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Hawkeye football

Reliaquist Bowl could be a 'classic' matchup

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C.R. school district explores cost-saving measures

Consolidating schools, creating intermediate schools are options

By Grace King, The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — Options to reduce costs in the Cedar Rapids Community School District include consolidating elementary or middle schools or consolidating schools and reconfiguring grade levels to add fifth- and sixth-grade intermediate schools.

School boundary adjustments also may be necessary to build sustainability and ensure operational efficiency as the district examines how to reduce its annual budget by more than \$10 million after a decade of declining enrollment.

Consolidating schools would save the school district up to \$1.5 million in operational costs annually for each school building that is closed.

Superintendent Tawana Grover said some decisions about how to address budget deficits will need to be made by the end of January.

District leaders introduced these options in a 21-question survey to almost 100 members of a volunteer community coalition Thursday evening following an hourlong meeting. A similar survey was administered to teachers and staff in the district this week.

"Why are reductions needed?" said Karla Hogan, the district's chief financial officer. "We have declining resident student enrollment. We have lower birth rates. We have increased open enrollment out and decreased open enrollment in. We have low state and federal funding that is not keeping pace with salary increases. We still need to purchase curriculum. We have special-education costs, technology costs, supply-chain costs and rising student needs. We have escalating operational costs. Our post-pandemic funding has expired, and we need to reallocate resources toward strategic priorities."

EXPLORING WHAT DECISION WILL 'DO THE LEAST HARM'

The community coalition meeting was held virtually because of inclement weather Thursday evening. The coalition is expected to reconvene for one or two meetings in January.

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The Educational Leadership and Support Center for the Cedar Rapids Community School District at 2500 Edgewood Road. NW. (The Gazette)

Pre-file bills include revival of fight over I.C. archives

Measures preview 2026 debates over kratom regulation, prison safety, historical archives

By Tom Barton, Gazette Des Moines Bureau

With the 2026 Iowa Legislature set to convene Jan. 12 in Des Moines, state agencies have begun pre-filing bills they say are needed to close legal gaps, clarify authority or respond to emerging public safety, election integrity and consumer protection concerns — and reopen a high-profile dispute over the future of Iowa's state historical archives in Iowa City.

Alongside proposals to regulate kratom, tighten prison security and limit utility shutoffs during extreme weather, the Department of Administrative Services has submitted legislation that would remove from state law a requirement that Iowa maintain a historical research center in Iowa City — a change sought as the state defends its decision to close the facility amid an ongoing lawsuit and

a court order halting the removal of materials. The early filings offer a preview of issues lawmakers are likely to debate in the coming months.

BILL WOULD REMOVE REQUIREMENT FOR I.C. STATE HISTORICAL FACILITY

The Department of Administrative Services has pre-filed legislation that would strike from state law a requirement that Iowa maintain historical resource research centers in both Des Moines and Iowa City.

Under current statute, the department is required to maintain research centers in the two cities. The proposed bill would remove the Iowa City requirement, leaving Des Moines as the only location explicitly mandated in law.

The filing comes amid a legal and political fight over the State Historical Society of Iowa's decision to close its 168-year-old Iowa City research center and relocate collections to Des Moines — a move that sparked backlash from historians, researchers, donors and elected officials.

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The Iowa State Historical Society in the Centennial Building, 402 Iowa Ave., is seen Oct. 1 in Iowa City. Under a bill pre-filed by the Iowa Department of Administrative Services, the state would no longer be required to maintain a research center in Iowa City.

TOP: The Iowa State Historical Society in the Centennial Building, 402 Iowa Ave., Oct 1 in Iowa City. (Jim Slosiarek photos/The Gazette)

UI Center for Intellectual Freedom director: 'It's not a political enterprise'

Center leadership says goal is 'academic excellence'

By Vanessa Miller, The Gazette

IOWA CITY — Leadership of the Legislature's new Center for Intellectual Freedom based at the University of Iowa on Friday dismissed recent polling showing the vast majority of students across Iowa's public universities feel comfortable sharing their views in class.

"I was, in all honesty, a

little bit surprised," Christine Hensley, a regent and member of the new center's advisory council, said Friday about the polling during a taping of "Iowa Press."

"Because I do get emails from students and parents of students expressing concern about it," Hensley said. "And I'll be real honest. I had family members that attended the University of Iowa ... and we had regular conversations with them. And they made it very clear that if they wanted to get a good grade in some of

the classes, then they really had to go along with what the philosophy was of the professor — even though they felt it was wrong or they totally disagreed with it."

Radio Iowa News Director and "Iowa Press" host Kay Henderson asked Hensley and the center's interim director Luciano de Castro about the Board of Regents' 2024 free speech study after they shared thoughts on the center's mission and metrics for success.

"One of the aspects that

we want to create is actually bringing academic excellence to our students," de Castro said. "It's not an ideological objective. It's not a political enterprise. It's an academic unit we are striving for to create academic excellence for students."

When asked whether academic excellence already existed on the campuses, de Castro pointed to his unsupported attempts as a UI economics professor to create a

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