



**National Headquarters** 1825 K Street NW Suite 200 Washington, DC 20006 (202) 797-8600  
**West Coast Office** 555 12<sup>th</sup> Street Suite 1620 Oakland, CA 94607 (510) 622-8150

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **FORMER HEAD COACHES, FGCU REACH LANDMARK SETTLEMENT IN CASE CHARGING RETALIATION AND DEFAMATION OVER TITLE IX VIOLATIONS**

FORT MYERS, FL – Florida Gulf Coast University will pay \$3.4 million to two former women’s coaches to settle a federal lawsuit filed earlier this year, charging FGCU officials with retaliating against the women after they voiced concerns about gender inequity in the school’s athletic programs. One of the coaches was fired within days of filing the lawsuit in January.

In addition, the school has agreed that an independent expert in Title IX – the federal law prohibiting gender discrimination at school receiving federal funds – will monitor FGCU’s compliance with the law for five years.

“As difficult and painful as this process has been, the importance for the future of women’s athletic programs made it worthwhile,” said Jaye Flood, former head coach of women’s volleyball at FGCU.

Flood was an accomplished coach who took FGCU women’s volleyball from an NCAA Division II program to a Division I conference winner. Last season, she was named Coach of the Year in the Atlantic Sun Conference. Despite that success and perennially high performance reviews, Flood was investigated, suspended and ultimately fired after she spoke out about concerns that the school was violating Title IX mandates.

“This is the price for retaliation,” said Linda Correia, lead counsel for the plaintiffs in the case. “This settlement shows the consequences of retaliating against coaches who raise valid Title IX concerns.”

The settlement, announced at a news conference in Fort Myers today, resolves the lawsuit filed on Flood’s behalf in January by Public Justice, the national public interest law firm based in Washington, D.C. Holly Vaughn, the former head women’s golf coach at FGCU, joined as a plaintiff in May, charging retaliation for speaking out about gender inequities in the school’s athletic program.

“Someone had once told me that if it’s a matter of style, swim with the current; and, if it’s a matter of principle, stand like a rock,” said Vaughn. “I felt like this was my turn to stand like a rock and do what I was supposed to do.”

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Both Flood and Vaughn said their ordeals had been difficult personally and professionally, and each lamented that their initial complaints were not handled appropriately when, along with other female coaches, they brought their concerns to the university's attention.

A participant in today's news conference, FGCU President Wilson Bradshaw promised that the school would "really assess our compliance with Title IX in a consistent manner." He said the settlement "was in the best interest of the university" and other parties in the case.

"We expect that the university will now take Title IX seriously," said Adele Kimmel, co-counsel for the plaintiffs and managing attorney at Public Justice. "It's the right thing to do, it's what the law requires, and it's in the university's own self-interest."

In addition to Kimmel and Correia, a partner in Webster, Fredrickson, Correia & Puth of Washington, D.C., Flood and Vaughn were represented by Jason L. Gunter, a Fort Myers attorney, and Amy Radon, the Goldberg, Waters & Kraus Fellow at Public Justice.

Contact: Deborah Mathis, Communications Director, Public Justice  
(202) 679-2652, (202) 797-8600 Ext. 246 or [dmathis@publicjustice.net](mailto:dmathis@publicjustice.net)

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