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LOCAL NEWS

Fired Clemson board secretary sues

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CLEMSON — A lawsuit filed by the former executive secretary to the Clemson University board of trustees claims he lost his job for speaking out against fiscal abuses.

Former board secretary Chalmers Eugene Troutman III filed suit this month in Richland County against the university's trustees, president, provost and general counsel, claiming he was wrongly fired and that his First Amendment rights were violated.

University spokeswoman

Cathy Sams said, "We deny all the allegations and are prepared to defend the board's actions."

Troutman seeks unspecified actual punitive damages and reinstatement to his position at the university, according to the suit.

It claims that tuition was increased from \$3,590 a year in 2000 to \$9,900 in 2007 without making use of money generated by the increases. The suit alleges that while tuition rose, tens of thousands of dollars sat unused in "rainy day" funds.

Contacted by phone, Troutman said the suit "speaks for itself" and said he wouldn't comment further.

Troutman, a Clemson alumnus hired in 2005, was unanimously fired by the board in August, with trustees citing a lack of an "effective working relationship" with the board and university president. Also cited was "circumventing board policy" in announcing a reorganization of the internal audit department without executive audit committee approval.

In the lawsuit, Troutman alleges that the statements the board released and made were "malicious and untrue" and "carefully designed to create unfair adverse public opinion" about him.

Sams said tuition increases

were needed to maintain and improve academic quality during a time of state budget cuts and to cover mandatory cost increases and inflation.

A cash balance was "strategically increased to prepare for costs we knew were coming," Sams said, citing examples including rehiring faculty, renovating facilities and computer network upgrades.

"State fiscal policies allow a state agency to carry forward unused revenues from year to year. We are talking about planning ahead. We have to plan for our liabilities, not just our assets," Sams said.