

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

2021-2022 Term
2nd Session

2021-2-011 SR

In the Iowa State University Student Government Senate
Introduced on September 22nd, 2021

Senator Hayes (for themselves and Senator Paulson) introduced the following bill, which was read once and referred to Student Initiatives Committee.

A RESOLUTION

TITLE: Condemning the Lack of Student Input in Big XII Expansion

WHEREAS: On September 10th, 2021, the Big XII voted to expand its membership to include the University of Houston, Brigham Young University, the University of Central Florida, and the University of Cincinnati. The possibility of expansion was made public only a week prior¹, and was not directly communicated to students at all prior to the finalization of the vote, and

WHEREAS: A previous attempt to add Brigham Young University to the Big XII was met with significant resistance, coming both from students and interest groups². Specifically at Iowa State, Student Government passed a resolution stating that we did not support BYU's inclusion in the Big XII Conference³, and

WHEREAS: Such contention from just five years ago should have reminded Iowa State University and the Big XII itself that inclusion of new schools in the Big XII is an issue relevant to students. The mission statement of the Big XII begins: "The Mission of the Conference is to advance standards of scholarship, sportsmanship and equity consistent with the highest ideals of Conference membership"⁴. In recent times, Student Government has questioned Brigham Young University in whether this class of new members fits the "highest ideals of Conference membership," and

WHEREAS: The Big XII Mission statement later continues "[to e]ncourage collaboration in areas beyond athletics that builds good-will between institutions and promotes the overall missions of the universities." In many ways, Big XII membership extends beyond athletics, furthering the sentiment that Big XII membership is an issue requiring the input of students. Such input which was not allocated reasonable time by the Big XII and was either not considered or outright ignored by Iowa State University Administrators. For these reasons, be it therefore,

RESOLVED: That the following statement be sent on behalf of Student Government to Executive Assistant to Commissioner/Manager of Executive Affairs Melanie Krumbholz, Big 12 Conference Commissioner Bob Bowsby, Baylor University

¹ ([AP](#))

² ([ESPN](#))

³ ([Iowa State Daily](#))

⁴ ([Big XII](#))

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

President Linda Livingstone, Iowa State University President Wendy Wintersteen, University of Kansas Chancellor Douglas A. Girod, Kansas State University Interim President General Richard Myers, University of Texas at Austin President Jay Hartzell, Texas Christian University Chancellor Dr. Victor J. Boschini, Jr., Texas Tech University President Lawrence Schovanec, and West Virginia University President E. Gordon Lee:

“Pursuant to the Big XII mission statement, membership of the Conference is to be held to the “highest ideals.” While evaluating whether that mission would remain fulfilled after including a new member, current members must evaluate complex histories, policies, and structures that a prospective member possesses before coming to a verdict. Subsequently, each individual university has an obligation to their greatest shareholders, their students, to consider student feedback on matters that concern membership to a conference that it will form ties with in the coming years.

The Big XII Conference’s rapid expansion did not allow for this input to be considered. Within a week of the first reporting that actions were being taken to enlarge the Big XII Conference, the four new members had accepted their invitations. At Iowa State, Student Government members were not notified of the potential expansion at all. Had we been at the time of the decision being made public, there still would not have been enough time for collaboration with the Administration to form a shared opinion. By that point, it was too late to have discussions with students, evaluate all four universities, and correspond student opinion to the University. For a conference that represents more than its Universities’ athletic departments, but their whole Student Bodies, this is unacceptable.

In future decisions regarding membership to the Big XII, student voices must be considered. Crucially, adequate time must be given by the Big XII prior to votes on new membership for both Administrators and students to evaluate whether prospective members are held to the “highest ideals.” If the principal goal of the Big XII Conference is truly to hold its own members to the highest ideals, this aim could not have been met without considering student voices throughout the expansion process. If this is not the principal goal of the Big XII, then we request a reevaluation of the Conference’s priorities.” and be it further,

RESOLVED: That the following statement be sent on behalf of Student Government to Iowa State President Wendy Wintersteen, Director of Athletics Jamie Pollard, Senior Associate Director of Athletics Calli Sanders, and Faculty Athletics Representative Tim Day:

“As the body charged with representing the Student Body of Iowa State University, we are disappointed by the process in which the Big XII was expanded. Without speaking to the merits of individual members, the mission of the Big XII extends beyond Athletics at any one university. Membership affects Student Organizations on campus that hold conferences and events with other Big XII members. The Big XII is ostensibly a community, but without input from existing members when considering new additions, this can hardly be the case. How students are affected by any additional member cannot immediately be

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

known to the Administration. If the Administration cares about the student body's opinions, they therefore have an obligation to seek out student input on these matters.

With the understanding that the gap between the Big XII announcing potential new members and a vote to confirm them was short, we still expect that members of the University Administration reach out to Student Government for input on new membership. This is especially true considering that just five years ago, Student Government expressed explicit disapproval of the entry into the Conference of Brigham Young University, one of the members accepted on September 10th. Whether student input in this important decision was not sought due to a lack of care or a desire to be willfully ignorant of student opposition to Big XII expansion, Student Government remains deeply dissatisfied with this process.

In the future, Student Government demands that the Administration at Iowa State be more considerate of student opinion, makes an effort to allow for student input on University matters, and even invites students to participate in the active consideration of all decisions which affect members of the Student Body. The Administration needs to recognize the Student Body as the primary concern of our University, and the Administration must recognize that the Student Body is not satisfied being left as bystanders forced to comply with decisions made without our consent. This is especially demanded in cases of decisions made which affect the entirety of Iowa State's Student Body, which includes cases that compel Iowa State's Student Body to be a part of a larger community." and be it further,

RESOLVED: That this entire resolution be sent on behalf of Student Government to Student Governments of the seven other continuing members of the Big XII Conference, with the encouragement to pursue similar legislation in their own bodies, as well as the Des Moines Register.