

## **Statement from Gene Chizik, Former Auburn Head Football Coach**

**April 4, 2013**

During my tenure at Auburn, the NCAA conducted a multi-year investigation into the Auburn football program that they called “fair and thorough.” The NCAA focused intently on widespread accusations about Auburn players being paid and other alleged recruiting violations. The NCAA conducted 80 interviews. In October 2011, the NCAA rejected “rampant public speculation online and in the media.” Unfortunately, the recent story published by Selena Roberts is more of the same. It once again portrays Auburn University, current and former coaches, professors, fans, supporters and community officials in a false light.

Unfortunately, Ms. Roberts’ story is long on accusation and inference, but short on facts and logic. It is noteworthy that the story comes just days before a player mentioned most prominently in the article is set to go to trial for felony armed robbery. The statements are very generalized accusations devoid of substance. During my time as Auburn’s head coach, I never authorized, instructed or directed anyone to change any player’s grade or provide any type of illegal payment to any student-athlete. Likewise, I am not aware of any alleged grade change or illegal payment by any member of my coaching staff, support staff or anyone else.

As for logic, the notion that the conduct inferred by Ms. Roberts was occurring under the NCAA’s nose, at the very same time the NCAA is conducting its thorough investigation, lacks merit. Further, the notion that there was ever an attempt to sabotage any Auburn student-athlete’s attempt to play professional football is outrageous. Auburn’s success in transitioning student-athletes to the NFL benefits both the student-athlete and the Auburn program.

I remain part of the Auburn family and take these attacks on myself, the University and community seriously. During my time at Auburn, the administrators, professors and academic staff were of the highest integrity. Additionally, the inference that there was academic support staff that worked together with professors to change grades is absurd. As an Auburn resident, I take great pride in the quality and integrity of our police department. They

enforce the law equally and fairly and my dealings with police Chief Tommy Dawson and his staff have been nothing short of excellent. He has handled many high profile cases with the upmost integrity and professionalism. To imply anything otherwise is simply wrong.

If there is a sad truth here, it is that there are no repercussions for bloggers who blast out widespread, venomous allegations and inferences in such an irresponsible manner. To make bold and outrageous conclusions on such thin support is a travesty.

During my tenure as Auburn's head coach, we kept the well-being of our student-athletes at the forefront of every decision. We ran our program with the highest level of integrity and accountability. Period. I make absolutely no apologies for that. I stand firm in my statements, my support of Auburn University, its student-athletes (present and former), faculty, staff and community officials. As I stated during the NCAA investigation, I am comforted knowing that the truth always prevails.

**Contact Information:**

Russ Campbell & Patrick Strong

BALCH SPORTS

(205) 226-3438 (Russ Office)

rcampbell@balch.com

(205) 226-3474 (Patrick Office)

pstrong@balch.com

