

College of DuPage trustee quits in disgust

Board moving in wrong direction, she says

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College of DuPage Trustee Jane Herron resigned in disgust this week for what she called "dictatorial" and possibly unethical leadership on the board.

Herron resigned Thursday night during a board meeting. During the general information portion of the meeting, she stood up and read a statement citing concerns about a pattern of disregard for college administrators, inappropriate micro-management of operations, and questionable contract awards.

Then she put on her coat and walked out.

Neither college administrators nor President Sunil Chand would comment on the resignation Friday.

Herron was head of the national search committee that brought Chand to the college.

The faculty association also did not return a request for comment. As trustee, Herron had been a lead negotiator with faculty on contract issues.

Herron, of Woodridge, said Friday she's been disturbed for at least two years by the direction the board is heading in.

"I've been trying to work within the system to effect change," she said. "I finally came to the conclusion that it's not possible. Sometimes you have to create a crisis for change to happen. That was the only way I saw to do it."

The tipping point, Herron said, was the board's recent hiring of a program manager for the facilities master plan.

Herron said trustees selected The Rise Group to manage \$300 million in capital projects at the college through 2012. Herron said the firm initially bid more than twice the \$3 million trustees budgeted and was not the low bidder — even after dropping its price to \$4.9 million.

"I thought, 'This is not right,'æ" Herron said. "That robs the students and that robs the taxpayers, and that's not OK."

Herron said that instance is reflective of several recent board decisions. She acknowledged being on the losing side of many of those votes but said she's not resigning because she didn't get her way.

Board Chairman Micheal McKinnon said he felt Herron's resignation letter was an attack against him, but he's not bothered by it. He just doesn't agree with it.

McKinnon pointed to the hiring of The Rise Group as an example of following a recommendation of college administrators. McKinnon said the firm was one of the two choices administrators preferred. It might not have been the low bid, but you get what you pay for, McKinnon said.

"I'm one of the very, very, very few board members that will ask hard questions," he said. "There have been many times during my last 10 years (on the board) where my voice was the minority or only voice on key issues. Instead of stepping down, I decided to keep my voice heard in order to best represent the taxpayers."

Herron would have had a chance to run for the chairman position in April but decided she had no chance to win. The chairman is selected by the trustees.

"I don't see an appreciation among the board members of a need for change," Herron said. She then called for an investigation of the board and its decision-making process.

"I really hope somebody looks into what's happening over there," Herron said. "I want someone to ask some hard questions about ethical operations. I have nothing concrete about what's going on, but the decisions were not based on data. They were coming from somewhere else."

The board now has 60 days to appoint Herron's replacement. Trustees are to meet Jan. 27 to discuss filling the vacancy.