

WVU Faculty Senate calls for Garrison's resignation - 05/06/08

By Emily Corio

Anchor: Yesterday, West Virginia University's Faculty Senate voted, and they want President Michael Garrison out. More than three quarters of Senators approved a motion that says Garrison "must resign" or the WVU "Board of Governors must require his resignation." The vote came less than two weeks after an investigative panel found that top WVU officials granted Heather Bresch, Governor Manchin's daughters and Mylan Inc. Chief Operating Officer, an MBA degree she didn't earn. Emily Corio reports.

Corio: Nearly two dozen people spoke out during the Faculty Senate meeting, and the majority didn't have good things to say. Larry Hornak, a professor in the department of computer science and electrical engineering, says the scandal hints at how politics is entwined with WVU's administration.

Hornak: I've come to the conclusion that the episode that precipitated this meeting is only a symptom of a cancer whose progress must be arrested at WVU, and that is the encroachment of political influence within WVU governance and administration. I fully believe that President Garrison means the best for the institution. I've worked with him myself, many of you have; however, he's a product of the very environment which is the problem.

Corio: This is second time Garrison has faced no confidence vote. When he was a candidate for the job, faculty senators passed a vote of no confidence in the selection process for president. Last month, a panel investigating WVU's decision to retroactively award Heather Bresch a MBA found Bresch received special treatment because of her "high profile." She is Go. Manchin's daughter, and COO of Mylan Inc., whose founders is one of WVU's largest donors. She is also a friend of President Michael Garrison. Before he became president, Garrison was a lobbyist for Mylan. School of Medicine Professor Robert Griffith says the decision to grant Bresch the degree is a symptom of political cronyism at WVU.

Griffith: I believe that the only way to restore our reputation is to remove the political appointee. If President Garrison truly cares about this University, he will do the honorable thing and resign.

Corio: Law professor, Patrick McGinley, says this has been a difficult issue for the law school, because several of the people involved, including Garrison, are law school graduates and supporters. But ultimately, tenured law school faculty decided to support the motion that calls for Garrison's resignation.

McGinley: I think that we're guided by principles. We've looked at the facts. We understand the implications of this matter on the University community as a whole, and I think that's the basis for the conclusions that were drawn.

Corio: Several faculty members say school funding is threatened. Former Faculty Senate Chair, Christopher Wilkinson says it's already affected the University's capitol campaign.

Wilkinson: Donors are so hesitant to donate to contribute to the University as a consequence of their reading of the report, that the quiet phase of the capitol campaign has been suspended. The quiet phase is when we get prospective donors who are prepared to offer seven digit figures of contribution. That is in suspension.

Corio: But there were a few Garrison supporters who spoke out at the meeting. Among them was Faculty Senate Chair, Steven Kite.

Kite: We should not be guided by suspicions or revisitation of the presidential search process for which the senate has strongly gone on record. The essence of our motions today are about one man, the president of WVU. Whether you chose to believe it or not we have a president who has a deep respect to faculty because of the contributions we made to him as he developed here at WVU.

Corio: The vote was 77-19 in favor of Garrison's resignation. Two other motions that called for less severe action failed, but the faculty senate's vote doesn't guarantee any change. The senate has no

authority over whether the president will stay or go. That's up to the Board of governors and the President himself. Garrison released a statement Monday night that says he intends to continue doing the work that the Board of Governors has asked him to do.

For West Virginia Public Broadcasting, I'm Emily Corio in Morgantown.