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Radford's Interim Provost is being accused of racial discrimination in a lawsuit that claims, among other things, that she mistreated a former employee and breached his contract.

[Dr. Ebenezer Kolajo](#), who is black and a Nigerian American who speaks with an accent, was hired in January of 2013 as Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Assessment, and in that position, worked with an accreditation agency to ensure Radford met accreditation standards.

In a response submitted to the court on Aug. 15, defendants Colley and Radford University flatly deny the majority of Kolajo's allegations and ask that the case be dismissed. Discovered through documents obtained by The Tartan, the civil action submitted to the District Court for the Western District of Virginia on May 31, 2019, alleges three counts of illegal discrimination and one count of breach of contract.

The lawsuit also claims that Kolajo experienced numerous slights from [Kenna Colley](#), who is white, since she was hired as Radford's Interim Provost in October of 2017.

In a response submitted to the court on Aug. 15, defendants Colley and Radford University flatly deny the majority of Kolajo's allegations and ask that the case be dismissed.

Kolajo claims that when Colley eliminated his position "effective immediately" in June 2018, less than a month after Radford had renewed his contract for another year, she did so because of his race and national origin.

The defendants deny that the elimination was effective immediately. If it were, it would go against the guidelines laid out in the Radford Administrative and Professional Faculty Handbook, which requires 90 days of notice before the position's elimination.

The lawsuit claims that the reasons given for eliminating his position are "false and are pretext for unlawful discrimination." It points out that Kolajo's position was eliminated despite there being

two white “similarly situated employees” whose jobs were not.

Kolajo alleges that the way Radford terminated his position affected him monetarily. Had Radford not renewed his contract, Kolajo claims they would have had to pay him 12 months’ salary as severance.

By eliminating his position less than a month after renewing his contract, Kolajo claims they only had to offer him 90 days of salary.

The defendants take a very different stance. They deny ever having offered Kolajo 90 days’ salary, and instead say that the severance payout ended as soon as Kolajo accepted his current employment at Norfolk State University.

Notably, Kolajo claims that Colley would make comments about not being able to understand his accent, would interrupt him during meetings, speak on his behalf, and correct his pronunciation. The defendants deny this entirely. They allege that Kolajo waived Radford’s liability when he accepted the amount of money they offered him.

Kolajo’s suit makes numerous claims that characterize Colley as targeting him and treating him differently than his white coworkers.

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The lawsuit alleges numerous instances of Colley meeting with Kolajo’s staff without his knowledge. When asked about it, the lawsuit claims that Colley just told Kolajo to “let it go.” The defendants also deny this outright.

Kolajo claims that from day one, Colley “heaped criticism” on his department, which made for a stark contrast from the positive reviews Kolajo had received from superiors up to that point.

Specifically, the lawsuit juxtaposes Kolajo’s performance rating of “consistently above standards” from Provost Joseph Scartelli in 2016 with Colley telling Kolajo that his department needed to change, without providing specific details, during their first meeting after her taking the position.

The defendants deny that this criticism at their first meeting was ever made, and claim that Colley

gave Kolajo a similar performance rating as her predecessor.

The defendants also deny Kolajo's claim that he was responsible for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commissions on Colleges (SACSCOC), Radford's accreditation agency, telling Radford in December of 2013 that it would no longer be regularly monitoring Radford's accreditation metrics.

According to the [SACSCOC accreditation listing](#), Radford last had its accreditation affirmed in 2012 and is next up for reaffirmation in 2023.

Tom Harrington, an attorney for Kolajo and from the Employment Law Group, told The Tartan that he had advised his client not to speak to the press, as it would likely not help the chances of his case. When it came time to accredit the newly acquired Jefferson College of Health Sciences, Kolajo alleges that Colley unfairly selected someone under Kolajo to lead the Academic Review Committee.

The defendants retort that Kolajo's prior experience did not obligate them to select him to lead the committee.

Kolajo alleges that Colley went over his head in hiring a new Interim Associate Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Improvement. The defendants deny that Kolajo had sole hiring authority over the position, and also deny Kolajo's claim that she did not consult him first.

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The Tartan reached out to Radford University, Ebenezer Kolajo, and Kenna Colley for comment but received no response.

**Photo Credit: (Radford University)**

**Featured Image:** ( [L-R] Dr. Ebenezer Kolajo and Kenna Colley)