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Subject: FW: 12-19-11 Today's Headlines

FYI – have a great week!

Sincerely,

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From: Higgins, Deborah
Sent: Monday, December 19, 2011 7:50 AM
Subject: 12-19-11 Today's Headlines

Today's News:

Orlando Sentinel: New FCAT scoring will mean 'blood on the table'
FL Today: Proposed FCAT standards to have 'profound impact' on schools, officials warn
Associated Press: State Board of Ed to vote on FCAT scores
Ft. Myers News Press: Former Edison executive expects college to face sanctions in reaccreditation
Associated Press: Fla. Legislature shifts focus to higher education
CNN: Florida A&M Alumni Group: Hazing A National Problem
Tallahassee Democrat: Alumni president: FAMU, Ammons being singled out

Orlando Sentinel
New FCAT scoring will mean 'blood on the table'
Florida education leaders today will make state test tougher to pass
By Leslie Postal, Orlando Sentinel
8:58 PM EST, December 18, 2011

Florida is poised to ratchet up its standardized-testing system, making it tougher for students to pass key math and reading exams.

It's a move designed to push students, and schools, to achieve more academically. But the immediate and dramatic impact likely will be that many more students fail FCAT.

More failing test scores will mean thousands more students face being held back, assigned to remedial classes and told their diplomas are in jeopardy.

It will be a "a shock to the system," said Barbara Foorman, director of the Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University.

Orange Superintendent Ron Blocker was even more blunt. "There will be blood on the table," he said.

But Blocker, president of the Florida Association for District School Superintendents, said he and his colleagues support most of the proposal to toughen the scoring system for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.

Like state educators, they hope tougher standards mean more students get help early on and more leave high school ready to tackle college courses.

But they worry about the impact on already struggling students.

"Those who are easily discouraged might say, 'Why try?' "

The State Board of Education is to vote this morning on both a new scoring system for FCAT math and reading exams and a grading formula for the state's new algebra end-of-course exam.

The changes are needed because the state has debuted the new algebra test and revised the math and reading exams, dubbed FCAT 2.0, to meet new, more rigorous academic standards.

The proposed changes could mean:

- The percentage of third-graders facing retention for failing FCAT reading climbs from 16 percent to 18 percent.
- The percentage of 10th-graders passing FCAT reading, which they must pass to graduate, falls from 60 percent to 52 percent.
- The percentage of students failing the algebra exam hits 46 percent.

Those figures are the state's estimates based on students' performance on FCAT and the algebra test in 2011.

The state also expects that many more students, in elementary to high school, will score poorly and be required to take remedial lessons.

Fifteen-year-old Matilda von Kalm said she wasn't aware FCAT was about to get harder and doubted many students were.

But she said many classmates are nervous about new graduation requirements that eventually will require students to pass new end-of-course exams to get a diploma, so a tougher FCAT will just add to those worries.

"I understand it, but I really don't want to be the person who goes through it," said the 10th-grader at Hagerty High in Seminole County.

Matilda's class of 2014 is the first that will be impacted by what the State Board decides today. The new system will kick in with the FCAT exams taken this coming spring.

Though Matilda said she has done well on FCAT in the past, she knows plenty of students who were tripped up, particularly by the reading test.

"I have friends who are very smart, but they're just not good at standardized tests," she said. It will be "devastating" for them if higher standards mean their diplomas are at stake, she added.

Rob Anderson, principal of Lake Nona High in Orange County, said schools likely won't know the fallout until they see new FCAT and algebra scores in the spring.

But it seems clear, Anderson said, that schools will have to put more students in remedial math and reading classes because they've failed the exams, eliminating electives from their schedules.

"How does that compromise their four-year high-school experience?" he said. "It's just going to be a ton of accountability on our kids."

FL Today

Proposed FCAT standards to have 'profound impact' on schools, officials warn

12:12 AM, Dec. 19, 2011

Written by Mackenzie Ryan

As the state Board of Education meets today to set new passing scores for the FCAT 2.0, local education leaders are warning about the possible consequences of raising the requirements as high as Florida Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson recommends.

"This is going to have a profound impact on our schools, in terms of failure rates, remediation, in how we do business," Brevard School Board chairwoman Barbara Murray said.

More students could be held back — a state rule calls for third-graders who fail the FCAT reading test to repeat the grade. More students could be placed into mandatory remediation classes, possibly limiting elective courses for high school students. The change also could make it harder for some students to get the scores they need to graduate.

Robinson says that raising the scores needed to pass will help ensure students leave high school college- and career-ready.

"I'm confident that Florida's students and educators will meet the challenge," Robinson has said.

If the proposed scores were applied to last year's tests, more than 15,000 additional high school students statewide would not have scored well enough to graduate.

Deputy Education Commissioner Kris Ellington noted that if students don't pass the exam in the 10th grade, they still have two more years to try. She said the goal is to reduce college remediation rates.

The proposed scores have been opposed by state school superintendents.

Instead, the Florida Association of District School Superintendents endorsed passing scores recommended by two study panels, which still raises the bar. Using their proposed scores, an additional 8,000 high school students statewide would not have earned a high enough FCAT score to graduate.

Both panels were appointed by the Department of Education. They included superintendents, educators from public schools, colleges and universities, business people and the Florida PTA.

Brevard Superintendent Brian Binggeli said the school district is preparing for any changes, which will take effect this year, but that he's not willing to sacrifice those aspects of school that create well-rounded students.

"We won't let this do things that aren't right for kids," Binggeli said during an interview Friday. "We're hanging onto things we value, and we value these because they do prepare kids for a 21st century global economy."

Binggeli also questioned the need to raise the bar, citing an analysis that shows Florida eighth-grade reading standards are second highest in the nation.

In Brevard, about one-fifth of students the state considers below grade level in high school go on to receive an 18 or higher on the ACT, a score most colleges require. Every high school student in the district takes the college-entrance exam.

"I'm pretty proud of our kids," Binggeli said. "Twenty percent of them are still in intensive reading . . . (and) demonstrated on that test that they have everything needed to be college-ready."

It's unclear what the effect of raising the bar would be in Brevard, where nearly every school received an A or B last school year. FCAT scores are the basis of school grades and bonuses.

"I think we'll rise to the challenge. We'll figure this out," said Karen Schafer, Brevard's director of accountability, testing and evaluation. "But, initially, it's going to be ugly."

Creating higher passing scores would make what is expected of students across grade levels more uniform. Right now, the score needed to pass 10th-grade tests expects more of students, comparatively, than scores needed to pass tests in younger grades.

Because of that, Binggeli said students who receive Level 3s throughout elementary and middle school, which is considered on grade level, will often see FCAT results drop to a Level 2 in high school.

Raising the bar in younger grades could mean fewer students pass the test, however.

Last year, about 72 percent of students statewide passed the third-grade reading assessment. Using the proposed score, about 57 percent would have passed.

Associated Press

State Board of Ed to vote on FCAT scores

Monday, December 19, 2011 at 3:01 a.m.

The state Board of Education is scheduled to make a decision on how high to set passing scores for Florida's standardized test.

The board will hold a conference call Monday to vote on new cut scores for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.

Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson has recommended setting passing scores for the FCAT reading in the 9th and 10th grade that are slightly higher than what a panel of education leaders recommended.

The goal of raising the scores is to help ensure students are prepared for higher and a career and don't need remedial education in college. Some are concerned the scores are being set too high and that more children will fail.

Ft. Myers News Press

Former Edison executive expects college to face sanctions in reaccreditation

By BRITTANY SHAMMAS

Sunday, December 18, 2011

FORT MYERS — As Edison State College officials work to address concerns raised by its accrediting body with the goal of being reaffirmed, the administrator who formerly led the school in the process warns achieving that goal might not be as clear-cut as it seems.

Steve Atkins, who was fired in October from his position as vice president of academic affairs, said he is confident Edison won't lose its accreditation. However, he predicted that the college won't be reaffirmed and will face a sanction — at best, a warning and at worst, probation — when it is reviewed in June by the Southern Association on Colleges and Schools, or SACS.

The severity and length of that sanction will depend on what changes the college makes in the next few months, said Atkins, who has years of experience with SACS as a committee member and as a college administrator. Atkins was let go in October for insubordination and maintains his termination was an act of retaliation by embattled President Kenneth Walker, who since has been placed on leave.

The college has been mired in controversy for months due to course-swapping issues, miscommunication about the college's unaccredited nursing program and unqualified teachers in classrooms, among other problems.

"You really want to avoid probation, but really, what's going to happen — what will turn that — depends on what happens between now and June," Atkins said. "It won't escape sanctions. The problems are just too entrenched."

Erin Harrel, interim vice president of Academic Affairs, declined to respond to Atkins' assertions regarding Edison's reaccreditation status, but wrote in an e-mail that the school's reputation and accomplishments in its 50 years speak for themselves.

"We firmly believe that we are moving quickly to enact the organizational and process changes needed to respond to the visiting team's concerns," the e-mail read. "We remain committed to serving our students and the citizens in our five-county area, and maintaining our continued membership with the Florida College System and SACS."

Accreditation is critical because it allows the college to receive federal financial aid funding for students and allows students to have their degrees recognized by employers and other schools.

It has been a focus for the college's board of trustees, which changed the school's leadership in part to send a positive signal to SACS that it is serious about getting on track.

Edison has until April 10 to respond to 14 recommendations, which deal with issues ranging from integrity of academic programs to qualifications of academic officers, made by a SACS committee that visited the college last month. The recommendations relate to 14 areas in which the school is out of compliance of commission standards.

"They have an opportunity now to respond and fix those areas of noncompliance and the (SACS) board of trustees will make a determination of whether or not they have," said Barry Goldstein, chairman of the commission.

If administrators are unable in April to provide evidence that they have met those recommendations, the college will be placed on sanction, Goldstein said.

Harrel acknowledged this in her e-mail to the Daily News, writing that the school "may be asked by SACS to provide continuing monitoring reports."

While on sanction, which Atkins said could hurt enrollment and donations, administrators would provide reports to show what was being done to put the college into compliance.

One recommendation Atkins said poses a challenge deals with ensuring the college has the appropriate number of full-time faculty members. It will be difficult, he said, to hire and pay for enough faculty within five months.

Atkins said he was troubled by Walker's previous statements to the media that there were "no surprises" in the 14 recommendations, as one of them — dealing with integrity — is considered the "kiss of death."

Humanities professor Wendy Chase echoed Atkins' concerns in a letter she sent to board members last month. Chase wrote that she felt downplaying the severity of the problems would "backfire and further damage our reputation."

An integrity violation, Atkins said and Goldstein agreed, is rare.

Goldstein said that among more than 800 colleges and schools accredited by SACS, only a few have had findings dealing with integrity in about six years.

"That's the first principle which all other principles rely on," Goldstein said. "We expect that an institution is working with integrity. And accreditation is about quality and integrity."

Goldstein wouldn't get into specifics of why Edison had an integrity finding, but said this generally relates to "integrity in what they do and how they act in all aspects."

He gave the example of a college listing in its documentation requirements to graduate from a program, and then not following those requirements.

Edison administrators say they are working diligently to address the integrity finding and the 13 others. Acting President Patricia Land said during a press conference soon after stepping into her role that doing so will be a priority for everyone on campus in her time as president.

"We're going to have some work to do," Land said, but losing accreditation is "not something I'm afraid of nor are the members of our staff."

The board, too, plays an important role in the process, Atkins said.

"I think what SACS will watch closely is what happens in the next few months with the board — the decisions they make, how seriously they take the report," he said.

Trustee Chris Vernon said he's determined to avoid probation. He said he feels confident that with some hard work, Edison is headed in the right direction.

"I have enough confidence in the team that's in place and the changes that we're in the process of making that I'm confident we're going to avoid probation," he said. "But I think we need to work on it."

Associated Press

Posted on Mon, Dec. 19, 2011

Fla. Legislature shifts focus to higher education

By CHRISTINE ARMARIO AP Education Writer

Last year, Florida legislators made historic changes to education. Tenure for new teachers was eliminated. Instructor evaluations were revamped and linked to student test scores. And a new compensation system was passed to reward those whose students achieve the highest gains.

In the 2012 session, which starts Jan. 10, the focus is likely to shift from K-12 to higher education. Gov. Rick Scott and others say they want to find ways to make the state university system more effective and boost the number of students graduating with degrees in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

Whether the Legislature is ready to pass wide-sweeping changes to higher education is another matter. To date, no bills have been filed and several legislators said they are

still researching what possible action to take. Redrawing the state's congressional and legislative districts and the budget are likely to be at the top of the agenda, and lawmakers will also be focused on effectively implementing last year's K-12 overhaul.

"I hope we can make some changes," said House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park. "But my real goal is to get the dialogue going, and then hopefully the leaders that follow me can continue that."

Scott caused uproar in academia this fall when he urged the state to look at the employment outcomes for all degree programs and pointed to anthropology as one field of study where more people weren't needed. He also touted the higher education overhaul pushed by Republican presidential candidate and Texas Gov. Rick Perry. The Texas plan includes ideas like basing professor evaluations on student reviews and how many students they teach.

So far, it's not gathering much momentum in Florida.

"I don't think anyone would seriously say that's the sole basis for evaluating faculty," said Rep. Bill Proctor, R-Winter Park.

Proctor, chairman of the House Education Committee, said legislators and staff are focusing on nearly a dozen areas for potential changes including tuition, accountability and sharpening university mission statements. Controversial topics like tenure haven't yet been addressed, Proctor said.

"It's a high-profile issue but it's really not the thing we're looking at too much," Proctor said. "Right now if I were to say what's (the) highest concern, it's sharpening the focus of our mission because it's reasonably clear there's not going to be a lot of state money for the university system in the foreseeable future, so we have to make sure we are spending it in the right places for the right things."

Even Scott conceded changes might not happen this session.

"I know this session's going to be harder to get things done just because we are going to spend so much time on redistricting," Scott said. "But I think to the benefit of our students I think the earlier we make sure that individuals are getting degrees in areas that they can get jobs it's good for the state."

After slashing the education budget last year, Scott is now proposing a \$1 billion increase for public K-12 education. That money comes as millions in federal jobs and recovery funds has dried up and districts across the state have cut jobs and reduced after-school options because of budget cuts.

"I think the governor heard his constituents and acted accordingly," said Wayne Blanton, executive director of the Florida School Boards Association.

Andy Ford, president of the Florida Education Association, the statewide teachers union, likened the increase to "a Band-Aid." He said years of cuts, the end of federal stimulus and jobs money, and a slew of expensive mandates, including the class-size amendment, end of course exams, and the new teacher evaluations, mean the \$1 billion increase won't go far enough.

The governor and legislators "just keep walking away from their responsibility," Ford said.

On the K-12 front, bills filed so far include: A measure that would eliminate a middle school physical education requirement; a bill to reduce the monetary penalty districts receive for failing to meet the class-size law; a proposal to allow prayer at high school events; and a bill to establish a technical career track for high school students.

"It's one of those issues that has been neglected for a long time and is going to move back to the forefront this session," Blanton said of vocational education.

Rep. Bryan Nelson, R-Apopka, has sponsored a bill to allow advertising on schools buses, an idea that's gained traction in a few other states.

"It doesn't cost taxpayers a nickel and it could raise a substantial amount of money for the school districts," Nelson said.

Charter schools are likely to be another area of focus. Last session, the Legislature passed a law to make it easier for high-perform charter schools to expand. This session, Rep. Janet Adkins, R-Fernandina Beach, has introduced legislation requiring school districts to share capital outlay tax revenue with charter schools. If not, the state will recalculate the money it receives from the Florida Education Finance Program and redistribute a share to charters.

Florida has seen some of the largest growth in charter school student enrollment nationwide. The number of students attending charter schools was 40,465 in 2001-02 and almost quadrupled to 154,780 in 2010-11.

"I think you're going to see a lot of attention paid to charter schools," Blanton said. "More charter schools and more oversight of charter schools."

CNN

Florida A&M Alumni Group: Hazing A National Problem

By the CNN Wire Staff

9:29 pm EST December 18, 2011

(CNN) – Florida Gov. Rick Scott could place Florida A&M University's accreditation in jeopardy by requesting the suspension of the university's president, the head of the school's National Alumni Association said Sunday.

An investigation is under way into various issues at the university following the death of Robert Champion Jr., 26. The drum major in the Florida A&M band died last month in a suspected hazing incident. His death has been ruled a homicide.

In response, Scott said in a statement he was "disappointed in the direction the dialog regarding the hazing-murder of a Florida A&M University student has taken."

"This week, I learned of reports of at least one child molestation case that took place on campus," Scott said, referring to a case unrelated to the hazing allegations. He added that university President James Ammons told him he was not aware of the alleged incident until months after it occurred.

"Based on all of these facts, I merely suggested it would be wise for Dr. Ammons to step aside until these investigations are completed," he said.

Ralph Monroe, 18, a graduate of FAMU's Developmental Research School, was arrested in October and faces two counts of lewd and lascivious acts on a child under 12, according to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. He is accused of molesting an 8-year-old student in a school bathroom in May while still a student at the K-12 school, which is located on the FAMU campus.

Attempts by CNN to contact Monroe were unsuccessful Sunday, and it was unclear whether he had retained an attorney.

FAMU officials were unavailable for comment on the matter Sunday, but FAMU spokeswoman Pam Tolson told the Tallahassee Democrat newspaper the research school has made several changes since this school year began, including increasing supervision of all students after school and buying and implementing a system to perform background checks on all visitors and volunteers.

The board of trustees is expected to consider Scott's request regarding Ammons on Monday.

FAMU National Alumni Association President Tommy Mitchell told reporters Sunday the president of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which oversees accreditation, sent a "warning" to Scott after the governor asked the university's board of trustees to suspend Ammons.

The warning said that school governing boards should be free of influence from government bodies, Mitchell said. If the board suspends Ammons at Scott's direction, it could

have unforeseen consequences for the university, he added.

"Gov. Scott should not be in the position of weakening the accreditation of our alma mater," Mitchell said.

After meeting with Scott on Friday, Ammons said the two had a "great conversation" and both "have the interests of Florida A&M University at heart."

"The governor made a recommendation, and as governor, he can make a recommendation," the university president said Friday. "At the end of the day, it is up to the board of trustees. I will be right along with (their) decision."

Mitchell said the association's thoughts and prayers are with Champion's family. But he stressed that hazing is a national problem, and said deaths have occurred at other schools. Twelve to 13 deaths have occurred this year, he said, in Florida and other states, but did not provide specifics.

"Name another university that suspended a president for hazing – and they have deaths every year," Mitchell said. "... Hazing has occurred all over the country. Deaths have occurred all over the country."

He questioned why the situation at Florida A&M is receiving so much attention, adding it may be an "HBCU (historically black college and university) problem."

In his statement, Scott said FAMU was not being singled out. He said he has called on all Florida universities to examine their hazing and harassment policies and requested that university presidents remind their students, faculty and staff "of how detrimental hazing can be."

Ammons has already been publicly reprimanded by the school's board of trustees, Scott noted.

"It is up to the FAMU Board of Trustees and Dr. Ammons to determine how to proceed," he said. "I have not and will not try to influence their decision. I simply offered my advice and opinion based on the events and the facts I was made aware of."

Controversy has swirled around the Tallahassee university since Champion's death, including three arrests tied to the alleged hazing of a freshman band member a few weeks earlier.

And Jerry Bailey, commissioner of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, said last week that investigators looking into Champion's death have turned up evidence "that there were financial irregularities having to do with the band and several other components of the university." The suspected financial irregularities are not directly related to the death.

These issues prompted Scott on Thursday to recommend to the chairman of Florida A&M's trustees that they suspend Ammons until state investigations of the university and its leadership are complete.

Asked what he believes should happen, Mitchell said Sunday that the association is waiting for the results of the investigations.

"We recognize hazing is against the law," he said. "We realize there must be consequences. We will support consequences when this happens."

Orange County officials said in a statement that Champion died November 19 because of "hemorrhagic shock" – the result of excessive internal bleeding – "due to soft tissue hemorrhage, due to blunt force trauma sustained during a hazing incident." He died in Orlando, where his band had been playing.

No one has been charged in Champion's death. The Orange County Sheriff's Office released a statement Friday indicating that its detectives "have followed all appropriate protocols as if investigating a homicide" and suggesting that more action will be forthcoming.

"In the coming days and weeks, investigators will be working with the State Attorney's office to identify the charges that are applicable," the sheriff's office said, noting that "the vast majority" of witnesses to the incident have been interviewed.

According to a medical examiner's summary of the autopsy findings, Champion was "previously healthy (when he) collapsed and died within an hour of a hazing incident during which he suffered multiple blunt trauma blows to his body."

He complained that he was thirsty and tired immediately after the incident and, minutes later, lost his eyesight and suffered a cardiac arrest.

"These symptoms are consistent with hypotension or shock," the statement noted.

The autopsy conducted after his death found "extensive contusions of his chest, arms, shoulder and back," as well as "evidence of crushing of areas of subcutaneous fat" – which is the fatty tissue directly under a person's skin. Champion didn't have any bone fractures or injuries to his internal organs.

The medical examiner didn't find any evidence of "natural disease except for a slightly enlarged heart," nor did toxicology tests reveal signs of drugs or alcohol.

Some band members have said Champion died after taking part in a rite of passage called "crossing Bus C." One member, who spoke on condition of anonymity, explained that students "walk from the front of the bus to the back of the bus backward while the bus is full of other band members, and you get beaten until you get to the back."

Four students were expelled from the school, and another 30 were dismissed from the band after Champion's death, Ammons wrote in a letter to the board of trustees last month.

The young man's father, Robert Champion Sr., said, "We are pleased to find out what caused our son's death."

"Now, we need to move forward, so this doesn't have to happen to any other kid," the father said in a statement.

Solomon L. Badger III, the chairman of FAMU's board of trustees, called the homicide ruling "extremely upsetting," albeit expected.

"We will continue to cooperate with all agencies looking into the matter and are committed to creating a safe environment for the entire FAMU community and ensuring that this never happens again at FAMU," Badger said in a statement.

School trustees have placed band director Julian White on administrative leave, in addition to reprimanding Ammons. Badger, the board's chairman, said Thursday that a decision on how the university goes "forward" – including the president's fate – will come Monday.

Mitchell told reporters Sunday he was in the band as a student at the university, and retired from the school in 2007. His granddaughter is now a student, he said.

As a band member, "I made it absolutely clear nobody was going to touch me," he said.

"I am very much concerned" about the hazing allegations, he said. "We plan to look into how we can do what no one else has done, and that is stop hazing."

CNN's Ashley Hayes contributed to this report.

Tallahassee Democrat
Alumni president: FAMU, Ammons being singled out
By Bill Cotterell

December 19, 2011

The president of the Florida A&M University National Alumni Association told cheering supporters of FAMU President James Ammons on Sunday that dangerous hazing rituals go on at schools all over the country, but said Ammons is the only campus leader whose job is threatened by a hazing death. The university's board of trustees has a teleconference set today to consider Gov. Rick Scott's "very strong" recommendation that Ammons be suspended until the Florida Department of Law Enforcement finishes a criminal investigation into the death of Marching 100 drum major Robert Champion. The FDLE has also announced it is investigating unspecified "financial irregularities" at the nation's largest historically black campus. Ammons cancelled all band activities after Champion's death Nov. 19 and moved to fire band director Julian White. During the weekend, White's attorneys renewed their demand that Ammons reinstate White, who has been on administrative leave. Also Sunday, Scott repeated that he has "the utmost, absolute respect" for Ammons. But he said everyone would feel more "comfortable" during the investigation if the university president stepped aside. Tommy Mitchell Sr., president of the national alumni group, called an afternoon news conference on the steps of Lee Hall, where today's board meeting will be held. About 75 alumni and other supporters sang the university's alma mater and loudly applauded when Mitchell said parents should have no fear about sending young people to FAMU. "Two of my grandchildren graduated, I have a granddaughter here now — she's going to remain — I have seven others that I want to come," Mitchell said. "Where could I go then, that they might not get killed, since hazing is happening everywhere? Where would you suggest that I send her? My position is that she will die a Rattler." Mitchell said the FAMU alumni group will begin a campaign to stop hazing, not only at their alma mater and other historically black institutions, but across the nation. He displayed a list of what he said were hazing incidents — even deaths — dating back for decades and said FAMU has been unfairly singled out by a glare of nationwide news coverage since Champion collapsed aboard a band bus in Orlando last month.

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A medical examiner's report released on Friday ruled his death a homicide, caused by beatings. Mitchell said the alumni have deep sympathy for Champion's family. But he asked, "Why is it that this hazing has gotten so much attention? It's even been implied that it's a HBCU problem." In addition to Champion's death, former band member Bria Hunter recently disclosed that she suffered knee injuries, blood clots and a cracked thigh bone when her legs were beaten as part of a hazing ritual by the "Red Dawg Order," a group of band members from Georgia. Like Champion, she was a clarinet player from the Atlanta area. Three band members were arrested on Monday in connection with her beating. Ammons moved to fire White as head of the famous Marching 100 and other music activities, but White took legal action to prevent his ouster. Attorneys Chuck Hobbs of Tallahassee and Willie Gary of Stuart sent Ammons a letter on Saturday, saying White's administrative leave should be lifted and he should be reinstated — just as Ammons himself seeks to hold onto his position while the investigation continues. Four band members kicked out of FAMU after Champion's death have been readmitted, pending completion of the FDLE inquiry, Hobbs and Gary wrote. They said White deserved no less presumption of innocence — particularly since he had suspended 30 band members involved in hazing reports during and after Homecoming Week in October. In an unrelated case, a former football player for the Florida A&M Developmental Research School was charged with molesting an 8-year-old boy in a school bathroom. The FDLE disclosed the case on Friday. The athlete had graduated from FAMU High and was playing football at Stillman College in Alabama. In view of the hazing incidents, reports of financial misdealings and the FAMU High case, Scott said it was best that Ammons be suspended. He met with the embattled president at the Capitol on Friday, the day after hundreds of FAMU students marched on the governor's mansion, but after their 45-minute conference Ammons said that, despite Scott's advice, he will abide by whatever the board decides today.

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"We want to make sure that everybody's comfortable that this is an investigation that's open, it's transparent, it's unfettered," Scott said Sunday. "I have the utmost, absolute respect for him, but I think about a poor young lady in the hospital with a broken femur. I think about Robert Champion's family, about the case of the young boy that was molested. We've got the financial irregularities investigation by FDLE." Tallahassee City Commissioner Andrew Gillum attended the alumni news conference at Lee Hall. Earlier, he posted a Facebook note supporting Ammons and blasting Scott's record on higher education. "You can't cut our funding, attack our employees, deny us the ability to offer more advance degrees and then tell us that you're acting in our best interest by recommending that our president step aside!" wrote Gillum. "I have been a member of the FAMU board of trustees, I and my sister have served as FAMU student body presidents, and my wife as an SGA vice president. I speak for my family when I express that we believe that it's in the best interest of FAMU to allow the process to play itself out." Gillum said Ammons, who was reprimanded by the trustees for a lack of communication in the Champion case, should not be removed without a showing of wrongdoing on his part. "It is shameful to use a tragedy of death to push other political agendas," he wrote. "Hazing is wrong and should be punishable to the fullest extent of the law. That is the issue we should be dealing with."

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