

From: Aaron Boies  
Subject: Support for Dr. O'Kane  
Date: September 30, 2021 at 7:01:16 PM CDT  
To: Becky Hawbaker, Christopher Martin

Hello,

I am currently a senior who is enrolled in the plant systematics class that was taught by Dr. O'Kane until yesterday when administrative action was taken against him for his classroom policy regarding face masks. As a biology student I am in full support of Dr. O'Kane and any other faculty who would like to see all students wear masks in the classroom. To punish him for requesting safety and public health practice in his own classroom is denying him the right to a safe and healthy workplace.

Dr. O'Kane cares about his students and genuinely enjoys teaching. In the six weeks that I have been able to attend class, I have learned volumes of information from his expertise. He told us all that we should wear a mask in his classroom. However, he never threatened our grades for not wearing masks, he simply stated that we could leave if we did not want to wear a mask. No student left the classroom because of this and we all wore masks while in class.

I personally have no issue with the request to wear a mask. I never felt offense or anguish over having to wear a mask in the classroom. I personally have kept wearing a mask in public, even after vaccination, for the protection of my family and professors and understand why professors would want us to wear them. All of the professors have the choice to teach online but they teach us in person because they care about their students and believe that they learn best in person. This particular course cannot be taught online and must be done hands-on in a classroom, so this request to wear masks was not unreasonable as we ARE STILL IN A PANDEMIC. The actions taken against Dr. O'Kane are impeding the education and careers of his students, many of whom are graduating within a year. This punishment enforced by the board of regents is politically motivated and the policy is failing the students and professors.