

## Ringeisen says faculty-administration conflict was factor in recent vote

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Richard Ringeisen, chancellor of the University of Illinois at Springfield, said long-brewing tensions between the UIS administration and faculty exacerbated recent events that included the resignations of three coaches and a no-confidence vote in him by dozens of faculty members.

"People felt I wasn't being as forthright as I should," Ringeisen said. "Our expectations were different. And I think it came to a head here."

In late March, three UIS athletic coaches, all male, resigned within one week. Two of the coaches left because of alleged incidents, possibly alcohol-related, that took place during a spring break trip the UIS women's softball team took to Florida earlier this year. The third coach, for the UIS women's and men's golf teams, resigned soon after for unrelated reasons.

Many faculty members wanted to get a more complete explanation for the resignations. Feeling that Ringeisen and the administration rebuffed their concerns, roughly half the faculty met and ended up voting on four impromptu measures, one of which was a no-confidence vote in Ringeisen's leadership.

However, when the university's Campus Senate, made up of faculty, administrators and students, had a chance to follow suit a few days later, it tabled a similar no-confidence measure. Instead, it ordered an investigation into the athletics controversies.

Ringeisen said the incidents with the coaches revealed a need for the university community to discuss which decisions require faculty consultation and which ones are better left to the administration.

"At every institution, there's always a bit of a conflict between the administration and the faculty as to what things are to be discussed with the faculty. And if there are things that should not," Ringeisen said.

"What happened here, in my opinion, is that there have been situations along the time through these eight years that I have been here where the faculty would expect consultation and it wouldn't have been my expectation to consult."

The Campus Senate just began a new term. Ringeisen said he expects to begin a conversation once its new executive officers are appointed.

"We'll begin to discuss, as we should have maybe a long time ago, what sorts of things are we supposed to be discussing with each other. And what things can the administration do rightly without such discussion," he said.

Moving on sounds like a good idea to Tih-Fen Ting, an assistant professor of environmental studies at UIS and a three-term Campus Senate member.

"It seems to me that the administration and the faculty have a different take on what shared governance is about," Ting said. "I think that is what it is.

"I personally think that we do need to move on from this. But by moving on, I don't mean forget what happened. I mean working together to address whatever the issues or the problems are in front of us."

Ting said some faculty members are concerned that UIS no longer resembles the much more cooperative spirit of the Sangamon State University era. Also, she says, many Senate faculty leaders strongly believe the administration has improperly left them out of the loop regarding some decisions.

Even though shared decision-making needs to be part of any institution of higher learning, she said, she fears it's an "eroding" aspect of university life.

At least one student leader says students support both sides.

"From a student perspective, there's been a groundswell of support for the chancellor," said UIS senior and student Senate member Craig McFarland. "However, I think shared governance is important. Faculty needs to have a voice at the table. I think that the chancellor and the Campus Senate will continue to work together. Both sides have the best interest of the students at heart."

Channeling Abraham Lincoln, Ringeisen sent a memo to UIS employees last Tuesday expressing his desire to progress.

"We now have an opportunity to bind up our university's wounds, with malice toward none and charity for all," Ringeisen wrote.

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**Richard Ringeisen's memo, dated April 21**

Faculty, staff and students:

Friday was a bruising day for those who were at the Campus Senate meetings, but this week, we have many renewed opportunities to work together for the benefit of our students, faculty and staff.

First let me address the resolution calling for an investigation of our Department of Athletics. We got our first look at the resolution Friday morning, and now we look forward to conversations about the next steps. We will take into account the affirmative vote of the Campus Senate, the opposition of the Academic Professional Advisory Committee, and the opposition of many Student Government Association leaders and student-athletes. Everyone's voice matters.

Today I am asking the campus community to join me in finding ways that we can all move forward together, as a community, and to move to a discussion about principles, policies and best practices.

So I am asking you to remember a few things, all of which were said at Friday's Campus Senate meeting or in the discussions leading up to it:

I don't know anybody who doesn't have our students' best interests at heart.

We have student-athletes who are passionate about their studies and their teams. They have great confidence in our athletic programs and in their administrators. Our student-athletes are highly successful in the classroom – something we all take great pride in.

We have many outstanding faculty and staff at UIS, dedicated to our students.

We are in relentless pursuit of our vision to become one of the top five small public liberal arts universities in the nation. We are managing this together every step of the way, and there is ample evidence of our successes.

As we continue the process of entry into NCAA Division II, we need to clarify the charge and membership of the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee – and the ways in which administration must improve its communications with this important committee.

We have some differences and disagreements about the meaning of shared governance. I think we can resolve these. You have my commitment from my administration to engage enthusiastically in a dialogue about principles of shared governance.

We now have an opportunity to bind up our university's wounds, with malice toward none and charity for all. Let's seize this opportunity to reflect on the lessons of the past few weeks, so that we can continue our focus on what's best for our students.

Let's continue to do what we all have been doing so well, building a university that all of us are proud of today and for many years to come.

Richard D. Ringeisen, Chancellor

The University of Illinois at Springfield

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