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UCSF medical school dean David Kessler terminated

San Francisco Business Times - by [Chris Rauber](#)

David Kessler, dean of **UCSF Medical School** and a university vice chancellor for medical affairs, was terminated Thursday by UCSF Chancellor Michael Bishop.

Late Friday the university confirmed that Kessler had been dismissed by the chancellor. Officials at UCSF and the University of California's general counsel's office said that Bishop had asked Kessler in June to resign no later than Jan. 1 and to work on a severance and transition agreement over a six-month period. "Unfortunately, Dr. Kessler did not relinquish his position, forcing the Chancellor to formally dismiss him."

UCSF did not give a reason for his dismissal.

In an email sent Dec. 14 to a large number of **University of California San Francisco** staffers, medical students and administrators, Kessler said he "discovered a series of financial irregularities that predated my appointment" as dean of UCSF's medical school in 2003, and "reported these issues to appropriate university officials at the time."

Over the summer, Kessler added, the chancellor requested his resignation and "I continued to try to solve these problems. Yesterday, Chancellor Bishop terminated my appointment as Dean, effective immediately."

In his email, Kessler stated that the university had "characterized me as a whistleblower."

According to the university, Kessler first raised these concerns in the spring of 2005 and the university investigated the matter as a whistleblower complaint, referring it to the university auditor. The auditor completed his final report in June, "concluding that the whistleblower allegations were not sustained." On Dec. 14 university officials said that investigation was followed by two additional reviews, one by a group of senior financial officers and one by an outside accounting firm. Both reviews found no evidence of financial irregularities and concluded that the school of medicine was in a strong financial condition.

Charges that Kessler engaged in improper spending after he was hired four years ago were not substantiated by an investigation which found that his oversight of the medical school fell within

established UC standards, according to published accounts.

Allegations investigated during the UC audit included charges that Kessler irresponsibly spent \$90 million in reserves and gave senior managers excessive raises. The investigation was ordered in early 2005 by UC President Robert Dynes' office, after UC officials received an anonymous tip about the alleged improprieties.

In a separate Dec. 14 email, Bishop said Sam Hawgood, also a UCSF professor, has agreed to serve as interim dean, effective immediately and that an international search for a replacement for Kessler "will be initiated promptly."

Kessler came to UCSF from **Yale University's** school of medicine, where he had served as dean. Before that, he was commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in Washington, D.C.

Although Kessler reportedly will remain as a UCSF professor, he must vacate his seat on the oversight committee of the **California Institute for Regenerative Medicine**.

CIRM dispenses stem cell research and facilities grants from a \$3 billion fund approved in 2004 by California voters.

Kessler was appointed by the chancellor as an executive officer of the campus, according to a CIRM spokeswoman, and therefore is no longer able to serve on the oversight committee.

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