

On December 2nd, 2019, the impeachment hearing of President Rhode took place. Three other SGA members and myself are the authors of the Articles of Impeachment. There were five different counts that Rhode could have been removed from office for. Most of our evidence was verbal, and we were originally criticized of not having reasonable grounds and publishing the Articles based solely on a personal vendetta we supposedly have with Rhode, and continuously attacked myself throughout the entire four-hour hearing. One of the counts Rhode could be removed on was an allegation that he accepted a bribe as a Board of Trustees member to attend the Campus Leadership Project Summit in Washington, D.C in late July. In doing so, he broke university standards which led to legitimate legal problems for Rhode. The Campus Leadership Project is a branch of the right-wing organization Turning Point USA. The point of this branch is to target SGA officials nationwide to maintain conservative values on college campuses.

Rhode blatantly confessed to accepting the bribe and attending the conference during the hearing. After this occurred, the hearing was immediately put into recess so that the Legal Counsel and Rhode could hold a private meeting regarding his confession. Before his confession, I had become certain he would not have been removed from office due to the Senate body believing we did not have sufficient evidence. As soon as the recess began, it seemed that every soul in the room was certain he would be removed from office. He essentially admitted to committing a crime.

Despite his confession to an extremely serious offense, Rhode began focusing on other parts of the Articles of Impeachment, specifically regarding an accusation made of sexual harassment. On September 27th, David pulled my boyfriend Chief of Staff Patrick Clemons into a private meeting. In this meeting, Rhode accused our relationship as being a conflict of interest, said that I was forming a coalition in Senate against him, was swaying Patrick's views and behaviors regarding his participation in SGA, and, most importantly, accused me of using our sexual relationship as a way to convince Patrick to leak "confidential" information to myself. Rhode claimed multiple times during the hearing he did not make these comments and accused Patrick and I of lying with the malicious intent of making him look bad. He flat out called Patrick, his own Chief of Staff, a liar in front of the entire Body, the guests in attendance, and on a live-stream that accumulated over 6,000 views.

An article was published by the Western Carolina Journalist in which there was a filmed interview of myself included. The video is 8 minutes long. Rhode tried to admit an edited 10-second clip from this video to showcase a comment I said, which would have been taken out of context, seeing as he specifically chose one specific quote. Thankfully, upon my request, this evidence was not admitted due to the severe and purposeful editing of the clip.

He has tried to play the victim throughout this entire process, and it's honestly disgusting. I am personally extremely offended by Rhode's behavior last night and the personal attacks aimed at me as well as the complete disrespect he posed against Patrick and I. He has made multiple statements of how we as SGA members should never create an environment where we make people cry. This is absolute bullshit coming from him. He has made Patrick and I cry and consider resigning on multiple occasions, especially regarding his sexual harassment and personal bias. As an individual who has been diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder, an anxiety disorder, and ADHD, I have experienced mental health issues my entire life. David's

actions and claims have heavily triggered my MDD and anxiety throughout the semester. He does not care because he obviously is apathetic and does not take into consideration that others have feelings as well. He claims that he cares so deeply about SGA as a whole, but it's obvious that this is not true if he is willing to treat members of the organization in this way.

I was completely appalled by the Senate's vote to keep Rhode in office. Even though he blatantly admitted to committing a crime, threatening to fire SGA members, and then so disrespectfully accused Patrick and I of unfairly lying about his sexual harassment, Senate decided his behavior was not serious enough to be removed from office. It makes me feel as if this organization absolutely does not care about how leadership treats members of the organization. Senate most definitely took the side of the perpetrator last night and completely disregarded the victims' claims. Sexual misconduct, whether that be harassment or assault [off the record: he has faced accusations of harassment and assault before the hearing by different people], should not be taken lightly, which is exactly what happened last night. Senate does not care about me as a Senator if they are willing to let his treatment of me slide. As a student, it is extremely troubling to see SGA would treat a sexual harassment allegation in this way, and I believe shows a great deal about the character of multiple members. I am extremely disappointed in the students in this organization. In fact, a senator mentioned that we shouldn't remove Rhode from office because it would make WCU look bad. Rhode's actions alone have made WCU look bad. Holding him accountable would show that SGA actually has the integrity to stand up to those who commit wrongdoings, especially to fellow students. This organization is more focused on making the University look good versus actually representing the student body. This organization is currently highly flawed.

Along with my extreme disappointment of the Senate, I am also disappointed in many SGA Advisors. First of all, if Rhode attending the CLP Summit was not as big of a deal as the authors believe, why was this process not transparent? I believe that there is more than meets the eye in this situation. The Senate, the rest of SGA, and the student body are not being told information they should know. I truly do not believe this is over. Secondly, SGA advisors have been aware of the sexual harassment incident since September 27th. While they were informed of the situation, absolutely nothing was done to remedy the situation. Rhode made a half-assed apology to Patrick and thought that issuing an apology to me, the main subject of the accusation, was not necessary, as he admitted to last night. Again, this shows disrespect for SGA members on Rhode's part, but it also shows the lack of accountability I feel Rhode was held to by SGA Advisors. They were fully aware of how this incident effected both Patrick and I, and from what we know little to nothing was done about the situation. There was no action taken until I met with the Dean of Students himself to voice my concerns. The Dean of Students offered me support and gave me the resources I needed to take action against my harasser. When Patrick and I brought the situation to SGA Advisors, they said that "...this allegation... would not rise to the level of mandatory reporting for a supervisor." The Dean of Students has helped Patrick and I both a great deal.