

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BOARD OF SCHOOL IN FINANCIAL CRISIS GIVES PAID LEAVE TO PRESIDENT FOLLOWING MISMANAGED ACQUISITION DEAL

Watkins Commissioner and Executive Committee of the Board, Susan Basham, announced to faculty and staff yesterday (February 12, 2020) that President, Dr. J. Kline, has been placed on paid administrative leave. Basham's announcement immediately follows Watkins Faculty's official "Vote of No-Confidence" letter and a call for immediate removal of J. Kline as President of the institution. The letter was delivered to the Board of Trustees and J. Kline on Tuesday, February 11, 2020. Basham cites the cause for administrative leave as being related to Kline's 2 week absence from Watkins and his dereliction of responsibilities. Kline has not been on campus since the "[Town Hall](#)" meeting held on January 29, 2020.

The "Vote of No-Confidence" letter was signed by twenty-eight faculty and staff, and was approved by the Watkins Faculty Senate. It outlines J. Kline's inability to function in a senior leadership role, citing sixteen specific examples of leadership failures.

The list outlines a pattern of negligence and lack of transparency, concerns that were raised to Kline and to the Watkins Board as early as 2018. It includes the hiring Kline's wife (then fiancée) as the head of Admissions (VP of Strategic Enrollment Management) over objections of the search committee, faculty, and some board members, due to lack of relevant experience and her personal relationship to Kline. To date, Miyauchi still holds her post as VP of Strategic Enrollment Management. Miyauchi is no stranger to student protest and discontent. Immediately prior to her position at Watkins, Miyauchi was in the midst of a [budget crisis](#) at Alberta College of Art and Design.

Other concerns include a lack of effective communication and engagement with faculty and staff, and making misleading and inaccurate statements about enrollment trends and the overall health of the institution. The letter states Kline went thirteen months without a formal meeting with faculty and staff from August 2018 to December 2019, and that a series "brainstorm" sessions among Kline, faculty and staff during that same general time frame resulted in "numerous ideas and strategies for the continued success of the college". These strategies were not supported or implemented.

J. Kline's paid administrative leave has sparked significant dissatisfaction. Despite the clear disapproval from Watkins faculty, staff and students and Kline's inability to successfully manage Watkins, the board has opted to allow Kline to enjoy compensation while avoiding the individuals that he has failed. Watkins students still hold uncertain futures, Watkins faculty and staff have no offers of employment or severance. Basham's announcement causes further speculation of an alliance between her and Kline as they share a personal friendship.



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An online Change.org petition, “An Open Letter to the President of Watkins College of Art and Board of Directors”, has over 4,800 signatures. It makes several demands for transparency, and for accountable, enforceable guarantees for Watkins students who would be transferring under the Belmont deal, and severance pay for any Watkins faculty that are not hired by Belmont.

The **Save Watkins** initiative continues pressing the Watkins Board for transparency. Save Watkins is a collective of Students, Faculty, Staff, and Alumni of the Watkins College of Art. Our mission is to secure a safe and open environment for Watkins Students to express themselves without fear of being censored. This may manifest as securing the funding to keep the Watkins College of Art open in its current form, changing existing policies at Belmont, or working towards a partnership with a different institution.

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