

Carla learned her lesson but Tony shouldn't just drive away

Carla Coleman, Florida Atlantic University's former fund-raising head, has had her once respectable name dragged through the mud in the media, been booked and charged with a felony and lost her \$185,000-a-year job. Although she pleaded to a lesser charge and will serve a year of probation rather than face jail time, it's sufficient to say Coleman learned her lesson.

She had a good-intentioned idea to reward her former boss, ex-FAU President Anthony "Tony" Catanese, with a red Corvette as a going away present, but the way she did it stunk like raw fish. Using the non-profit FAU Foundation's relationship with an interior design firm to conduct an under-the-table \$42,000 payment is irresponsible conduct for an official charged with overseeing donated money and a criminal abuse of power. She even wrote the check before the foundation raised the funds to pay for it, meaning a portion of the payment came from general funds not donated for Catanese's wheels.

Someone who's smart enough to raise millions should have more sense than that.

While some of her detractors might like to see her in jail, Coleman didn't benefit from her scheme — like Catanese did. The damage to her reputation is already embarrassment enough and something anyone who'd like to hire her would likely consider.

Catanese is the one who's raced off scott-free.

The man who turned FAU from a no-name school into the rapidly growing regional institution it is today, has been hiding in his ivory tower at the Florida Institute of Technology, a private university in Melbourne. Investigators haven't found enough evidence to charge him, but it's hard to imagine that Catanese didn't smell something funny when Coleman told him of the deal.

Perhaps his zeal for a sleek Corvette — like the astronauts drive — clouded his judgment.

Catanese returned the \$42,000, but only after the news had made the rounds and the investigation was practically at his door. He still has the car and a high-paying job. And while he spent his days at FAU mixing in public circles to promote the university, lately he's been more like the hermit of Melbourne. He also hasn't shown up at FAU.

Catanese lucked out when Coleman pleaded, because the lawyers won't get the opportunity to grill him on the stand. Coleman's attorney said he would have loved the opportunity, saying about Catanese's treatment of his client: "He threw her under the bus at his first opportunity."

If there were any justice in this, Catanese would be joining the punished Coleman instead of driving a red Corvette.