

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Student-Athletes File Lawsuit Against Sonoma State and CSU Leadership Over Elimination of Athletics and Academic Programs**

**SONOMA COUNTY, CA - March 10, 2025** - Seven student-athletes from Sonoma State University (SSU) have filed a lawsuit against SSU, Interim President Emily Cutrer, CSU Chancellor Mildred Garcia, and the CSU Board of Trustees over the January 22, 2025 decision to eliminate all athletic programs and discontinue 22 academic degree programs at the university.

The lawsuit, filed in Sonoma County Superior Court, alleges fraud and misrepresentation by the defendants and seeks a writ of mandate to set aside and declare unlawful the decision that has disrupted and imperiled the academic and athletic careers of numerous students. The action also seeks an injunction to prevent the university from implementing the decision.

According to the complaint, SSU administrators knew about the planned elimination of sports and academic programs well before the January 22 announcement, but kept that information hidden from students and faculty until just two days into the Spring 2025 semester. The plaintiffs allege that even while SSU knew of its impending decision, SSU continued to recruit student-athletes to the university without disclosing that athletics would be discontinued as soon they arrived.

The lawsuit further alleges that defendants failed to follow required regulatory procedures before discontinuing academic degree programs, including:

- Failure to go through the academic senate
- Failure to seek consultation with enrolled students
- Failure to specify an adequate teach-out plan for affected students

Additionally, the plaintiffs contend that the decision is arbitrary and capricious, claiming that the administration's assertion that eliminating athletics would save \$3.7 million is not supported by the evidence and appears to be substantially inaccurate.

The lawsuit highlights the failure of CSU and Sonoma State leadership and their abandonment of the core mission of the CSU system. While administrative budgets and salaries have grown substantially over the years, the decision targets core academic and athletic functions of the university while preserving top-heavy administrative structures.

The case stems from growing concerns about transparency in CSU decision-making, particularly when such decisions dramatically impact current students who enrolled with specific academic and athletic expectations.

“The decision did not follow any of the required procedural protections before callously imploding student’s academic and athletic lives, so it must be set aside,” Joseph Saveri Law Firm partner [David Seidel](#) said. “The lack of transparency and willingness to keep the cuts hidden until after the spring semester began shows a complete disregard for the wellbeing of the students. We are proud to represent these talented and dedicated student athletes who are now forced to stand up to the failures of Sonoma State’s leaders on behalf of themselves and the entire student body.”

“Interim President Cutrer’s and Chancellor Garcia’s decision ignored the catastrophic impacts to the plaintiffs, coaches, faculty and so many others in the Sonoma State community,” said Ross Middlemiss, attorney with Gross Klein PC. “The decision, and the manner in which it was made, is contrary to the mission of the California State University and is a dereliction of duty on the part of the Interim President and Chancellor. We look forward to proving the illegality of this unconscionable decision in court, so the impacted students can continue their exemplary representation of Sonoma State University, both in the classroom and in their athletic arenas.”

### **About the Plaintiffs**

The seven plaintiff student-athletes represent various sports programs at Sonoma State University and range from freshmen to seniors whose educational and athletic careers are being irreparably harmed by the sudden elimination of their programs.

### **Contact Information**

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