on recruitment of strong students and talented student athletes.

Inaction on this matter is not sustainable.