

REBUTTAL TO JANUARY 16, 2026 INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
of the
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE AND INTEGRITY

To: University of Wisconsin-Platteville
From: Michael Knipe
Date: February 17, 2026

This memo is my rebuttal to the January 16, 2026 Investigative Report (“Investigative Report” or “Report”) concerning me and addressed to University of Wisconsin-Platteville (“UWP”) Chancellor, Dr. Tammy Evetovich. Pursuant to state law, you are required to provide this rebuttal to anyone you provide with the Report.

The Report lacks important context, omits important information, and seeks to lay blame on me for systemic failures and oversights. Lacking the vast resources equivalent to those of the entire UW System, and given very little time,¹ I can only provide a high-level rebuttal. I encourage the reader to consider the Report and its conclusions with a critical eye.

From the moment UWP began asking me about charges to my UWP purchasing card and throughout the investigative process, I conducted myself with full transparency and cooperation. Had the investigator wanted more detail or additional information, all she had to do was ask. While given absolutely no notice prior to the investigatory interviews conducted December 1 and 3, 2025 as to what was being investigated, it was, is, and always will be my goal to conduct myself with integrity. This has been a staple of my career, noted throughout by supervisors, peers, and those I managed alike. As recently as my most recent evaluation by Chancellor Evetovich, I scored exceptionally well in the area of integrity and my overall performance exceeded expectations. None of this evidence appears in the Report. It was by this same standard that I approached every question I was asked in the investigation, and also expected in return.

I joined UWP as the Athletic Director in spring 2024, after the incumbent tragically passed away. In the early days of my tenure, UWP, and the athletic program in particular, was in great turmoil: there were mass layoffs (25% staff reductions across all positions), and I inherited a budget deficit of over \$560,000, with no apparent plan to address it. Within a year, I had erased that deficit and had the budget running neutral. I received little to no training on administrative policies and rules, including those the Report now accuses me of violating, but instead was told to rely on longstanding staff. I did that. I also inherited systems, practices, and relationships that the Report now

¹ I was not provided with this report in draft form or when it was completed. Instead, I was first given the Report on February 2, 2026, after a public records request was received by UWP, and I was entitled only to February 19 to prepare this rebuttal before the Report would be publicly released.

identifies as problematic. At no time was I ever informed that there were questions about the propriety of how I did my job, nor was I ever offered the opportunity to address concerns or change my approach. The University appears to take no responsibility for maintaining systems that were problematic and not providing adequate training to me and others.

Indeed, when I was placed on leave in August 2025, UWP gave me the impression that its only concern was over charges on my UWP purchasing card ("P-card"), and that this was the topic of investigation. I acknowledged from the start that I and my son had accidentally made charges to the P-card when the intention was to charge my personal credit card. It was also determined that some charges were actual fraud – the kind of fraud that has become all too common and familiar to many of us. I worked hand-in-hand with UWP to resolve all charges in question. While this took some time, in the end I paid UWP for all charges – including some that were legitimate charges, but for which receipts were missing.

By the time I met with the investigator four months after I was placed on leave, in December 2025, I was surprised at the apparent scope of the issues she was reviewing. I had no access to my email or other documents that might help me pin down details and dates around her questions, though I did refer her to such materials and asked for copies of them as well. My request was taken as a public records request. I still have not been given many of the records I requested from the University in December 2025, immediately after I was interviewed, that may support my defense against the allegations in the Report, and which I encouraged the University to review prior to concluding its investigation. There is no indication that the University did so.

With respect to the allegations that the agreement I reached with WCC Brands was against UWP rules, I had no reason to believe or know that. When I arrived at UWP, there were arrangements with both Southwest Health and Potosi Foundation that involved no bidding process for exclusivity. Moreover, with respect to the allegation that I "inappropriately" routed payments through the university foundation, I was told that it was common practice long before I arrived at UWP to run purchasing through the foundation instead of through UWP accounts. These purchases ranged in scope from hundreds of dollars, to a single purchase of \$200,000 (at a time when the department had a \$560,000 budget deficit). It appears these practices were never before called into question, and I was given the impression that it was all acceptable. One cannot willfully neglect rules without knowing and understanding them. I accept that perhaps things should have been done differently, but at no time did I have the information needed to reach that conclusion. At no time did I personally benefit from the practices now identified as wrong.

At bottom, I was new to UWP and its processes and rules. UWP failed to provide me with the training necessary to align my actions with what I now hear were UWP's

expectations. The appropriate response to my presumed errors was to train me and others on the correct policies and procedures. Yet after hearing a verbal summary of the investigation, and without ever affording me the opportunity to respond to the investigator's conclusions, Chancellor Evetovich decided "at her pleasure" to end my employment. While she had the right to do that, it should be recognized that this was not a dismissal for cause, and unlike most public employees, I have no right to contest whatever conclusions she reached about my conduct. That is, unlike other UWP employees, I had no job protection and cannot challenge my termination as based on a flawed understanding of the facts or misapplication of the rules.

While it has never been my intent to publicly oppose the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and its handling of this situation, it has now become evident that the good will and honest approach I extended towards them and this process was met with an unequivocal desire to paint a fabricated picture that relieves the University of all fault and places unmitigated and undeserved blame on me: to make me the "fall guy." The University of Wisconsin System and University of Wisconsin-Platteville control the canvas, paint, and paintbrush related to the handling of this investigation and ultimately cannot be challenged through legal processes. This control doesn't change the fact that UWP's handling of my career and reputation is morally wrong, and its leadership takes no ownership of their own misdeeds. They should be embarrassed by their actions.