

From: Tristan Murphy  
Subject: Steve O'Kane  
Date: October 3, 2021 at 8:23:02 AM CDT

Hello,

My name is Tristan Murphy and I was one of Dr. O'Kane's students this semester before he was relieved of his position.

I am a graduate student at the University of Northern Iowa and after encountering many professors in my academic career, I can say without a doubt that Steve O'Kane is easily one of the smartest and kindest professors that I have ever met. He genuinely cares about the learning and safety of his students and he did what he thought was the correct thing to keep us safe and learning. For this, he was unfairly and unceremoniously punished.

Personally, I think what the University did was wrong. I am aware that he allegedly violated school policy, but some rules need to be broken, especially if the rules are politically motivated and not based on scientific evidence such as this one. The lack of a mask mandate at UNI has made myself and other students uncomfortable. I firmly believe, and the numbers suggest, that COVID-19 is still rampant. Dr. O'Kane's voice of reason by requiring masks in his classroom reassured me that at least one person at this University actually cared about the safety of himself and his students. I am sure that there are other faculty that promote masks in classrooms, but Dr. O'Kane doubled down on his personal beliefs and values and put his career on the line. I cannot voice how much I respect him for that. I believe that Dr. O'Kane should be reinstated to teach this class and any and all punishments be rescinded.

Thank you for taking your time to read this email and I hope that you can do whatever is in your power as a union to help Dr. O'Kane as I truly believe that he is an excellent professor and an even better human being.

Respectfully,

Tristan Murphy