

Winston-Salem State Athletic Director Is Out

Contributed by LaTasha Miles -- Black College Wire
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Nationwide search underway for replacement

The Winston-Salem State University Athletics Department has faced many changes, since transitioning to Division I, most recently the firing of Athletic Director Percy "Chico" Caldwell.

Caldwell had been at his position since 2000, but Chancellor Donald Reaves announced Feb. 9, Caldwell would no longer retain the athletic director title. Caldwell was influential in maneuvering WSSU's athletic programs from Division II to Division I status, a move he said he firmly stood behind. The move has been argued as a main concern with the state of Ram athletics.

An immediate nationwide search has begun to replace Caldwell.

Tonia Walker, the associate director of athletics, has become the interim athletic director.

According to a Feb. 10 Winston-Salem Journal article, Caldwell was asked why he was fired and said, "I don't know -- that's what I'm trying to find out."

Caldwell could not be reached after numerous attempts by the student newspaper, The News Argus, for further comment. The termination of Caldwell came in the midst of possible increases to the athletic fees to be included in students' tuitions next year.

On Feb. 13, the State Board of Governors voted on a proposal by Reaves to raise student fees, a request the UNC president and board member Erskine Bowles strongly disputed. The decision could determine whether the school will remain in Division I or return to Division II.

One reason the athletic fee increase was requested is WSSU's athletic department will be about \$1.5 million short at the end of the academic year, according to the school's budget. Due to Bowman Gray Stadium rental costs, poor financial support outside the school, and other concerns, a student increase seemed to be the only solution to compensate for the seven-figure deficit.

Reaves requested a 31.3 percent increase, which would have taken the fees to the highest of any other school in North Carolina that has an athletic program.

Each WSSU full-time student pays a \$579 fee each academic year. UNC-Asheville students now pay \$590, but the request would have increased the fees to \$760, effective next year. Students now produce just under \$3 million in revenue, and the increase would have added another \$1 million to the athletic program.

The request by Reaves was denied by Bowles and the 32-member governors' board. However, an increase of 3.9 percent was approved for tuition and fees. This increase must be approved by the NC General Assembly. If approved, the increase will take effect the 2009-2010 academic year.

The Board of Governors' next meeting will be March 20 at the Spangler Center in Charlotte.

{moshaloscan}LaTasha Miles writes for the News Argus, the Winston-Salem State University student newspaper, which originally published this article.