

Emails, Phone Calls, Messages and Meetings Regarding Mold Problem at 219 Melrose Court

House owned by the University of Iowa and Iowa State Board of Regents, managed by Heritage Property Management.

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| <p>Telephone call November 2007</p> | <p>I called David at Heritage Property Management to complain of a moldy smell. A couple days later he called to inform me that someone had been by to test the house the day before and found nothing.</p> |
| <p>Telephone calls Every month from December to March</p> | <p>I'd write a note on my rent check envelope or give a phone call, explaining to David that water comes into the basement during heavy rains and that the gutters are clogged. I point out that the drainage tubes on the south side are badly broken open, allowing the drain water to spill out next to the house's foundation. After two reminders, someone comes by to change the tubing. It's left in a position that requires water to run uphill. Around February I inform him that the front gutter is mostly covered with roofing shingles.</p> |
| <p>February 28, 2008 From: Beach To: Missen</p> | <p>Thank you for bringing this to my attention. I am sorry for the many inconveniences you have encountered breaking in one of our new properties. I will follow up regarding the interactions with our property management office, particularly Cathy, and determine how we can have a better interface with our tenants.</p> |
| <p>End of March</p> | <p>The first big snow melt/rains come and the basement has 1" to 2" of water throughout. My son's band equipment is soaked. They have to lug everything outside to dry. I call Heritage Property Management to complain. The woman answering the phone claims "it's happening all over town" and says they will send someone by to dry out the basement. No one comes.</p> |
| <p>April 2, 2008 Letter to David Heritage Property Management</p> | <p>Here's April's rent and a list of the things that need attention at 219 Melrose Court...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the leaves and branches from the fall/winter need to be carted away (they will kill the grass if not...) – the motion detector light on the front of the house (which lights up the stairs) remains on all day and only turns off at night (when it feels like it.) There's a brand new replacement unit at the top of the basement stairs. – the roofing covers the gutters along the front side of the house, meaning water pours off directly – one window in the upstairs bath and another in the smaller bedroom are only attached by one screw, which means they will become a problem when it comes time to open the windows – the screen for the sliding door next to the dining area is missing (the track is there, but the screen is gone) – I'm still experiencing water in the basement on wet days |
| <p>June 7, 2008 From: Missen To: Beach, Heritage Property Management</p> | <p>While I might take comfort in the fact that my lease is up in less than 60 days, I cannot.</p> <p>I've spent inordinate time cleaning up my water filled basement, dealing with mold and mosquitoes and running the AC simply to dry out the house.</p> <p>While I have reported several times since last December that the house's gutters are clogged and some are 80% covered with poorly installed roofing material, nothing has been done. So every time it rains the water pours down the sides of the house and the dripping, from the water stored in the gutters, lasts for a day or more after the rain is over. The walls smell of mildew and I vacillate between running the AC and opening all the windows to air out the place.</p> <p>The last manifestation of this poor management is a leak in the ceiling of the family room in the back of the house. The water is coming through the ceiling fan and staining both the ceiling and carpet. My guess is that the seal around the upstairs window was broken when the window installers did their very sloppy installation of the new windows. They left behind gobs of extruded insulation on the untreated and rotting sills, along with debris and empty containers. I'm going to guess that no one inspected their work. The broken seal was the perfect entry point for the water pouring down the side of the house because of the clogged</p> |

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| | <p>gutters.</p> <p>There are several species of ants now working their way through the house. I know that some ants are attracted to wet wood and hope that they are not causing any damage.</p> <p>Finally, after seven months of requests, someone finally came by to do the landscaping promised in my lease (after a frantic call to David before guests were to arrive for my son's graduation.) Whoever showed up ran a mower over the small patches of lawn and blew the debris off of my deck. But they did not rake out the leaves from last fall, they did not pick up sticks, they did not trim up the storm-damaged bush, and they left behind the large garbage bin full of dead branches I had left prominently on the back sidewalk. I wound up pressure washing the deck myself before my guests showed up.</p> <p>Three weeks ago I cleaned the blown insulation and debris out of the whole house fan so I could use it. I had reported this problem to David last fall when the insulation was installed.</p> <p>It's one thing to waste a tenant's time and money, but trashing the house is self-defeating. Unless, of course, the plan is to milk the house for a couple years and then tear it down. Still, it would be fair to your tenants to let them know that this is the case so they don't expect better maintenance.</p> <p>Grumpily,</p> |
| <p>June 7, 2008 From: Beach To: Missen</p> | <p>Cliff,</p> <p>I'm asking George about where the ball has been dropped. Thank you for letting me know.</p> <p>One of us will get back with you quickly.</p> <p>NOTE: They do not get back to me. Even slowly...</p> |
| <p>June 7, 2008 From: Missen To: Beach</p> | <p>Thanks Mary Jane.</p> <p>After I sent this I realized that I was writing it for you and the management company, so there's a few peevish bits that weren't intended for you as much as the folks at Heritage.</p> <p>Still, I've been on the road a lot in the last couple months and it's a pain to return home to hours of clean-up when I'd rather be spending my limited time with family and friends.</p> <p>I'm shopping for a new place and have seen a clear distinction between those properties that are well-managed and those which are not. After this experience, I'm willing to spend more for good management. I'm going to guess that my current residence will always rent, as close as it is to the hospital. But with a single bath it's going to get beat up pretty quick if it hosts multiple students. If it were my property, I'd invest in making it solid and rent it to visiting faculty/clinicians.</p> |
| <p>July 6, 2008 From: Missen To: Doug Booth City of Iowa City Housing & Inspection Services</p> | <p>I live in a university owned house at 219 Melrose Court that is managed by a private property management firm. For the nine months I've lived here I've reported mold and water problems (clogged gutters, water in the basement, water in the walls, etc.) to no avail.</p> <p>Only recently, since the flooding in the rest of the city, have I read articles that describe the symptoms of mold allergy and I realize that I've experienced most of them.</p> <p>I have declined to extend my lease because of the poor management of this house; originally because I was unhappy with how poorly the house was being maintained, but now I'm seriously concerned about my health.</p> <p>Some of my colleagues have suggested that I live elsewhere until I find a new home, others have told me that I may need to dispose of all my fabrics, some have advised me to get a full checkup.</p> <p>How concerned should I be about the mold? It's so pervasive that I entertain visitors outside and cannot run the AC without smelling up the place.</p> <p>I purchased a mold testing kit last week and it looked nasty after 48-hours. (I sent it off to the lab...) Is there a way to test the house and definitively say,</p> |

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| | <p>“This house is unsafe to live in?”</p> <p>What’s the City’s Housing & Inspection Services role in this?</p> <p>At what point should I seriously consider moving to a hotel?</p> |
| <p>July 13, 2008 From: Missen To: Beach, Heritage Property Management</p> | <p>Just to keep you in the loop on matters at 219 Melrose Court (since no one has come by to investigate the previously reported problems.)</p> <p>Not only is the perpetually wet basement unusable and unhealthy for human habitation, I can no longer run the A/C without filling the house with the smell of mold and mildew. The water damaged fan in the back room has stopped working entirely. I have discovered patches of mold upstairs in papers and on several of my natural fiber African drums. I am visiting doctors to understand the sinus headaches and shortness of breath and documenting the visible signs of mismanagement and mold.</p> <p>I’ll be gone this next week and will try to stay out of the house as much as possible before moving on July 31st. You might want to take a look yourself at the damage. I think you’re going to have a hard row to how to make this building safe for your next tenants.</p> <p>Very unhappily,</p> |
| <p>July 14th, 2008 From: Tony Vespa To: Missen</p> | <p>We’ll get Actually Clean back over to the house right away.</p> <p>*** NOTE: I have no evidence that Actually Clean had EVER been to the house. The visible mold on the wall and the water on the floor was untouched.</p> |
| <p>July 27, 2008 From: Missen To: Beach, Vespa</p> | <p>Here’s yet another update on my three month mold nightmare.</p> <p>No one has showed up yet to address the mold problem in my house. It continues to grow while I grow increasingly more distressed. There’s visible mold throughout the basement and both toilets grow a moldy ring within 5 days of being scrubbed.</p> <p>My allergist, who has treated me for 15 years, told me this week that I have developed a new mold allergy where I had none before. I’m taking medications to alleviate the headaches and respiratory problems. Mostly, I’m staying out of the house as much as possible, keeping all the windows open, and sleeping next to an open window. Last Friday my doctor had my lungs x-rayed and did some other tests to understand the extent of the damage.</p> <p>Last week I took a stack of papers to my office and within an hour my office mates were complaining about the mold smell. I’m packing up to leave this house and finding mold in my artwork, in my papers, and in my books. (I can’t run the A/C because it’s overrun with mold.) I’ve taken boxes elsewhere only to stink up the storage space.</p> <p>Now I’m stacking my possessions in the garage with the depressing conclusion that I’m going to have to treat everything that’s been in this house. That’s going to be time consuming and expensive.</p> <p>I’ve contacted the city housing inspectors and will document all of this for the incoming tenants so that they understand the health risks.</p> <p>When I decided to not extend my lease three months ago, I was annoyed at the lack of good stewardship demonstrated towards this structure. Now I’m angry that my health, my possessions, and pocketbook have all suffered from the poor management of this property. It is contrary to my nature to pick a fight with my employer, but I intend to seek full remuneration for the damages, the health care costs, and the loss of a livable home these past few months. There’s no reason I should have to pay for this neglect.</p> <p>One reason I rented a larger home was so that my sons could stay here when they wished. My eldest son packed up his band and move their practices elsewhere months ago because they were tired of schlepping all their equipment and rugs upstairs to dry outside. Now neither of my sons will come to spend the night because of the mold smell and I don’t blame them.</p> <p>This has been a miserable experience for me.</p> <p>Unhappily,</p> |

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| <p>July 28, 2008 From: Fountain To: Missen</p> | <p>Thank you for your note.</p> <p>The University did have a firm go to the house mid July and perform a second mold test. They did find spores and treated them.</p> <p>The owner of Heritage will contact companies today to address.</p> |
| <p>July 28, 2008 From: Missen To: Fountain, Beach, Hollins</p> | <p>OK. I'm getting an all-too-subtle message that you're only hearing half of my concerns and are working on covering your butts rather than dealing full-square with the problem.</p> <p>Since I'm the one who has to live with this mess and the fallout, I'm going ahead and hiring the professionals and getting the job of protecting my health and stuff done right.</p> <p>You can work with me on the front end, make it easier for everyone, and possibly save yourself some money, or I can pile up the bills and come back with an attorney to make my claims.</p> <p>I know you're busy, but I'm in a vortex since I'm moving this week and need to make serious decisions.</p> <p>It's your call.</p> |
| <p>July 28, 2008 To: Missen From: Norm Cate Senior Housing Inspector City of Iowa City</p> | <p>Doug Boothroy just gave me your email regarding mold at your 219 Melrose Ct. home. I'll try to answer your questions as best as possible. You asked is there a way to test a house and definitely say it is uninhabitable? Technically, no. There are no established EPA interior air quality standards. However, high levels of mold is recognized as a health hazard for people with allergies.</p> <p>You asked "how concerned should I be?" You should be concerned, but not panicked. Mold is something that is everywhere in our everyday environment. You may have high levels of mold in your house, but that doesn't necessarily mean your health has been compromised. If you're concerned about your exposure, you may get a test at an allergist to indicate your level of tolerance to mold.</p> <p>You asked what the City's role in this is? Because this is University property, therefore state owned, we (the City) have no jurisdiction or standing in this matter. However, you are a tenant and you have certain rights. The following is a link to the Iowa tenant/landlord law http://www.legis.state.ia.us/IACODE/2001SUPPLEMENT/562A/</p> <p>Also, here is a link for mold information; http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldresources.html</p> <p>I hope this info helps. Let me know if any questions.</p> |
| <p>July 28, 2008 From: Missen To: Norm Cate Senior Housing Inspector City of Iowa City</p> | <p>My allergist, who's treated me for 15 years, reports I have a new mold allergy.</p> <p>I'm finding mold on my artwork, my instruments, and my papers.</p> <p>Are there private contractors in the area who can assess mold and advise on abatement?</p> |
| <p>July 28, 2008 From: Fountain To: Missen</p> | <p>Thank you for your follow-up note. The company that tested the house did find mold spores this month and cleaned areas.</p> <p>We will address the concerns since the work that was done did not seem to eliminate the problem.</p> <p>The gutters were all cleaned out and the ADS drainage system power cleaned out a short while back. Our next step is to place gutter guard on to help keep debris out.</p> <p>Heritage has contacted an air conditioning company to check out the system.</p> |
| <p>July 28, 2008 From: Missen To: Fountain, Beach, Hollins</p> | <p>How discombobulating! I just got back to my house to verify Cathy's statements.</p> <p>The gutters are not cleaned out. They are still chock full of old brown debris. All of the gutters have gutter guards already -- they just happen to be clogged. The front gutter is still 90% covered with roofing tiles (who ever installed the roofing forgot to cut off the tabs along the bottom row.)</p> |

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| | <p>No mold has been cleaned in my basement. There's more than 20sqft of black mold on several walls that hasn't been touched since I first complained about it-- and it's growing!</p> <p>I don't know who's telling who stories, but that's none of my business. My business involves preserving my health and preserving my stuff.</p> <p>Meanwhile, you're scaring me. I'm taking another round of photos to document this.</p> <p>Seriously, if you came to see the house you would, within minutes say, "Oh my God, this isn't right. I'm sorry." And then we could deal with the fixing the real problems.</p> <p>I'll be in and out all day. My cell 321-xxxx</p> |
| <p>July 28, 2008 Email to Cathy Fountain</p> | <p>My gutters are still clogged. The water continues to pour into the basement. There's visible black mold all over the walls in the basement. There's mold growing on my artwork. I carry a sheaf of papers to my office and other complain about the smell. Running the HVAC makes the house smell so bad I can't breathe. My friends can't bear to be in the house. I've developed an allergy!!!</p> <p>Someone's got a bad case of denial going on. A simple visual inspection would tell you that the house has a serious problem.</p> <p>I'm on the phone now looking for remediation specialists (for health reasons, I can't take all this moldy stuff into my new living space.)</p> <p>My health care people had instructed me not to work with the moldy stuff, so I'm going to have to hire someone to move it to a climate-controlled storage unit.</p> <p>I'll be in and out of the house most of the day, hosting inspectors and getting bids. Call and stop by and I'll give you the tour. I think you'll understand the minute you walk through the door.</p> |
| <p>July 30, 2008 Email from Vicki Siefers Coordinator of church flood relief effort</p> | <p>Wow, I had not heard about your mold problem before. I used information from Peter Thorne who is a walking encyclopedia on mold. It is not easy to clean and most items must be tossed out. Dried mold can produce clouds of spores and endotoxin. The N-95 masks are usually effective but only filter 95% out as their name indicates. Peter says you must soak mold contaminated items in bleach solution for 6-8 hours. I did not do this because I only cleaned flood contaminated items. If something had visible mold, I tossed it out. The bleach solution is made by mixing one cup bleach to one gallon water.</p> <p>I have had a hard time getting anyone to go with me into the flooded area. One of the only people left who will is Dave **** who just happens to be in between jobs right now and I would recommend asking Dave for help. Dave's email is *****@yahoo.com and his cell phone is *****. He has all the right gear for a clean up job already and he comes prepared for anything. He has been invaluable to me this summer. I can ask around and see if anyone else can help. Right now I have a long list of people who have allergies and can't help.</p> <p>I can help you out also as I have all the right gear and I know how to handle mold but I might throw out stuff you want to keep. You need to be prepared to lose items if they are porous and can't be cleaned with bleach. I will be out of town tonight but I will be back tomorrow afternoon and I have Friday off so I could help out on Friday.</p> |
| <p>July 30, 2008 Email to: Fountain, Beach, Hollins, Vespa</p> | <p>Just to keep everyone in the loop.</p> <p>I've consulted with mold experts with the UI's School of Public Health. They are in some disagreement (2 to 1) about whether I should toss or clean the porous items in my house. They are unanimous that I should NOT move any of my stuff -- porous or non-porous -- into another house until it has been treated. Their advice: move everything to a climate controlled space and gain some time to treat items before moving them into my new space.</p> <p>What I've learned is this: mold spores are likely all over my stuff. Only those things containing moisture (like my drums, instrument cases, and leatherwork) show mold growth. Even those things that have no moisture today will grow moldy when they eventually get wet. Spore-ridden stuff will contaminate the new house and cause mold, which is why it is important to clean everything as well as possible -- or throw it out.</p> |

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| | <p>I've called around to the storage companies in town with climate controlled spaces. None are available. I could move my stuff into a detached garage, but I run the risk that the mold will continue to grow in the humidity. I can't ask my friends to host a pile of moldy stuff in their attached garages.</p> <p>I've called around to a half-dozen mold remediation places and it looks like the soonest I can get my stuff treated is in six weeks. So, despite the fact that I'm in my busiest time at work, with classes wrapping up and several major grants due in the next few weeks, there's no one I can hire to manage this mess.</p> <p>I've spent days running around trying to take care of this problem and it has seriously detracted from my teaching and administrative duties, causing me a lot of undue stress.</p> <p>Last night I came home to find the AC on and the air nasty. I had to open the windows and leave for several hours while the building aired out. Please ask your workers to refrain from running the AC until the ductwork has been cleaned. The air moving equipment they have installed to dry the basement is kicking up spores like crazy.</p> <p>I'm glad to see you finally fixing up the house for the next renters, but you haven't done a thing to help me get my stuff fixed.</p> <p>I'm assuming your hands-off policy means that I'm free to hire whomever I need to manage this problem and that you're expecting me to present you with the bills.</p> <p>Meanwhile, I'm not going to be out of this house today. I've got to find a climate-controlled storage space and I'm teaching four hours this afternoon. I've got to go get ready...</p> <p>You could, of course, help out.</p> <p>-- Cliff</p> |
| <p>August 2, 2008 Meet new tenants of 219 Melrose</p> | <p>I stop by the house to drop off some brackets. The current tenants report that the UI has offered to pay their electricity bill if they keep the A/C on all month. I ask if they know if the ductwork was cleaned. They say, "nope."</p> |
| <p>August 3, 2008 Email to Cynthia Joyce University Ombudsperson</p> | <p>I'm in a conundrum that has me very anxious about my health and my university.</p> <p>Ten months ago I rented a UI-owned house through a private property management service.</p> <p>The UI had just purchase the house and I was its first occupant. It needed serious repairs (windows falling off, clogged gutters, poor drainage, etc.) but I was assured that these things would be taken care of.</p> <p>After less than a month in the house I experienced water in the finished basement and a mold smell. I complained to the property management folks and nothing was done. I reported that the gutters were clogged (some 80% covered by poorly installed roofing) and that water was pouring directly from the roof into the foundation.</p> <p>As months went on, I learned that maintenance of the house was piecemeal and low quality. (Some windows were replaced, the workmanship was shoddy, no one from the UI or the property management inspected the job, it was left to me to call can complain about the outcomes, etc.)</p> <p>And the mold problem grew worse, as did the water in the basement. The clogged gutters and poor drainage were not addressed.</p> <p>In the early spring I decided not to renew my lease because of the poor property management.</p> <p>Then the rains came and the basement filled with water constantly. My son (who used the basement as a practice space for his band) gave up on the space, tiring of carrying his equipment outside to dry after every rain. I wrote emails, made phone calls, all to no avail.</p> <p>I probably cleaned water out of the basement 20 times, but I travel for weeks and a time and could not keep up with the flow. After awhile I could not stand to go into the basement because of the mold and smell.</p> |

By now the mold had taken over the house. I could clean a toilet bowl on the second floor and it would have a mold ring inside the bowl within five days. I found mold growing on my African artwork and musical instruments. Visible molds of several varieties covered 20-30 square feet of my basement wall and covered the woodwork near the floor.

When the summer weather hit, I tried using the AC, but it filled the house with an obnoxious smell that made me woozy.

All of this time I was feeling quite ill, suffering headaches, depressive thoughts, and bouts of total exhaustion. I attributed this to my recent separation and hectic work schedule. Then, about six weeks ago, while helping a friend whose house had been flooded, I was given a brochure on mold's effects on health and was surprised to find I had virtually every symptom. (Including fingernails that had grown misshapen and ugly.)

I started noting when I was feeling symptoms and realized that when I traveled on business I was free of depressive thoughts and headaches, but they returned when I got home.

I visited the allergist who has treated me for 15 years and discovered I had a new mold allergy.

I spent as much time as possible away from my house in the last month of my lease. I pressed the business office to clean up the house and deal with the mold issues, but they denied the problem (not visiting to see the mold growth until a few days before the end of the lease.)

Consulting with mold experts, I learned that it would be unwise to move my spore-ridden possessions into another house given my allergic state. I read from Web sites by the EPA and California Public Health that I should seriously consider discarding every porous item that cannot be put into a clothes washer (like my couch, mattresses, art work, etc.)

I had spent days seeing physicians, consulting with experts, looking for a safe, mold-free home, and coming up with a plan to deal with my infested possessions. All of this at a time when I was spending up to 4 hours a day in the classroom and falling further behind on grant writing and project management responsibilities. I was not about to move my moldy possessions without proper precautions, so it looked as though I would not move out of the house in time. At that point, for the first time, I got some assistance from the business office in the form of them helping me to find a temperature-controlled storage space to store my stuff temporarily.

So now I'm in a real mess: all of my possessions are in temporary storage. I'm unclear as to what items I can move into my new condo, but I do know that even the non-porous items need to be cleaned with bleach water and air dried. So I'm looking at spending weeks cleaning stuff, and laundering or dry cleaning all my clothes. Then I may possibly have to replace a number of major household items and even have to discard some of my cherished artwork and instruments.

I've called a couple professionals who deal with these matters and they are booked weeks in advance because of the recent floods.

All of this would be easier to deal with if the folks in the business office would sit down to address the problem, but they have been evasive and sometimes misleading. I do not relish the idea of hashing over every detail with them. They have lost my trust.

In fact, the folks in the business office, citing clearance from the experts in Public Health and the UI Health Protection Office (which I have not been able to verify), simply had an unprotected worker paint over the worst of the mold and moved new tenants into the building the next day. This is contrary to everything I've read about treating mold and seems to me to be unethical.

I'm very anxious to understand the impacts on my health and I'm very uncomfortable getting into a tussle with my home institution. But I am convinced that I went above and beyond what can be expected of a tenant and that poor management and neglect lead to a breakdown that has harmed my health, consumed a great deal of my time, and leaves me facing continuing losses of property, time, and well-being.

I need your counsel on how to proceed in a civil, caring, and productive manner.

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| <p>August 6, 2008</p> | <p>Met with Cynthia Joyce, University ombudsperson</p> |
| <p>August 12, 2008 Email from local attorney with mold case expertise</p> | <p>Now, on to your house- what you are describing sounds like a severe mold problem in that house. If you see visible mold, then chances are good that there are much worse problems behind the walls.</p> <p>I'm obviously not a medical doctor, but the symptoms you describe are some of the ones that I ran across when doing mold-related research. Mold allergies can manifest many, many different ways in different people- anything from psychological symptoms (depression, etc.) through respiratory problems and even death. I have attached a redacted copy of a mold assessment done for one of our clients so you can see the common toxins and potential symptoms. This was done by Americlean and I have no independent basis to judge its accuracy, but it might be a starting point for research.</p> <p>I'm glad to hear you are moving out soon. In terms of what you could do, you might want to think about replacing any porous items (cloth furniture, paper, etc.) if they have absorbed any mold. Hard surfaces can be wiped down with bleach to kill the mold, usually. There are some further recommendations on remediation in the PDF I'm sending- but usually, you just have to get rid of anything that has contacted the mold and gives it a substrate on which to grow.</p> <p>Hopefully, things will greatly improve for you when you find a new place. This is actually a good time to find a place because anywhere that will take water in the basement probably has water in the basement right now. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance.</p> |
| <p>August 20, 2008 Email from Dr. Laurence J Fuortes Occupational and Environmental Health College of Public Health</p> | <p>Dear Cliff, a couple of things.</p> <p>First, being out of the environment is the best possible medicine and time will exert it's healing salve bit by bit.</p> <p>In my view any physician who holds themselves out as a 'mold expert' is a money grubbing quack and should be avoided like the plague. I don't say this lightly but on the basis of years of experience with such folks. The mold experts have disabled untold numbers by stressing on fears of the unknown.</p> <p>Our allergy department would be a great place to start, I just spoke to one of the staff about your case and they see such cases all the time. They will obviously focus on medical evidence of sensitization and treatment for allergic symptoms. Often in such situations there is an overlay of stress, anxiety, depression related to the unexpected illness, property loss, relocation etc. and these things generally take time to resolve.</p> <p>I would urge you to look on the positive side as much as possible and minimize your concerns regarding any potential long term consequences of mold exposure. Stressing the potential and unproven risks of any environmental exposure is one of the time proven ploys of quacks. I wish you all the best, Lar</p> |
| <p>September 12, 2008 Email to Cynthia Joyce University Ombudsperson</p> | <p>I'm stymied every time I turn around with setting up a mold spore free house. I'm having to purchase some new furniture (and I purchased my old bed less than a year ago), buy an air cleaner, hire people to help with the moldy stuff, and seek guidance on all kinds of weird conundrums.</p> <p>I understand where George might want to resolve things more quickly, but that's the least of my worries at the moment. Given the matters which press on my time and the mountain of work I have to do to make my house comfortable in the tiny spaces between my professional life and travel schedule, I'm preferring to focus on my needs. It causes me anxiety every time I have to write another check for some big ticket item without knowing whether I'll be reimbursed. That alone is aggravating enough. The business office's emphasis on expediency over integrity seems to be the hallmark of this whole enterprise.</p> <p>I'm convinced that I need to do whatever it takes to protect my health, which has improved dramatically in the last month.</p> <p>So I'll keep receipts and logs and turn it over to my lawyer and see what he can do in terms of getting reimbursement from the UI.</p> <p>When I have the time and energy, I want to return to the bigger questions: why was I lied to by Cathy Fountain about HPO and Public Health inspecting and approving the mold remediation? Why was an old man with no protection sent to paint over the mold? Why did the university move four students into the house the following day without properly dealing with the mold that had made me sick</p> |

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| | <p>as a dog and caused me to develop a mold allergy? Is the necessary work of tiling the house's foundation and removing the walls affected by mold growth going to happen?</p> <p>I really wish that the UI would address this problem with more integrity.</p> |
| <p>September 15, 2008 Email to Cynthia Joyce University Ombudsperson</p> | <p>Thanks for the update, and I certainly understand your position at this point. Would you be comfortable with me calling George to say that you won't be able to provide an estimate in the near future? I won't say anything about possible future legal action. In addition, if I can help get you the answers to your questions, please let me know.</p> |
| <p>September 30, 2008 Email to George Hollins Cynthia Joyce, Donna Pearcy, Mary Jane Beach</p> | <p>I left you a phone message last week and didn't get a response. You must be busy.</p> <p>I'm in the hole about \$4,000 (not to mention what Blue Cross has paid in health care) and about 200 hours so far in my efforts to de-moldify my life. And I've still only gotten half of the things out of my storage place.</p> <p>I got last month's "offer" from the ombudsperson, asking me to name a price and sign an agreement to drop the matter.</p> <p>There's two problems with this:</p> <p>ONE: I have no idea what the long-term effects of this mold exposure will be. My fingernails are clearing up nicely and the depression is gone. I have fewer and less intense headaches. But I've become a walking mold detector. I walk into stores and homes, feel my face go flush, and announce, "you have mold!" It's a nifty new superpower, but one I'd rather not have. I've developed a long list of homes and cars I don't want to be in. Lord knows what will happen to me when I resume travel to developing countries. I've purchased two used couches to replace my previous cloth couch and have had allergic reactions to both. THIS USED TO NOT HAPPEN! It aggravates me immensely. To top it off, I'm regularly taking drugs to reduce the symptoms. They address the stuffiness and headaches, but they make me gain weight. That bums me out.</p> <p>TWO: I still think it is morally wrong to have moved new renters in to the place without proper mold remediation. Cathy Fountain told me in no uncertain terms that Public Health experts (including my friend Peter Thome) and the UI Health Protection Office inspected the house and approved the plan. There's simply no way this can be true (besides the fact that no one I've asked provided or approved a plan): all of the published materials I've found (over 40 articles from the EPA, the State of Iowa, etc.) clearly do not recommend sending an old guy with a can of paint to cover up the mold. There are standard best practices for mold remediation, none of them, to my knowledge, have been observed at 219 Melrose Court.</p> <p>Your brush off, the deceptions, the buy-out offer, the lack of concern... all lead me to the conclusion that the UI has no intention of acting properly in this matter. By acting properly, I mean sitting down with me (otherwise known as "the victim") to devise a plan to address the problems in a stress-free, accountable manner, engaging professionals when necessary to determine the best course of action, and taking fiscal responsibility for the damage done. It also means doing proper mold remediation at 219 Melrose Court.</p> <p>So I'm passing this matter on to my attorney and to other interested parties. I would like someone to investigate what the UI has done to protect the health of the current tenants. As much as I would prefer to focus on other matters, I feel an obligation.</p> <p>You can follow the progress in my journal at http://www.yahoodrummers.com/219melrose/timeline.htm Pictures and witness testimonials are coming next.</p> <p>What does it take to get the University business office to do the right thing?</p> <p>Who is going to be accountable?</p> |
| <p>October 2, 2008 Email to George Hollins Cynthia Joyce, Donna Pearcy, Mary Jane Beach</p> | <p>So I called and spoke with Donna Pearcy. She says I can file a claim, but that action/form requires that I know how much all of this is going to cost me. Being that I don't make a habit out of getting into messes like this, and being that your office is being no help whatsoever, it seems foolish of me to assume I know enough to file a claim at this moment.</p> <p>It's seems to me that the institution has made an art out of victimizing its</p> |

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| | <p>victims. First your poor management screws up my health and my life, then I'm left out in the cold with zip-lipped bureaucrats, pressure ploys, and complex (and expensive) decisions to make with no input or feedback.</p> <p>I'm disappointed in this process. It seems remarkably un-lowan.</p> |
| <p>October 3, 2008 Email to Cynthia Joyce</p> | <p>I'm convinced that I'll continue to get the brush off from the business office. As my earliest mentor would ask, "If a horse returns to a dry well, who do you blame, the horse or the well?" I've gotten the message that the Business Office prefers to handle these matters in a contentious legal fashion.</p> <p>I've also not heard one word about a proper mold remediation at 219 Melrose Court. My Liberian friends have a proverb: "Sitting quietly reveals crocodile's tricks." Given the business office's consistent lack of communication and unwillingness to take responsibility, I've got to assume that the problem runs deeper than my own case.</p> <p>I'll meet with my lawyer this afternoon to launch the legal process.</p> <p>And I'm preparing a Web site http://www.yahoodrummers.com/219melrose/timeline.htm to inform other stakeholders and interested parties who can help change the UI cavalier attitude towards their tenants.</p> <p>I'd rather make change quietly, but I've seen no evidence that the ecosphere of the Business Office is open to change. I hope you'll agree that I've tried to do this respectfully in a collegial fashion.</p> <p>Thanks for listening to my sorry story and trying to help.</p> |
| <p>October 07, 2008 Email to MaryBeth Fasano UI Allergy/Immunology Clinic</p> | <p>Your name has come up in conversations with a couple of colleagues and I hope you don't mind my seeking your advice.</p> <p>I was recently "schooled" in mold allergies after living in a rental house that had a significant water problem in the basement. I grew steadily ill over the course of nine months before drawing a link to the mold. My allergist for 15 years, Dr. Kammermeyer, told me in July that I have new mold allergy and I've since moved (twice) to better accommodations.</p> <p>Colleagues in Public Health and Family Practice have provided me with helpful basic but sometimes conflicting advice, leaving me unsure about how to proceed in terms of managing my health and belongings (most of which are in a controlled-climate storage) and what to expect in the future.</p> <p>I'm looking for someone who can coach me on the best ways to move forward and provide a state-of-the-art physical evaluation so I can comfortably settle with my past landlord and move on.</p> <p>Is this your area? If not, could you refer me to someone in the area?</p> |
| <p>October 07, 2008 Email from MaryBeth Fasano UI Allergy/Immunology Clinic</p> | <p>Sorry to hear about the flooding in your rental house. Regarding mold allergy – it sounds like you have recently had a repeat allergy evaluation by Dr. Kammermeyer. In our Allergy/Immunology Clinic, we too manage patients with a variety of environmental allergies, including mold allergy. Whether we would be able to provide you with recommendations above and beyond what you have already received from Dr. Kammermeyer, I can't say, but if interested in scheduling an appointment, just call 356-8486. You might also consider attending our CME course as Dr. Peter Thorne will be speaking on "Mold Hazards in the Aftermath of Floods" (see attached brochure). Finally, you might also wish to check out information on mold allergy on the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) website at www.aaaai.org and/or mold-related information on the CDC website or the EPA – Indoor Air Quality website.</p> |
| <p>December 9, 2008 Email to George Hollins</p> | <p>As the head of the business office and the one who, over the last year, stood by ineffectually as my house grew more poisonous and then blew off approaches from myself and the ombudsperson to seek redress, your cavalier attitude is disappointing, but no longer surprising.</p> <p>The glib, "I don't see what's the big deal" and "you're the only one complaining" arguments belie something even more disturbing. I'm left thinking you're either being clueless or clever. Either way, I have no confidence that attitudes will be changing any time soon in your realm.</p> <p>I suppose it's possible that you're OK with someone growing gravely ill through</p> |

the repeated mismanagement of a house under your authority. Maybe you're cool with a (literal) whitewash of a mold problem that most experts would say required considerable remediation. Perhaps you're copasetic with exposing other unwitting individuals to the same health hazards. If so, I think the university needs to seriously consider whether you are the right person to make those kinds of calls.

Of course, if you are representing the university's position in this matter, then the taxpayers of this state need to be concerned about even larger issues.

So what do I seek? A significant change in how the university responds to health hazards in university owned residential properties. The UI (and the State) should set examples of good stewardship, not grub along the bottom line. Allowing a contractor to send an allergic old man with NO PROTECTION to paint over a serious mold problem -- exactly what happened at 219 Melrose Court -- shows a callous disregard for human safety.

I'd like to see that someone in your position thinks it a "big deal" when someone's health is damaged by ineptitude, however unintended. I'd like to see the university make a public statement recognizing there have been lapses in judgment and pledge to be a more admirable landlord in the future. I'd like to see the university apologize to those who have been put in harm's way. I'd like to see university residential properties fall under an impartial inspection regime like any other city or county residence. (It's clear that allowing the wolf to guard the hen house is not working.)

Most of all, I'd like to see the university react more civilly to such matters. To be more "lowan."

To flippantly say, "go file a claim" -- a one-time option -- does no good for someone who is looking at potentially long term health and financial ramifications. Especially for a less-understood issue like mold. As it is, I've spent thousands of dollars out-of-pocket, delaying replacing some furniture and cleaning some articles until I get caught up on my finances. Lately I've had to curb my activities (and holiday spending) while looking at a pile of bills that will eventually be included in my claim against the university. I literally slept on the floor for a month -- spending my money on health treatment, cleaning, and storage -- before I replaced my mattress. (At that point, I had no idea if I'd be reimbursed for any of this. I still have no assurance from the university, but my legal counsel seems pretty confident.)

As I requested at the beginning of this debacle, it would have been much more reassuring for me to sit down with a responsible party and draw up an agreement as to how we would mutually make things right.

Oh, and you forgot to ask, (the "civil" thing again), "so are you feeling better?" The answer is, "Yes, my health has improved dramatically in the months after moving out of 219 Melrose Court. My fingernails are almost back to normal. My headaches and sinus congestion disappeared in about two weeks. I no longer wake with depressive thoughts. I feel much better, thank you."

On the other hand, I see no improvement in the university's response to mistakes it has made. Today's phone call was no exception.

December 03, 2008
Email to Marcia R. Brunson
Policy and Operations Officer
Board of Regents, State of Iowa

I'm in an awkward situation.

I'm a UI faculty member and the director of a popular project that attracts a lot of attention to the UI. As such, I'm reticent to get involved with any activity that reflects badly on the UI.

However, I've been caught up in a conundrum that has cost me dearly and leaves me very concerned about the ethics of the UI business office.

Last year I moved into a university owned property -- a home adjacent to the fieldhouse that the university purchased only a month earlier. After moving in I noticed a moldy smell and complained to the property management firm. Over the next few months I complained to the property management firm and the UI business office about the upkeep of the place, including water in the basement. Then, as spring came around, large quantities of water came into the basement. Not once did someone from the UI business office visit the house to see the damage. Mold started growing in extraordinary amounts while I was traveling overseas and soon I was getting very sick. (Although I did not initially draw a link between the two.) Volunteering in the flood zones last summer, I learned that mold can cause many of the symptoms I was experiencing. I was soon diagnosed with a new mold allergy. By this time, the house had huge quantities of mold and I had to spend much of my time outside the home.

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| | <p>I moved out at the end of July, but it was very difficult since all my possessions were covered with mold spores, if not growing mold (like many of my African drums and some artwork.) I've spent months cleaning and replacing many of my possessions, some of which are still in cold storage.</p> <p>What irks me most is that a temporary worker was sent to paint over the 50 sq. ft. of mold in the basement and five students were moved into the house the next day -- with no effort made to properly remediate the mold. In fact, I have every reason to believe that the UI business office lied to me and the renters about the condition of the house -- they claimed that the the UI Health Protection Office and staff of the Public Health program had approved their cleanup process.</p> <p>I have taken this issue to the Ombudsperson. She gave me little hope, suggesting that I continue working with my lawyer. The UI business office's response was essentially, "so sue me." (Actually, "file a claim", but this is not a helpful response to a victim who is facing a great deal of uncertainty and expense.)</p> <p>I wrote to President Mason about this issue last month and did not receive a reply.</p> <p>I have been interviewed by a reporter who wants to take the story public, but I have asked her to wait until I have used up all the internal options.</p> <p>More information, details, and pictures can be found at this private Web site: http://www.yahoodrummers.com/219melrose/</p> <p>I am reluctant to cause my employer any embarrassment. My attorney assures me that my expenses will be recoverable in court, but I feel an obligation to protect the health of others who may fall victim to the irresponsible actions of the UI business office.</p> <p>It seems to me that the current tools that the UI uses to resolve these kinds of issues - stonewalling and flippancy - requires victims to use the legal system and public media to get satisfaction.</p> <p>What other options do I have?</p> |
| <p>December 10, 2008 Email to George Hollins</p> | <p>RE: Follow-up to our phone conversation</p> <p>These are lovely and innocuous suggestions.</p> <p>However, they don't begin to address the main issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- months of neglect and irresponsiveness to an identified problem on the part of you, your staff, and the property management firm -- continued unwillingness to take responsibility for creating and prolonging a dangerous situation -- the apparent inability of the university to respond kindly to mistakes it has made -- the "wolf guarding the hen house" phenomena |
| <p>December 17, 2008 Email from Mark J. Braun Chief of Staff, President Mason</p> | <p>I am responding on behalf of President Mason to your correspondence.</p> <p>The Business Office is the correct office to work and I am sure they will be very accommodating in explaining and helping you through the process in order to make that happen.</p> <p>Please let me know if you need any additional information.</p> |
| <p>December 17, 2008 Email to Mark J. Braun Chief of Staff, UI President</p> | <p>I'm sorry, but we're past the "brush off" stage on this matter. I've tried working with the Business Office for six months and they have been remarkably unhelpful.</p> <p>George Hollins contacted me last week to discuss my issues with mold and mismanagement at my university owned house.</p> <p>Mr. Hollins' phone call was similar in tenor to previous interactions, poo-pooing</p> |

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| | <p>the seriousness of the problem (denying that the UI has faced similar problems in the recent past, even though it was front page news only a month ago) and inviting me again to submit a claim to risk management.</p> <p>I responded with the following email...</p> |
| <p>December 17, 2008 Email from Mark J. Braun Chief of Staff, President Mason</p> | <p>Have you submitted a specific list of claims to the Business Office?</p> |
| <p>December 17, 2008 Email to Mark J. Braun Chief of Staff, President Mason</p> | <p>There are two considerations: refunding me the out-of-pocket expenses; and making sure that this sort of thing does not happen again.</p> <p>The former, I am assured by my legal counsel, is assured. The latter, I am convinced, cannot be solved at the level of the Business Office.</p> <p>Bottom line: the business office screwed up in a major, almost criminal way. It continues to screw up. It appears, now, that its right to screw up is being protected by the university.</p> <p>I can take a \$8,000 kick in the shorts as well as anyone. But I can't sit back and let others experience the hell that I've been through in good conscience. I want to see significant change.</p> <p>The Business Office has proven they cannot be trusted with this level of responsibility.</p> <p>Now it's left for us to see if the University can live up to the responsibility.</p> |
| <p>December 19, 2008 Email from Mark J. Braun Chief of Staff, President Mason</p> | <p>With regard to your specifically, please have your legal counsel call Gay Pelzer in the General Counsel's Office. Gay can be reached at 319-335-3025.</p> <p>As for this not happening again, I do know specific new protocols are being reviewed and implemented.</p> |
| <p>December 22, 2008 Email to Mark J. Braun Chief of Staff, President Mason</p> | <p>Et tu, Brute?</p> <p>So it's back to "sue me" and "everything's been fixed in some mysteriously bureaucratic way that you cannot detect."</p> <p>So much for transparency and leadership.</p> <p>I'm getting the picture: it's an institutional problem.</p> <p>Thanks for trying.</p> |
| <p>December 22, 2008 Email from Mark J. Braun Chief of Staff, President Mason</p> | <p>No you do not have to sue but you do need to file a claim - that is the process that has been long established by the state for those who seek remediation from a state institution.</p> <p>What do you want to know about the new policy? Every property will be tested before someone moves in. I am sure I can find the specific wording when I get back in the office.</p> |
| <p>December 22, 2008 Email to Mark J. Braun Chief of Staff, President Mason</p> | <p>Testing every property at the time of purchase will do nothing to address the problem I experienced at 219 Melrose Court.</p> <p>Hundreds of gallons of water seeped into my basement over the months that I complained to the property management firm and the business office. Despite my persistent reports, no one from the business office investigated the problem. Nothing was done to clean up the mess. In fact, they misrepresented the facts to each other and me. When the problem came to a head, they whitewashed the mold and moved five students into the untreated house.</p> <p>That is gross, unethical mismanagement that has NOTHING to do with testing a house for mold.</p> <p>I remain incredulous that NOT ONE PERSON in a position of responsibility, save the ombudsperson, has addressed these underlying issues. I was dangerously sick for months and now have what will probably be a life-long allergy. There are stores and public places in Iowa City, including my own church, that today make me woozy and stuffed up.</p> |

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| | <p>There is no test, as far as I know, that will indicate to a potential renter that the landlord will behave in an ethical and responsible manner. All we have to go on is past behavior.</p> <p>My attorney says I have two choices: file a claim and only worry about getting my expenses refunded; or file for damages in such a way that the UI and regents will have to sit up and pay attention to the root causes of this debacle.</p> <p>In the meantime, I am doing everything possible to create the change I desire within the system. I've been at it for six months and I've been patient and relatively diplomatic.</p> <p>Hearing from the President's office -- via you -- that the issue once again boils down to a bit of business and side-stepping responsibility, I am more convinced that I need to do this bit of work to improve my institution.</p> <p>Doing the right thing need not be so difficult.</p> |
| <p>December 31, 2008 Marcia Brunson Board of Regents</p> | <p>The upshot of the last few weeks is this: the UI president's office (in the person of your former boss, Mark Braun) has come to the same conclusion: I should file a claim and be satisfied that "new protocols are being reviewed and implemented."</p> <p>I'm sorry, but I am not convinced.</p> <p>This set of actors has consistently shown little concern for the gross mismanagement that led to serious health problems for me and continues to expose unwitting students to the same. To allow them free rein to determine vague policies and cover each other's tracks is like asking the fox to guard the hen house.</p> <p>I am convinced that the UI needs an independent, third party (like the City of Iowa City's housing inspector) to protect the health of those who live in university-owned residential property.</p> <p>The UI has a financial stake in NOT maintaining the homes, as they plan to own them for a short length of time before tearing them down. That leaves the occupants vulnerable to a "good ol' boy" system inside the UI that has little incentive to maintain healthful standards.</p> <p>I've copied the discussions between myself, the UI business manager, and Mark Braun below. I think it clearly demonstrates that I have made the Business Office's mismanagement a central concern and that both the Business Office and the President's Office have brushed these concerns aside.</p> <p>Who, I wonder, is going to be accountable?</p> |
| <p>July 10, 2009 Email to Peter Thorne and Lar Fuortes</p> | <p>I hope you don't mind me pestering you for a personal problem, but I'm deeply frustrated and worried.</p> <p>Last year I contacted you for advice about a mold problem I had encountered in a house I was renting. I got tested for allergy -- which came back positive -- and moved out to another place. I was sick as a dog, with depressive thoughts and constant headaches.</p> <p>I put most of my stuff into a climate-controlled space and only moved new furniture and professionally cleaned materials into my new townhouse. My health has returned, most of my outward physical symptoms have disappeared.</p> <p>However, about three months ago I moved some boxes of books, papers, and artwork from cold storage into my attached garage.</p> <p>Following my allergist's advice, I've kept the house sealed and have been running the AC all spring.</p> <p>Now I'm getting headaches again, have experienced depressive thoughts, and have discovered grey mold rings that appear in my toilets (the only constant source of moisture in my house) only a week after cleaning them.</p> <p>I now have greyish mold growing on portions of my garage floor (the garage is dry, but the lime coating must be attracting minute amounts of moisture from the air.)</p> <p>Also: I've been having reactions when I'm in my car with the AC on. Friends have complained of my AC smelling like mildew. So now I need to test my car. (Which was used to haul my belongings from house to house over the last year.)</p> |

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| | <p>My first reaction is to move again, have my clothes professionally cleaned again, and ditch all my belongings. My inner-scientist wants to put petri dishes all over the house to measure and understand what it is that is plaguing me.</p> <p>Is there someone to whom I can turn for advice? I don't want to have to move every year.. On the other hand, I don't want to ditch all my stuff if it's not necessary.</p> <p>And how do I identify the source and type of the mold? How can I be sure that it isn't in my lungs and bloodstream?</p> <p>Sorry to lay all of this on you, but I appreciate any advice and/or leads you can give me.</p> <p>And if I wanted to do the petri dish thing, where would you recommend me to go to find lots of petri dishes and medium?</p> |
| <p>July 10, 2009 Email from Peter Thorne</p> | <p>I am sorry to hear that this issue has not resolved completely. I cannot address any medical questions, as I am not a health care practitioner. As to mold problems, I don't think you should move and I don't think you need to ditch all your stuff. You should get relief from the environmental interventions you have done and from medical treatment for your allergies. These things take time to resolve (as frustrating as that is) and you should try to be patient. Here are some specific comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Continue to keep the house closed and ventilated with AC as the temperature and humidity calls for it. Remember that relative humidity above 60% is the major promoter of mold growth. 2) Assuming that your garage is not air conditioned, the items you are storing there may grow some mold if they are exposed to humidity and heat. You will need to either clean them thoroughly and move them inside or consider that you may have to give them up. If you do this work you should use a two-strap N95 respirator. And wear clothing that you put into a plastic bag and then put directly into the washing machine. 3) The toilet bowl mold/yeast/bacterial rings are pretty normal for this time of year. If you are worried about them you can buy the disinfectant "blue water" devices that hang inside the toilet and discharge a small amount with each flush. 4) I do NOT suggest deploying settle plates (Petrie dishes with media) around the house. It will tell you nothing useful. 5) If you are concerned about your garage floor you can mop it with a solution of 1 cup household bleach to 1 gallon of water. That will kill any mold and will remove some of the substrate for mold growth. 6) Given what you tell me, the source of the mold in your garage is outside air – completely normal. The source of the musty odor in your car is likely past mold and dust from moving. For that you can have you heater/cooling coil cleaned and can vacuum and clean your upholstery and carpet. After that, you could also get a scented mirror hanger to mask the odor so you don't fret about it. 7) Not as a professional but as a friend, I would say that you may have stress in your life that is contributing to your concerns about these exposures and diminishing your health. Perhaps you can institute some lifestyle changes that could help you feel more vigorous. Walks in the park, increased social engagement, more drumming, vigorous exercise – who knows, it could help. <p>I hope these comments are helpful. I will be away until next Thursday. But I can talk with you after that if there is more to consider. Best of luck friend.</p> |
| <p>July 10, 2009 Email to Peter Thorne</p> | <p>Thanks for the advice, Peter.</p> <p>I'm keeping the AC on. I don't want more of my stuff damaged. That's the reason I've learned to use the toilet bowl as a yardstick... it's the only exposed moisture inside the sealed house. Given that I have an excess of toilets, I use one as my control by keeping it covered. I've managed to live 48 years without seeing anything like this.. even in Africa. And it's not just my new bachelorhood: I've had the placed cleaned by a professional for the last few months.</p> <p>I've queried my neighbors, whose housekeeping is measurably worse than mine, and neither of them are experiencing mold in their garages or toilets. Now, of course, they eye me with suspicion...</p> |

I'm finding that having reactions to mold in our culture (excuse the pun) is like having chronic fatigue. Half the people who hear my story view me as a wierdo. The other half want to tell me about their aunt who had the same problem.

I'm getting quotes from ServiceMaster and another remediation group to do the hepa vac and wash the washable items. Drums and artwork that have already shown signs of mold growth (the rawhide and natural drum heads absorb and hold moisture easily) are simply heading to the dump. If they can't be cleaned, I'm going to have to give up a library full of rare well drilling and development research. About a month ago I spent an hour looking up Liberian geological information (for a guy in Maryland who's training drillers in Monrovia) from the papers I had stored in my locker and by the end of the exercise I thought my head would burst.

You're the second professional to scoff at my petri dish idea. I may just have to take the advice seriously...

Here's another test I performed recently: I took a piece of paper that had been on my desk at the old house for months and stored in my climate-controlled shed. I sprayed it with water and left it under a lamp. Within five days it was furry.

I've been doing counseling, biking 5 miles every morning, drumming lots, and keeping in touch with friends, so I've been feeling very healthy lately. That's why the return of the mold is so discouraging. I was (and generally continue to) feeling pretty spunky otherwise. I take antihistamines when I feel pressure in my sinuses or my throat gets raw, which for the last month has been almost daily.

I've had lots of conversations with professionals like yourself who express the concern that my psychological state may have more to do with my reactions than the mold, and I'm not adverse to the idea in general, but I only need to walk into places like Lebeda Mattress, Village Inn, Goodwill, and Stuff to get a heady whack of mildew and almost instantly feel dizzy and congested. I've not experienced anything like it before in my life. A couple months ago I took an overnight train in India and could barely open my eyes in the morning, they were so sealed with gunk. I can't afford to ignore the very visceral feedback I'm getting from my environment. From November to just this last month I was very happy and healthy inside my townhouse, even when I felt the effects of my allergies when outside.

On the lighter side, I found this wacky article while researching mold remediation. I think the guy's onto something...

<http://www.craigslist.org/about/best/mne/253079671.html>

August 26, 2009
Email to University Hygienic Laboratory
Web customer interface

I understand that you provide a service to grow and identify molds from samples.

Recently diagnosed with a mold allergy, I'm trying to identify areas of my home and belongings that have increased amounts of molds and spores.

I understand that tape lift samples are best for this sort of thing.

Do you provide this service? How much does it cost? And do you have instructions for on how best to gather samples?

August 26th, 2009
Email from Nancy Hall
Supervisor, Environmental Microbiology
University Hygienic Laboratory

Most public health specialists currently do NOT recommend testing as a first step to determine if you have a mold problem in your home. There are many reasons for this recommendation which include currently there are no standards for this testing, cost, and interpretation is very difficult. As the web sites I list below state, the simplest approach is the following: if you can see or smell mold, you have a moisture problem that should be eliminated and then the mold area cleaned and disinfected (or the mold growth will likely reoccur). If the mold growth is extensive, a trained professional should be called in for cleanup.

If you wish to proceed with an indoor air quality assessment, we suggest this web site to look for qualified AIHA consultants in your area:

<http://www.aiha.org/Content/AccessInfo/consult/consultlisting.htm>

For general information about mold in the home:

http://www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/common/pdf/board_of_health_assistance/mold.pdf

http://www.cal-iaq.org/MIMH_2006-06.pdf

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| | <p>Hope you find this information helpful. I, too, have a mold allergy and try to avoid areas with continual high humidity(>65%) or evidence of mold. I find running our central air conditioner and dehumidifier in our basement are necessary to control humidity in my home especially this summer with all the rain.</p> <p>Good luck and if you would like to discuss this further, please give me a call.</p> |
| <p>September 10, 2009 Email to Iowa Office of Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman</p> | <p>Ombudsperson,</p> <p>I am a year out from a horrible experience with mold in a University-owned house. The home I rented was very poorly managed by Heritage Property Management, with clogged gutters, poor drainage, and water entering the basement all spring long. Numerous complaints to the property management and UI business office brought no relief -- mostly finger pointing and dismissive retorts.</p> <p>I grew more and more ill that spring and summer, completely clueless to the cause until, while helping someone in a flooded home, I was handed a brochure that spelled out the symptoms of mold poisoning. A week later my allergist confirmed I had a new mold allergy and instructed me to move immediately.</p> <p>A year later I'm realizing how sick I had become. I've moved twice to find a place where I can live in reasonable comfort, now have to ingest anti-histamines almost everyday, can't go to certain places (like Goodwill, Village Inn, Lebeda, and certain friends homes and cars...), and have been physically uncomfortable in my frequent travels to developing countries like I've not experienced in 25 years of doing this work.</p> <p>Most of my stuff is in cold storage or has been replaced. I still find pockets of mold growing on precious possessions I have been unable to part with.</p> <p>The university's response has been: "so sue us." I've discussed the matter with everyone from the business office, the ombudsperson, the president's office, and the Regents, trying to find an amicable way to settle the matter.</p> <p>You can read and see more details at:</p> <p>http://www.yahoodrummers.com/219melrose/</p> <p>Finally, I'm compelled to raise this issue in significant way for another reason: the day I moved out of the house, the property management company sent a worker, who himself had mold allergies, to paint over the 50 sq.ft. of obvious mold and then moved five students in the next day without any further remediation -- all with the full participation of the UI business office. They paid the students to close the windows and run the A/C for the first month to dry out the house, insuring that they would breathe the circulating spores day and night.</p> <p>The UI business office is wrong on a whole lot of levels here.</p> <p>I want the Regents to change policy so that those living in University-owned homes can turn to third-party (city) inspectors and regulators for protection. During this whole debacle, I was not able to turn to the usual city and county parties for inspection and protection because the house is considered state property. The UI business office would simply claim that they had handled the issue -- clearly misleading me and their colleagues in several instances. This is a "fox guarding the hen house" sort of issue that should not be allowed.</p> <p>Now that I'm regaining my health (I'm experiencing a night and day difference from last summer), I'm simply angry that the UI business office would, through sheer negligence, cause such a problem in the first place; and then walk away without lifting a finger when the damage had been done.</p> <p>Without a serious change in policy, I intend to take this case to the legislature and the courts to protect Iowans in the future.</p> |
| <p>September 11, 2009 Email from Bert Dalmer Assistant Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman</p> | <p>I received your e-mail this morning. Please clarify the precise street address and city, as I cannot find it on the Johnson County Assessor's website.</p> <p>In addition, did you make any of your complaints in writing, and did you get any response to your complaints in writing from the University? What specific people did you speak with, when, and what was their specific response?</p> <p>Did you attempt to contact city or county inspectors with a complaint? If so, which, and on approximately what date?</p> <p>Also, please explain the arrangement here ... what was your relationship to the</p> |

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| | <p>University, how did you find this property to live in, to whom were you paying rent, how much, and over what period of time? If you have a copy of the lease, that would help as well. Did you have any regular contacts at the Business Office?</p> <p>Your assistance with these questions will give me a better idea how to look into this and attempt to find a resolution.</p> |
| <p>September 28, 2009 Email from Bert Dalmer Assistant Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman</p> | <p>A review on a problem like yours could take a few months. What I can tell you now is that I was most struck by information you provided indicating that the city had no jurisdiction. I have followed up on that, and I have learned that there is no state law or city ordinance that specifically exempts university owned housing from inspection by the city. That is what I plan to follow up on in the coming weeks. I'd ask you to keep that to yourself for now in the interest of my investigation. I will be in touch with more when I know it.</p> |
| <p>December 9, 2009 Email to Bert Dalmer Assistant Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman</p> | <p>Can you give me an update on this matter?</p> <p>Now that I'm parking a wet car in my garage, I've had mold growing again on my concrete floor. The spores leap into action whenever there's moisture. During the waning months of summer I did not run the HVAC in my home and experienced no mold growth. I turned on the air circulation system last month to heat the house and now mold shows up quickly in the only exposed moisture in my home: the toilets.</p> <p>Soon I'm going to have to file a legal claim before the statute of limitations runs out.</p> |
| <p>December 9, 2009 Email from Bert Dalmer Assistant Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman</p> | <p>I've done some considerable research on the matter. In short, neither state law nor city ordinance specifically exempts university-owned housing from city inspections. However, the University is relying on a decades-old opinion from the Iowa Attorney General which opines that the state needs to be specifically included in the law to become subject to city inspections. I am not an attorney, but I have read the AG opinion and am convinced that any argument that the city should be inspecting university-owned housing would be an uphill battle.</p> <p>In either case, however, I was quite surprised to find out that most states do NOT inspect rental properties for mold. National standards used by most states and cities do not address mold at all. The City of Iowa City tells me they are sometimes able to address mold indirectly, by citing violations relating to improper drainage, unsolid structural issues, or generally unclean conditions. But the University, apparently, is not subject to any normal housing standards whatsoever, other than what they choose to follow. The University's contracted manager has a checklist, but it appears to be highly subjective.</p> <p>This leaves me in a trickier position than I had hoped to be in. Since I can't tell the University it is violating a law or rule, I would have to argue that their inspections are merely unreasonable, and I have not decided yet whether to take that position, based on the lax mold standards nationally. If I do take that position, I will have to try to persuade the University to change its practices, which it would not be bound to do.</p> <p>There is one key interview of a private individual I attempted to conduct last week to help me decide where to go from here, but I could not reach her. I will try again in the coming week or so, and will update you then on how I plan to proceed.</p> <p>I hope this is satisfactory.</p> |
| <p>December 10, 2009 Email from Bert Dalmer Assistant Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman</p> | <p>I was going to suggest you share your story with the Regents directly, in an open meeting if possible, since the business office has not responded to your satisfaction. But that is only if I've reached the end of my rope. Not sure I'm there yet. Hang tight for another week or so, and let's go from there. I have collected some information that a few states have added mold to their housing standards. So it's possible that Iowa lawmakers would look at that issue (although we're hearing that the budget will dominate this coming session, which has been scheduled for a shorter term than usual). But it's also possible the University will opt to beef up their standards voluntarily, if the argument is compelling.</p> <p>I'll let you know where I stand soon.</p> <p>Which attorney with UI do you speak of? Do you have anything in writing from him or her on mold inspections? I don't recall hearing that from you previously.</p> |

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| <p>December 16, 2009 Email from Bert Dalmer Assistant Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman</p> | <p>Today, I discussed your complaint with my superiors, including Ombudsman Bill Angrick. Due to the fact that the Iowa Code does not explicitly place state-owned residences within the inspection jurisdiction of the City, and due to the fact that mold is not regulated by uniform housing codes, for us to argue that the University has an obligation to address mold in all its residences is a difficult proposition for us. This is particularly true if we cannot definitively establish a link between the mold in your former home and your medical condition. To this point, I have taken it on faith that there is such a connection, but for us to press your complaint further would require more investigation and research on our part that at this time we cannot provide, given our limited resources.</p> <p>We believe you still have avenues of complaint within the University. I would suggest sharing your story (and photos and timeline) with the head of the University's Division of Finance and Operations, which oversees the Business Office. The number is 319-335-3552. This division certainly is empowered to take action where the Business Office has not, despite the limitations of the housing codes. If this fails, making your case to the Board of Regents, perhaps in a public meeting, may be an effective way to have your complaints fully considered.</p> <p>You should know that I have asked questions of the Business Office and the University's Legal Counsel about the University's obligations and practices on its housing inspections. Unlike the City's inspectors, the University's contracted property manager does not refer to or abide by any explicit or recognized standards when it evaluates the livability of its properties. Rather, the property manager has a checklist on which it reports the condition of various parts of the home. Both processes are subjective, but it appears to me that the University's checklist system is much more subjective and less formalized.</p> |
| <p>December 16, 2009 Email to Bert Dalmer Assistant Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman</p> | <p>I understand the City's indirect approach, which would have applied to my case: the mold grew out of months of moisture in the basement, which was not addressed by the property manager or the university despite many complaints. I could see the rainwater pouring off of the clogged gutters directly into the foundation and reported this to no avail.</p> <p>So the UI attorney's offer last year that the UI would now inspect private residences for mold before renting them was ineffectual: the problem was not necessarily pre-existing mold but extremely poor management that allowed water to flood the basement for months, creating the environment for mold to grow.</p> <p>If the university and the Regents are unwilling to address this issue, am I to suppose that my next move is to talk with my legislative representatives to change the law?</p> <p>Having faced the greatest health challenge of my life because of the university's lackadaisical attitude towards managing their properties, I am passionate about protecting innocent people from experiencing what I've gone through.</p> |
| <p>December 17, 2009 Email from Bert Dalmer Assistant Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman</p> | <p>I understand your position and I would not dissuade you from your proposed course of action if you feel you're at the end of your rope. But, then, I am not sure based on the information I've received from you whether all the right people at the University have had a chance to hear your specific problems and consider them. Confronting the Regents in an open meeting (assuming that option is open to citizens) would probably get you press coverage and maximize your opportunity for a fix without having to go to court. That might also offer you some protection from a job-security standpoint.</p> <p>I'm also intrigued by the note you sent me that referenced a UI attorney's offer to inspect residences for mold prior to rental. You did not elaborate on that. If the attorneys indeed thought to make that offer, certainly poor management over the same issue should also get their attention -- especially if you have evidence that the mold made you sick.</p> <p>I agree that just because mold remediation is not strictly required by law, that does not necessarily mean it should not be done. But it's a trickier case to make. Older houses are notorious for water problems (mine in Des Moines included), and in most cases, do not cause the sorts of illness you've experienced. Your photos and medical records could help to make that case, if you share them with the right people.</p> <p>If there's anything more I can help you with, please ask.</p> |
| <p>December 17, 2009 Email to Bert Dalmer Assistant Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman</p> | <p>Here's a convoluted email-within-an-email discourse in which I discuss with the Chief of Staff, Mark Braun, why the the university business office's offer to inspect newly purchased homes for mold before renting them would be fruitless</p> |

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| | <p>when my home was poorly maintained and the mold grew AFTER it was rented to me.</p> |
| <p>December 17, 2009 Email from Bert Dalmer Assistant Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman</p> | <p>Thanks for the additional info. I did not realize the extent to which you had shared your discussions with the President's office. You've outlined the issues very well for the University's consideration, in my view. Did you get a response from Braun to your e-mail exchange with Hollins?</p> <p>Some of your outstanding complaints are about the Business Office. Some are about the laws and rules that govern University rental housing. Obviously, the latter can only be addressed by the Legislature (or the Regents, if they chose to voluntarily adopt some standards.) On the former, if the President sees nothing wrong with the Business Office's responses to you, then I would concur that a direct appeal to the Regents and/or media, or a lawsuit would be your remaining options. The idea of painting over mold, rather than eradicating it, is pretty objectionable to me, regardless of whether there is a law allowing it.</p> <p>The Business Office's offer to be more sensitive to mold prior to future move-ins is a decent one, but I also get your point: that the University has not addressed issues going backwards, and has not addressed the overall inspection issue. Why should the University not have to be inspected by a third party? It's a good question, in my view. It's particularly compelling when you're talking a private residence, as opposed to an office building. Again, though, that's an issue of policy or legislation.</p> <p>They've invited you to file a claim, but you expected a more compassionate response. Perhaps the media would understand your expectation, if the President's office does not. As you know, it's tough to legislate or mandate compassion.</p> <p>Sorry for what you've been through. Have you tried to visit with the current resident to see if she shares any of your problems, or whether the University has done any remediation?</p> |
| <p>July 28, 2010 Email from Charles Schmidt VSP Engineering</p> | <p>Subject: moldy paper</p> <p>Cliff;</p> <p>None of us in the building mold business could help you, what about the folks that work in document preservation/restoration? Surely they have to repair/restore moldy paper??</p> <p>Good luck.</p> |
| <p>July 28, 2010 Email to Charles Schmidt VSP Engineering</p> | <p>Thanks, Charles!</p> <p>I've gotten some advice from conservators here. They are mainly concerned with volumes that have viable mold, and much less about invisible spores. It makes sense, since only oddballs like me will actually be affected by spores.</p> <p>One of my contacts led me to The Queen's stables in the U.K. where they have developed a cleaning fluid for leather that won't discolor (or discolour, to be British about it) leather artwork.</p> |
| <p>March 9, 2011 Letter to Board of Regents, State of Iowa</p> | <p>Members of the Board,</p> <p>Please add me to the agenda for your meeting on June 8th, 2011 in Iowa City. I would like to present a petition to change Regents' operating policy to protect the health of residents in university-owned housing.</p> <p>As a long-time employee of this institution, one who has sung its praises in the halls of Congress and all around the developing world, it is with great regret that I raise these issues, but I am convinced that the business practices of the University of Iowa need to change so it takes full responsibility to protect the health and safety of its tenants. I want tenants of Regent-owned properties to have the right to ask state, county, and city inspection services to respond to complaints and issues citations, since the university has proved to be neither willing nor trustworthy.</p> <p>After severe injury to my health from poor building maintenance in 2008-2009, I have followed a rigorous set of procedures to get satisfaction from the UI Business Office, my dean, the University Ombudsperson, the university's legal office, and the president. None have had the ability to help. The latter have simply brushed off the issue. I'm given to understand that this ignore-them-until-they-go-away sort of treatment is an intentional policy of the legal office. In</p> |

December 2009 I asked the State Ombudsperson to intervene and their representative responded that real change would require Regents action.

In 2010, before my option to filing a claim expired, I filed a claim with the State Appeal Board. Months later, in December, they offered a fraction of my modest claim for damages. I rejected the offer.

Many of the details of my conundrum are in the attached copy of my claim to the State Board of Appeals. Others, including pictures and the texts of emails, can be found at an intranet Web site that has yet to be released to the public...

<http://www.yahoodrummers.com/219Melrose>

While I was suffering a water and mold-infested house, I contacted Johnson County and Iowa City inspectors and asked them to look into my situation. They replied that the state law prevented this. Later, in his research in to the matter, State Ombudsperson staffer, Bert Dalmer, found this...

"...neither state law nor city ordinance specifically exempts university-owned housing from city inspections. However, the University is relying on a decades-old opinion from the Iowa Attorney General which opines that the state needs to be specifically included in the law to become subject to city inspections."

This is akin to letting the fox guard the chicken coop.

The most distressing thing is this: after damaging my health so seriously by their negligence – seeing the diagnosis from my doctor and witnessing for this first time (after months of complaints) the disgusting state of my basement – the University of Iowa's Business Office, citing clearance from the experts in Public Health and the UI Health Protection Office (which I have not been able to verify), simply had an unprotected worker paint over the worst of the mold and moved five students into the building the next day. This is contrary to everything I've read about mold remediation and seems to me to be blatantly unethical.

Hence my requests:

- 1.) I be reimbursed for all of my out-of-pocket and future anticipated expenses
- 2.) The Board of Regents changes it policy to allow third-party inspection of Regents-owned residential property.
- 3.) That all leases in the future reflect this right of tenants to seek third-party inspections
- 4.) That tenant handbooks and Web sites include the contact information for the relevant third-party inspectors.
- 5.) That the Board of Regents establishes a mechanism for tenants to appeal directly to the Board when the universities do not respond to complaints about home safety issues.

We have two options for the June 8th public meeting. We can announce a settlement that involves rule changes and full reimbursement, or I can file both a petition with the Board and a lawsuit with the courts that seeks additional damages for the physical and emotional distress this whole misadventure has caused me.

Believe me; I have tried very hard to do the right thing on this matter. Now it is time for the Board of Regents to step up and do the same.

May 9, 2011
Letter from Board of Regents

[RegentResponse](#)

June 6, 2011
Email to Mary Mascher and Joe Bolkcom
State Legislators

I appreciate your advice and assistance on dealing with a problem with the Board of Regents and their cavalier attitude towards tenants of their properties.

Here are the basic details of the case:

Three years ago I rented a residence that was owned by the UI and managed by Heritage Property Management. The maintenance of the house was incredibly slipshod. I had mold and water problems that were not addressed and I wound up with a serious mold allergy that continues to make me miserable and has cost me thousands in medical bills and replaced possessions.

The most distressing thing is this: after damaging my health so seriously by their negligence, the University of Iowa's Business Office, citing clearance from the experts in Public Health and the UI Health Protection Office (which I have not been able to verify), simply had an unprotected worker paint over the worst of the mold and moved five students into the building the next day. This is contrary to everything I've read about mold remediation and seems to me to be blatantly unethical.

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| | <p>For the last couple of years I have worked with everyone from the UI Business Office, the UI Ombudsperson, the UI President's office, the State Ombudsperson, and the Board of Regents. Not only have they been unable to assist, but the UI and Regents have been what I would consider to be abusive. I filed a claim with the State Insurance Board and was offered \$10,000, a fraction of my out-of-pocket expenses.</p> <p>While I was in the home, after the University Business Office ignored my entreaties for months, I tried to have city and county inspectors assess the property. They told me they could not because of a law that allowed the State to do its own inspections. This "fox guarding the chicken coop" situation was further clarified by the State Ombudsperson who said that no state law was in play, but a Regents rule.</p> <p>I've petitioned the Regents to change the rule and last week I received a letter from the Regents claiming, falsely, that I had insisted on moving into the house before it was in a marketable state, that the water in the basement was caused by the 2008 floods, and that they had offered me other accommodations on several occasions and I had refused them. These are blatant -- if not totally transparent -- lies and they bother me on two levels: as one who has suffered wretched health for three years because of their neglect and poor stewardship, I am hurt by their continued "blame the victim" approach; and as a taxpayer and community member I am appalled at how callously they regard their obligation to protect and serve the public.</p> <p>My next step is to sue the Board of Regents to recover my costs, but I want more to make sure that they are not in a position to harm others in the future. In my estimation, they have shown themselves unable and unwilling to act responsibly. In all of my efforts to seek redress and corrective action, I've been stunned by the lack of an adult in the room to make things right.</p> <p>For two years I have dissuaded a couple of local newspaper editors from covering the story because I did not want to jeopardize my project at the University, which survives on the goodwill of the UI community. But when I think about the five students who were moved in to the house after me before any mold remediation -- who were told to close the doors and windows and to run the A/C for a month at the UI's expense -- I think that a injustice has been done and will continue to be perpetrated unless the Board of Regents is called to act with integrity and real concern for the welfare of their tenants.</p> <p>More background information can be found at this intranet site: http://www.yahoodrummers.com/219melrose/</p> |
| <p>June 6, 2011 Email from Mary Mascher State Legislator</p> | <p>Thanks, Cliff. I have a call in to Sally's office and the are doing some follow-up. I will let you know what I find out.</p> |
| <p>June 6, 2011 Email from Joe Bolkcom State Legislator</p> | <p>Thanks for the note. This sounds like an awful situation you have been in.</p> <p>I would be happy to talk.</p> <p>Let me know what works for you.</p> |
| <p>November 13,2011 Email to Sally Mason</p> | <p>I have a couple issues that I think we should discuss soon.</p> <p>Regrettably, I have wound up in a position where I am going to have to undertake actions that could bring significant embarrassment to this institution.</p> <p>As a professional courtesy, I would like to explain myself and prepare you.</p> <p>I leave for East Africa next weekend. Is there a chance that we could meet this week?</p> |
| <p>December 14, 2011</p> | <p>Met with President Sally Mason with her attorney Mark Braun in attendance.</p> |
| <p>December 14, 2011 Email to Sally Mason</p> | <p>Crunched for time and flustered in the "speaking truth to power" thing, I forgot to make two points in today's meeting.</p> <p>Outside of the incredible discomfort my newfound allergy has caused me, my commitment to see a Regent's rule change is fueled by one vignette that is burned into my mind. The day after I moved out of the mold infested house, the Business Office, without doing a proper remediation, moved five students into the place. (They pledged to pay the first month's electricity bill if the students would</p> |

close all the doors and windows and run the A/C to dry the house out... thereby hyper-exposing the students to airborne mold spores.) The night I moved out, the leader of the new tenants showed up in tears. She had been led to believe by the folks at the business office that I had done something to cause the mold in the house. She wanted to see the mold for herself. She told me and the friends who were helping me move that she had been offered another UI-owned home at the last minute. When she went with the agent to view the alternative house, they were startled to find rats running around the kitchen.

"I'd rather have mold than rats," the young woman reported.

That tells a sorry but very real story about the state of the UI's stewardship of these homes. I hope that you will address these issues and support my call for more third-party oversight. ...

March 3, 2012
Email to Board of Regents
Craig A. Lang
Bruce L. Rastetter
Nicole C. Carroll
Robert N. Downer
Jack B. Evans
Ruth R. Harkin
Greta A. Johnson
David W. Miles
Katie S. Mulholland

Dear member of the Board of Regents,

I regret to report that I will be filing a lawsuit against you in the next two weeks. My intent is to bring sharp and very public focus to a lack of oversight where the Regent's system has failed me and can potentially harm others.

As a loyal employee of the University of Iowa who has worked assiduously to build the institution and represent it in the best possible manner everywhere I work around the world, it grieves me to be brought to this point. However, if you check the record you will see that I have done everything in my power to resolve this issue through formal and less public channels. (Even discouraging newspaper stories.) However, the statute of limitations is about to run out and I'm tired of waiting for someone with a soul to step up to the plate.

As you will learn, lies have been told about this situation and your Executive Director has mindlessly parroted these lies on your behalf.

This issues stems from the poor maintenance of a University of Iowa rental property that went unaddressed despite months of complaint. I was exposed to large quantities of mold, I became very ill, and developed a late-in-life mold allergy that continues to cause me misery today.

The worst thing, though, and the reason I am demanding a Regent's rule change, is that the University of Iowa simply painted over the mold and moved five students into the house the day I left.

This unconscionable act has been rationalized at every step up the chain of command. Even your board --the rule makers charged with oversight -- has whitewashed the matter, declining to do an even cursory investigation, employing transparent fabrications to avoid taking responsibility.

I'm not asking a lot, just...

- that the University takes full responsibility for the mismanagement of their property
- that I be reimbursed my immediate and future out-of-pocket expenses
- that my stuff -- currently stored in a climate controlled shed -- be restored or replaced
- and, most importantly, that Regents rules are changed to allow third party inspectors (city and county) to scrutinize Regents' properties

This last point is important: the current situation has the fox guarding the hen house. My complaints went unaddressed for months, with at least one UI employee brazenly lying about the problem. City and county inspectors refused to get involved because of a Regent's rule prohibition. (The state ombudsperson has indeed clarified this situation.)

It is a shame that common citizens and decent employees have to resort to lawsuits to have their grievances addressed in your system. I was even denied the right to present this matter to the Board. I suspect that there must be some sort of systemic reward for behaving the way the Board does. But I am not one to walk away from an injustice. At last count, I have raised this issue with more than two dozen responsible parties, including a gaggle of state legislators and a national environmental advocacy group. I know how to put up a good fight and I know how to recruit people to a good cause.

I know some of you personally. I understand that you have your reasons for not intervening. That's fine. "It's the system." So I'm sure you'll understand, while I campaign for greater accountability over the next few months (or years, if you wish), that it's not personal.

More information, at least what the public will be reading soon, can be found at this currently-unlisted Web site.

<http://cliffmissen.com/219melrose/>

[Home Page](#)

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