

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF VISITORS
Academic Programs, Diversity, & University Community Committee

MINUTES

Thursday, February 13, 2025

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair: Lindsey Burke; Visitors: Mike Meese, Jeff Rosen; Staff Representatives: Provost Jim Antony, Sharnnia Artis, Rose Pascarell; Faculty Senate President: Solon Simmons; Staff Senate Chair: Rachel Spence; Faculty Representatives: Cameron Harris, Melissa Broeckelman-Post; Student Representatives: Maria Cuesta, Carolyn Faith Hoffman

ALSO PRESENT: Rector Stimson, President Washington, Visitors: Armand Alacbay, Anjan Chimaladinne

I. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lindsey Burke at 10:00 a.m.

II. Approval of Minutes (Action Item)

Chairperson Burke called for any corrections to the minutes from the November 19, 2024 APDUC Committee Meeting. Hearing no corrections, the meeting minutes stood **APPROVED** as written.

III. New Business

A. Provost's Update

James Antony – Provost and Executive Vice President

Provost Antony provided an update on the spring semester, which began on January 21. He noted that spring recess is scheduled for March 10-16 and commencement will take place on May 15. He also shared an enrollment update, highlighting the over 3,000 new and transfer students joining George Mason this semester. Provost Antony highlighted the opening of the new Life Sciences and Engineering Building, with over 90 courses there this semester. He also noted that George Mason's online master's programs earned top 10 rankings by U.S. News & World Report in special education, industrial engineering, and nursing for veterans. Additionally, he reported that the College of Science dean search is advancing, with finalist interviews scheduled. He provided updates on the Budget Model Redesign, set for implementation in FY 2026, and introduced two new working groups that will begin this semester—one focused on enhancing graduate education and postdoctoral affairs, and the other, a Research Kitchen Cabinet initiative, aimed at strengthening George Mason's research enterprise. Finally, Provost Antony provided a brief overview of the recent Executive Orders, emphasizing Mason's commitment to clear and transparent communication as more details emerge. He concluded by recognizing the achievements of students, faculty, and staff across the university.

B. Program Actions and Faculty Actions

Provost Antony provided an overview of both the Program Actions and Faculty Actions.

Chairperson Burke called for a **MOTION** to approve the Program Actions and Faculty Actions en bloc; Visitor Meese **MOVED**; Visitor Burke **SECONDED** the following program actions:

1. Degree Program Closure: MS Marketing
2. Conferral of Emeritus/Emerita Status
3. Elections of New Tenured Faculty

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Yes – 3

C. Discussion: A Report of the University of Chicago Committee on the Criteria of Academic Appointment- *to reflect on what, if anything, can be gleaned from the Shils Report*

The committee discussed the University of Chicago's Shils Report on academic appointment criteria. Provost Antony emphasized George Mason's commitment to transparency, balance between research and teaching, and cross-disciplinary collaboration regarding academic appointment. He also highlighted the university's adherence to Section 5 of the report. Faculty representatives noted that George Mason's Faculty Handbook is regularly updated to reflect contemporary priorities like career readiness and faculty service, areas not emphasized in the Shils Report. While the "Chicago Trifecta" of free expression, institutional neutrality, and merit-based advancement was acknowledged, George Mason has adapted its merit criteria to better serve its institutional goals. An invitation was extended to meet with the Faculty Handbook Committee if committee members wanted to learn more.

D. Antisemitism Resolution

A draft resolution addressing antisemitism was brought before the APDUC Committee for discussion, led by Visitor Rosen and discussed by board members, administrators, faculty, and students. The conversation included arguments for and against the resolution, concerns about potential impacts on free speech and academic freedom, and the broader implications for campus climate. Visitor Rosen discussed the context and reason for the creation of the resolution, emphasizing that the resolution aims to reinforce protections against harassment and discrimination without restricting academic freedom or political expression. Some committee members expressed concerns about the resolution's language, particularly the IHRA definition, the inclusion of Zionism as a protected category, and the need for equal protection for all minority groups. University administrators highlighted existing initiatives addressing antisemitism and broader discrimination, while also acknowledging areas for improvement, such as updating reporting mechanisms and ensuring clear communication. Several members proposed refining the resolution to align with George Mason's policies and suggested moving some elements into the "whereas" clauses to acknowledge current efforts. Participants stressed the need for consistency in addressing these issues and ensuring that fundamental freedoms are not compromised. The discussion also touched on the potential impact of the resolution on political and academic discourse, emphasizing the need for careful refinement. The conversation concluded with agreement to continue discussions on revisions to the draft resolution.

E. Announcements and Reports

Announcements and Reports were acknowledged for the Committee's benefit. No further discussion was held.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Parnell
Secretary Pro Tem

Full Name:	Mason Affiliation	Written Comment
Joseph jarjourah	Student	Anti-Zionism is not racist in any way. And I would repeat that a million times, Zionism is not related to any religion or race. It is related to a belief that killing Palestinians and being on the oppressive side of a genocide is okay and normal. Being an Anti-Zionist is not in any way causing hatred to a Jewish community but proving a point that Palestinian lives matter. That in fact the idea of proposing that Anti-Zionism is even possibly racist is actually racist towards Palestinians. Because it clearly states that their lives don't matter just because of an incorrect ideology.
Kay Linwood	Community Member	I am deeply disturbed by the pure lack of knowledge an institution holds around an extremist political ideology like Zionism. If you know this as a university and ignore it for financial reasons, remember that no amount of money can buy us out of hell. Condemning students, the ones who pay you for education, for speaking against a humanitarian atrocity is downright atrocious. May you realize the horrible side of history that George Mason University will fall into should it continue to perpetuate violence against students and stand as an institution that upholds the denial of genocide. Shame.
Jane Doe	Faculty	Antizionism is not racism. Antizionism is not racism. Antizionism is not racism.
Fairouz Ouikhlfen	Student	Recommendation for consideration of the alternative, Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/) referenced in this explanatory +972 article (https://www.972mag.com/ihra-antisemitism-israel-inversion-projection/). +972 describes itself as "an independent, online, nonprofit magazine run by a group of Palestinian and Israeli journalists." The university would be committing a fallacy to ignore or override the views of civically engaged Israeli citizens and adjacent reporters such as Democracy Now's Amy Goodman, without careful and unpolitical analysis. Zionism is a political movement involving American Christians in addition to numerous other backgrounds. In aligning it with features students or faculty cannot change about themselves without reasonable distress (ethnic markers, physical appearance, names, ancestry, nationality, or heritage), the university will politicize the fight against hate.
Declan Rees	Student	Conflating criticisms of Zionism as racist will only make the campus less safe. Zionism, unlike the Jewish faith, is an ideology. It is young, only coming into the world stage in the 20th century. It's creation was an attempt to answer the "Jewish Question" and many of its founding members cooperated with known Nazi sympathizers during the holocaust. In its innate principles it pushes for the development and maintenance of Ethno-state in the holy land, an area where many different peoples call to. The subjugation and genocidal aggression to the native Palestinian population sense the Nakba, especially in the past year, has been demoralizing. If you try to make it impossible to criticize the state of Israel or the ideology of Zionism you will be putting countless students in danger. I cannot express it more fervently, do not do this
Robert Zigmund	Staff	I am writing to oppose Jeff Rosen's proposal regarding criticism of Zionism. This proposal is a disgraceful and authoritarian attempt to censor our students in their opposition to genocide.
sara babb	alum	Anti-Zionism is anti-Apartheid. Do not conflate anti-semitism with anti-Zionism. Protect the right to fight for human rights. Reject the proposal of defining anti-zionism as racism. The truth is that zionism is racist and led to a genocide of Palestinians.
Laurie B.	Concerned citizen	Anti-zionism is Not racism!
Ryan Nary	Community Member	I am an Arlington resident and thus I share neighborhood space with GMU's Ballston campus. I want to express in the strongest possible terms my opposition to GMU adopting the IHRA definitions of antisemitism, which dangerously conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism.
Sofia Nicholas	Student	Anti-Zionism is just and necessary. It is resistance to the hegemonic powers trying to steal Palestinian land and life. Anti-Zionism is not antisemitic and conflating the two is dangerous.

Siwar Masannat	Alumnus	The conflation of Zionism with a protected identity, on the one hand, and with Judaism as a religious identity, on the other, is not only erroneous but also dangerous. Zionism is a settler colonial ideology and systematic practice that has resulted in the genocide and successive mass displacement of Palestinians for more than seventy years. Zionism endangers Jewish people and Palestinians alike, and many Jewish people in our GMU community oppose Zionism based on the facts gathered by international agencies and bodies that have found Israel to be guilty of ethnic cleansing, genocide, apartheid, war crimes and torture based on meticulously gathered evidence and verified testimonies. Criminalizing the brave and conscientious actions of students, staff, and faculty who critique and oppose settler colonialism and genocide endangers them, their educational journeys and livelihoods. GMU, this is a shameful and unconscionable measure meant to stifle dissent against genocide and dispossession at a moment of heightened US fascism. Do better.
Stephen D'Alessio	Student	I am writing to oppose the measure from Jeff Rosen to equate all criticism of Zionism with antisemitism. As a George Mason student it is important to me that we oppose antisemitism and make sure that students of all backgrounds are welcomed and empowered. However, all criticism of Zionism is not antisemitic and the rights of students who want to fight for Palestinian rights need to be respected as well. Please oppose this proposal.
Anonymously	Alum and CVPA Board Member	I strongly oppose the proposed adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance(IHRA) Working Definition of Anti-Semitism which conflates Zionism with anti-semitism. Leader across universities and institutions across the country are wary of this definition because of its intention to suppress criticism of Israel. It would shameful and misguided for GMU to adopt a policy which will in turn suppress free speech and any anti-Israel criticism which is not a criticism of Jewishness.
K Hoffman	Community Member	As an institution of higher learning, the inclusion of anti-Zionism in a definition of anti-Semitic activities is a far reach. Please remove all mentions of Zionism in your DEI initiatives. Claiming that Zionism is a Jewish identity is an insult to many Jewish people. That's like saying that all Christians identify as MAGA Republicans. No religion is a political monolith and this argument is exactly why the USA is predicated on the principle that we must separate church and state. GMU should encourage debate about politics and support free speech when bad policies are harming people. Stepping on the free speech of students in the USA in order to defend a foreign state's willful acts of genocide and apartheid is not a smart decision. Do better, GMU.
Anonymous	Staff	Anti-Zionism cannot be equated to racism or anti-semitism. To think so is to be greatly uninformed. Recognizing the livelihood and rights of the Palestinian people is not anti-semitism (see work by scholar Edward Said to learn more). Criminalizing, punishing, or otherwise preventing pro-Palestinian speech is suppression, and it is especially harsh coming from a university that lauds itself for its diversity and inclusion.
Ruby Hayes	Student	Comment regarding the antisemitism resolution: The safety of Jewish people and keeping anti-Semitism off campus is important. However, anti-Zionist beliefs are not inherently anti-Semitic. Being anti-Zionist is to oppose the State of Israel that has been occupying Palestinian land and killing thousands of Palestinians for decades.

Jacqueline Green	Alumna	<p>Hello, I am writing to urge you to vote NO on the resolution brought forward by Jeffrey Rosen to criminalize critiques of Zionism and genocide both on and off GMU campus.</p> <p>This resolution, if passed, would open the door for school officials to harass and persecute students and student organizations with whom they disagree, or based on their race, religion or ethnicity. Based on the violent assault on student peace protests during the 2023-2024 school year, this is likely to embolden further harassment and persecution of peace and human rights activists, and those who oppose genocide and apartheid.</p> <p>Students have the right to freely advocate and express their opinions, particularly in academic settings that are intended for free thought and inquiry. For example, targeting students for supporting Palestinian rights is a serious violation of freedom of speech, as enshrined in the first amendment of the constitution. If passed, this resolution would violate those rights. Historically, resolutions like this have been disproportionately used against minority and marginalized communities, and particularly targeted against Palestinian-American, Arab-American and Muslim-American communities.</p> <p>The ACLU has responded to resolutions like this across the country in the “Open Letter to Colleges and University Leaders: Reject Efforts to Restrict Constitutionally Protected Speech on Campuses.” (https://www.aclu.org/documents/open-letter-to-colleges-and-university-leaders-reject-efforts-to-restrict-constitutionally-protected-speech-on-campuses).</p> <p>Like the ACLU, I urge you to vote NO on this resolution and protect ALL GMU students' right to free speech both on and off campus.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p>
Roxanne Freeman	Student	Anti-zionism is not anti-Semitism and the suppression of pro Palestine voices is a violation of our rights to free speech.
Omar Abaza	Student	The definition of Zionism, a noun, “a movement for (originally) the re-establishment and (now) the development and protection of a Jewish nation in what is now Israel.” The same thing is real that is now wanted by the International criminal court for crimes against humanity. This decision alone , by definition, would be considered anti-Zionist. So you gonna be able to talk about the ICC ruling without being called anti-Zionist? They Can’t Criticize Israel without being called anti-Zionist? How is it that students can criticize the American government but not the Israeli one? This is all, besides the fact that Zionism is founded by The British government and the ethnic cleansing of the native people Palestine.
Anonymous	Alumni	It is unacceptable to criminalize free speech on any US campus. We have the right to a voice and we the right to be heard, please don’t let your decision betray the values and foundational principles of our beautiful university.
Jude Schroder	Community Member	I advise the board to swiftly reject Jeffrey Rosen’s proposed resolution regarding “antisemitism.” Anti-Zionism is not antisemitism, and yet this resolution dangerously equates the two. This resolution will not make GMU safer. In fact, it will silence and exclude anyone in support of Palestinian liberation and autonomy. Furthermore, there are many, many Anti-Zionist jewish people, however, this resolution mischaracterizes “Jewish identity” as Zionist. If this resolution passes, it would solidify GMU’s institutional stance that it is in support of genocide and willing to punish anyone who dares to question the atrocities committed against the Palestinian people. This resolution hides behind language of DEI. I urge the board to consider the students, faculty, and community members it would be silencing and excluding with this resolution.
Jill DeWitt	Alumni	This resolution is a violation of free speech. The board should be ashamed of even considering an anti-human rights restriction on the freedom of students, faculty, and staff to support a

		free Palestine. This action would make me ashamed to be an alumni and I will never donate to any institution that restricts free speech.
Janet Freeman	Alumni	It is unconstitutional to bar free speech. Please reject Rosen's proposal.
Kristin Samuelian	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>
S Hamdani	Faculty	Discussing policies of any state is fundamental to the principles of free speech and intellectual inquiry fundamental to society and to any university mission. Doing so does not constitute racism of any kind, or antisemitism. I therefore oppose this resolution for censoring any discussion of the state of Israel's policy with regard to the human rights or right to self-determination of Palestinians.
Michael Chang	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p> <p>Thank you, as always, for taking action. As we just learned from our victory blocking three additional partisan extremists from the BOV, we have a lot of power when we join together and fight!</p>

Eli Nguyen	Staff	<p>Forbidding any criticism of Zionism is a flagrant disregard for our right to free speech. In the current political climate protecting our fundamental rights should be of the utmost importance. No ideology is above critique, no ideology warrants being held away from any discussion. Who does it benefit to prohibit critique of an ideology? What other ideologies are given this same privilege?</p> <p>As a student of the Jimmy and Roslyn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution I think it's imperative that we are able to have open discussion about political ideologies and their geopolitical consequences. Restricting this by prohibiting anything that may be construed as criticism of Zionism as a political ideology is reckless, and a restriction on the academic study being done at Mason. It's alarming to me that GMU, a school which prides itself on its diversity and open mindedness would consider a resolution that so clearly seeks to negate its own core values.</p>
Samirah Alkassim	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. This resolution must be rejected, and I urge all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Once this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry is behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>
Angelica Zayid	Student	<p>Antisemitism and Zionism are not the same. Supporting Palestinians is about advocating for equality, not discrimination. No matter their faith—Jewish, Muslim, Christian, atheist, or otherwise—people should treat each other with love and respect. There is nothing antisemitic about expressing concern for the thousands of innocent children caught in the crossfire.</p>
Benjamin Steger	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>

Rose Cherubin	Faculty	<p>I strongly reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I strongly support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. Criticism of the current state of Israel is not equivalent to criticizing the idea of a Jewish state, for the idea of a Jewish state does not imply adherence to the current state's policies, and can include the recognition of a Palestinian (also a semitic group) state alongside it. Indeed, many Israelis support the idea of a Jewish state and a Paletstinian state coexisting, and strongly oppose their own government's policies. In its current form, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can move ahead to crafting just and effective language that include ethnic identity and shared heritage in Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>
Alexander Monea	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>
Ella Duncan-High	Student	<p>Anti-Zionism is not racism. Protect free speech. How dare you try and silence students on campus.</p>
Carlin Decker	Staff	<p>On the Topic of the recent resolution proposed by Jeffery Rosen, to criminalize criticism of Zionism, this resolution should be struck down. Being critical of a nation or a political philosophy it practices is a form a free speech protected under the First Amendment. Limiting the community's freedom of speech is a direct violation of their First Amendment rights.</p>
Ellen Gurung	Alumni	<p>I am writing to express my frustration about the recent GMU Board of Visitors Resolution regarding the condemnation of students who engage in anti-Zionist language, behavior, and activism. Zionism is not an integral part of Jewish identity nor should be considered antisemitic as explained by numerous Jewish activists. Israel is a colonial project that is currently responsible for an ongoing genocide against Palestinian people, and with GMU having such a large West Asian/Middle-Eastern population I would hope that GMU would consider the many students whose family and friends are deeply impacted by the atrocities that Israel is committing. As an alumni I will not financially support GMU in any donation or fundraising activities if this resolution is put in place. This is not the first time that GMU has worked to shut down leftist student activism efforts and I am ashamed to call GMU my alma mater.</p>
Anonymous Staff Member	Staff	<p>I would like to put forth a condemnation of Jeffrey Rosen's resolution to classify criticism of Israel as hate speech. Israel and Judaism are not one and the same. Judaism is a beautiful and ancient faith. Israel is a nation, which should not be exempt from the same criticisms other nations face. Jewish people do not unilaterally support Israel, and for the university to criminalize the discussion of the topic is to decide for those people what is acceptable speech from Jews. The university also runs the risk of having to enforce penalties for "antisemitism" on community members who are Jewish. This initiative is such a misstep from the University,</p>

please do not try to prevent our university from being a forum for such important conversation.

Mackenzie Liu	Student	<p>As a Jewish individual, Israel is a key part of my identity. The prayers I say everyday mention Israel and its people. I'm a proud Zionist who believes that the Jewish people have the right to live in Israel. The harassment I have received on campus for the past year and a half has been nonstop. Often acts of anti-semitism like calling the Star of David offensive is stated to be anti-Zionist by people on this campus. My friends and I have been called countless names that are inappropriate and harmful. Again they were disguised under the name of anti-Zionism. I was left in tears one day after painting the star on one of Wilkins Plaza paintable walls. Six people yelled and circled around me, but claimed they were anti-Zionist and not anti-Semitic. The student government DEI committee has shown clear bias and refuses to acknowledge anti-semitism. Instead their meeting notes consist of anti-Zionist and anti-Israel rhetoric. The chairs of the committee even labeled a presentation on antisemitism as something that didn't involve them. Being a Zionist goes beyond the Jewish community. I have friends who are not Jewish and have received anti-Semitic harassment for supporting Israel. This further proves that the Jewish people and Zionism are linked. The climate on campus has been extremely hostile for Jewish and Zionist students. Our voices are being silenced by people who think we shouldn't exist or that a Jewish student born in Israel is a colonizer. We have been left out of student government meetings and communications about anti-Zionist legislative decisions.</p>
Elizabeth DeMulder	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p>
Betty Aquino	Community Member	<p>I've heard that Mason is considering a proposal to criminalize the criticism of Zionism on campus and I am deeply concerned by this proposal as it infringes on the students right to free speech.</p>
Grace Larsen	Student	<p>Please pass it, I often don't feel safe on campus because I am an open Zionist. I have received antisemitic messages, snide remarks, and have been given long glares at GMU.</p>

Laura Buckwald	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee meeting. I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. However, this resolution is not about protecting students and faculty from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing and blocking free speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. The policies of any nation need to be open to free discussion and debate. Any criticisms of Israeli state policies have nothing to do with antisemitism, just as criticisms of U.S. policy do not make one anti-American. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate free speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
Hannah Landsberger	Alumni	<p>I am deeply concerned about the antisemitism resolution and urge the committee not to approve it. The conflation of all Jewish people with the state of Israel is a dangerous and incorrect assumption to codify into policy on campus, and will be used to restrict free speech and students' rights to protest. As a Jewish descendant of Holocaust survivors, I can testify to the fact that the duty to protest injustice, including against governments that are executing a genocide not dissimilar to the one that my grandparents survived, is a critical part of Judaism. Students, including Jewish students, must not have their right to protest curtailed.</p>
Ana	Student	<p>Mason is suppressing Arab and Palestinian students, prohibiting them from criticizing Zionism, which is a belief system that is accountable for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. This complacency in conflating Zionism with racism will tarnish Mason's already tumultuous history. Students should have the right to oppose a system that negatively impacts their homes as well as work towards disclosure and divestment. George Mason has praised itself for its diversity and consistently brands students of color on its websites; however, it appears to lack the resources and commitment to support these students adequately. This proposal, even being considered, highlights how Mason falls short in its alleged pursuit of genuine equity; approving it will only further isolate students. Regardless of administrative decisions, students will persist in making their voices heard.</p>
Elizabeth Ann Kelly	Community Member	<p>Zionism is an idea, not an identity. Just as criticizing our own government is a basic part of freedom of speech, criticizing another government or the actions of another nation is a basic part of freedom of speech. Students must be free to criticize the philosophy of Zionism and the actions of the government and nation of Israel (and the actions of all other governments and nations).</p>

Emily Haines	Community Member	<p>I am writing to express concern and opposition to the proposal before the Board of Visitors that suggests adding Zionism protection to university policy as part of the University's protections from antisemitism.</p> <p>I personally have family and friends who are Jewish and who have even been harassed, so I am completely sympathetic to the desire to protect Jewish students and community members from antisemitic attacks. However, Zionism is very specifically a political ideology, not an identity, and it must be open to debate on a college campus where difficult ideas are meant to be discussed. Zionism is an ideology that can be extremely harmful, and has inherent racist and colonial roots, asserting that Jewish people have an absolute right to land that Palestinian people already owned before they arrive, and even that violence is acceptable to secure that land. The University's place in such debate, if it has one, is only to ensure all sides are respectful and that discussion is around beliefs and actions, not ad hominem attacks on who someone is that cannot be changed- Zionism is not unchanging, it is a political position. The assertion that Zionism is central to many Jewish people's identity, therefore Zionism must be protected, is a false equivalence. Many Catholics believe deeply that abortion is murder and define themselves as pro-life, but we do not consider pro-choice rhetoric, even against the Catholic Church establishment, to be anti-Catholic hate speech no matter how deeply held those beliefs may be. Zionism is the same. Just because it uses religious reasoning does not place it above reproach.</p> <p>It may be uncomfortable to allow such discussions on campus, but it doesn't make them less important to have, and groups that are already being silenced elsewhere such as Arabs and Palestinians, and even pacifists like Quakers, need academic spaces to be protected venues for free speech.</p> <p>The University, in specifically protecting Zionism, would be taking a racist and biased position itself under the guise of protecting one group from another. Please, reject this proposal, and use other methods to protect your Jewish students and faculty from direct antisemitism, without silencing legitimate criticism of a foreign government's ideology.</p>
Laura Dempsey	Community Member	<p>It's come to my attention that this board is considering criminalizing the criticism of Zionism. This nationalistic movement should not be above criticism, just like we love and honor our country enough to criticize if we should be able to do so for a foreign country too.</p> <p>It's dangerous when institutions of knowledge put guardrails on intellectual criticism. It goes against the very essence of your mission and purpose as a university.</p>
Kieron Rust	Community Member	<p>I am deeply concerned by the proposal to ban criticism of Israel and zionism from campus. Students are expressing legitimate concerns about the actions of a state's government, and their conduct in war, which led to an arrest warrant in the ICC. This is vastly different from hatred based on religion, which we all condemn. These two things are not the same.</p> <p>Countries can still be criticized even when they are deeply tied to religious minorities. We spoke out against Saudi Arabia over the Khashoggi murder, which was not only protected speech, but encouraged. Calling out Israel's deeply immoral conduct is no different.</p> <p>Protect student's right to protest. Protect free speech.</p>
Pua Ali'i Lum	Community Member	<p>There is no greater disservice to humanity than to conflate lies about antisemitism. Regardless of how many lies, court cases, threats and removing/revoking visas of students standing with Palestinians', human beings, rights. In some cases, they are Palestinians who are constantly suffering at the hands of Zionism Yt supremacy. You can't make a lie the truth. Shame on you.</p>

Jackie Jones	Community Member	The least Jewish thing you can do is not share opinions and argue the points of founding principles of Zionism. Withholding love is a form of abuse and not caring about the rights and humanity of other's is anti-Jewish. We all should be standing tall in solidarity with Palestinian's.
Anne Komer	Community Member	I'm of Jewish descent and I do not support the genocide and lands stolen from the Palestinian people. There's a difference between antisemitism and anti-Zionism, and that distinction is a very important one. It is of utmost importance that we do not swing from no hate speech against a people who Hitler tried to ethnically cleanse to no hate speech against a government that is ethnically cleansing another people.
Concerned Community Member	Community Member	<p>To the Board of Visitors at GMU,</p> <p>I am writing as a concerned local community member and family member of a GMU alum about the proposal to revise University Policy Number 1201 ("Non-Discrimination Policy") to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on and off campus. I think that the proposal should not be approved on the basis of protecting GMU students' 1st Amendment right to freedom of expression. To me, this proposal to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism seems concerned about protecting a specific political position and not at all about protecting Jewish students, faculty, and staff.</p> <p>For example, indeed it would be antisemitic to "[a]ccus[e] the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust," as stated in the IHRA examples of antisemitism. It also would indeed be antisemitic to "[hold all] Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel." Accusing Jews as a people or Israel as a state of making up the Holocaust are examples of antisemitism because they show exaggeration and stereotyping of the entire Jewish community.</p> <p>However, there are several contemporary examples listed in the IHRA definition of antisemitism that are notably not antisemitic. It is extremely alarming to hear that GMU might implement a rule to punish students who are actually exercising their 1st Amendment right to freedom of expression by adopting this definition and its examples. For instance, it would NOT be antisemitic or denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination to "[claim] that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor." The State of Israel does not represent Jewish people as a whole, so it would not be antisemitic to criticize Israel as a racist endeavor. Students, faculty, and staff raising concerns about Israel, for example about Israel being a modern colonialist state or "a racist endeavor", would not be antisemitic because it does not attack Jewish people, and instead is criticizing the government and history of Israel. It's conveniently vague that another IHRA example of antisemitism is "[a]pplying double standards [to Israel] by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation." Who or what decides what is a double standard, and what is or is not expected of "any other democratic nation"? This does not seem like something that can be objectively enforced.</p> <p>I also have concerns about the language used in the proposal. It's interesting that instead of Jewish people being explicitly the center of the intended expanded protections, the word "Zionist" is used. While white supremacists do use phrases like "Zionist" to spread antisemitism (for example, "Zionist-controlled government"), Zionist does not equal Jewish. There are many Zionist Christians in the world who are not Jewish. There are many Jewish people in the world who do not identify as Zionist. There are many Jewish people around the world, but especially here in the DC area, who are critical about Israel who would be labelled as antisemites by this change. Again, this proposal seems concerned about protecting a specific political position and not at all about protecting Jewish students, faculty, and staff on and off campus from actual antisemitism.</p> <p>I urge the Board of Visitors to reject this proposed change. There are better ways to protect Jewish students, faculty, and staff that do not need to revolve around the idea of protecting "Zionists" more than the Jewish community as a whole.</p>

Allan Gluck	Community Member	Evaluating whether an act is genocide is objective. Applying the definition of the act of genocide to what Israel has done is objective, affirmed by the international criminal court and numerous other organizations and countries. Thus, to say that Israel is undertaking genocide is in no way antisemitic, and in fact denying this is antisemitic for it is antisemitic to think that Jews condone genocide.
Mariam C	Alumna	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>As an alumna of GMU, I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen's proposal for George Mason's Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p> <p>From my years at the university, both in and off campus, I know that George Mason University prides itself on its diverse student population yet continues to harm and marginalize their very own students. This proposal seeks to silence and censor any criticism of Zionism within ALL University departments. Zionism is a colonialist and racist ideology rooted in the violent dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. Equating antisemitism to anti-Zionism is dangerous and allows fascism and white supremacy to strengthen their roots - especially if endorsed by a university that claims to "honor freedom of thought and expression". This is not only a direct attack on Palestinian and Arab students; it endangers the fundamental rights of every individual to express their views freely. Marginalized groups rely on academic spaces to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for change, yet the University continues to repress activism and silence the very voices that it should uplift.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the grave consequences of this proposal which seeks to undermine freedom of expression, critical thinking and diverse discourse which are essential attributes of higher education. Suppressing these freedoms would not only diminish the educational experience but would also set a dangerous precedent for censorship, marginalization and the erosion of democratic values within academic institutions.</p>

Nezha Selloum Community Member

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Kelby Gibson PhD candidate and GTA

Dear APDUC Committee Members,

I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting.

Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians. As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th. Then, with this politicized attempt to criminalize legitimate speech and inquiry behind us, we can get to the real work of including ethnic identity and shared heritage into Mason's anti-discrimination policy.

Terri Ginsberg
Community
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James H. Finkelstein	Emeritus Professor of Public Policy	<p>I'm Jim Finkelstein, Professor Emeritus of Public Policy and was the founding Vice Dean of the School of Public Policy, now part of the Schar School.</p> <p>According to the Association of Governing Boards (AGB), the first Principle of Trusteeship is to "Embrace the full scope of your responsibilities." The foremost of these responsibilities is to "Fulfill your fiduciary responsibilities. As a fiduciary, you are charged with acting on behalf of the public to further the best interests of the organization on whose board you serve." I am concerned that at least one member of the Board of Visitors (BOV) may not be upholding this responsibility.</p> <p>On February 11, 2025, Dr. Lindsey Burke reposted a multipart tweet by her Heritage Foundation subordinate, Jay Greene, in which he strongly advocated for reducing the NIH indirect cost recovery rate. Earlier, she shared a February 7, 2025, tweet by Elon Musk:</p> <p>"Can you believe that universities with tens of billions in endowments were siphoning off 60% of research award money for 'overhead'? What a ripoff!"</p> <p>Dr. Burke's engagement with these posts suggests support for a policy that would significantly cut Mason's federal funding—a conservative estimate places the loss at over \$2 million per year if such changes were enacted. It is difficult to see how advocating for such cuts aligns with Mason's best interests.</p> <p>This is not the first time Visitor Burke has used X to express views that, in my view, conflict with her duty of care and fiduciary responsibility as a member of the Mason BOV and chair of its Academic Programs, Diversity, and University Community Committee.</p> <p>I urge Dr. Burke to step down from the BOV to uphold the integrity of the board and protect the university. This move would serve the best interests of Dr. Burke, the university community, the Commonwealth, , and even the Heritage Foundation.</p> <p>Respectfully,</p> <p>James H. Finkelstein, Ph.D. Professor Emeritus of Public Policy Schar School of Policy and Government</p>
Bethany Letiecq	Faculty	<p>Dear APDUC Committee Members,</p> <p>As the president of the GMU chapter of the American Association of University Professors and a Professor in CEHD, I am writing to strongly object to Visitor Rosen's proposed resolution (titled "Antisemitism Resolution") under consideration at the February 13th APDUC Committee Meeting. This resolution is an overreach of the BOV and threatens both free speech and academic freedom.</p> <p>Like all people of good will, I reject antisemitism and antisemitic ideologies, and I support including protections based on ethnic identity and shared heritage in GMU's anti-discrimination policy. But this resolution is not about protecting faculty and students from discrimination. It is about chilling if not repressing critical discussions of Israel and Israeli state policy and stigmatizing speech that supports the human rights of Palestinians.</p> <p>As such, this resolution must be rejected, and I call on all Board members on the APDUC Committee to vote "NO" when the resolution comes up for debate on February 13th.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration. Bethany Letiecq, President, GMU-AAUP</p>

Sammy Alqasem	MD resident	To whom it may concern,
<p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding Jeff Rosen’s proposal for George Mason’s Board of Visitors that would aim to criminalize all criticism of Zionism on campus. This outrageous proposal is an assault on free speech and is a gross violation of our first amendment rights. Institutions of higher education should represent tolerance and growth, fostering environments where diverse perspectives, ideas and identities can thrive. Universities are indicators of social progress, making it crucial that they uphold principles of inclusivity, open discourse and freedom of expression.</p>		
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Natalie Johnson	Community Member	<p>Protect freedom of speech. Do not adopt Jeff Rosen’s proposal to ban all anti-Zionist speech. Zionism is a racist colonial ideology that is predicated on the genocide of Palestinians. Anti-Zionism is NOT anti-Semitism. If you ban anti-Zionist speech, then you are trampling free speech and making all students less safe, especially Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students.</p>

Nora Mona

Community
Member

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Alison OConnell	Alumni	<p>Dear Board of Visitors,</p> <p>The IHRA definition of antisemitism is flagrantly untrue, racist, seeks to suppress free speech, and is in itself antisemitic.</p> <p>Kenneth Stern, who drafted it, says he regrets creating it because of how it has been weaponized by the right to suppress free speech, especially on college campuses: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/13/antisemitism-executive-order-trump-chilling-effect</p> <p>Many Jewish organizations, including but not limited to, J-Street, T'ruah, Diaspora Alliance, Jewish Voice for Peace and Partners for Progressive Israel oppose this definition.</p> <p>Conflating all Jewish people with Zionism and the state of Israel is both inaccurate and antisemitic. The first anti-Zionists were Jewish people, long prior to 1948. Many Jews today are anti-Zionist and seeking to suppress their voices does not make this any less true. Yes, even Jewish people with family in Israel, who have lived in Israel, visited Israel - many of them also conclude the state of Israel is committing apartheid and genocide, and therefore oppose it.</p> <p>It is also appallingly racist and very transparent to try to suppress Palestinian students and professors from speaking honestly about their own experiences of colonization, racism and oppression.</p> <p>This Resolution is a shameful move on the part of Mason, and as an alumni I strongly encourage you to vote against it.</p>
Michael Beer	spouse is alumni. I am also a Virginia taxpayer	<p>As a person of Jewish heritage, and relatives who were killed and hostaged on Oct 7, as well as the descendant of Holocaust victims, I ask you to oppose the proposal by Jeff Rosen to criminalize and/or stigmatize criticism of Zionism on campus. Many many Jews are critical or oppose Zionism. Are you seriously going to equate (or link) antisemitism with anti-zionism? And please don't refer or promote the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which also equates criticism of Zionism with Judaism. Academic freedom is coming under attack by the Trump administration. LGBTQ, immigrants, gender studies, racism/ethnicity studies, people with disabilities and DEI. The issue of Israel and Palestine is a canary bird in the coal mine. Stand firm for academic freedom and the universal right to free speech and assembly as guaranteed under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.</p>
Anonymous	Student	<p>Restricting students' free speech against the genocide against thousands of innocent Palestinians is a deeply disturbing proposition by a body meant to reflect the student voice. The IHRA's Definition of Antisemitism has a prominent history of being weaponized to silence criticism of Israel, and it's profoundly disappointing to see this institution do the same.</p>

Anonymous	Community Member	<p>Zionism, the idea that Jewish people have a right to all land that exists in a certain part of the Levant is highly damaging to not only to all non-Jewish people but as well as all Jewish people all over the world. By trying to legitimize this claim you are legitimizing all claims of old lost land, are we supposed to go back to the borders of the 16th century and entertain such nationalism? I think not.</p> <p>Even worse, if you were to legitimize such claims you are condemning the people that live in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to being ethnically cleaned and removed from where they live, which will result in lives lost and extreme unnecessary agitation.</p> <p>Also, in suppressing the freedom of speech of people against Zionism is against human rights, especially the right of freedom of speech. To be against Zionism is not to be against Jewish people, in fact it's a standpoint that is rooted in creating a better world, as validating nationalistic claims to ethnically cleanse and settle land is highly anti-human.</p>
Q Garcia	Community Member	<p>Freedom of speech and expression is a foundational right in this country, and should be upheld by our collegiate institutions. Of course hate speech should not be tolerated, but trying to broaden the definition of "hate speech" for political purposes is an insult to all of us, and threatens our right to speak up against injustice. We are not claiming that Jewish community members should be attacked for their identity and beliefs, hate speech should continue to be banned. But broadening the definition of hate speech to include all good faith critiques of Israel as a settler-colonial nation, is not only false, but immoral and a threat to our freedoms.</p> <p>Many Jewish community members and leaders have differing views and opinions around Israel, and to reduce the Jewish community to one stance is anti-Jewish and hateful in itself.</p> <p>A commitment to honest and open dialogue about the issues of our time is desperately needed on our college campuses, and I urge you to rethink your assertions and definitions of hate speech and anti-semitism. Your current plans do not reflect American or Jewish values and instead threaten other groups of people being directly impacted by ongoing wars and displacement. This move seeks to divide us further, by silencing and forcing out voices that you don't agree with, further marginalizing already intentionally marginalized groups.</p> <p>It is your responsibility to advance truth and honesty in your rules and policies, not to punish students for views you disagree with.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p>
Grace Nina	Community Member	<p>Freedom of speech Freedom of assembly</p> <p>Respect our rights</p>