

## S.C. State's Former President Sues University

Contributed by Dervedia Thomas -- Black College Wire  
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Lawyer calls it "vindication" for his termination

On the heels of South Carolina State University's expressed attempts to move in new directions by appointing a new president, former president Andrew Hugine Jr., has sought what his lawyer termed "vindication" for his removal from office in December 2007.

Hugine in a press release dated July 30, announced that he had filed suit against the university as well as against former and present members of the Board of Trustees.

The suit alleges breach of his written employment contract with the school, defamation of character and conspiracy.

The release specifically singles out former Trustee Board Chairman, Maurice Washington and claims he conspired with others to falsely and unlawfully evaluate Dr. Hugine's job performance, in order to justify Hugine's dismissal.

According to The State newspaper, Washington said he first learned of the suit when a reporter reached him on his cell phone. He would not comment on the specific allegations, but called Hugine's actions "An unwelcome distraction."

The suit also alleges that state and university policies and procedures were breached in the evaluation process and in the manner that Hugine's termination occurred.

This includes the decision to terminate the President by the BOT which the suit contends was made before the December 11, 2007 BOT meeting, because a letter of termination, prepared before the meeting, was presented to Hugine before the meeting's conclusion.

Additionally, the complaint alleges that a press release announcing the termination was prepared in advance of the Board meeting suggesting "illegal contacts" among Board members about the matter of the president's dismissal.

Hugine's lawyer Benjamin M. Mabry said "The career and reputation of Andrew Hugine Jr., a man who dedicated more than thirty years of his life to the university, has been destroyed.

Lawyer for SC State, Charles Boykin says the institution is ready to dispense with any action taken against the university.

Boykin told The Collegian that while he is not sure that the length of time Hugine took to present a suit regarding his dismissal will be a factor, he is certain that the university did not breach any contract or make any violations in their dealings with the former president.

Hugine was fired on December 11, 2007 via teleconference in a 7-3-1 vote with Trustee John Corbitt abstaining.

The board cited Hugine's 2006-07 performance review and an academic review of the university prepared by the Education Commission of the States as the reason for not renewing his contract.

Hugine is seeking damages of not more than one million dollars against the university and not more than two million dollars against the individual defendants.

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Dervedia Thomas is editor in chief of The Collegian, the South Carolina State University student newspaper, which originally published a version of this article.