

In the Matter of:
Investigative Hearing

RONNIE LACOURSE KOROSEC

February 15, 2019



1 BEFORE THE FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2 Public Integrity & Ethics Committee

3 IN RE:

4 Investigative Hearing on the
5 Unauthorized Use of Appropriated
6 Funds for Fixed Capital Outlay
7 Projects at the University of
8 Central Florida,

9 _____ /

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Deposition of: RONNIE LACOURSE KOROSEC

14

Date Taken: February 15, 2019

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Time: 9:46 a.m. - 10:10 a.m.

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Location: UCF Communications & Marketing
17 12443 Research Parkway
18 Suite 301
19 Orlando, Florida 32826

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Reported By: Emily W. Andersen, RMR CRR FPR
22 Stenograph Shorthand Reporter
23 and Notary Public, State of
24 Florida at Large

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1 A P P E A R A N C E S:

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17 Appearing on behalf of the witness.

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S T I P U L A T I O N S

It is hereby stipulated by and between counsel for the respective parties that the reading and signing of the deposition be waived.

1 THE REPORTER: Would you raise your right hand,
2 please.

3 THE WITNESS: (The witness complies.)

4 THE REPORTER: Do you solemnly swear that the
5 testimony you are about to give will be the truth,
6 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help
7 you God?

8 THE WITNESS: I do.

9 RONNIE LACOURSE KOROSEC,
10 having first been duly sworn, testified under oath as
11 follows:

12 DIRECT EXAMINATION

13 BY MS. MITZ:

14 Q. Good morning, Ms. Korosec.

15 A. Good morning.

16 Q. Have you ever given a deposition before?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay. So let me kind of give you a brief view
19 of what you can expect, and then also lay down some
20 ground rules so we're all on the same page.

21 The reason that we have you here today is just
22 to ask you some questions to better understand what
23 happened at UCF.

24 A. Okay.

25 Q. We are not -- we are not asking any trick

1 questions. We're not trying to pin anything on anybody.

2 We're just trying to better understand what happened.

3 As you know, we didn't sit in your interview --
4 your interview with the Bryan Cave firm. So this is the
5 first time we're actually getting to talk to people
6 live, and it's proving helpful. So that's why we're
7 here, just to get some more information.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. You were just -- you just took an oath, so we
10 ask that you be honest.

11 A. Uh-huh.

12 Q. If you don't know something, "I don't know" is
13 a perfectly fine answer. We would rather you say "I
14 don't know" than "yes."

15 If you are estimating or approximating
16 something, we ask that you tell us that. If you're
17 telling us something because -- and you know it because
18 someone else told you, please let us know that you know
19 that because someone else told you.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. The court reporter is typing down everything
22 we're saying, so we need to speak in words. We all have
23 the habit of saying uh-huh, huh-uh. That doesn't work
24 real well in a transcript, so please try to speak and be
25 audible in your responses; no nodding of the head or

1 anything like that. And if you need us to rephrase a
2 question or restate it, feel free to ask us to do that.

3 And that's about it. So are you ready to go?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. Can you please state your full name and
6 spell your last name for the record?

7 A. Ronnie Lacourse Korosec, K-O-R-O-S-E-C.

8 Q. And have you discussed this deposition with
9 anyone besides your attorney?

10 A. Just my attorney.

11 Q. Okay. Have you had an opportunity to review
12 the notes that were taken during your interview with
13 attorneys from Bryan Cave?

14 A. Just recently, yes.

15 Q. Okay. Did you review the notes of anyone
16 else's interview?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Have you reviewed anything else in addition to
19 those notes?

20 A. I was requested by general counsel to look to
21 see if I had any e-mails related to this case, and so I
22 went through my e-mail and found anything that had the
23 term -- I believe it was "Trevor Colbourn Hall" or
24 "budget meeting," and "orientation." And I reviewed
25 those e-mails and sent them to general counsel.

1 Q. And about how long ago did you do that?

2 A. Maybe -- probably two to three weeks ago.

3 Q. Okay. All right. And we understand that you
4 were not placed under oath when you were interviewed by
5 Bryan Cave; is that correct?

6 A. That is correct.

7 Q. Did everything -- was everything that you told
8 him truthful?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. And have you been interviewed or even
11 just asked questions about your involvement in the
12 Trevor Colbourn Hall or Colbourn Hall projects by anyone
13 at UCF, including the general counsel's office, the
14 president's office, immediate supervisors? Has anybody
15 asked you questions about this?

16 A. In general, there is a lot of conversation
17 about Trevor Colbourn Hall happening among faculty,
18 staff, but I have not been summoned or requested in a
19 formal manner.

20 Q. Okay. All right. When did you join UCF?

21 A. I joined UCF in 2000.

22 Q. All right. And in what capacity?

23 A. At that point, I was a visiting assistant
24 professor.

25 Q. Okay. And can you just kind of detail for us

1 the different positions you've held since you joined?

2 A. It's a long list, so I will try to keep it
3 brief.

4 Originally, a visiting assistant professor,
5 then an assistance professor, then promoted to an
6 associate professor, then interim associate dean, then
7 associate dean, then provost faculty fellow, then
8 assistant provost, then associate provost for strategy,
9 then associate provost for operations, then associate
10 provost and chief of staff for academic affairs, and
11 most recently, associate dean.

12 Q. Okay. So which one of those positions did you
13 hold when you were reporting -- reporting to or working
14 closely with Provost Whittaker?

15 A. Multiples of those, beginning with the
16 assistant provost -- excuse me. The correct title is
17 assistant -- assistant vice provost, I think is what it
18 was.

19 But starting with assistant vice provost all
20 the way up to associate provost and chief of staff for
21 academic affairs.

22 Q. So in those positions, you reported to Dale
23 Whittaker?

24 A. I did.

25 Q. Okay. Recently, at the January 24, 2019, board

1 meeting, President Whittaker had some remarks to the
2 committee or to the board, and he identified you as
3 someone who was due credit for assisting with faculty
4 placement in Trevor Colbourn Hall.

5 Can you give us an idea of what it is that you
6 did with that project?

7 A. I was surprised and somewhat shocked to hear
8 him give me credit for that, because that was not
9 something I did.

10 Q. Oh, okay. Interesting. All right.

11 A. I found it interesting.

12 Q. What kind of work did you do?

13 A. Pardon me?

14 Q. What did you do in relation to Trevor Colbourn
15 Hall?

16 A. I had almost no activity with Trevor Colbourn
17 Hall.

18 I was responsible at that time for making sure
19 that action items relating to Trevor Colbourn Hall that
20 Dale Whittaker asked be implemented, that those took
21 place with the appropriate people.

22 So my role as chief of staff was not an
23 implementer, but more of a coordinator, so assuring that
24 people like Lee Kernek was talking with the deans and
25 the coordinators of the programs that were going to go

1 into Trevor Colbourn Hall.

2 Q. Okay. Did you have any involvement whatsoever
3 in the funding for the project?

4 A. Absolutely not.

5 Q. Okay. When did you start assisting with Trevor
6 Colbourn -- either Colbourn Hall or Trevor Colbourn
7 Hall, do you recall the month and year?

8 A. I don't recall that specifically, but I know
9 that I was involved in the conversations probably when
10 Dale was starting to be involved in those.

11 Q. Okay. It probably would have been soon after
12 he started?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And your involvement was just by virtue of your
15 position?

16 A. Yes, yes.

17 Q. All right. Did you have anything to do with
18 seeking transfers of E&G funds related to Colbourn Hall
19 and/or Trevor Colbourn Hall?

20 A. Absolutely none.

21 (Exhibit No. 1 was marked for identification.)

22 BY MS. MITZ:

23 Q. Okay. I'd like you to take a look at an e-mail
24 that I'm sure you've been asked to look at before.

25 A. Thank you.

1 Q. It's an e-mail from Tina Maier to you, and it
2 was sent on March 30th of 2015.

3 Can you just take a look at that, review it,
4 and let me know when you're done?

5 A. I'm done.

6 Q. Okay. Do you recognize this e-mail?

7 A. I actually don't, but it has my name on it so
8 I'm sure it came to my e-mail.

9 Q. Okay. So I'm going to assume then, if you
10 don't recognize it, you probably don't recall why --
11 what transpired to get this e-mail?

12 A. I do not.

13 Q. Okay. Did you typically work with contracts
14 and grants?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay. Do you have any idea how you would have
17 been asked or involved in something like that?

18 A. My speculation is that this would be something
19 that she had wanted me to bring to Dale for his
20 understanding. I don't recall this.

21 Q. Okay. So you can't -- you don't recall what
22 project or matter this dealt with?

23 A. I do not.

24 Q. Okay. If this was something that Dr. Whittaker
25 had asked you to inquire about and then you got a

1 response, would your normal practice then be to take
2 that response to Dr. Whittaker or whoever asked you to
3 find out information about it?

4 A. My normal response on this probably would have
5 been to either print it or forward it to Dale and ask
6 him what he wanted to do with it.

7 Q. Okay. You're certain you wouldn't have just
8 kept the information to yourself, you would have passed
9 it on?

10 A. No, I would have passed that on.

11 Q. All right. How long did you work closely with
12 Dale Whittaker?

13 A. I worked with Dale from the point when he was
14 hired up until the point where he moved to the
15 president's office.

16 Q. Okay. So maybe three plus years?

17 A. Probably, yes.

18 Q. Okay. And did you ever witness any discussions
19 between him and anybody else regarding the use of E&G
20 funds for capital projects?

21 A. I am not sure on that, because I am not sure I
22 would have understood the distinction of E&G. So there
23 may have been conversations where the term E&G came up,
24 but that was not my forte and budgeting is not my
25 background, so I'm not -- I'm not sure I would have

1 known to know that that was an issue.

2 Q. I got you. Okay.

3 Did Provost Whittaker ever ask you to seek
4 advice on funding sources either from university audit
5 or the general counsel's office or anyone else?

6 A. Can you reframe that question?

7 Q. Sure. Do you recall Provost Whittaker ever
8 asking you on his behalf to seek advice concerning
9 funding sources for capital projects from the general
10 counsel's office or university audit?

11 A. If Dale were to ask me for advice on funding,
12 it would almost always be, Who should I talk to? or
13 Whom should be involved?

14 Q. Okay. So he wouldn't have said, This is my
15 question, you go get the answer and come back to me. He
16 would have probably asked you to tell him who to ask?

17 A. Or he would have said -- yes, there were times
18 when he said, Here is my question, go get the answer.

19 Q. Okay. Do you recall ever having to go to
20 either the general counsel's office or university audit
21 on one of those questions?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. Do you recall whether they were related
24 to the funding of capital projects?

25 A. I don't recall that.

1 Q. When you worked for Provost Whittaker, did you
2 ever help him to prepare for meetings that he attended,
3 such as the budget chat group or the facilities budget
4 committee or the university budget committee?

5 A. I did help him prepare, but the way in which I
6 helped him prepare was more operational rather than
7 related to budget issues. He did not defer to me on
8 budget issues.

9 Q. Okay. So what do you mean by your response?
10 What exactly did you do to prepare?

11 A. That's a good question. Dale was very siloed
12 in the people that he relied on for certain areas of
13 expertise. He was very famous for saying, I hired smart
14 people and I rely on them, you know, to do their jobs.

15 My job was not budgeting. My job was
16 operations. So if I helped him prepare, it was often
17 the case that it was an operational preparation, so who
18 needs to be in the room, who needs to be consulted.

19 If it were, for example, since we're talking
20 about budget, if it were an issue of budget, Ronnie, I'm
21 going to a meeting, have Tracy prepare, have Bill
22 prepare this. So although I was the operations person,
23 I wasn't the person responsible for coming up with the
24 information.

25 So in terms of a prep -- I just want to be very

1 clear on that. In terms of a prep, yes, I did help him
2 prep for his meeting, but he relied on -- we called it
3 SMEs, S-M-Es, subject matter experts. He relied on the
4 subject matter experts to do the deep dive in these
5 specific areas that he was prepping for.

6 Q. Okay. So you wouldn't -- it doesn't sound like
7 you would have actually looked at any budget paperwork
8 that you had been provided by Lee Kernek or Mr. Merck.
9 You would have just assembled it and then given it to
10 him for whatever meeting he had?

11 A. I wouldn't have assembled it.

12 Q. Oh, okay.

13 A. I wouldn't have assembled it. I would have
14 received it at the meeting from either Tracy or Christy
15 Tant or whomever was in the meeting.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. So my job was not to assemble it.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. If he was prepping for a meeting, it would be
20 things that he wanted included in the meeting, not other
21 people sending it to us.

22 Q. Gotcha, okay. Do you recall ever assisting
23 Dr. Whittaker in preparing for a meeting with Dr. Hitt
24 to go over E&G commitment or allocation lists?

25 A. I regularly prepared Dale's agendas for his

1 meetings with Dr. Hitt.

2 Q. Okay. Do you recall whether those included
3 capital project E&G commitment lists?

4 A. While I don't specifically recall that, it
5 could have been the case that they did.

6 MS. MITZ: Okay. Don, do you have any
7 questions?

8 MR. RUBOTTOM: Just a couple, because I want to
9 be clear.

10 DIRECT EXAMINATION

11 BY MR. RUBOTTOM:

12 Q. You don't recall this e-mail? You don't recall
13 what started it?

14 Would you have occasion to interface with other
15 faculty or deans and ever take a question like that to
16 audit on their behalf, and just communicate back to
17 them, answers, without discussing the matter with
18 Dr. Whittaker?

19 A. I'm trying -- there -- yes, there were often --
20 not often. There were instances where the deans would
21 come to me and say I have a problem, can you help us
22 resolve it?

23 Q. And would you give any report to Dr. Whittaker
24 about solving that problem?

25 A. Always.

1 Q. You would always report?

2 A. Always.

3 Q. What -- were you in the provost's office when
4 Dr. Whittaker joined the university --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- in 2014?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. And on the date of that e-mail,
9 March 30th, what would -- what was your position at that
10 time?

11 A. Oy. I don't know. Probably associate provost.
12 I don't know if I was still assistant provost.

13 Q. Would you be willing to send us an e-mail and
14 confirm what your position was on that date?

15 A. Sure, absolutely. I can do that.

16 Q. Thank you.

17 With the subject matter experts, if he was
18 having a meeting with Dr. Hitt and they were discussing
19 budgets, would he also get agenda information from Tracy
20 or somebody else?

21 A. Always.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. But would you have been aware of that meeting
25 prep going on?

1 A. Not always.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Not always. Dale was famous for going and
4 talking to people, and didn't -- this is not a criticism
5 of him, but often he would go off and do that leg work
6 himself, and I would find out about it days later or
7 maybe not even find out about it.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. So it was not the case, despite my title, that
10 I knew a hundred percent of what he was thinking or
11 doing all the time.

12 Q. Did you ever hear him discussing with anyone
13 the ideas that certain kinds of moneys can only be used
14 for certain kinds of purposes, just in those -- in all
15 of his interactions?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Did you ever hear him refer to himself as the
18 chief university budget officer?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Did you -- how did you perceive his
21 relationship with Bill Merck with respect to big budget
22 issues?

23 A. Bill and Dale were very close, very close.
24 They -- part of the reason that Tracy Clark reported to
25 both Bill and to Dale was because -- I believe that

1 there was such a strong overlap between the work that
2 they were trying to get done, they needed someone to be
3 the interface between the two of them.

4 Q. Okay. Did you ever hear him express
5 frustration with Bill Merck's responsiveness,
6 transparency, or clarity in communications with
7 Dr. Whittaker?

8 A. Can you repeat that?

9 Q. I'll try to.

10 A. Sorry. There's a lot going on there.

11 Q. Did you ever hear them express frustrations
12 with Mr. Merck's communications to him?

13 A. Only in one area.

14 Q. Which area --

15 A. Sorry.

16 Q. -- was that?

17 A. He expressed frustration that Bill had not
18 worked to get Lee Kernek's performance with the deans
19 more in line with what the deans were expecting.

20 Q. Would that issue have been space allocation and
21 sizes of offices, things like that?

22 A. No.

23 Q. What would that be?

24 A. That was frustration over the length of time it
25 took to get construction completed on the campus, and it

1 was frustration over the cost of construction on campus,
2 and having a conversation with her being able to deliver
3 to the deans a different product than was being
4 delivered.

5 Q. Was the cost concern centered on areas where
6 the departments were having to pay for those projects?

7 A. Yes, yes.

8 Q. Were there also concerns about repairs and
9 maintenance issues?

10 A. Absolutely, absolutely.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And the length of time to get those done.

13 Q. Do you know if Dr. Whittaker ever discussed
14 cost control in the construction area with any -- with
15 any trustees?

16 A. Oh, I don't know that.

17 Q. Do you know if he ever had conversations with
18 Trustee Marchena when he was facilities and finance
19 chair about facilities or finance issues?

20 A. While I was not in those meetings, I can't say.
21 I don't know. It would make sense because of the
22 closeness of those positions, but I was not in any of
23 those meetings.

24 Q. Okay. There was an E&G allocation list that
25 was produced -- at least I have seen one from 2013 and

1 2014.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Those were signed by the provost and the
4 president each year?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Were you ever present when -- when those lists
7 were presented to either Provost Waldrop or Provost
8 Whittaker?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Who would have presented those documents to the
11 provosts?

12 A. They would have been presented by Tracy Clark
13 when -- when it was Dale Whittaker. When it was Tony
14 Waldrop, it would have been Lynn Gonzalez.

15 And I wouldn't have been present with Tony
16 Waldrop and Lynn Gonzalez, but I would have been present
17 as part of the budget committee. Those were presented
18 at the budget committee meetings.

19 Q. At their budget chat groups?

20 A. At the larger -- larger budget committees as
21 well.

22 Q. Well, I don't think that was -- the university
23 budget committee was started.

24 A. Yeah, that's right.

25 Q. Do you remember when that committee started?

1 Was it in the first year that Dr. Whittaker was provost?

2 A. I don't recall. I don't recall.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. It's a relatively new development, but I don't
5 recall if it was in the last two or last three years.

6 Q. Do you recall those allocation lists being
7 signed in -- or the fact that it's been an annual -- has
8 there been an annual signing of that document throughout
9 the period of -- I mean, since 2014, is it your
10 recollection that those have been signed?

11 A. I don't recall being present at the signing,
12 but I do recall those being presented to Dale by Tracy
13 and Bill.

14 Q. Okay. The 2014 one was presented to him, I
15 think, like before he had been here two weeks.

16 A. I don't recall.

17 Q. You don't recall that at all?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Do you recall, if you were present, him asking
20 questions about the document?

21 A. It was Dale's nature to ask questions. So if I
22 was present, he would have been asking detailed
23 questions.

24 Q. Okay, okay.

25 MR. RUBOTTOM: Carine, I think that's all I've

1 got.

2 MS. MITZ: Okay. Is there anything else that
3 you think we should know as part of our
4 investigation into the misuse of appropriated funds
5 that we haven't already asked you or that you
6 haven't already told us?

7 THE WITNESS: That's a pretty large question.
8 Let me think about that for a second.

9 No, not that I can think of.

10 MS. MITZ: Okay. Are you someone who makes it
11 a habit to keep notes or journals or diaries of what
12 you do at work?

13 THE WITNESS: No.

14 MS. MITZ: Okay, okay. Well, then lastly, we
15 just ask for you to agree that you are not going to
16 discuss this deposition with anybody while our
17 investigation remains pending.

18 So we're asking that you not disclose the
19 questions that you've been asked today, as well as
20 the answers that you gave. Do you agree to do that?

21 THE WITNESS: I do.

22 MS. MITZ: Okay. Great. Thank you so much.

23 THE WITNESS: Thank you. Have a great day.

24 THE REPORTER: Read or waive?

25 MR. ZIELINSKI: Yes, I think we can go ahead

1 and waive. That's fine.

2 (The deposition was concluded at 10:10 a.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF OATH

STATE OF FLORIDA:
COUNTY OF ORANGE:

I, Emily W. Andersen, RMR CRR FPR, Stenograph
Shorthand Reporter, certify that RONNIE LACOURSE KOROSEC
personally appeared before me on February 15, 2019 and
was duly sworn.

WITNESS my hand and official seal this 15th day of
February, 2019.

Identification:
Produced Identification
Florida Driver's License

Emily W. Andersen

EMILY W. ANDERSEN,
Notary Public State of Florida
Commission No. GG 258112
Expires October 14, 2022

1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

2 STATE OF FLORIDA:
3 COUNTY OF ORANGE:

4 I, Emily W. Andersen, RMR CRR FPR, Stenograph
5 Shorthand Reporter, certify that I was authorized to and
6 did stenographically report the foregoing deposition of
7 RONNIE LACOURSE KOROSEC; that the review of the
8 transcript was requested; and that the foregoing Pages,
9 4 through 22, inclusive, are a true and complete record
10 of my stenograph notes.

11 I further certify that I am not a relative or
12 employee of any of the parties, nor am I a relative or
13 counsel connected with the parties' attorneys or counsel
14 connected with the action, nor am I financially
15 interested in the outcome of the action.

16 DATED this 15th day of February, 2019.

17 *Emily W. Andersen*

18 Emily W. Andersen, RMR CRR FPR
19 Stenograph Shorthand Reporter
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