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President Frederick, Staff Exposed Student Whistleblower in Financial Aid Fraud, Targeted Protestors

Note: For the safety of student whistleblower, he will be referred to as “Chase” throughout this article. Administrators who provided information in the spirit of transparency while risking their jobs will also be unnamed.



Wayne Frederick, 17th President of Howard University

When a student employee in the Office of Financial Aid suspected his colleagues were conspiring to embezzle financial aid funds, he had no idea where to turn.

“There were so many people involved in this fraud that I didn’t know who I could trust. Just when I thought about telling a colleague, I’d soon learn that they were somehow involved with the theft of financial aid money. So my last resort was to tell the President,” the former student and Capstone scholar said.

The former student, Chase*, met with President Frederick and the student ombudsmen (read: Dr. Frederick's wingman), Calvin Hadley, in a fourth floor conference room in the Administration building, just after the 2017 Commencement. Chase, who requested that his real name be concealed for his safety, said that he was surprised by the President's response to his shocking disclosure. After the meeting with Frederick and Hadley, Chase wondered if the embezzlement had somehow reached the highest office in the University.

"I can't say for sure that Dr. Frederick is involved. I have no proof of that. But it's as if he's tried to cover this whole thing up. When I first told him and Calvin Hadley, he seemed like he already knew what was going on and was just annoyed that a student had found out."

Chase brought with him the financial aid documents another financial aid employee would later leak to student activists. These records were troubling—they showed unusual grants being awarded and approved by and for financial aid employees well in excess of the cost of attendance for any academic program. Already deeply upset by this revelation, Chase was further disturbed by what he says was "mistreatment and betrayal" from the Office of the [university] President.

"I asked him repeatedly to protect my identity and he promised that he would," Chase explained, "but days after I met with him, I was harassed by my former colleagues who were upset that I had 'snitched' on them." When Chase asked one former colleague how she learned about the meeting, she responded "**Calvin [Hadley] told me.**"

Following his meeting, Chase heard rumors that the President's office has been running a smear campaign against him. "Calvin Hadley began telling people that I was blackmailing the University. I heard this from several people—student leaders and administrators alike." Chase said he would have been worried about this accusation if he didn't have exonerating proof.

"I recorded the entire meeting. Every single word. I recorded it on my iPhone. They had no clue," Chase admitted. When asked why he would record the meeting, Chase said, "Dr. Frederick has a reputation for being dishonest. As does Calvin. They lie. They misrepresent facts."

Many people advised me that if I was going to meet with him about anything, I needed to record him.”

Hadley and President Frederick were unaware of the recording when Mr. Hadley *allegedly* accused Chase of blackmail.

Since exposing the embezzlement, Chase claims that he has been blackballed by the University. **Only one credit hour stands between him and graduating from what was once his dream school**, but the full scholarship recipient has been unable to clear that hurdle for complicated registration and financial aid related reasons. If he could do the last year all over again, Chase says he wouldn't have taken the information to President Frederick.

“I heard that Dr. Frederick was vindictive. I heard stories from student activists. I wasn't trying to be an activist. I just wanted financial aid money to go where it belongs—to students. I wanted people to be held accountable. If I had known that standing up would screw up my life like this, I would have never said a thing. I guess that's how they operate. He inspires fear which breeds compliance. Lesson learned.”

Chase believes his story is not unlike other students who stand up to the administration. Chase claims that it was widely known that President Frederick instructed financial aid administrators to deny discretionary aid to students who were headaches for Frederick and his administration. Specifically, student protestors, especially those affiliated with #HUResist were denied financial assistance for their “disruptive activities.”

President Frederick, in an interview with *The New Yorker*, discussed an unnamed student who “harshly criticized” his political activities with the Trump administration but later asked the President for help with financial aid. While Frederick never identified the student, #HUResist members say many of their members were denied for financial aid and forced to leave the University after protesting the Frederick administration in 2016 and 2017.

One notable example involved Durmerrick Ross, former Mr. Freshman of Howard University. On Twitter in August 2017, Mr. Ross alleged that a

grant had been removed from his account without explanation or notification. Mr. Ross tweeted that Associate Vice President of Student Affairs, Parris Carter, told him financial aid officials were fraudulently placing grants on student accounts with “money that never existed.” While no malicious intent can be yet proven, many of the students who were affected by this irregularity describe themselves as student organizers with #HUResist.

Neither Chase or Durmerrick are enrolled at Howard University, and have no plans to return.

The President’s Office had no comment on this story.

