

Lawyer denies verifying FAU gift University investigating fund-raisers

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A lawyer for former Florida Atlantic University President Anthony Catanese, alleged to have accepted \$42,000 from FAU Foundation leaders to buy a red Corvette, now says he never confirmed that his client accepted the parting gift from the school's fund-raising arm.

On Wednesday, Phillip Nohrr told the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*: "What we understand [is]: A vote was taken to authorize a gift and a payment to Dr. Catanese . . . It's my understanding that the foundation wanted to express their thanks for all the years of hard work and the job that Dr. Catanese did, and they decided to do that."

On Friday, Nohrr said it is up to the foundation to describe its actions regarding Catanese's departure since it is the target of an inquiry.

Reports of Catanese receiving cash from the foundation for the Corvette prompted FAU officials to lock foundation offices last week and start an in-

vestigation that involves campus police and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Foundation officials Friday repeated their contention that the foundation never approved any gift to Catanese.

"There was positively no authorization" for a car or cash to buy one, said FAU Foundation Vice Chairman Herbert Gimelstob.

FDLE investigators have been questioning people at FAU, said George Zoley, FAU trustee chairman.

It's not a full-blown investigation but just "a preliminary inquiry into matters surrounding the red Corvette" said FDLE Miami office spokeswoman Paige Patterson-Hughes. That review will help determine if there was a criminal act, she said.

Zoley said that 20 of the 28 employees barred from their offices should be allowed back to work Monday. They are returning, he said, because they are not physically in the way of investigative work.

As for those who have not yet been allowed to return, including foundation Executive Director Carla Coleman, "that does not imply they are in any trouble," Zoley said.

Nohrr said neither he nor Catanese has been contacted by investigators. Coleman has not been questioned by police either, said her attorney, Ken Lipman.

"Carla Coleman is confident that when the investigation is completed there will be a determination she did absolutely nothing wrong," Lipman said. "And anything she did do in relation to this matter was done with the knowledge of others."



Catanese

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