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Troutman: Clemson institute 'wasteful and misguided'

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COLUMBIA — A former executive secretary for Clemson University's trustees who is suing Clemson over the loss of his job has sent a 14-page letter to three trustees alleging the school's Restoration Institute near Charleston is a "wasteful and misguided project."

Eugene Troutman asked in his letter that trustees cease funding the institute, which includes the restoration effort for the Confederate submarine H.L. Hunley, until an impartial due diligence study is done and a business plan developed.

Troutman alleges that since Clemson announced

its plans for the institute more than two years ago, nothing new has been built on the former naval base in North Charleston despite \$10 million in state funding, and that the school has hired three executives who each make more than \$100,000 annually.

He also said that digital files left to him by another former board secretary show that Senate President Pro Tempore Glenn McConnell of Charleston, the chief legislative supporter of the Hunley restoration, originally proposed that Clemson develop the Restoration Institute idea to help with the Hunley, though McConnell has publicly said the institute was Clemson's idea.

Joel Sawyer, spokesman for Gov. Mark Sanford, who is a critic of the Restoration Institute, said the governor was still studying the material. "The bottom line is we don't think there is a whole lot of economic development that is going to come out of restoring a Confederate submarine," he said.

Cathy Sams, spokeswoman for Clemson, described the letter as "the latest in a series of inaccurate and misleading allegations by a disgruntled former employee who is currently involved in a lawsuit against Clemson University and President Barker."

McConnell was unavailable Wednesday for comment.