



Justin P. Wilson, Comptroller

December 18, 2017

Former UT Football Director of Operations Pleads Guilty

An investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office has resulted in Chris Spognardi, the former Director of Football Operations at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, pleading guilty to official misconduct.

Comptroller investigators determined that Spognardi provided fabricated or altered documentation to account for at least \$14,085 in athletic funds from September 2015 through January 2016. Spognardi could provide no evidence that this money was used for legitimate UT Athletics purposes.

Spognardi was responsible for receiving and handling cash advances from the athletic department to pay various travel-related expenses of the University of Tennessee football team. These expenses included per diem payments, meal costs, and various cash tips.

Investigators determined that Spognardi submitted fraudulent and fabricated documents as support for the cash advances he received. These false documents included invoices for food and other services that were never provided to the football team. Spognardi also submitted at least 18 fraudulent tip sheets indicating that he paid cash tips to various vendors and individuals. Comptroller investigators found that, in many instances, the tips were never received.

The Comptroller's Office began its investigation after Spognardi's scheme was detected by the University of Tennessee Office of the Treasurer and Office of Audit and Compliance. Chris Spognardi was terminated from the University of Tennessee Athletics Department on December 12, 2016.

On December 14, 2017, Chris Spognardi pled guilty to one count of official misconduct.

"This investigation involved thousands of dollars of cash advances," said Comptroller Justin P. Wilson. "Using cash for travel expenses increases the possibility of errors and irregularities. It also places employees at risk of theft or robbery. I'm pleased to note the University of Tennessee has taken steps to address this problem."

To view the special investigation online, go to: <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>.

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