

Oliver speaks on decision to step down as BSU president

Oliver says e-board unanimously voted he had not fulfilled his duties

GABRIELA JULIA
MANAGING EDITOR

Last semester, Micah Oliver got the sense that people thought his name and the Black Student Union (BSU) were synonymous. At that point, he knew a distinction needed to be made.

Oliver, a senior business and international studies major, resigned as BSU president on Dec. 9, just five days after BSU's executive board unanimously voted that he had not carried out the duties and responsibilities as president, according to Oliver.

Oliver spoke to *The Spectrum* about his resignation after delaying comment originally.

Although the vote did not mean Oliver had to resign, he felt it was best.

"A part of the resignation was that there were differences in strategies and approaches in how the org[anization] would pursue its goals," he said. "But that's the essence of student organizations. We're all growing and learning. Unfortunately, I just don't think my leadership in particular is what the executive board wanted."

In his letter of resignation, Oliver wrote, "I am not able to fathom this unfavorable evaluation, nor am I able to recollect a time when I was given adequate feedback, constructive criticism or an opportunity to improve upon any areas of concern."

The BSU e-board denied comment regarding Oliver's comments, but new President Deidree Golbuorne told *The Spectrum* last week that Oliver stepping down was an "internal change" that wouldn't affect future club events. Golbuorne has stepped into the role of president and Samirra Felix was elected vice president on Feb. 1.

Oliver emphasized that although his resignation is unfortunate, it is not the first time a student has decided to step down from an organization.

Tiffany Vera, former BSU secretary, re-



KAINAN GUO, THE SPECTRUM

Micah Oliver, former Black Student Union president, stands in Jacobs Management Center. Oliver resigned from BSU on Dec. 9 after the executive board voted he did not carry out his duties as president.

signed two days after Oliver.

In Vera's letter of resignation, she wrote, "I am not confident that the organization will follow through with the progress and the level of professionalism that the former president [Oliver] personified."

Vera said she opened herself to direct criticism with the e-board regarding her duties as secretary. Two out of the 13 e-board members directly contacted her, but other than that, she said all she received was either "passive aggressive feedback or indirect contact."

Kevin Appiah-Kubi, BSU's former historian who resigned on Oct. 14 due to circumstances outside of BSU, said he was shocked when he heard news of Oliver and Vera's resignations.

"Micah was a respectable president and made the club have more visibility," he said.

Unlike Vera, Appiah-Kubi said he believes the new e-board has "everything under control" and he has no hard feelings toward any of the members.

Oliver said he did not know the vice president election would be held on Feb. 1. Although he does not expect to be a part of the rearranging of the e-board, he said he wished he could have used the election as an opportunity to address his resignation to the general body.

But Oliver is not completely done with

BSU. He still plans on attending events and meetings as any other undergraduate student.

"I'm a student like anyone else is a student and this is a decision that I made for my academic career and I just ask that it be respected," he said.

BSU president hasn't been the only job Oliver has taken on.

He is also a community assistant in Campus Living, a UB 101 peer mentor and an undergraduate research assistant in the communication department. He is also the Student-Wide Judiciary chief justice and formerly part of UB's Division 1 track and field program.

Oliver is also actively involved in the Office of the President and the Office of Equity, Diversion and Inclusion.

"But my busy schedule has no effect on my resignation," he said. "It didn't deter me and it didn't play a role in my final decision."

Beth Del Genio, chief of staff to the president, worked closely with Oliver in creating educational-based programs around equity, inclusion and diversity for the new general education requirements along with a College of Arts and Sciences policy regarding campus art installations.

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“As a student leader, he was always well-prepared for discussion and encouraged open-dialogue among university leadership and student leadership,” Del Genio said in an email.

Oliver said he has always emphasized the importance of the members’ education in every e-board meeting. He also said some people might not realize how important his family is to him.

“I pride myself in being a good brother and son, and last semester I lost myself in all of that,” he said. “I look forward to having more time to enjoy my family and friends beyond college and boardroom meetings.”

Oliver said he’s appreciative of the relationships he’s developed throughout his

time as president. E-board members, UB faculty and staff have played a large role in handling last semester’s incidents — such as the “White Only” and “Black Only” signs, the open forum and the protest at President Satish Tripathi’s annual address.

Vera said that despite her experience on the e-board, she has “immense amount of love and respect” for BSU.

Oliver said he would challenge members to pursue the principle goals of the organization.

“I hope that one day, black students across the country will choose to go to UB because they see how active BSU has been on this campus,” he said. “That would make me proud.”

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KAINAN GUO, THE SPECTRUM

Oliver said he’s appreciative of the relationships he’s made during his time as president and plans to attend BSU meetings and events as any other undergraduate student.