

August 28, 2022

Dr. Robinson,

We, the members of the 2022 Rattler Football Team, would like to address several issues that are having an adverse effect on our lives, our future, and the student-athlete experience at FAMU. To date, we have kept these issues within the university structure, but since they have not been adequately resolved, we will release this statement to the FAMU Board of Trustees and Florida Board of Governors.

**Financial Aid:** Each semester, we have issues with our financial awards being posted in a timely manner. We are repeatedly told, "It's a new system, and it's taking longer to post than normal". This response is completely unacceptable. This delay in funds has repeatedly left us unable to pay for our basic daily needs. There are also cases of players having evictions filed against us which reflects on our credit reports. We're sure that you are keenly aware of the damage that a poor credit file can have on individuals beginning their professional careers. Additionally, unpaid balances from our financial aid processes prevent us from buying textbooks or access codes for classes and from utilizing the priority registration process afforded to athletes. This, in turn, causes delays in our registration, often causing us to enroll in classes days or weeks after they have already started. Professors often do not allow us to make up the work that we have already missed, which places us in a posture of playing catch-up for the entire semester. Dr. Robinson, when we signed our letters of intent to become student-athletes at FAMU, we agreed to perform at our peak in the classroom, on the field, and in the community. How can we realistically be expected to perform at a high level when we're

concerned with having adequate academic resources and whether or not we will have a roof over our heads and nourishment for our bodies?

**Academic Support/Compliance:** It was very damaging to the morale of our football team to read on various media outlets, "26 FAMU Football Players Ruled Ineligible." This narrative implies that we are not performing in the classroom. In fact, that couldn't be further from the truth. The issue at hand is not academic performance, but procedural issues within the registrar's office, compliance department and academic advisement. For instance, Isaiah Land, our All-American defensive end, who was singled out as the highest-profile of our teammates unable to compete in our first game, was mis-advised. He was instructed to take three, two-credit hour courses this summer, in order to meet satisfactory progress towards his degree. He did so and passed all three courses. It was determined last week, at the beginning of the fall semester, that Isaiah actually needed three additional hours during the summer, which would not have been an issue had he received proper advisement. This situation left Isaiah three credit hours shy of satisfactory progress towards his degree, deeming him academically ineligible. At the root of this issue is the fact that our Academic Advisement and Compliance Offices are understaffed. The compliance office consists of one person, who has no subject matter expertise in athletic compliance. How can this person be expected to certify over three hundred athletes in a timely manner? You stated in your address on yesterday that, "We have shared a commitment to a culture of accountability and compliance". Are the actions and staffing plans of the current university and athletic administrations in alignment with this statement?

Our campus partners also share responsibility in this fiasco. During the admissions process, several of us had to submit academic transcripts, letters of recommendations, and immunization records multiple times because prior submissions were either misplaced or never forwarded to the proper departments. Currently, we have multiple players that have been deemed unable to participate in competition because simple tasks such as changing of majors, conferring of degrees and the submission of grades have not been completed promptly. One such player submitted a change of major form on August 10<sup>th</sup> and it has yet to be completed by his advisor or department. Is this the fulfillment of our university motto, "Excellence with Caring"?

**Summer School:** Dr. Robinson, because of our athletic obligations in the fall and spring semesters, summer school is vital to the academic success of our team. It is imperative that our scholarships cover at least part-time enrollment for the summer term. Additionally, football games are not won during football season. They are won in the grueling workouts and team activities during winter, spring and summer months. In the summer of 2021, we were provided tuition of up to six credit hours plus room and board. We were able to transform our bodies and developed into a championship caliber team. This summer, your administration decided not to provide housing or meals for us during summer school. This decision has had detrimental effects on our preparation for the 2022 season. Many of us were not able to maintain or increase body weights because of a lack of nutrition. Most of us found minimum wage employment but because of educational and athletic obligations, we were unable to work enough hours to fully provide for our needs. Do you think that the same conditions are placed on the players at The University of North Carolina or Jackson State? You claim to support us but

support is much more than cheering for us during games or offering a few kind words after a big victory.

**Underrepresentation:** We are in the midst of the search for the next athletic Director at FAMU. It was very disheartening that there is no student-athlete representation on the eighteen-member search committee, nor were there any discussions held with us regarding the characteristics or qualifications of our next leader. In contrast, every elected Student Government Association president is seated on the University's Board of Trustees. It is important that students' voices are considered in shaping the future of this institution. Concerning the next athletic director, it is our belief that the individual selected should have extensive administrative experience from successful NCAA member institutions, an efficient organizational structure model to address current existing personnel deficits, and a proven track record of successful fund raising. The idea of placing a person in the position because of ties to FAMU is not appealing to us at all. We need fresh ideas and innovation to achieve the level of excellence that FAMU Athletics is capable of.

**Underappreciation:** Dr. Robinson, the NCAA allows players to receive four tickets for all games in which we participate. That has been the standard since we arrived at FAMU. Last week, we were informed that the current athletic administration had reduced the number of tickets that we would receive from four to two. This decision left our family and friends, who had already made arrangements to travel to Chapel Hill, scrambling to purchase expensive tickets to see us play. Our family and support systems should not be burdened in this manner. The vast majority of them incur hotel and travel expenses, and the facilitation of game tickets should require minimal effort from our athletic administration.

On Friday, after much dialogue within our team, we decided to play at UNC. We determined that we would not play for this institution, but for our families, teammates, classmates, our rabid fanbase, and our coaches who had prepared us and love us. We played our guts out, and in the process, two of our teammates suffered season-ending injuries. After the game, we decided to protest the Marching 100's playing of the Florida Song and FAMU Alma Mater by kneeling during both songs. We will continue to do so until significant changes that facilitate a positive student-athlete experience are made. We will not sing a song that begins "College of Love and Charity..." when we feel neither from this university.

Dr. Robinson, this letter is not a personal attack, but a demand for positive change and a cultural shift in the current direction in FAMU Athletics. We came to FAMU to better our lives and we are expressing concerns about impediments to that goal. We are not interested in further empty dialogue with you or your staff. **We want to see changes made now!** We have given our bodies and shed blood, sweat, and tears on behalf of this institution. It's time for FAMU to reciprocate the love.

1. ~~R. Atk~~
2. ~~James Miller~~
3. ~~Cozy~~
4. John Fisher
5. Amy Taylor
6. Conema Curio
7. Chad Beck
8. Nicholas Dixon
9. Stanley Mentor
10. Richard Summers
11. Christian Jones
12. ~~Alvin Sp~~
13. Thomas Demas
14. ~~Tracy Lee~~
15. A. Davis
16. John Gilley
17. ~~Tamm~~
17. Tamm B. Degenator
18. ~~Yusse Zaten~~
19. ~~Bill Coff~~
20. Dariusz Weeber

21. mirsad muratovic
22. Jacory Jordan
23. ~~Atk~~
24. ~~Isaac Land~~
25. Cheryl Christopher Williams
26. Mendartus Cunningham
27. Jermaine Hawkins
28. Jordan Moore
29. ~~Cesar Ryc~~
30. ~~James Atk~~
31. ~~Justin Coed~~
32. Marquez Phillips
33. Donald Hall
34. Benjamin Onwzo
35. Jalen Goss
36. ~~A. Boyera~~
37. Gentle Hart
38. Kwame Clark
39. Morgan Moore
40. Khamari Stephens
41. Jordan Ricks
42. Myron Ward
43. Sheldon Walker
44. Brian Beck
45. Daulton Hall
46. Derrick Hall

47. Hymmani King
48. Jahmarré Sherrod
49. Winsome Frazier Jr
50. Terrill Jennings
51. David Manigo
52. DeAndre Francis
53. Kamari Young
54. Zairé King
55. Trenton Meane
56. Cam Sigur
57. Jordan Cumberbatch
58. Tim Williams
59. Khalif Copeland
60. Travis Moss
61. Justin Porter
62. Jalon Howard
63. ~~Justin Porter~~
64. Josi Romo
65. B. J. Behler
66. Ce'Kaun Epps
67. Jamiah Pruitt
68. Malcolm Muir
69. Trevonte' Davis
70. Jaylen McCloud
71. Devin Smith
72. Fenley Graham
73. Dre Jones #40
74. Deondri Clark
75. Michael Marshall

76. Xavier Smith
77. Darian Oxendine
78. Michael Williams
79. Cameron Shelton
80. Kareem Burke
81. Kees
82. Bryce Turner
83. Jack Brooks
84. Tyler Riley
85. Chris Faddoul
86. Javan Morgan
87. Isaiah Mason
88. Christopher Sanders II