

2024 GSA General Election

DRO Decision in the Matter of ISA and Ajibola Adigun

Friday, March 15th 2024

A formal complaint was filed by the International Students' Association (hereafter "the Complainant") against Ajibola Adigun (Jibs), a candidate for the position of Vice President Student Life in the GSA Re-Election of the Vice President Student Life (hereafter "the Respondent"), on Wednesday, March 13th, 2024.

Complaint: The Complainant alleges that the Respondent posted slanderous remarks against the ISA on social media. The Instagram post caption is as quoted: *"Are international students not engaging or are international students not being engaged? In the last ISA elections, the voter turnout of graduate students was a dismal 40. Not forty percent (40%). 40 out of more than 3500 graduate students."*

Additionally, a Campaign Volunteer, on behalf of the Respondent, posted an Instagram story that also disseminates unfounded allegations against the ISA. The Instagram story is as quoted: *"Jibs has my complete and total endorsement for VP of Student Life. The re run for this position is taking place because of interference done by a GSA individual. Let's root out corruption No more Breakfast for Votes."*

Screenshots of both the Instagram post and Instagram story were provided as evidence.

Response: The Respondent stated that as a member of the ISA, he is entitled to "comment on her affairs especially about their conduct", and commented that "Some weeks ago when the ISA held its elections, complained to the Chief Returning Officer that I and some other International Students were unable to vote during the course of the election". Furthermore, the Respondent, in reference to the campaign volunteer, stated "I find it curious that the ISA thinks that they are the ones being referred to in the post by a former candidate in the GSA elections. As a former candidate and a member of the GSA, he is responsible for making his own deductions regarding the conduct of the GSA elections, especially since there has been nothing in the public record why a rerun has been declared."

Relevant Bylaw and Policy:

I.POL.6.1 "The fundamental principle underlying GSA elections is that they are to be fair, respect the wishes of voters, and conducted in a manner that reflects the excellent, positive reputation of the GSA"

I.POL.6.2 Candidates will abide by GSA Bylaw and Policy concerning elections, and any other applicable policies or laws, and will ensure that Campaign Volunteers do the same. It is the responsibility of candidates to familiarize themselves with GSA Bylaw and Policy on elections

I.POL.10.2 No form of campaigning (verbal, electronic, and visual) will contain slander, discriminatory content, or ad hominem attacks of individuals

Consultation with the Elections and Referenda Committee (ERC): The ERC had decided prior to this year's election that any form of slander would warrant a penalty depending on the severity of the incident.

Decision: The DRO recognizes that constituents to a particular student group may be afforded the right to question and comment on affairs of that group - this does not contravene GSA bylaw and policy. As such, this element of the initial complaint is dismissed.

On the subject of the Campaign Volunteer's comment about "No more Breakfast for Votes", the Campaign Volunteer makes an unfounded allegation concerning the ISA breakfast event. Note that this Instagram Story was uploaded and reported prior to the public release of the ACB decision to rerun the VP Student Life portion of the election. While this comment is concerning, it does not contravene GSA bylaw and policy. As such, this element of the initial complaint is dismissed.

However, the DRO notes that the Campaign Volunteer made unsubstantiated, slanderous remarks against the GSA including alleging "corruption" within the GSA. This serves as a campaign post, and is contravening *I.POL.6.1*. The DRO finds that the Instagram story contravenes *I.POL.10.2*, and that the Respondent had an obligation to have any Campaign Volunteers take down such posts as per *I.POL.6.2*. As such, the DRO issues a **10% voter deduction penalty**.

Appeals: As per GSA Bylaw and Policy, "decisions of the CRO are subject to appeal to the GSA Appeals and Complaints Board (GSA ACB)" (I.POL.11.6) and "[parties] have twenty-four (24) hours from the time the CRO's email is deemed delivered for an emailed appeal to be received by the Chair of the GSA ACB" (I.POL.11.6.a). Please note that all parties may file an appeal to ACB, and ACB decisions are final and binding (H.POL.15.7.b).