

OUT OF OFFICE

STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT IMPEACHED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TEXAS A&M HISTORY

Former-Student Body President Hudson Kraus was impeached and removed by the Student Senate on Sept. 27 by a 35-15 vote following weeks of public controversy.

After Kraus changed the qualifications of the vice president of campus improvement cabinet position to match his brother's lack of Student Government Association, or SGA, experience at the Aug. 30 senate meeting, senators motioned to impeach him, resulting in the Sept. 27 trial.

After his brother was denied by the senate, Kraus altered the position's qualifications to be entirely entry-level rather than the initial paragraph recommending SGA experience. The altered version states an individual's resume does not matter as much as their "attitude toward service and their personality."

At the Aug. 30 meeting, Constituency Affairs Chair Marcus Glass said he discovered the changes just hours before.

"In fact, it turns out there was an edit made to the actual descriptions at 11:30 a.m. today," Glass said. "So, what does that mean for us? Do we disenfranchise the student body by changing what the qualifications were originally for this position?"

The senate then denied the nomination in a 23-27 vote. Following the meeting, senators demanded a public apology from Kraus, but he never gave one, according to an official within SGA choosing to stay anonymous.

"There [were] a variety of meetings where an apology was demanded," the official said. "And finally, people started saying, 'Enough is enough. We value integrity. We want to preserve that.'"

The SGA Code requires one-third of its members to sign a petition to initiate impeachment proceedings, but in just days, the motion accumulated 43 signatures, according to the official.

At an Internal Affairs meeting with the top student senators, Kraus privately apologized to the group and distributed a written statement, where he said impeachment was not the proper route to take.

"Furthermore, my feeling is that impeachment is a tool to be utilized when all other options have been exhausted," the letter reads. "In this case, I made a mistake and I take ownership of the error. However, my actions have not been indicative of a negative pattern of behavior that would warrant such an impeachment action occurring." The trial was initially scheduled for Sept. 13, but Kraus submitted an appeal to A&M's Judicial Court alleging

misconduct in the impeachment proceedings. The court then issued a Writ of Injunction, stopping the proceedings and issuing a gag order, preventing senators and those involved from speaking about the impeachment.

The court simultaneously issued a Writ of Certiorari, instructing the Student Senate and Kraus to submit evidence to the court in preparation for a trial to review the alleged misconduct.

However, he withdrew the appeal days later, according to a Sept. 19 statement.

"We are at a crossroads, and it is not about being right anymore, but about preserving unity among the Aggie family," the statement reads. "I wish to restore the bonds of peace that would lead [SGA] back to selflessly serving Aggies, and I trust that others are interested in doing the same."

Following the withdrawal, the judicial trial was canceled and the senate trial was scheduled for Sept. 27, the next general senate meeting. The SGA Code mandates impeachment trials occur during an executive session, so no individuals besides senators, the chief justice, the student body president and SGA's faculty advisor were allowed in the room during the deliberation.

After hours of deliberation, the Student Senate voted 35-15 to impeach Kraus, passing the two-thirds requirement for removal of office.

The trial was conducted by Chief Justice of the Judicial Court Sawyer Bagley.

"After multiple rounds of counting and ensuring that everything was followed according to the ruleset ... the final vote was 35 to 15," Bagley said during the meeting. "The impeachment removal of Student Body President Kraus has passed."

Kraus declined to comment. Multiple senators declined to comment or answer questions, citing a gag order placed on them until the senate's Internal Affairs group makes an official statement.

According to the SGA Code, Speaker of the Senate Andrew Applewhite is next in the line of succession for student body president, if he accepts the position.

Story by Nicholas Gutteridge



September 19, 2023
Office of the Student Body President

Loyalty, a spirit of unity, and fighting for what is right. These are my guiding principles as Student Body President (SBP) of the greatest university in the nation.

Earlier this month, certain members of the Student Senate called for my impeachment. It is crucial to understand that Texas A&M University is not undertaking this action against me, nor was it sanctioned or approved by the administration. In fact, I have received overwhelming personal support from the student body, faculty, and distinguished alumni. I have not publicly responded to the various demands out of respect for the Student Government Association (SGA), the university at large and most importantly you, the student body. However, unfair and inaccurate information has now been published in the media, and I can no longer stand by without a response.

Here are the key facts:

1. Impeachment proceedings were brought forth by a certain group of individuals in the Student Senate, an independent student organization, and not by Texas A&M University or any member of the administration.
2. I revised the qualifications for the role of Vice President of Campus Improvement (which is a new position on the Executive Cabinet this year). These revisions included changing "Previous SGA experience recommended but not required" to "This is an entry-level position... prior SGA experience is not required." These adjustments were within my purview as SBP per the SGA bylaws.
3. No recall was allowed by this change. The Student Senate voted to deny the candidate who was nominated for VP of Campus Improvement and the position is currently vacant.
4. I was not involved in interviewing my brother for the position of Vice President of Campus Improvement on my Executive Cabinet, nor was I involved in selecting him for the position. Individuals on my Top Staff team conducted the interview and selection process for that position.
5. I apologized for not proactively communicating my revision of the qualifications when it was read aloud at the general senate meeting and requested an intermediary action as an alternative to impeachment. For the SGA bylaws, impeachment is to be utilized in cases of substantial failure to uphold the duties or honor of my office. An impeachment would overturn the desires of the Texas A&M student body, who elected me to represent them as Student Body President.

As Aggies, we share there's a spirit that can never be sold. I believe that as Student Body President, it is my responsibility to maintain the unity of that spirit. Generations of Aggies have come before us and have lit the way for us all. New generations of Aggies will come after us and we must light the way for them. As members of the Aggie family, we should never see dissent among one another, which is the reason behind our unwavering love to never have another Aggie. It is my desire to re-establish unity of the spirit here at Texas A&M.

Due to my strong conviction regarding loyalty and a spirit of unity to it belong to all Aggies, I have chosen to fight for what is right. I have a high regard for the Judicial Court who has already ruled in my favor to grant this injunction. I sought this injunction because this process has been unfair and, frankly, wrong. However, considering no precedent under this injunctive statute I would have to argue publicly against a fellow student and a fellow Aggie - an individual who was also a member of my campaign team. We are at a crossroads, and it is not about being right anymore, but about preserving unity among the Aggie family. I wish to restore the bonds of peace that would lead the Student Government Association back to selflessly serving Aggies, and I trust that others are interested in doing the same. In that spirit, today I am requesting my request for an injunction.

Removing my request for an injunction only emphasizes my commitment to fighting these allegations at the impeachment trial. I trust that the Student Senate will understand the magnitude of their decision and conduct a fair and just process as we move forward.

Texas A&M is different than any other higher education institution in the nation. It is renowned for developing leaders of unique character dedicated to serving the greatest good. As a leader, my responsibility is to serve that greatest good to generations, and can only be accomplished through fostering peace among the individuals involved. I look forward to continued collaboration with those in the Student Senate as we focus on our common purpose to serve the students of Texas A&M.

Thanks, and Giga 'Em!
Hudson Kraus '18
Student Body President

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Hudson Kraus

IN HIS DEFENSE

Student Body Kraus' statement given on September 19. Courtesy of The Battalion.



WALK OF SHAME

Former-Student Body President Hudson Kraus and Vice President of Municipal Affairs Ben Crockett walk out of Koldus after an executive session that led to Kraus' impeachment on Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023. Photo by Ishika Samant

PUT TO VOTE

Senior Student Body President Hudson Kraus sits at the Student Senate meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023. Photo by Chris Swann

HOWDY WITH HUDSON FOR STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT