

House Committee

COMMITTEE MINUTES for GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT

Date: *February 2, 2021*

Location: *Law Library*

Convened: *10:30 AM*

Adjourned: *12:10 PM*

Attendance Roll Call:

Present: Representatives Brink-CH, Jacobsen-VC, Holt, Isenhardt, James, Kaufmann, Olson, Thompson

Absent:

Excused: Representative Gaines-RM

Chairwoman Brink called the meeting to order at 10:34 AM on Tuesday, February 2. Members introduced themselves to the committee. Roll was called during this time. The minutes of the previous meeting were distributed electronically to the members. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as distributed.

No bills were available for assignment.

Chairwoman Brink recognized representatives from three regent universities of Iowa State University, the University of Northern Iowa, and the University of Iowa for opening comments lasting no longer than five minutes.

Iowa State University began with opening comments. Iowa State University was represented by Wendy Winterstein, President of ISU and Mike Norton, University Counsel. President Winterstein began her opening comments in regards to a personnel issue in regards to the expression of students First Amendment rights to free speech. She described that the personnel issue was in regards to a syllabus statement. The employee was consulted and an action team was put in place.

President Winterstein described that Iowa State University has now inserted a 'syllabus statement' into every syllabus on campus and made this aware to students through a campus wide statement.

Next the University of Iowa gave opening remarks on student issues that were brought to the attention of the committee. Those representing the University of Iowa were David Johnson, Dean of the College of Dentistry, Dr. Galen Schneider, Associate Dean for the College of Dentistry, and Kevin Kregel, Provost. Dean Johnson began by apologizing for the situation of student Michael Brasse. Dean Johnson also stated that, he will no longer speak on political issues in his position. He also stated the CAP Committee, similar to the dental licensing board, was being restructured due to the Brasse issue and explained that the situation was being evaluated by university counsel. Dean Johnson exhausted the time restraint for opening comments.

The University of Northern Iowa was last to present opening comments.

Representing the Univeristy were Steffoni Schmidt, Student Government Advisor, Allyson Rafanello, Dean of Students, and Leah Gutknecht, Associate to the President. Ms. Gutknecht testified in regards to the situation of the 'Students for Life' group being denied recognition from the Student Government group. She stated that President Nook intervened in this suppression of free speech and that the student organization was recognized by President Nook and overruled the decision of the Student Government Body.

Following opening comments the floor was opened to questions by the members at the discretion of the chair.

Rep. Kauffman was recognized for comments. The representative asked if the

University of Iowa would have a systematic goal of not using official college capacity to use political views. Dean Johnson stated that he would no longer use his capacity for political reasons. Rep. Kauffman then asked about the protest situation that occurred last Friday and if the protest had the backing of administration. Dean Johnson stated that it was not sanctioned by the College of Dentistry and that it was not backed by the College of Dentistry.

Representative Holt was recognized. He asked the University of Iowa if Michael Brasse would be reasonably concerned for expulsion in regards to his reply to a university email. He also asked if Brasse used unprofessional behavior.

Representative Holt then read statements from current students and requested comment on the protest that happened on Friday of last week. He asked if appointments were canceled during the protest and how the College of Dentistry would respond to the protests. The University of Iowa had no comment as the investigation was pending.

Representative Jacobsen was recognized by the chair. He read a letter written by two Representatives of the Iowa House who are currently dentists. The representative read the letter and asked 'did you give the students who walked out in protest permission to do so? Did you give them permission to cancel their patients? How far in advance were these patients given? Will those students be disciplined? Does this constitute abandoning a patient, unprofessional conduct, or failure to practice under the standard of care for strictly political purposes?' These questions were not responded to due to pending University of Iowa investigation.

Next, Rep. Thompson presented questions to the committee. He asked what action was Michael Brasse reprimanded for? University of Iowa responded with 'we had complaints.' Not going into any further detail. Rep. Thompson then asked if any other students were given the letter and the Dean responded no, but there were about a dozen others on the list.

Rep. Thompson then used his time to question Iowa State University. Rep. Thompson asked President Winterstein how the English 250 Class situation was handled and if that professor was still employed by Iowa State University. She described that personnel action was taken and that safeguards were put in place by the University to protect students. Some of those safeguards included: the option to transfer classes (only one student participated in this option), an administrative contact to report concerns, monitored grading by superiors, and a grade appeal policy. No students participated in these at the report of President Winterstein. As for the personnel action, President Winterstein stated that the professor was still employed, but there was a corrective letter placed in her file. Iowa State University has also responded to this situation by creating a syllabus statement that is sent to all students and is required to be on every class syllabus.

Chairwoman Brink questioned the University of Northern Iowa in regards to the Student Body's rejection of Student's For Life. She asked Ms. Schmidt if that had been her first meeting as an advisor to the Senators. She said no, but for many students that had been one of their first meetings. She said that the situation presented a great learning opportunity for students. She has scheduled workshops and professional development on First Amendment free speech in regards to the denial of the group. Chairwoman Brink then questioned Ms. Schmidt on the situation with Turning Point, but Ms. Schmidt stated that she was not a part of the group when that decision was made. There has been a request to provide information to the committee on that issue.

Rep. Brink then asked the three universities if everyone had a CAP committee like the University of Iowa Dental School. None of the universities responded, but the Dental School is the only one who said that they had that program. Chairwoman Brink then asked the University of Iowa if there were people outside of the school on that committee and Dean Johnson replied no.

Rep. Jacobsen was recognized. He asked the three colleges why there was no push for academic diversity. President Winterstein of Iowa State said that 'we bring in outside groups such as the Koch Brothers to promote a free-market economy.' She

encouraged Rep. Jacobsen to look to the Department of Economics at Iowa State for that diversity he is looking for. UNI stated that they will pass that onto the Provost and the President. Iowa did not comment.

Rep. Olson was recognized. He asked the University of Iowa Dental School what the timeline is on fixing this issue with Brasse. He asked them what they would do in the future. The University of Iowa asked them to give him a month to get that information. Rep. Olson requested that they provide that information.

Rep. Olson asked Iowa State University if they felt that there were any changes to their policies that they needed to make. President Winterstein responded, "we can always do better, but I think we are in a pretty good spot."

The University of Iowa said that they were going to look into adding a practicing dentist to the CAP committee.

Rep. Isenhardt was recognized. He asked the University of Iowa College of Dental what the appeal process is and if Brasse had been issued a written apology. Dean Johnson acknowledged that he was issued a confidential one and it was not in his file.

Rep. Kauffman was recognized by the chair and reiterated that the committee had authority on these issues.

Rep. James was recognized. She thanked the three universities for attending and addressed that concerns were brought up in this meeting.

Chairwoman Brink then addressed the committee with closing comments in regards to issues that were surfacing overnight and reiterated to the committee that this subject would be readdressed in the future.

Representative Holt moved to arise.

Chairwoman Brink adjourned the meeting at 12:11 PM.

Representative Holly Brink

Jacob Schroeder, Committee Secretary