



Office of the President

PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE TO NCAA 2017 ALLEGATIONS

July 28, 2017

GSU Family,

Not long after becoming president last year, an internal investigation into NCAA compliance revealed various violations that occurred between 2010-2015. A Notice of Allegations (NOA) has been issued by the NCAA enforcement staff stemming from our inquiry.

As a result of non-compliance between 2010-2015, we have to vacate certain wins, including the 2011 Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) football championship. As much as we pride ourselves on having a winning, championship-level athletics program, we must operate in compliance with all aspects of NCAA bylaws, regulations and rules. When we have not done so, we, like all institutions, must suffer the consequences. We have to give up numerous events, games and records because ineligible players were permitted to participate in various sports and we have to give up some student-athlete scholarships. In addition, two of our track coaches have been disciplined for their individual violations.

These are serious allegations and serious violations. Plain and simple, the NCAA puts violations in a few categories, from incidental, or minimal, infractions on up to severe, or blatant, infractions, a Level I violation. Our violations are categorized as Level II, or significant and intentional efforts to achieve an advantage over competitors, compromising the athletic competition and fairness model. We cannot operate that way, and we will not. Most of you have heard me say in the last several months, we can do better, and we will

We have agreed with the NCAA that we were fundamentally wrong in several instances, including:

- having a history of incidental to serious violations.
- a number of serious violations, including not meeting the single-year 930 APR benchmark for all sports with a men's basketball APR of 875, a men's cross country APR of 857 and a men's track and field APR of 919.
- condoning, participating in or negligently disregarding a violation or wrongful conduct.

However, we suggested, and the NCAA enforcement staff agreed, that we:

- promptly self-detected and self-disclosed violations.
- promptly acknowledged the violations, accepted responsibility and imposed meaningful corrective measures and penalties.
- took affirmative steps to expedite final resolution of the matter.

In addition, the NCAA alleges that we were intentional, willful or had blatant disregard for NCAA constitution and bylaws, and we disagreed with that assertion.

More specifically, several serious mistakes were made, including:

- failing to properly certify 45 student-athletes in 11 sports, yielding 45 infractions in baseball, men's basketball, women's basketball, men's track and field, women's track and field, softball, women's soccer, football, women's volleyball, women's tennis and women's bowling.
- we have to vacate the 2011 SWAC championship because ineligible football players competed in regular season SWAC and/or non-conference football games during the fall 2011 season and ineligible football players competed in the 2011 SWAC championship game.
- permitting 24 athletes in six sports to practice, compete and receive expenses without meeting amateurism certification requirements.
- having 21 athletes in eight sports improperly certified in meeting progress toward degree requirements.

In January 2015, the NCAA Division I Committee on Academics Subcommittee on Data submitted a request to GSU to review our APR information as a result of an APR data review, additional progress toward degree violations were discovered.

There are some serious allegations against our head track and field coach and our assistant track and field coach. The NCAA alleges, and we have agreed, that the head coach and the assistant coach each condoned, participated in or negligently disregarded NCAA Bylaws related to wrongful conduct, and that the assistant coach clearly exhibited unethical conduct. In our favor, the university and the NCAA agree that we promptly notified the NCAA and acknowledged and accepted responsibility soon after the situations were brought to the attention of university leadership.

The NCAA penalties include some penalties we suggested and additional penalties imposed by the NCAA. Our self-imposed penalties were not sufficient and our athletic governing body decided to levy additional penalties, as is their right and responsibility as they work to even-handedly balance student-athlete academic and other support with structures that need work.

Working with the NCAA to come up with a reasonable set of actions and penalties, the core penalties for our institutional violations include:

- a two-year probation, from July 28, 2017 through July 27, 2019
- a financial penalty of \$5,000.

- a scholarship reduction in women's track and field by one equivalency in 2017-18 and 2018-19.
- restrictions on our women's track and field program, including reducing the number of recruiting days during the 2017-2018 academic year.
- public reprimand and censure by the NCAA.
- vacating a number of events and games in which ineligible athletes participated, and those same events and games must be vacated for the individual ineligible student-athletes, though the individual eligible student-athlete finishes and awards will be retained.

Although there is a two-year probation, only our men's basketball program and our men's track program have one-year post-season bans.

The allegations leveled by the NCAA enforcement staff are primarily focused on issues dating back several years, through multiple presidents, multiple athletics directors, multiple coaches and multiple athletics staff members. Many of these issues have largely been uncovered since Athletics Director Paul Bryant started in January 2017. It is unfortunate that our past instability of leadership has allowed a number of these incidences to happen, and to allow a number of these matters to continue to be issues as we moved from leader to leader and team to team. That is not the fault of the NCAA; it is our situation, our set of issues, we must deal with it and put it behind us.

Though we were already cooperating with the NCAA, the investigation was significantly upgraded and updated as Mr. Bryant pulled his team together to dig into the allegations, literally taking each and every allegation seriously, sometimes leading to information about additional violations.

Though we might quibble with one allegation or another, we have decided that the best course of action is to accept full responsibility for the allegations. We have made some immediate remedial actions, including:

- working with the Provost's Office to improve institutional processes.
- hiring an experienced assistant AD for compliance.
- hiring an experienced assistant AD for academic services.
- securing a \$400,000 grant to enhance academic services for student-athletes.
- developing an annual compliance plan to educate coaches, faculty, staff and boosters about NCAA compliance.
- plans to add a full-time eligibility specialist in the Office of the Registrar.
- plans to add staff in the Offices of Athletics Academic Services and Compliance.

Though this phase of the process is coming to a close, our institution will be on probation for two years and we will continue to put in place structures that will avoid such allegations in the future. Specifically, our school will be on probation for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 academic years. In addition, we are required to pay a financial penalty, a vacation of several event and game records and wins and administrative reporting requirements. Perhaps the biggest and most unfortunate penalty is a modification of our available scholarships, reducing the number for our available scholarships by two, one for our track team and one for our cross country team.

Let me provide some additional background and context as we aim to be as transparent with you.

In February 2016, the NCAA began an inquiry into our athletics program after the (former compliance officer or university) self reported some probable violations that occurred in 2015. During the course of the review process, potential NCAA rules violations came to light involving our assistant track and field coach providing a prospect, who did not enroll in the institution, with free housing, transportation, meals and cash, and that the head track and field coach knew about these situations and did nothing to stop them or to inform anyone at the university. Regardless of the circumstances, what was done was unacceptable and wrong, and, as an institution, we are responsible.

That investigation led us to explore other incidences involving the track and field team, and that investigation led us to explore other sports. That's when we discovered a host of unfortunate circumstances.

I am deeply disappointed about these allegations, and I am more disappointed that we, as an institution, allowed this to happen. I am grateful to AD Bryant for leading this uncomfortable task along with Tiffani Sykes, our newly-appointed compliance director, and members of the athletics team. I know we will have a stronger athletics program and a stronger institution because we have faced these issues head on. Bryant has a multi-year agreement, ensuring stability in athletics during this probationary period. In addition, an eligibility certification team has been established, including the registrar, or a registrar designee; the assistant AD for academic services, the assistant AD for compliance, the compliance coordinator and the faculty athletics representative.

I promise you that we will do what is right, and we will take any necessary corrective actions and we will continue to make Grambling State University the institution as strong as its worldwide brand and reputation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard J. Gallot, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Richard J. Gallot, Jr., JD