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UVI Offered to Employ Man Accused of Inappropriate Behavior Towards High School Students Before Rescinding Offer

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Jason Gilliam-Alexander By. UVI

Last Tuesday, just before 1:00 pm, Consortium journalists received a press release from the University of the Virgin Islands. “UVI Welcomes New Men’s Basketball Head Coach”, the headline read. The release was a standard one, announcing that Jason Gilliam-Alexander had been appointed as the university’s new men’s basketball head coach.

It featured the usual quotes from Gilliam-Alexander himself, mentions his previous post as assistant coach at Florida Memorial University, and an enthusiastic welcome from UVI Athletics Director Dr. Jerel Drew.

Just over four hours later, another email from UVI, this time asking us to hold back from publishing the previously delivered release. There was no stated reason behind the request to unpublish the story except that the press release had, according to University Public Relations Director Tamika Williams, been issued prematurely.

On Monday, news broke that Gilliam-Alexander had been stripped of his Florida-issued Educator Certificate last November, after the findings of a state investigation revealed that he had reportedly been engaging in inappropriate conduct with female students.

The Broward County edition of the Florida Sun-Sentinel [reported in late December](#) that when Gilliam-Alexander was coaching junior varsity basketball at a Florida high school, he faced allegations that among other things, he tried to kiss one student on the lips against her will, as well as what the newspaper described as “having improper boundaries with students”. The report details several accusations, including that Gilliam-Alexander asked for the telephone numbers of female students, took the phone of one student and entered his details into it, spoke to students about his marital troubles, and complimented one 9th grade student on her figure, which he described as quote “the best” among her cohort.

The Florida Education Practices Commission investigated, and found that the coach “failed to protect students from conditions harmful to their education, mental health and physical safety.” On November 24th, Gilliam-Alexander was informed that not only would his teaching license be revoked, but that he would be banned from re-applying for certification. By that time, however, he was coaching at FMU.

This morning, Tuesday August 9th, the day after the details surrounding Gilliam-Alexander came to the attention of the USVI public, UVI issued another statement, saying that the offer of employment for Gilliam-Alexander was conditional and has since been rescinded following the completion of the background check process. Although the university declined to specify what information the background check produced that caused them to yank Gilliam-Alexander’s contract, it is not difficult to conclude that the details outlined above might have factored into the university’s decision.

What makes this sequence of events troubling for some, especially the current UVI students who have reached out to the Consortium with concerns, is that this is the second time someone credibly accused of inappropriate behavior with students on the mainland has been able to find favor with University of the Virgin Islands recruiters and officials involved in the hiring process.

In mid-June, [we learned](#) that Oluwafemi Banjoko, a contract and grants specialist with the university, was actually Bridges Randle, a former officer of the Memphis Police Department, who had at least one conviction on offenses relating to the sexual assault of women while on duty. While in the case of Randle-slash-Banjoko, his multiple name changes and reported falsification of information on applications for local identification documents may have helped him evade UVI’s background check system, it is unclear how the university could have made it to the point of extending a formal offer of employment to Gilliam-Alexander, given that the information about the loss of his teaching license was so recently and publicly available.

In both cases, Banjoko and now Gilliam-Alexander, the university has declined to share information about how and when they learned the adverse information about these individuals, and it is that lack of communication is making some students feel uneasy. As one student said in her missive expressing concerns to Consortium journalists, “UVI is putting students at risk. We have to have a higher standard as a community.”

Now that his contract offer has been rescinded, Gilliam-Alexander will not be interacting with students on the UVI campus, but the same cannot be said about Bridges Randle. After federal agents arrested him on his way to work at the university on June 14, the university said that his continued employment would hinge on the outcome of an investigation by the university and the federal case against him. No other communication from the university has been forthcoming since then.

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