

Ian Strasma

J415

February 15, 2023

Wolgast

A resolution and condemnation of the Student Executive Committee's use of student funds to finance their trip to Washington, D.C. interrupted the University of Kansas's Student Senate meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 8. Despite the resolution failing to pass, the incident culminated in former Chief of Staff Samuel Sokoloff resigning from his position, citing his grievances with the executive committee's lack of communication, disregard for KU's student body, and alleged misappropriation of student fee money.

The incident began when two student senators, Blake Bailey and Austin Stiffler, presented their resolution which aimed to condemn the executive committee's lack of communication over the finances and goals of their trip to Big 12 On the Hill 2023. The resolution, if passed, also demanded that the executive committee cancel their late February trip unless they could provide an adequate explanation for the trip and a thorough list of where the allocated funds will be going to.

In his speech supporting the resolution, Sokoloff claimed that despite ostensibly being a trip to lobby for student mental health, the true purpose was to pay for the executive committee to network in Washington. "I went to this Big 12 Conference. I will tell you the muster of people there at that conference – they are not in it for the student body," Sokoloff said. "I don't think that they carry forward the values of the University of Kansas."

Sokoloff went on to criticize the use of student fee money to finance the trip when other services at KU are currently underfunded. "I don't think we should be spending all the student fee money, especially when the buses are a wreck. CAPS is underfunded. There are hundreds of

students that are waiting right now for mental health guidance and stuff at the school. Recycling is gone,” he said.

At the end of his speech Sokoloff announced his immediate resignation.

In her negative speech, Student Body President Sadie Williams explained that this conference is something that KU’s executive committee has historically attended and that she believed the resolution was misinformed. “It has been a precedent, something that happens every single year pre-COVID,” Williams said. “We can certainly break it down more, but it was never out of the intent to hide anything from you all.”

Government Relations Director DaNae Estabine also supported the executive committee’s trip in her negative speech. She argued against Sokoloff’s claim that the committee would not be getting anything done with their lobbying. “Every little bit of advocacy that we can do is important, and it has meaning,” said Estabine. “If we get a chance to put ourselves in the room with these people, we need to take that opportunity.”

The resolution ultimately failed with 14 affirmative votes, 18 negative votes, and three abstentions.