

An Open Letter to President Boren, from the student membership of The Pride of Oklahoma

President Boren,

We are tired of being ignored!

This year, there are strict repercussions for speaking out about the condition of The Pride. In order to be in the band, we had to sign a document stating that we would not say anything negative about the organization or its leadership, or else we will be kicked out immediately. We've been forced to lie through our teeth about what's happening out of fear. Our student voices are being quelled with threats – and this is perhaps the most dangerous part of all.

You are a good politician, President Boren. You know how to play the game to subdue the students, trivialize the publicity, champion the incompetent director, blame the right people, and spin the favor in your direction. We are not stupid. You've done some great things for the University of Oklahoma, but now you are effectively eliminating the people who care the most about the band, the football team, and the spirit of Oklahoma. With respect to governing the student body, it's unjust and it's turning an incredible student-fueled program into a dictatorship. Think about what would happen if you decided to listen and engage with us now. We would once again be proud to be a member of The Pride of Oklahoma and part of this prestigious institution. There would be very few people who would be upset with your decision to hire a more competent, qualified director of whom we all could approve. Most importantly, your conscience would be at peace with the knowledge that you listened to the students and you ultimately put the organization and the university first at the expense of a few self-centered opinions.

While we agree with the Alumni sentiments about the Pride's direction, we don't necessarily agree with the way they went about presenting it. We are absolutely not being influenced by Alumni; our sentiments are our own. We vehemently disagree with the direction the Pride is headed because we fear it will continue to create an environment of mediocrity and complacency.

Many of us resolved to be in Pride again solely because of football. We have accepted that things will not change and have decided to stay in The Pride for the trips and camaraderie. This is completely unacceptable to us for a number of reasons. First, students should want to be in The Pride of Oklahoma, to be involved in something great not because they want to go on free trips. Second, many students in The Pride are required to participate due to their field of study and they aren't getting the quality of education a student expects from The University of Oklahoma. We just want to learn and we are tired of our time being squandered by ineffective leadership and poor instruction.

All of this is just so frustrating and beyond infuriating that people would just stand by and watch a great organization with nationally recognized traditions be destroyed from the inside out. Those who have spoken out have been assumed to be in the minority. There are parties who are resistant to change because they are simply comfortable with the status quo. Change for the sake of change gets us nowhere. If an unqualified director had been brought in at any other university and the quality of the organization deteriorated drastically, immediate action would have been taken to correct the direction of the organization. A similar situation happened in the 1990's to our football team with Howard Schnellenberger. He was fired after his only season with the team after a less than stellar performance.

We are tired of being embarrassed. We are tired of mediocrity. We are tired of poor leadership. But most of all, we are tired of being ignored.

Sincerely,

The Pride of Oklahoma Students



The Pride of Oklahoma Student Quotes

"I dreamed of being in The Pride of Oklahoma all of my life, but being embarrassed about being in The Pride was not in my dream."

"Some of my friends chuckle when I mention that I'm in The Pride because they all know how much of a joke it has become."

"We're not the 'Pride' of Oklahoma, we're the 'Bane' of Oklahoma."

"Before Dr. Stolarik came, I proudly wore my Pride jacket everywhere and told friends and family that I was a member of the Pride of Oklahoma. Now I am ashamed to be recognized as a part of this organization."

"Morale is at an all time low because no one believes our situation can be improved because our President is ignoring us."

"I'd rather do my high school marching shows again, as opposed to what we have been performing as a university band."

"We are embarrassed because we know we can be great, but are doing boring and dull shows that even high schools wouldn't perform."

"The current level of education is not consistent with a tradition of excellence."

"We want to entertain the fans, but Dr. Stolarik doesn't think we're capable."

"Because we have stolen so many things from Wisconsin, I feel like I'm in the little brother band that wasn't even good enough to be the Wisconsin band."

"Dr. Stolarik promised originality and excitement in our shows, but all we've gotten are copies of the Wisconsin band performances and lots of standing around."

"At the University of Oklahoma, student academic integrity is very important, but what about professor academic integrity? Our shows are like exams in other classes and he's copied for most of them."

"The Pride director refused to teach us how to use drill writing software in our marching band techniques class and then openly admitted that he didn't know how to use it."

"As a Music Ed. Major, It is unlikely that I will find a job because I do not know how to use the software that is necessary to teach marching band."

"I didn't come to OU to be in The Pride, do toe taps and dance."

"I had the choice between going to The Ohio State University and OU for college. Ultimately, I chose OU because of The Pride. Looking back, I deeply regret my decision to come to OU."