

From the moment the Board of Trustees received the report alleging unwelcome and inappropriate communication and attention by Dr. Boer, our intent has been to act justly and amicably in the best interests of the Calvin University community.

We have made repeated good faith attempts to resolve this matter in a way that extends grace to the Boer family and that allows the University to remain focused on its mission. Unfortunately, Dr. Boer's actions since his resignation and the legal complaint Dr. and Mrs. Boer filed on Friday, April 12, reflect a disappointing refusal to take accountability for the misconduct Dr. Boer privately admitted to us.

The Board regrets that this matter continues to distract from the University's important work to equip students to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world. Part of that mission is speaking the truth and speaking against disinformation. The Board regrets that Dr. Boer's actions have caused this situation and this hurt for many members of our community, and continues to pray and call for respect, civility and sensitivity, with special prayer for the woman who brought forth the original report.

We would prefer to allow the court of law to decide this case on the legal merits. However, the misrepresentations made in the Boers' legal complaint include vicious personal attacks against current employees who had no role in the process that led to Dr. Boer's resignation, as well as Board of Trustees members. At least one of those employees is now the subject of violent threats. The disinformation campaign is also serving to distract and deflect from Dr. Boer's admitted conduct, which is at the center of this dispute. To counter all of this, we offer the following:

The Events That Caused Dr. Boer's Resignation

The Board was clear in its initial announcement that Dr. Boer's resignation was due to inappropriate and unwelcome communication with a non-student member of the community. That announcement clearly stated that the conduct to which Dr. Boer admitted did not include physical contact or sexually explicit communication.

The conduct did involve him exchanging approximately 100 messages over roughly 10 days with a woman who was not his wife, with him sending at least half of the messages and initiating almost all of the conversations. Disclosing the actual messages would reveal the complainant's identity; however, they included texts where Dr. Boer admitted to initiating the exchange under false pretenses. He made multiple comments about the woman's physical appearance. Dr. Boer also said in these messages that he wanted to get to know her and repeatedly asked about her whereabouts and her plans to attend Calvin events so he could see her.

In his meetings with the Board, Dr. Boer characterized these messages as "flirtatious" and "inappropriate." He also reported to Board leadership that he had deleted the messages from his phone knowing they were wrong. He admitted these facts on two separate occasions, once to a small group of Trustees and again in a meeting that included 26 of the 31 Board members, where he expressed regret for the pain and embarrassment caused by his conduct.

The Board viewed the content of the messages in their totality as particularly inappropriate and concerning in light of the power dynamic, considering Dr. Boer's position as President of the University and the woman's role in the community.

Since the announcement of his resignation, Dr. Boer has complained about a lack of due process leading up to the end of his employment with the University. Dr. Boer, by his own admission, engaged in misconduct which the Board felt rendered him no longer fit to be President. This admission of guilt negated the need for any additional process. As the Board has previously stated, while the report came through the University's Title IX office, no formal complaint was made to trigger a formal Title IX process, nor did the Board make a finding that he engaged in sexual harassment as defined by Title IX.

In his public statement, Dr. Boer alleged that "the sum total of my conversations was a single 15-minute video meeting with the Board." This is demonstrably false. The initial meeting, in which Dr. Boer was notified of all the allegations in the report and was provided an initial opportunity to respond, lasted roughly two hours. Board officers subsequently communicated with Dr. Boer multiple times before he addressed the entire Board. Dr. Boer ended his remarks to the entire Board prior to the end of the 15-20-minute time period the Board had allotted for his remarks at that meeting.

Dr. Boer also asked for and was given an opportunity to address the entire Board again, prior to the Board's acceptance of his resignation, but he did not show up to that other meeting.

The Board's initial announcement also referred to other aspects of the complaint that Dr. Boer denied. The Board did not make a formal finding on these additional allegations because the misconduct to which Dr. Boer admitted was serious enough on its own to require the Board to act.

After His Resignation:

DeWit Manor is owned by the University and exists for the purpose of hosting University events and as housing for the President during his or her term.

As soon as Dr. Boer resigned, members of the Board of Trustees assisted the Boer family in securing temporary housing. Dr. Boer was informed on February 26 that his and his family's access to the entire campus was restricted. He was instructed that with prior approval, he and his family could return to campus to get personal items or start moving out of DeWit Manor. On February 29, Dr. Boer communicated to a Board member that his family had moved to another place where they had a longer-term stay.

A few weeks later, the Board received several reports that suggested that the Boers may have started living at the DeWit Manor again, without permission and in direct violation of the Board's earlier directive. A review of security camera footage confirmed these reports. Security cameras exist at DeWit Manor for the physical security of the President and his or her family. The cameras are not there to monitor comings and goings and were only consulted after receiving reports of activities taking place there.

After weeks of the Boers' refusal to comply with these access restrictions regarding the Manor, practical and legal concerns compelled the University to remind Dr. Boer of those restrictions on April 2. In that communication, the Board reiterated its willingness to provide access to the house with advance notice. That letter also reiterated the University's willingness to assist Dr. Boer and his family in trying to identify possible housing options in the Grand Rapids area. The Boers responded with legal action seeking an injunction allowing them to re-enter the Manor House, which was rejected by the court even before the University knew legal action had been initiated.

Other Allegations In The Lawsuit

Beyond being irrelevant to the events that led to his resignation, the lawsuit also mischaracterizes the search process that led to Dr. Boer's hiring. One of the 16 search committee members is married to the cousin of a University administrator's wife. This distant connection was fully known to the search committee and immaterial to the committee's work.

As part of its search process, the search committee invited several candidates to apply after the initial deadline had passed. That same committee ultimately recommended Dr. Boer for the position – a recommendation that reflected the emphatic endorsement of a wide range of University leaders, including those alleged in the lawsuit to have opposed it.

The Board also rejects the lawsuit's characterization of the University's treatment of Mrs. Boer. If anything, the University offered Mrs. Boer special treatment by hiring her in an expanded spousal employment role, which the University had never done before.

That required administrators and staff – particularly those with responsibility for managing University finances – to develop new ways of working to accommodate Mrs. Boer's priorities. This naturally required balancing competing financial interests in a stewardly way. While the Board laments the existence of racism, sexism and other related problems that exist in the world, it is baseless to suggest that any tension arising from efforts of University administrators and staff to ultimately hold Mrs. Boer accountable for spending decisions was in any way related to personal, gender, or racial animus.

We hope that providing further clarity around the nature of Dr. Boer's misconduct and correcting some of the misrepresentations of fact in the Boers' lawsuit will provide members of our community with important context.

In summary, the Board emphatically rejects the accusations of breach of contract, defamation, and discrimination laid out in the Boers' lawsuit, and we are confident that further misrepresentations will be corrected through litigation.

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