

SHANE A. SMITH

July 29, 2016

This letter and attached sanctions are in response to Rohini Sethi's social media comments and her subsequent actions and statements. It is a fair point that one ignorant social media post alone may not warrant such sanctions. However, serving in a public role means that we are held to a higher standard – and rightfully so. We give up some of our own privacy and anonymity to be able to serve. We are expected to be knowledgeable about the issues that face the students we represent. We must understand that *everything* we say and do reflects on our organization and its other members. Due to Rohini's leadership position and the actions she has taken since her post, the situation has escalated to a point that the organization must take a strong stance.

I have been very disappointed and concerned by the manner in which Rohini has handled this situation. Since her original post, I have not felt that she has understood or respected how her actions have affected the people around her, as well as the reputation of SGA and the university. I believe that many of the actions she took only further escalated the situation and were not in the best interests of the organization.

I am aware of the first amendment arguments that some have made. Yes, Rohini had a right to say what she did. Identically, students also have that same right to voice their complaints. The first amendment prevents a person from being jailed by the government for what they say. But the first amendment does not prevent people from receiving other consequences for what they say, including workplace discipline.

Sanctions are listed below that Rohini must complete before returning to her position. The members of SGA will hold her accountable for completing these items. I am confident that Rohini has the ability to learn from this experience and become a better leader and a better person. I will join Rohini in many of the assignments listed below and will encourage other members of SGA to do so, as well.

As with any decision I make, I will face significant criticism, both internally and externally. That comes with the job – this role isn't meant for making simple decisions. Leadership is rarely easy or fun – it means determining what the right decision is and making it, regardless of whether the decision is popular. When leaders take the easy way out, nothing changes. I can be reached for comment at SGAPresident@UH.edu.

This organization is more important than any one person. As members of SGA, we commit to serving the students and the organization before ourselves. When our actions prevent the organization from succeeding, it is necessary to remove ourselves and allow the members around us to get back to working for the students. It's now time for SGA to get back to work.

Respectfully,



Shane A. Smith  
Student Body President

For violations of the UH SGA Bylaws (including but not limited to Title XI, Article 2, Section 2 and Title XI, Article 4, Section 6), Rohini Sethi is hereby assigned the following sanctions:

**1.** 50 day suspension, beginning Monday, August 1 at 12:00AM and ending Tuesday, September 20 at 12:00AM.

**Details:** This suspension will include any and all duties, activities, and events related to SGA. She may attend events that are open to students, but will have no official standing. The only exception is that she may continue to individually plan projects and events for the coming year.

**Reasoning:** Every time that Rohini attends a meeting or an event, she is representing the student body and SGA to those around her. A significant group of our student body has expressed their objection to her performing that role and her presence could also distract from the organization and its goals. Furthermore, this time away will also give Rohini the time to focus on the other components of this sanction.

**2.** Mandatory attendance at the Libra Project Workshop, August 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>.

**Details:** The Libra Project aims to educate Houston college students on issues facing today's society. This includes discussions around race, gender, religion, police relations, and other topics.

**Reasoning:** Rohini has stated that she would like to learn more about the issues facing our community. This comprehensive program will allow her to explore many areas and better prepare herself as a student advocate for the future.

**3.** Mandatory attendance at three UH cultural events per month from September through March, excluding December.

**Details:** These events should include, but are not limited to, events hosted by organizations represented in the Black Student Caucus, as well as volunteering events within the local Third Ward community.

**Reasoning:** By attending such events, Rohini will become more connected with the students that she serves and will better understand their needs.

**4.** A letter of reflection discussing how Rohini's actions have impacted SGA, its members, and the university.

**Details:** The letter should demonstrate an understanding of her responsibility as a public figure.

**Reasoning:** Throughout this situation, Rohini has not demonstrated, privately or publicly, that she understands how her actions have affected those around her and the work that this administration hopes to accomplish. Understanding the commitment to place the needs of the organization above her own is a crucial part of serving in her role.

**5.** A public presentation detailing the knowledge she has gained about cultural issues facing our society, given at the September 28<sup>th</sup> SGA Senate Meeting.

**Details:** The presentation should cover the issues that Rohini has explored and her personal growth around these topics, as well as how her growth will impact her performance as a student leader. To assist in this, Rohini will meet three times with a committee of UH cultural organization leaders, who will provide guidance and feedback.

**Reasoning:** Many students have lost faith in Rohini's ability to represent them. In order to regain that trust, she must demonstrate to them that she is ready and prepared for her duties. I am confident that she has the ability to do so.