

Ex-Clemson adviser says tuition hiked despite surplus

By [Samantha Harris](#)

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CLEMSON UNIVERSITY — A former Clemson University adviser is suing the school, claiming he was punished for trying to expose bad financial practices.

The lawsuit, filed against the Clemson University Board of Trustees, university President Jim Barker and others, argues that Chalmers Eugene Troutman III was fired from his job for exercising his First Amendment rights of freedom and expression.

Mr. Troutman was released in July 2006 from his position of executive secretary to the board of trustees, the law suit claims.

His firing came “because he repeatedly spoke out within the public institution about matters of public concern in an attempt to correct abuses of discretion, inadequate safeguards, improper practices and breaches of the duty to serve as stewards of public assets,” the suit states.

Neither Clemson University officials nor Mr. Troutman’s attorneys could be reached for comment immediately Wednesday afternoon, but in a published report, a university spokeswoman said the school denied the allegations and would defend the board’s practices.

The concerns Mr. Troutman raised were about the school’s “unchecked growth of its unrestricted cash,” the suit states.

“Representatives of the university made nonfactual public statements regarding the need for tuition increases,” the suit alleges. “Year after year, the defendants hoarded the cash generated by these increases.”

Mr. Troutman maintains university officials fired him for raising too many concerns about the cash account, which grew to \$80 million, and was not being spent.

Claims made in the lawsuit include an allegation that the university raised in-state tuition from \$3,590 per year in 2000 to \$9,900 in 2007, but never used the additional money those increases produced.

Raising these rates placed unreasonable financial burdens on students and defeated the purpose of the scholarships funded by the South Carolina Education Lottery, the suit states.

When Mr. Troutman refused to resign, he was suspended and asked to say he was on medical leave, according to the lawsuit.

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