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## WKU Regents decline to dismiss professor

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Western Kentucky University's Board of Regents voted 8-0 on Friday to not dismiss Dr. Jeanine Huss, a tenured professor in the School of Teacher Education, after an all-day hearing to decide if she was to be dismissed.

"Today's hearing followed the process outlined in the WKU Faculty Handbook. After hearing evidence from both sides, the Board voted not to dismiss the professor for cause," university spokesperson Jace Lux said in a statement. "This outcome demonstrates the university's commitment to following established procedures and participating in shared governance. As is WKU's usual practice, the University will not speak further on the details of this employment action at this time."

The special meeting was called due to WKU President Timothy Caboni's recommendation to the board that Huss be dismissed for cause. The hearing was the sole action item on the table for Friday.

The regents deliberated in closed session for a little over two hours before delivering the vote. The hearing beforehand totaled close to seven hours.

“We can hash this out in court because that’s where it’s going to go,” Clarc Mezibov, Huss’ counsel and an attorney from Cincinnati-based firm Mezibov Butler, said before the regents entered their closed session. “No, I’m not threatening. I’m telling you that’s the inevitable result if Dr. Huss is dismissed.”

The regents heard from university figures like Dr. Susan Keeseey, interim director of the School of Teacher Education and Huss’ direct supervisor, and Dr. Corinne Murphy, dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, who both outlined that Huss had a recent history of poor performance evaluations and negative student feedback.

Keeseey said she first started receiving concerns regarding Huss’ teaching in the fall of 2020. These included students reporting a lack of feedback and long waits to hear back from Huss via email. Keeseey said these issues continued into the spring.



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To remedy this, it was agreed that Huss' course load would be reduced in the fall of 2021 and she was to enter a performance improvement plan. According to Keeseey, that semester went much better for Huss, as there were no formal student complaints.

In February of 2022, a student emailed a complaint to Murphy detailing an assignment in Huss' Elementary Education 355: Student Diversity course that they took issue with. Students were told to dress as a "diverse person" and give a presentation on that figure's life. The student felt the assignment fell into the territory of cultural appropriation.

The student also wrote that Huss had made "several comments that I do not believe are professional, appropriate or represent this program or profession well."

Huss was then placed on paid administrative leave. Murphy submitted Keeseey's proposal for dismissal to provost Bud Fischer along with her own recommendation after she reviewed Huss' evaluations.

An advisory committee, made up of faculty, was then charged by Caboni to "make a reasonable effort to resolve the entire matter by informal methods," according to Molly Dunkum, WKU mathematics professor and chair of the committee.

This did not occur. The president made his recommendation to affirm Huss' dismissal, which the regents then voted against.

