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Impeachment process proves changes needed to SGA procedures

The recent impeachment proceedings within the Student Government Association brought to light needed changes within the organization's by-laws and procedures.

While Ryan Chapman's impeachment and subsequent removal from office may or may not have been warranted, the proceedings themselves revealed the inherent inequity in impeachment procedures.

Currently, an impeachment occurs after a formal complaint is filed. The senate then votes on whether to impeach the offending officer.

If the impeachment vote passes, a hearing is held to determine whether the impeached officer should be formally removed from office.

A jury is set up, consisting of "three highest-ranking available senators, the highest ranking available member of the President's Council and the second highest ranking available member of the judiciary committee," according to the Constitution and By-Laws.

In theory and foresight, the pro-

cedures appeared fair and equitable. However, in practice, problems arose.

By establishing a jury deciding the offender's fate solely within the SGA, the chances of an unbiased, objective judgment are diminished.

In addition, by having the attorney general serve as committee chair compounds this problem.

In Chapman's case, both Chapman and Brian Judd, attorney general, served as cabinet members to SGA President Evan Espey.

As a result, Judd became intimately involved in the events that culminated in an impeachment hearing.

By being so closely tied to the occurrences listed in the formal complaint, Judd brought to the hearing a pre-conceived notion of Chapman and his behavior, conscious or not.

Despite the best intentions to the contrary, human nature often prevents complete objectivity when one is personally involved in a situ-

ation.

A solution to these unforeseen problems would be to re-create the rules governing the assembly of an impeachment committee.

Instead of serving as chair, the attorney general should serve as prosecuting counsel. This move would allow the personal and intimate knowledge of the offender to be channeled into the proceedings, instead of suppressing the notion.

The jury should still include serving members of student government, but non-SGA members should also be brought in.

Creating a jury that consists of students with no SGA service would bring the level of objectivity and fairness that was sought in the creation of the rules in the first place.

To replace the attorney general as impeachment committee chair could be a faculty adviser, either SGA's or a representative from student services. Something needs to be done to ensure future fairness in impeachment proceedings.

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