

## University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire received a final judgment on the investigation into a racist social media post involving five UW-Eau Claire football players from November 2019. A panel of faculty, staff and students found the five students in question not responsible for any violations listed in [Wisconsin Administrative Code UWS 17](#).

What follows are statements from Chancellor Jim Schmidt, Vice Chancellor Warren Anderson, UW-Eau Claire Football Coach Wesley Beschorner, and UW-Eau Claire Athletic Director Dan Schumacher, regarding the outcome of the investigation and the plans moving forward.

### **STATEMENT – CHANCELLOR JIM SCHMIDT:**

“While we accept the ruling of the panel, it is NOT acceptable behavior for Blugolds to act in a racist manner.

“I know we are – and can – be better. The football team faces the hard work of rebuilding trust; the faculty, staff and students of this university must take on that challenge. I will continue to work with the entire community to ensure that this incident is the exception, and not the norm.

“The recommendation from this spring’s Rapid Action Task Force for pursuing restorative justice is guidance we’re following, especially in this case.

‘Because UW-Eau Claire is an institution of higher learning, the philosophy of restorative justice—which focuses on healing for the victims, repairing the harm to the community, and providing an opportunity for the offender to accept responsibility for their actions and learn from their failures—is more congruent than retributive justice to our mission. For all these reasons, the Rapid Action Task Force recommends implementing a restorative justice program as the best way to heal the campus and to seek justice in response to past and future acts of injustice.’

“Restorative justice is the approach that we will follow as we continue to have the difficult discussions and action for change that are required. I ask the entire University community to join me in this important work.”

### **STATEMENT – VICE CHANCELLOR FOR EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (EDI) AND STUDENT AFFAIRS, WARREN ANDERSON:**

“Having the privilege of calling oneself a Blugold is one that comes with tremendous responsibility. The facts in this case shows that there was a serious lapse in judgment, and do not represent the other student athletes, or UW-Eau Claire as a whole. Our primary responsibility as an institution of higher learning is to give every student the skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly global society. The students in this case progressed through the student conduct process outlined in UW System Ch. 17, and the hearing panel found them “not responsible for violations of institutional policy”. While there are some that will not agree with the outcome of this case, we must progress in a manner that moves the

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institution forward. We must take this opportunity to engage in meaningful discourse that will set the course for inclusive excellence. This course includes the following steps, already underway:

1. The completion of a comprehensive external review of the climate in Intercollegiate Athletics at UW-Eau Claire. This will include a review of Athletics' policies, practices and procedures to ensure the most culturally competent student athletes.
2. Continue the process of implementing the substantial recommendations of the EDI Rapid Action Task Force, and the Task Force Implementation Team.
3. An exhaustive review of the policies, practices and procedures across the University to ensure that equity and inclusion are paramount, including the student code of conduct, student recruitment procedures, and institutional hiring practices, and taking appropriate action – for example, the integration of restorative practices into the current student conduct framework.
4. Enhanced EDI training and education that is both required and optional for students and employees, including a comprehensive review of our current EDI training model.
5. Increasing opportunities for cultural and intercultural exchange, for students and employees, to ensure that no member of the UW-Eau Claire community feels marginalized, threatened, or targeted because of how they choose to identify.
6. Enhanced institutional priorities centered on EDI within the curriculum that provides UW-Eau Claire students with the most culturally responsive education possible.

“The steps outlined above are only a handful of examples of how we are taking steps now to grow together as an institution. The university that I walked into last December was one that was wounded because of the actions of a few. We must work together to ensure that this example of racist behavior does not define UW-Eau Claire for generations to come.

“I have reached out to the co-captains of the football team to invite them to work with me and build a legacy of forgiveness and accountability. The Coach and Athletic Director will engage with me to build a comprehensive training and education path. This path will include every student athlete, coach, trainer, and administrator engaging in very difficult, but very critical work. I look forward to helping to build a more culturally competent and culturally sensitive culture that eliminates racism of all kinds, in and out of Athletics.”

**STATEMENT – FOOTBALL COACH WESLEY BESCHORNER:**

“The actions and statements by these five men that were made public in November 2019 are not conducive to promoting an environment of unity and inclusion within our football team. While the context of the “Snapchat Case” is up for interpretation and we feel no personal malice towards those involved, the imagery and verbiage used in this incident were appalling. Based on the outcome of the judicial process, these five men will be allowed back on the team roster. We have strongly urged them to participate in restorative justice activities if they want to truly be part of our team. We are committed to fighting racism through education and action.”

**STATEMENT – ATHLETIC DIRECTOR DAN SCHUMACHER:**

“I have always respected and followed the policies and procedures of the University. The actions of five student-athletes was unacceptable and destructive to our football program, athletic department and university. It is a privilege, not a right, to be a college student-athlete. We must move forward, must learn from it, become stronger for it.”

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