



Department of Intercollegiate Athletics  
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July 12, 2019

**VIA HAND DELIVERY & CERTIFIED MAIL**

Dennis Felton  
Head Coach, Cleveland State University Men's Basketball  
1220 West 6<sup>th</sup> Street, #700  
Cleveland, Ohio 44113

Dear Coach Felton:

As you know, we have had several conversations over the last month regarding the status of the Men's Basketball team which you have recently described as being "in crisis." I agree. Since the time that I assumed the role of Director of Athletics, I have been made aware of a series of performance issues, poor judgment, and lack of leadership on your part. This pattern has accelerated over the last several weeks. When I discussed these problems with you and requested a corrective action plan, you did not accept ownership or responsibility, or adequately respond to my request for an effective corrective action plan. Instead, you deflected blame on other department staff, a perceived lack of resources and a "panicked overreaction" by administration.

Your performance issues, include, but are not limited to the following:

- Mishandling and lack of reporting to the Office of Institutional Equity potential incidences of dating/relationship violence involving a student-athlete on the team.
- You hired two assistant coaches, both of whom have had significant compliance and ethical issues. One assistant coach was involved in an NCAA investigation at his prior institution that continued into his time at CSU. During the investigation, the coach admitted that he knew of and failed to report NCAA violations at his prior institution, and he defied NCAA enforcement directives by speaking with other subjects of the investigation after being told not to do so. The other assistant coach whom you hired has been terminated for cause from CSU for soliciting personal financial assistance of \$25,000 from a player on the team; you either knew of this serious ethical violation, or, as head coach, should have known. You have continued to communicate total support for your staff and have at no time suggested coaching staff changes, discipline, or expressed a desire to hold them accountable for their actions.
- You failed to immediately report an instance that was reported to you of student-athletes and other CSU students being stopped by Ohio Highway Patrol and cited for a traffic violation. As you know, your eventual report was determined to be inaccurate. There was suspected drug possession by occupants in the vehicle, which led to a reasonable suspicion drug test of the student-athletes involved, resulting in one positive drug test.
- You have failed to foster a culture of high academic achievement; in the Spring 2019 semester the overall team grade point average dropped to a 2.2, the lowest in a number of semesters, including five student-athletes with a sub 2.0 GPA and 18 non-passing individual course-grades across the roster.

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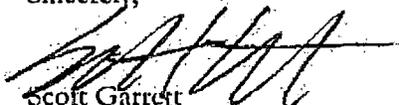
- Despite the lack of academic success, you have recruited, and received commitments from, several academically “at-risk” student-athletes who do not meet NCAA academic eligibility requirements. *CSU Department of Athletics Policies and Procedures 2018-2019*, Student-Athlete Recruiting, A.1.
- In June, while communicating regarding student-athlete discipline issues and requests for transfer, I learned that you were out of the country on vacation. I was not made aware of your time away until you were already on the trip; I was not aware that you would be away from the University and you did not request, and I did not approve, use of vacation time. In fact, you did not log into the University timecard system the use of any vacation during the month of June (indeed, you have not logged any vacation time in the last calendar year). See *CSU Department of Athletics Policies and Procedures 2018-2019*, at p. 25 re: Vacation & Sick Leave.
- Four players from the 2018-19 roster have entered into the NCAA transfer portal. As recently as a week ago two additional student-athletes were contemplating their transfer and had met with me as a group to relay concerns about the intensity of practices, their previous communications to you and your assistants about their physical well-being and their concern with playing in the program while you served as Head Coach. The state of the program is not consistent with the standards or expectations of the University.
- Failure to adequately respond to my identification of problems to you and request for a corrective action plan. The bulk of your plan consisted of what I should do and general statements of intention, rather than any concrete evaluation of issues and plan to address them.

The identified issues are not curable within 10 days.

The above-referenced problems, individually and collectively, amount to your breach of your employment agreement and I am therefore exercising the University’s option to terminate the agreement for cause pursuant to section 6.0 (specifically sections 6.0(d), (e), (f), (h) and (i), incorporating by reference sections 2.0, 2.1, 5.0, and 5.1). Accordingly, your employment is terminated effective today.

Information about your transition and salary and benefits termination will be sent to you under separate cover by Human Resources. I wish you the best in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,



Scott Garrett  
Director of Athletics

cc: Joseph R. Lefft, Esq.  
Peter Jones, Esq.