

**BOARD OF VISITORS  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Full Board Meeting  
Thursday May 1, 2025  
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201), Fairfax Campus**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Rector Cully Stimson, Vice Rector Mike Meese, Secretary Armand Alacbay, Visitors Horace Blackman, Reginald Brown, Lindsey Burke, Anjan Chimaladinne, Charles Cooper (virtual), William Hansen (virtual), Maureen Ohlhausen, Bob Pence, Jon Peterson, Nancy Prowitt, and Jeff Rosen.

**ABSENT:** Visitors Caren Merrick and Dolly Oberoi.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Solon Simmons, Faculty Representative; Carolyn Faith Hoffman, Graduate Student Representative; Maria Cuesta, Undergraduate Student Representative; Rachel Spence, Staff Liaison; Gregory Washington, President; James Anthony, Provost and Executive Vice President; Anne Gentry, University Counsel; and Scott Nichols, Interim Secretary pro tem.

**I. Call to Order**

Rector Stimson called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Rector Stimson informed the Board that two board members requested to participate remotely:

- Visitor Cooper due to a personal matter, specifically for personal travel in Switzerland.
- Visitor Hansen due to a personal matter, specifically out of town for work travel in Georgia.

Citing the board's Electronic Meeting Participation policy, Rector Stimson **MOVED** to approve Visitor Cooper and Visitor Hansen's electronic participation in the meeting. The motion was **SECONDED** by Vice Rector Meese. The **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE**.

**II. Recognitions**

**A. Honorary Degree Presentation**

Rector Stimson introduced Carolyn Peterson to the board as one of George Mason University's founding mothers. A recipient of the Mason Medal with her husband in 2008, her family has funded schools, colleges, scholarships and buildings at the university. She has served on the George Mason Foundation Board of Trustees and is best known for her support of the arts with active roles on the Mason Arts Board and with *ARTS by George!*.

On behalf of the board of Visitors, Rector Stimson conferred upon Mrs. Peterson the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters. Mrs. Peterson thanked the board and highlighted her time working with every university president and president's wife, remarking at how the university has grown from a single building to what it is today.

**B. Appreciation Plaque Presentations to Outgoing Representatives**

Rector Stimson recognized the 2024-2025 BOV student representatives, Carolyn Faith Hoffman and Maria A. Romero Cuesta. He presented Ms. Hoffman with a plaque and invited her to introduce her successor.

Ms. Hoffman expressed gratitude to the board, the advisors in the College of Public Health who supported her in her graduate student representative role, and to Maria and the students for their support. Ms. Hoffman then introduced Nilima Mow who will serve as the 2025-2026 President for the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA) and has been a representative in their general assembly during the past year.

Rector Stimson thanked Ms. Hoffman and invited Ms. Cuesta to receive her plaque and introduce her successor.

Ms. Cuesta extended her gratitude to the board and for her time working alongside Carolyn. She then introduced Isaiah Grays who will serve as the Student Body President for the 2025-2026 academic year. Mr. Grays will be a sophomore studying government international politics.

Rector Stimson also congratulated Solon Simmons for being reelected to a second term as the President of the Faculty Senate.

### **C. Recognition of Early Identification (EIP) Graduating Students**

Rector Stimson recognized the 2025 graduating class of the Early Identification Program (EIP), and directed the board to the history of the program and the names of the graduates located in the board materials. Rector Stimson introduced Dr. Mia Hines, Interim Executive Director of EIP, who thanked the board and President Washington for their support of EIP and for recognizing their graduating seniors.

Dr. Hines proceeded to introduce Meeha Bhuiyan as this year's student speaker. A first-generation Bengali-American and first to pursue higher education in her family, Ms. Bhuiyan is an honors student, majoring in biology with a minor in public health and plans to pursue a Master's of Science in management in the Costello School of Management through the Bachelor's Accelerated Master's program after graduation. Her long-term goal is to attend medical school and become a pediatrician, hoping to open her own clinic and serve minority communities like the one where she grew up.

Ms. Bhuiyan expressed gratitude for the foundation and support of the EIP program. She explained that the EIP program provided her academic and personal support for college and career preparation programming beginning in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and continuing through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. After graduating from high school, the EIP program provided a full tuition scholarship to George Mason University and also provided life skills: confidence, patience, and friendship. She thanked the EIP family, Dr. Khaseem Davis, Dr. Mia Hines, Ms. Jasmine Osborne, Ms. Bailey Highsmith, Ms. Gabby Rodriguez, Mr. Bob Lavelle, Erin Muss, and her college mentors. In closing, she added that education is often called the key to unlocking the future, but it is not about unlocking doors but for building a bridge for her community for generations to come.

The Board and members of the gallery recognized the graduates with a standing ovation.

### **D. Jack Wood Awards Presentation**

Rector Stimson noted that the stories for each Jack Wood Award recipient is included in the board materials and in a program placed at their seats. He then introduced Traci Kendall, the Executive Director of Operations and Community and Local Government Relations, to present this year's Jack Wood Awards. Ms. Kendall explained that the award is named after former Fairfax Mayor, John C. "Jack" Wood. Mr. Wood's son joined this segment and assisted with presenting each award alongside President Washington. Ms. Kendall offered congratulatory remarks for the following recipients of the six award categories:

- Community Category:
  - DeShane Jones, BA '18, is this year's recipient and was in attendance to accept his award.
- Student Category:
  - Food Recovery Network (FRN) is this year's recipient and Camila Rosales, President, was in attendance to accept their award.
- Faculty/Staff Category:

- Matt Rice, faculty member in the Department of Geography and Geoinformation Science is this year's recipient and was in attendance to accept his award.
- Government Category:
  - Takis Karantonis, Arlington County Board Chair, is this year's recipient and was in attendance to accept his award.
- Partnership Category:
  - Prince William County Community Services Board and George Mason's College of Public Health partnered to create the Peer Support Specialist Workforce Pipeline and are this year's recipients. Members from both organizations came forward to accept the award.
- Legacy Award:
  - Padmanabhan "Padhu" Seshaiyer, professor and director in the Mathematical Sciences Department, is this year's recipient and was in attendance to accept his award.

Rector Stimson invited all honorees to join the board for lunch and recessed the meeting at 11:43 a.m.

### ***Lunch Recess***

### **Meeting Reconvene**

**PRESENT:** Rector Cully Stimson, Vice Rector Mike Meese, Secretary Armand Alacbay, Visitors Horace Blackman, Reginald Brown, Lindsey Burke, Anjan Chimaladinne, Charles Cooper (virtual), William Hansen (virtual), Maureen Ohlhausen, Bob Pence, Jon Peterson, Nancy Prowitt, and Jeff Rosen.

**ABSENT:** Visitors Caren Merrick and Dolly Oberoi.

**ALSO, PRESENT:** Solon Simmons, Faculty Representative; Maria Cuesta, Undergraduate Student Representative; Rachel Spence, Staff Liaison; Gregory Washington, President; James Anthony, Provost and Executive Vice President; Anne Gentry, University Counsel; Dan Stephens, Interim Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer; David Burge, Vice President for Enrollment Management; Sharnnia Artis, Vice President of Access, Compliance and Community; Marvin Lewis, Assistant Vice President and Director of Intercollegiate Athletics; Malcolm Grace, Deputy Athletic Director, Compliance and NCAA Guidance; and Scott Nichols, Interim Secretary pro tem.

### **III. Approval of the Minutes**

Rector Stimson reconvened the meeting at 12:45 p.m.

Rector Stimson called for any corrections to the Full Board Meeting Minutes for February 27, 2025; Full Board Meeting Minutes for April 1, 2025; or the Special Full Board Minutes for April 17, 2025 that were provided for review in the board meeting materials. Hearing no corrections, the meeting minutes stood **APPROVED AS WRITTEN**.

### **IV. Rector's Report**

#### **A. View from the Bridge**

Rector Stimson began his report by describing the active engagement of the board, to include:

- April 10 Finance and Land Use Committee meeting on tuition, fees, and land use.
- Visitor Caren Merrick was appointed by Governor Youngkin to the board.
- April 17 Academic Programs, Diversity & University Community Committee meeting that began the discussion of whether to consider a proposal to prohibit race and other protected classes against discrimination in order to comply with a recent executive order along with the Education Department

Dear Colleague letter, directives from Richmond, and compliance with federal law. The board will continue the discussion at this meeting by hearing from university management on the changes to programs, policies, offices, scholarships, etc. that brings the university into compliance with the law.

- Timeline of the board's DEI review:
  - September 2023: creation of an ad hoc DEI Committee, formed under the leadership of Rector Blackman and co-chaired by Visitors Meese and Witeck. The committee held 10 meetings, several one-on-one conversations with professors, and met with students on April 17, 2024 for a two-hour listening session.
  - April 2, 2024: the public comment session of the full board meeting included oral and written comments on DEI.
  - March 27, 2024: board members attended the Braver Angels/ACTA debate and discussion with students related to DEI.
  - May 2024: the full board heard a report from the DEI Committee, *The Mason Way*, making recommendations on the assessment of positions and offices, a campus climate survey, and more.
  - November 23, 2024: the campus climate survey on DEI had 311 responses. Members of the DEI committee met with faculty, staff, and students involved in DEI and related offices.
  - Board members had other interactions with students on DEI, including the SciTech campus opening, a meeting with graduate students led by Ms. Hoffman, and a more than two-hour meeting with a dozen students led by Ms. Cuesta. Visitor Blackman met with students on April 22, Visitor Alacbay met with students on April 25, and Visitor Brown met with students on April 26.

Rector Stimson personally thanked outgoing Visitors Blackman, Chimaladinne, Oberoi, and Prowitt for their service to the board as their terms expire on July 1, 2025. They will be honored at the October 15 annual BOV recognition event.

Rector Stimson restated his announcement at the Executive Committee meeting of the appointment of Vice Rector Mike Meese and Secretary Armand Alacbay to work with university administration and legal counsel to review and revise the board bylaws, with proposed revisions provided to the board at least 10 days for review and feedback prior to the August 1 annual meeting when they will be put forward for approval.

Rector Stimson concluded with reminding the board that the OSCAR Celebration of Student Scholarship and Impact is on May 6, 2025; Commencement is on Thursday, May 15, 2025 at EagleBank Arena; a private musicale is on May 27; the Annual Planning Conference is Thursday, July 31; and the Annual Meeting is on Friday, August 1, 2025.

- B. Board of Visitors Meeting Schedule for 2025-2026 (ACTION ITEM)
- C. Board of Visitors Meeting Schedule for 2026-2027 (ACTION ITEM)

Rector Stimson reminded the board that the meeting schedules for 2025-2027 were proposed at the February 27, 2025 meeting and are included in today's meeting materials. No requests were made to consider alternative dates. Rector Stimson then **MOVED** that the Board approve the Board of Visitors Meeting Schedule for 2025-2026 and the Meeting Schedule for 2026-2027 as they are provided in the meeting materials. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Prowitt. The **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE**.

## **V. President's Report**

Rector Stimson recognized President Washington who reported the following:

Overview of year-to-date performance:

- A stellar start to the academic year has faced challenges. Presidential Performance metrics, with 25% of the fiscal year remaining:
  - Most metrics are succeeding; there is a slight decline in graduate enrollment of 1.1%, largely due to executive orders. Graduate research expenditures have not risen as hoped due to the research environment nationally. School rankings are mixed.
- Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education added a new classification to include outcomes (measured by student earnings 8 years after graduation) and access (how easy it is to get into the institution). Mason classified as High Access and High Outcomes, the only public R1 institution in the state to achieve this placement. Only 13 of the “large” or “very large” R1 universities (96) in the country are classified High Access and High Outcomes, and only 5 “very large” R1 universities achieve this classification.

Strategic issues:

- Executive Order update
  - There are about 30 executive orders that could possibly impact George Mason. The orders are subdivided into 3 categories:
    - DEI:
      - George Mason eliminated, amended, reduced, renamed or paused (while under review) programs to move DEI infrastructure into compliance with current federal directives.
    - Country of origin (to include immigration status and foreign aid support):
      - Dramatic changes to graduate enrollments are being managed.
      - The university developed a process to support current graduate students who are affected by updated visa revocation and deportation policies. Fourteen (14) students had their visas revoked; all visas were restored, but 8 did not return to the university.
    - Government agency restructure
      - Thirty-eight (38) current research projects have been paused or terminated. The university developed a process to manage those affected along with an initiative to appeal projects that potentially were terminated in error. The situation changes rapidly, one week prior there were 28 projects with a loss of \$13 million that were paused or terminated, now there are 38 projects with a loss of \$16 million.
      - Mason Career Academy: George Mason is supporting graduating students by offering free access to Coursera to get credentials that are in high need from regional employers. The significant drop in opportunities to work with the government and government contractors are impacting student employment. Students will be able to supplement their degree to match the workforce that is available to them. Displaced federal workers will also have access to these courses for a fee.
- Fiscal Realities update
  - The effect of federal executive orders and recent policy changes at the federal and state level are having a significant fiscal impact on the university’s academic and administrative programs. This fiscal impact, coupled with the net effect of unfunded mandates, create fiscal uncertainty for the upcoming fiscal year and reinforce the need for a tuition increase.
  - Three areas of uncertainty:
    - Reductions in research expenditures and awards (up to \$16M, \$3M in indirect cost).
    - Reductions in graduate student tuition due to visa denials (up to \$12M). There are about 4,000 foreign graduate students who pay full tuition; 45% of foreign graduate students come from India, their visas are being denied by their home country.

- Unfunded mandates (about \$23M) have cost the university about \$122M since FY20. Mason must cut programs every year or increase enrollments to cover the expense.
  - Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) provides tuition benefits at Virginia public colleges and universities to the spouses and children of military service members who were killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who became at least 90% disabled due to military service.
  - Unfunded compensation stems from the fact that the Commonwealth only covers about 50% of an employee's state-mandated raise. The institution is required to provide the remainder.
- Budget mitigation is achieved through:
  - Revenue enhancements: Patriot Investment Fund, Masonvale ground lease termination, and Vernon Smith Hall acquisition. Every additional student gives us net marginal resources.
  - Cost savings/cost avoidance: reduced positions, retirement incentive program, Vernon Smith Hall rent expense elimination, Freedom Aquatic & Fitness Center renegotiation, savings from parking, janitorial, and library services, and energy efficiency improvements.
- Mason tuition increases are not impacting the number of applications, noting that applications grew 17% while tuition increased by 11% over a 5-year period.
  - President Washington is sensitive to the cost of tuition, as he paid his college tuition, then received an ROTC scholarship. Every other Virginia peer institution has raised or is expected to raise tuition.
- Strategic Plan update:
  - The university is in year 3 of 5 of implementation, and is doing very well with 73% aligned action initiatives in progress, 14% completed, 5% not yet started, and 9% deferred. More details are in the meeting materials.
- 6-Year Planning Process this summer:
  - Two-year review of a six-year process to be completed in time for the August meeting.
  - State reviewers, OP-Six, provided feedback on Mason's plan:
    - The tuition discount rate for out-of-state students has reached 40%. The out-of-state tuition rate is three times the in-state tuition rate. Even with the discounted rate, the cost to out-of-state tuition is higher than in-state tuition so those students' aid is an institutional investment with a net positive return.
    - Auxiliary fund balances: Mason has a large reserve and has been spending down the fund with the acquisition of Vernon Smith Hall.
    - The two-year plan for budget reductions worked exceedingly well with the critical vacancy process and vacant position eliminations.

Discussion ensued:

- Visitor Brown asked what Coursera will cost the university. President Washington responded that the range would be \$400,000-700,000 annually. Credentials are paid for by Mason, not the student.
- Ms. Hoffman emphasized the value of the Mason Career Academy, as it is a direct need for her as a graduating student whose job opportunity is no longer available. This is very much needed by graduate students now. President Washington stated the academy will be available in a few weeks. This problem did not exist a month ago, so the university is coming together on this initiative quickly.
- Visitor Rosen asked about the plan for increasing state funding, gifts, and fundraising so that funding comes from other sources instead of students. University fundraising is at 77% of its goal. Typically, the biggest donations come in the summer. Later this spring, he will make a fundraising trip to

California. Dr. Washington added that he believes in the fundraising goal – if they reach the fundraising goal – 5 of the 6 highest fundraising years for the university have been in the past 5 years.

- Visitor Brown praised the president’s report and would appreciate having it in advance to read thoroughly and process it. He then asked about how many degree programs have been cut in the past 4 years. President Washington responded that George Mason has established more and cancelled more programs than our R1 peers combined. The provost’s new budget model will give units the incentive to take a critical look at their programs.
- Visitor Blackman is concerned that the university has an income statement problem. He noted increasing costs, including additional costs from the state. He remarked how lean the operations were at Mason and advocated that the priority is doing what it takes to deliver a quality education.

## **VI. University Policy 4030 (ACTION ITEM)**

### **A. Name, Image & Likeness Intercollegiate Athletics (Code of VA: §23.1-408.1)**

Rector Stimson recognized Marvin Lewis, Assistant Vice President and Director of Intercollegiate Athletics, and Malcolm Grace, Deputy Athletic Director, Compliance and NCAA Governance, to provide insights on University Policy 4030 specific to Name, Image & Likeness (NIL) for Intercollegiate Athletics.

Mr. Lewis and Mr. Grace presented a proposal to align George Mason University’s NIL policy with the new state framework (enacted April 2024) along with the anticipated NCAA settlement. They stressed the need for policy approval to allow preparation time post-House v. NCAA developments. Mr. Grace clarified NIL arrangements must be approved by the Director of Athletics and managed through a clearinghouse system.

#### Summary of Policy Statement:

- University may provide permissible benefits to a student-athlete (SA) or prospective student athlete (PSA) for the use of their NIL.
- University may directly enter NIL agreements with current and prospective student-athletes.
- The University shall not enter an agreement with a SA or PSA for “pay for play.”
- SAs are not considered employees based on their status as student-athletes.

#### Discussion ensued:

- Visitor Blackman warned that opting into the NCAA agreement is essential for maintaining an athletics program, costing \$8 million a year. He cited the \$700 million historical revenue impact from the 2006 Final Four. Opting in could bring in revenue from Atlantic-10 television revenue sharing.
- President Washington noted direct “pay to play” is prohibited and emphasized uncertainty regarding final outcomes of the House settlement. Mr. Lewis responded that the policy allows flexibility to provide NIL benefits without direct pay.
- Vice Rector Meese asked if the policy was coordinated with counsel’s office and state law. Mr. Lewis confirmed alignment.
- Visitor Brown advocated for greater board oversight than existing athletic liaisons. President Washington proposed creating an athletics committee to deal with the changing landscape of athletics. Secretary Alabay recommended the University of Maryland model as best practice. Several visitors, including Visitors Brown, Meese, and Alabay supported the committee proposal. Visitor Meese will include this as part of the bylaw review this summer.
- Visitor Brown expressed concern about protecting student-athletes from exploitation while protecting the university from liability as it seeks to support students who do not have an agent or financial advice support. He recommended the university consult a sports lawyer to provide best-in-class advice to address the issue.

- Visitor Pence recommended against approving the policy immediately, citing unresolved financial commitments for next year's budget and the unsettled situation of the *House v. NCAA* case in terms of restoring students cut from athletic programs. Mr. Lewis clarified the university does not intend to allocate \$10 million immediately for NIL deals, nor use student fees, only generated revenues would cover this expense.
- Visitor Cooper sought clarification on the "no pay to play" principle. Mr. Grace explained "pay for play" prohibits compensating athletes for roster membership and limits NIL to endorsement or licensing deals.
- Visitor Rosen described the policy as a flexible response to a challenging situation and inquired about broader university sentiment from faculty and students. Dr. Simmons noted minimal faculty discussion, which was surprising.
- Secretary Alacbay inquired about A-10 peers' decisions in regards to the framework. Mr. Lewis stated that 13 of 14 institutions have notified their intention to opt into the framework.
- Rector Stimson expressed concern about potentially losing recruits, as some contracts contain clauses tied to policy approval. Rector summarized two options:
  - Table the policy for further legal consultation, risking potential athlete losses.
  - Approve the policy and revisit as circumstances evolve.

Rector Stimson **MOVED** that the Board approve University Policy 4030 on Name, Image & Likeness Intercollegiate Athletics as they were provided in the meeting materials. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Prowitt. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

## **VII. Committee Reports**

### **A. Research Committee**

Visitor Prowitt reported on the Research Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentation received by Andre Marshall, Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact. Visitor Prowitt, in her farewell to the board, thanked the members and highlighted her involvement in selecting President Washington and the friendships she has gained across political lines. She concluded by thanking the students for being resilient and inspiring.

### **B. Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee**

Secretary Alacbay reported on the Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations received by Zachary Borgerding, Auditor of Public Accounts; Chris DiTresi and Melissa Perez, Office of Research Integrity and Assurance; Derek Butler, Deputy University Auditor; Aurali Dade, Interim Vice President and Chief Risk Officer; Vincent Lacovara, Associate Vice President, Institutional Compliance; and Charmaine Madison, Vice President and Chief Information Officer.

Secretary Alacbay thanked Chair Oberoi for her leadership and restated Visitor Oberoi's farewell to the committee, thanking the George Mason community, faculty, staff, students, Dr. Washington, and fellow board members.

### **C. Development Committee**

Visitor Peterson reported on the April 17 Development Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations received by Trishana Bowden, Vice President, Advancement and Alumni Relations; Sumeet Shrivastava, Chair, GMU Foundation; Cheryl Druehl, Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Research; Rebecca Howick, Director of Operations and Engagement; and David Tarter, Executive Director, Center for Real Estate Entrepreneurship.

### **D. Finance and Land Use Committee**

#### **1. Financial Matters**

- a. **FY 2026 University Operating Budget, Tuition and Fees (ACTION ITEM)**
2. **Capital Matters**
  - a. **Six-Year Capital Plan (ACTION ITEM)**
  - b. **Land Use Certification (ACTION ITEM)**
  - c. **SciTech Dominion Transmission Easement (ACTION ITEM)**

Visitor Pence provided a summary of the Finance & Land Use Committee meeting on April 10, providing a summary of the presentations given by Dan Stephens, Interim Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, and Alex Iszard, Assistant Vice President of Planning, Design and Construction.

Chair Pence noted that the committee voted bring the following action items to the full board:

- A budget with no increase in tuition and a 2.5% increase in student fees.
- George Mason's Six-Year Capital Plan, which authorizes projects due for initiation in FY26 that only utilize Mason funding, as well as those being submitted to the Commonwealth for funding approval.
- The annual Land Use Certification submission to the Commonwealth, with significant changes from the last report being three easements on our campuses.
- A new Dominion Transmission Easement on the SciTech campus.

Visitor Pence then **MOVED** that the Board approve the FY26 University Budget within the scenario ranges detailed in the Board Book, but with a 0% increase for in-state FY26 Tuition and a 2.5% increase in the Mandatory Student Fee. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Brown. (Original motion)

Visitor Peterson proposed to **AMEND VISITOR PENCE'S MOTION**, that the Board approve the FY26 University Budget within the scenario ranges detailed in the Board Book, with a 2.5% increase to in-state and out-of-state tuition and the Mandatory Student Fee. The amendment was **SECONDED** by Visitor Blackman. (Second Motion and the staff recommendation)

Visitor Burke proposed to **AMEND VISITOR PENCE'S MOTION**, that the Board approve the FY26 University Budget within the scenario ranges detailed in the Board Book, but with a 0% increase for in-state and out-of-state tuition and a 2.5% increase in the Mandatory Student Fee. The amendment was **SECONDED** by Visitor Pence.

Discussion ensued:

- Visitor Blackman urged immediate action, emphasizing the impacts of unfunded mandates and rising market-driven costs.
- Visitor Brown opposed the increase, arguing it places financial burden on students amid broader economic hardship for families, job losses, and tariffs. He stressed focusing on cost containment rather than tuition hikes.
- Visitor Burke proposed her amendment, stating the university has a spending problem and not a revenue problem.
- Ms. Cuesta supported fair wages for faculty but warned that any tuition increase would result in students working more jobs, facing food insecurity, and increased financial strain – potentially impacting student enrollment.
- Visitor Rosen noted potential record levels of state support and suggested more aggressive fundraising and cost-cutting rather than increasing student costs which impacts affordability and access.
- Ms. Hoffman countered, noting Mason is chronically underfunded and must act pragmatically, arguing that 2.5% is a modest increase aimed at protecting the institution's long-term stability.
- Vice Rector Meese entered undecided, acknowledging that either decision would, in different ways, support students.

- Ms. Spence referenced Carnegie's report, emphasizing Mason's brand is centered on access and outcomes, not being inexpensive.
- Dr. Washington reminded the board that students who make \$80,000 or less pay no tuition and out-of-state students pay a substantially discounted rate. A small increase would not put them in a difficult financial situation.

Following the discussion, Rector Stimson called for the **VOTE ON VISITOR PETERSON'S AMENDMENT.**

The **MOTION FAILED BY MAJORITY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 6

No: 8

Absent: Visitors Merrick and Oberoi

Rector Stimson asked Visitor Burke to restate her amendment for clarity and called for any discussion. Visitor Brown stated that a 0% tuition for in-state students was his priority. Rector Stimson then called for the **VOTE ON VISITOR BURKE'S AMENDMENT.**

The **MOTION FAILED BY MAJORITY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 6

No: 7

Abstain: Secretary Alacbay

Absent: Visitors Merrick and Oberoi

Visitor Pence then **WITHDREW HIS ORIGINAL MOTION.**

Visitor Brown **MOVED** that the Board approve the FY26 University Budget within the Scenario ranges detailed in the Board Book, but with a 0% increase for in-state tuition, an increase in out-of-state undergraduate tuition of \$528, an increase in out-of-state graduate tuition of \$720, an increase in out-of-state non-JD law tuition of \$1,022, and a 2.5% increase in the Mandatory Student Fee. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Alacbay.

Rector Stimson then asked if there was any discussion.

Visitor Rosen restated his opposition to the motion, as it once again put the burden on students without much financial benefit. Dr. Washington, with further details provided by David Burge, Vice President for Enrollment, responded that there are 8,000 out-of-state students, 4,000 of them are graduate students, so the tuition increase from that segment alone would yield approximately \$2.8 million.

The **MOTION CARRIED BY MAJORITY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 10

No: 4

Absent: Visitors Merrick and Oberoi

Visitor Pence then **MOVED** that the Board approve the Six-Year Capital Plan and the Land Use Certification as detailed in the Board Book. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Brown.

The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 14

Absent: Visitors Merrick and Oberoi

Visitor Pence then **MOVED** that the Board approve the SciTech Dominion Transmission Easement as detailed in the Board Book. The motion was **SECONDED** by Vice Rector Meese.

The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 13

Abstain: Visitor Peterson

Absent: Visitors Merrick and Oberoi

### **E. Academic Programs, Diversity and University Community Committee**

Visitor Burke reported on the activities of the April 17 APDUC Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations from Provost Antony and Solon Simmons, Faculty Senate President. Visitor Burke then **MOVED** that the board approve the following action items, en bloc, as they are provided in the meeting materials:

- Proposed Changes to the Faculty Handbook
- Faculty Actions
  - Promotion and/or Tenure
  - Conferral of Emeritus/Emerita Status
  - Elections of New Tenured Faculty
  - Special Rank Change

The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Pence. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 14

Absent: Visitors Merrick and Oberoi

Visitor Burke continued her report, sharing that the APDUC Committee discussed a proposed resolution on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Sharnnia Artis, Vice President of Access, Compliance, and Community, provided an overview of the steps the university has already taken to align its practices with current legal guidance. The committee chair decided to table the resolution for now and invited Dr. Artis to present to the board.

Dr. Artis provided the timeline of the university's actions and changes on DEI as they were accomplished in three phases:

Phase 1 Review of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (August 2023 – May 2024):

- Formation of two committees with board and university staff.
- *The Mason Way* report released revisiting Mason's approach to DEI within legal constraints.
- Interim Provost Walsh paused proposed Just Societies curriculum requirements.

Phase 2 June 2024 – December 2024, after *The Mason Way* Report:

- Overall, Mason eliminated 5 positions, amended 11 positions, realigned 3 DEI related positions for compliance and student support, and updated our nondiscrimination policy.
- Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office Program Changes:
  - Eliminated 2 out of 19 positions, and realigned 3 position descriptions and job titles.
  - Dissolved the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
  - Ended two initiatives: Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence (ARIE) Initiative and Inclusive Excellence Plans.
- Academic Units and Provost Office Personnel Changes:
  - Realigned 4 position descriptions and titles.
  - Ended the Chief DEI Officer Executive Certificate in Costello College of Business.
  - Expanded initiatives focusing on accessibility, mental health, and dialogue programming.
- University Life:
  - Eliminated 3 positions and realigned 4.

- Formed the Center for Leadership and Intercultural Engagement (CLIE). This center partners with the Office for Access, Compliance, and Community to respond to bias incidents. It also highlights the Black Male Success Initiative.
- Focused new programming on interfaith development, constructive dialogues, and anti-Semitism learning communities, including the Braver Angels debates.

Phase 3 January 2025-April 2025:

- January: external SCHEV review of DEI, student populations, and compliance.
- February 27: Passed antisemitism resolution.
- Dissolved Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; formed Office for Access, Compliance, and Community (OACC).
- Dissolved or Eliminated promotion of race-conscious third-party opportunities, partnership with The PhD Project, use of Affirmative Action Plans for Women and Minorities, use of diversity statements in hiring and promotion, and the Director of Supplier Diversity position.
- Paused 112 GMU Foundation scholarships for review and the Black Male Success Initiative (BMSI), the only program related to race which helps with retention.
- Reviewed or realigned institutionally funded scholarships and grants, the Hampton Summer Immersion Program, employee resource and affinity groups, trainings and professional development, all student life programs, and digital platforms for legal compliance.
- Six research grants have been terminated that seem to have a gender diversity, equity and inclusion-related research focus.

Dr. Artis concluded her presentation stating that the university will continuously review programs to ensure that there is a welcoming environment, free from unfair and illegal preferences, and open to all. The university wants to ensure students have the tools they need to be successful at George Mason and when they graduate.

Discussion ensued:

- Visitor Brown raised 3 questions and concerns:
  1. The need for third-party review for objectivity in compliance certification. Dr. Artis has been in conversation with University Counsel about working with a third party on compliance certification and that McGuire Woods is reviewing the paused 112 scholarships externally. Dr. Washington and Visitor Cooper concurred on a third-party review.
  2. Asked about changes over scope of prohibitions (race, gender, orientation, etc.): Dr. Artis confirmed Mason's long-standing protections for all protected classes. Dr. Washington clarified that most changes are in alignment with executive orders which have primarily focused on race. After review of university programs, almost everything was in compliance so very little had to change. Dr. Artis added that diversity statements were broad but are now gone so no one uses any diversity statements for any identities.
  3. Asked about what has changed in bias incident reporting: Dr. Artis described how Mason's approach is not punitive, so when students submit any type of bias, the university connects with them to understand their concerns and provide a referral and offer resources. It serves as a climate gauge, and remains unchanged.
- Several participants commended the board leadership's measured, deliberate approach on this topic, including Visitor Blackman and Dr. Simmons.
- Dr. Simmons expressed concerns about how to address legacies of discrimination while complying with law. He also asked if it would be acceptable for a faculty member to include a lived experience in their cover letter as part of their application materials. Visitor Brown suggested the use of a third party to determine compliance. Vice Rector Meese added that academic units are prohibited from using

diversity statements but applicants may choose to include a personal narrative if they believe that will help their application.

- Rector Stimson queried decisions around ending the ARIE initiative and the selection of Dr. Nolan Cabrera, a keynote speaker with partisan DEI critiques, highlighting that it was funded by Mason and outside sponsors. Dr. Artis stated that the ARIE initiative ended because it was designed to exist for only three years. A committee of faculty, staff, and students selected Dr. Cabrera to speak, with over 100 presenters overall. Rector Stimson asked who represented opposing viewpoints, highlighting that Mason is a public institution with certain obligations to free speech. Dr. Simmons requested clarity that faculty would still be allowed to express those views or organize conferences. Rector Stimson and Visitor Blackman stated that diverse viewpoints must be represented to some degree if it is sponsored by a public institution. President Washington reaffirmed Mason's academic freedom and hosting a wide-range of viewpoints.
- Ms. Hoffman voiced disappointment over time spent on debates on matters where the university is primarily compliant, believing that time could be better spent discussing student needs like tuition, employment, and support services.
- Visitor Cooper requested data on terminated positions and eliminated DEI programs' cost savings. Dr. Artis replied over \$600,000 savings from eliminated positions, either from incumbents being released or leaving vacancies unfilled. Visitor Cooper requested more details on position, programming, and research grant terminations and specifics on the Hampton Program's legal review.
- Visitor Rosen emphasized the importance of maintaining an inclusive environment for all while ensuring legal compliance. He warned against misinterpreting the desire for DEI compliance as opposition to inclusion itself. Secretary Alacbay noted that recent student listening sessions yielded identified areas of common ground.

### VIII. Closed Session

- A. Acquisition of Real Property (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.3)
- B. Discussion of the award of public contracts (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.29)
- C. Personnel Matter to discuss the performance goals of the President (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.1)
- D. Consultation with Legal Counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.7)
- E. Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding the aforementioned items (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.8)

Vice Rector Meese **MOVED** that the board go into Closed Session under the provisions of

- Section 2.2-3711.A.3 for the discussion of potential acquisition of certain real property to further the mission of the University where discussion in open session would adversely affect the university's bargaining position and negotiating strategy, specifically related to real property to be used for housing;
- Section 2.2-3711.A.29 for Discussion of the award of public contracts involving the expenditure of public funds, including interviews of bidders or offerors, and discussion of the terms or scope of such contracts, where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body;
- Section 2.2-3711.A.1 for a Personnel Matter to discuss the performance goals of the President;
- Section 2.2-3711.A.7 for Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation including briefings on:

- Akerman v. GMU
- Morrison v. GMU et al.
- de Raspide Ross v. Mason
- Zahabi v. George Mason University et al.
- Section 2.2-3711.A.8 for consultation with legal counsel regarding the aforementioned items and university compliance with applicable Executive Orders.

The motion was **SECONDED** by Secretary Alacbay. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

Following closed session, Vice Rector Meese **MOVED** that the board go back into public session and further moved that by roll call vote the board affirm that only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements under the Freedom of Information Act were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting, and that only such business matters that were identified in the motion to go into a closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting. Any member of the board who believes that there was a departure from the requirements as stated, shall so state prior to taking the roll call, indicating the substance of the departure that, in his or her judgment, has taken place. **ALL PRESENT BOARD MEMBERS RESPONDED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Absent: Visitors Brown, Burke, Chimaladinne, Merrick, Oberoi, and Ohlhausen.

Rector Stimson then **MOVED** that the board adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS, Chapter 15, Title 23.1 of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended (the "Virginia Code"), establishes a public corporation under the name and style of The Rector and Visitors of George Mason University (the "University") which is governed by a Board of Visitors (the "Board") vested with the supervision, management and control of the University;

WHEREAS, by Article 4, Chapter 10, Title 23.1 of the Code of Virginia of 1950, the University entered into a management agreement with the Commonwealth of Virginia which was enacted as Chapters 76 and 77 of the Acts of Assembly of 2021 (Special Session I) which, classifies the University as a public institution of higher education and empowers the University with the authority to undertake and implement major capital projects, including the acquisition of any interest in land;

WHEREAS, on May 1, 2025, the Board approved the submission of the University's Six-Year Capital Plan which included Faculty Staff Housing ("Capital Plan") and

WHEREAS, the Board deems it desirable and in the best interests of the University to acquire that certain real property discussed in Closed Session on this date (the "Property").

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The University is authorized to acquire the Property with Non-General Funds at the agreed upon price and upon such other terms and conditions as the President or others authorized to act on his behalf may, in their discretion, deem advisable;
2. The Board hereby authorizes, directs and empowers the President or the Executive Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff to execute, for and on behalf of the University and in its name, any and all documents required in connection with the acquisition of the Property,

3. Any actions by the aforementioned officers or those delegated to act on their behalf within the authority conferred hereby, taken prior to the date of this resolution, are hereby ratified, confirmed and approved as the acts and deeds of the University; and

4. That this resolution is effective immediately.

The motion was **SECONDED** by Vice Rector Meese. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE. (Attachment 1).**

Yes: 10

Absent: Visitors Brown, Burke, Chimaladinne, Merrick, Oberoi, and Ohlhausen.

Rector Stimson asked if there was any additional business. Visitor Blackman, noting that it is likely his last board meeting, provided farewell remarks, expressing his gratitude and that he was honored to be on the board for eight years. He added that President Cabrera said serving on the board would be the greatest thing he could do and he was right.

Rector Stimson thanked Visitor Blackman for his service on the board. He then adjourned the meeting at 5:08 p.m.

Scott Nichols  
Interim Secretary pro tem

Attachment 1: Real Estate Resolution May 1, 2025.

Attachment 2: Public Comments (35 pages)

**BOARD OF VISITORS  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Executive Committee Meeting  
Thursday, May 1, 2025  
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201), Fairfax Campus**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Rector Cully Stimson, Vice Rector Michael Meese, Visitors Maureen Ohlhausen and Bob Pence.

**ABSENT:** Secretary Armand Alacbay.

**ALSO, PRESENT:** Visitors Horace Blackman, Reginald Brown, Jon Peterson, and Jeff Rosen; Gregory Washington, President; Solon Simmons, Faculty Representative; Rachel Spence, Staff Liaison; Maria Cuesta, Undergraduate Student Representative; Anne Gentry, University Counsel; Scott Nichols, Interim Secretary pro tem and Bridget Higgins Secretary pro tem.

**I. Call to Order**

Rector Stimson called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

**A. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for February 27, 2025 (ACTION ITEM)**

Rector Stimson called for any corrections to the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for February 27, 2025, that were provided for review in the board meeting materials. Hearing no corrections, the meeting minutes stood **APPROVED AS WRITTEN.**

**III. Rector's Comments**

Rector Stimson announced the appointment of Vice Rector Mike Meese and Secretary Armand Alacbay to work with university administration and legal counsel to review and revise the board bylaws, with proposed revisions provided to the board at least 10 days for review and feedback prior to the August 1 annual meeting when they will be put forward for approval.

**IV. President's Comments**

Rector Stimson recognized President Washington to offer comments. President Washington indicated he would reserve his comments for the full board meeting.

**V. Closed Session**

Rector Stimson announced the committee would not go into closed session but would reserve the closed session for the full board meeting.

**VI. Adjournment**

Rector Stimson called for any additional business to come before the Executive Committee. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 8:35 a.m.

Scott Nichols  
Interim Secretary pro tem

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF VISITORS  
Research Committee Meeting  
MINUTES  
May 1, 2025**

**Present:** Visitors Nancy Prowitt, Chair; Horace Blackman, Vice Chair; Bill Hansen (virtual)

**Absent:** Visitors Anjan Chimaladinne and Lindsey Burke; Faculty Representative Tara Chaplin;

**Also Present:** President Gregory Washington; Rector Cully Stimson; Vice Rector Michael Meese; Visitors Maureen Olhausen, Bob Pence, Jeff Rosen, Jon Peterson; Faculty Senate Chair: Solon Simmons; Faculty Representative Igor Mazin; Staff Senate Representative Rachel Spence; Student Representative Carolyn Faith Hoffman, Maria Cuesta

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**The meeting was called to order by Chair Nancy Prowitt at 9:00 a.m.**

**I. Approval of Minutes (ACTION ITEM)**

It was **MOVED** by Visitor Prowitt to approve the minutes from the February 27, 2025, Research Committee Meeting. Approval of the meeting minutes was approved.

**II. New Business**

**a. Office of Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact Update**

***Dr. Andre Marshall – Vice President for Research, Innovation & Economic Impact*** reported the following highlights:

1. Overview of the recent Integrated Sensing and Advanced Communications workshop, conducted in partnership with the Department of Defense and National Science Foundation; and An update on the College of Science's \$20M Landolt Space Mission. How the university is providing critical support in response to the Trump Administration's Executive Orders since January 20, 2025, and their impact on the university's portfolio.
2. An update of the support actions ORIEI is providing faculty as well as the impact the Trump Administration's Executive Orders are having on the university's portfolio.

Vice President Marshall's presentation was followed by a robust conversation regarding Board member concerns the Administration's Executive Orders is having on research, faculty, students, potential projects, and the university's R1 status. Vice President Marshall shared that the Grand Challenges Initiative began this time last year, with President Washington stating that it was important for the university to focus on areas that would likely receive funding. The Grand Challenges Initiative will be helpful during this time in funding cuts, Marshall said.

**III. Adjournment**

Chair Prowitt asked if there was any additional business to be discussed. With no further comments or items of discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 9:41 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Yellia Seanor  
Research Committee Secretary

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF VISITORS OF  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**WHEREAS**, Chapter 15, Title 23.1 of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended (the "Virginia Code"), establishes a public corporation under the name and style of The Rector and Visitors of George Mason University (the "University") which is governed by a Board of Visitors (the "Board") vested with the supervision, management and control of the University;

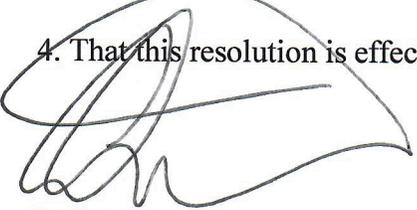
**WHEREAS**, by Article 4, Chapter 10, Title 23.1 of the Code of Virginia of 1950, the University entered into a management agreement with the Commonwealth of Virginia which was enacted as Chapters 76 and 77 of the Acts of Assembly of 2021 (Special Session I) which, classifies the University as a public institution of higher education and empowers the University with the authority to undertake and implement major capital projects, including the acquisition of any interest in land;

**WHEREAS**, on May 1, 2025, the Board approved the submission of the University's Six-Year Capital Plan which included Faculty Staff Housing ("Capital Plan") and

**WHEREAS**, the Board deems it desirable and in the best interests of the University to acquire that certain real property discussed in Closed Session on this date (the "Property").

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:**

1. The University is authorized to acquire the Property with Non-General Funds at the agreed upon price and upon such other terms and conditions as the President or others authorized to act on his behalf may, in their discretion, deem advisable;
2. The Board hereby authorizes, directs and empowers the President or the Executive Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff to execute, for and on behalf of the University and in its name, any and all documents required in connection with the acquisition of the Property,
3. Any actions by the aforementioned officers or those delegated to act on their behalf within the authority conferred hereby, taken prior to the date of this resolution, are hereby ratified, confirmed and approved as the acts and deeds of the University; and
4. That this resolution is effective immediately.



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Charles Stimson  
Rector  
Board of Visitors  
George Mason University

Date: May 1, 2025

**Public Comments**  
Received for May 1 Board of Visitors Meeting  
*As of 5/1/25 5:00 p.m.*

Full Name:	Mason Affiliation	Written Comment
Bethany Leticq	Faculty	<p data-bbox="570 289 1349 323">Dear Members of the George Mason University Board of Visitors:</p> <p data-bbox="570 359 1511 604">On behalf of the Executive Committee of the George Mason University chapter of the American Association of University Professors (GMU-AAUP), we write to express our strong and unequivocal objection to the inclusion of the Action Item: Resolution regarding the Presidential Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, listed under New Business for the Academic Programs, Diversity, and University Community (APDUC) Committee at the May 1, 2025, Board of Visitors (BOV) meeting.</p> <p data-bbox="570 646 1219 680">Our concerns are twofold: procedural and substantive.</p> <p data-bbox="570 716 1495 785">Procedural Concerns: This Resolution Cannot Be Properly Brought Forward by the Committee</p> <p data-bbox="570 821 1495 1037">The APDUC Committee took no action on this resolution during its April 17, 2025, meeting. Under the Board’s bylaws and Robert’s Rules of Order, which govern BOV proceedings (see Article XIII of the Bylaws), a resolution introduced in committee does not require a second. Still, it does require a formal motion and vote to be adopted or recommended to the full board. No such motion was made, and no vote was taken.</p> <p data-bbox="570 1073 1495 1213">Therefore, the resolution cannot be presented as coming from the APDUC Committee, because no formal action was taken to recommend it. To proceed otherwise misrepresents the committee’s actions and violates established procedural norms.</p> <p data-bbox="570 1249 1495 1423">To be clear, any individual member of the Board may introduce a resolution independently, but such a “direct resolution” must be formally moved, seconded, debated, and voted upon during the full Board meeting, subject to all applicable procedures. However, it is inappropriate for this resolution to be presented as if it originated from a committee that took no official action.</p> <p data-bbox="570 1459 1479 1600">At a time when trust in public institutions is under significant stress, the BOV must hold itself to the highest standards of transparency, integrity, and procedural correctness. The Board’s credibility—and by extension, that of George Mason University—depends on it.</p> <p data-bbox="570 1635 1446 1705">Substantive Concerns: Misrepresentation of DEI and Inappropriate Use of Ideological Framing</p> <p data-bbox="570 1740 1479 1988">We are equally troubled by the resolution's content and the ideologically driven rhetoric used in support of it, particularly the remarks made by Visitor Burke during the April 17 meeting. Though the resolution was never formally on the floor, her extensive remarks and those of Professor Caplan—strangely invited to offer public comments in a meeting specifically closed to them—effectively served as its public defense. Their remarks contain numerous factual inaccuracies, flawed reasoning, and dangerous distortions of the</p>

academic frameworks they purported to critique.

In particular, the assertions about critical race theory, affirmative action, DEI programming, and the legal landscape surrounding civil rights are misleading, legally imprecise, and rhetorically inflammatory. The repeated invocation of terms like “struggle session,” “mass hysteria,” and “virus” to describe DEI initiatives is inflammatory and dehumanizing. It disrespects the work of professionals committed to making our institution more inclusive, equitable, and effective.

We join with Visitors Meese and Brown (personal communication) and others, including student representatives to the committee, in questioning the necessity of this resolution. George Mason University is not like other institutions. We are one of the most diverse public universities in the country—racially, socioeconomically, ideologically, and internationally—and our success depends on embracing that diversity, not retreating from it. The resolution, as drafted and defended, sends the opposite message. It politicizes the Board’s work, disregards the realities of Mason and higher education governance, and risks long-term harm to the university’s reputation and community.

We urge the Board to act with integrity, deliberation, and adherence to its rules. Allowing this resolution to proceed under the false pretense of committee endorsement is a violation of basic parliamentary procedure. Adopting it would be a rejection of George Mason’s proud commitment to academic freedom, shared governance, and intellectual pluralism.

We call upon you to reject this resolution, whether on procedural, substantive, or both grounds. We respectfully ask that the Board recommit itself to academic freedom, shared governance, and conducting its work in a manner that reflects George Mason University’s mission, diversity, and values.

Sincerely,

Bethany Letiecq, President, GMU-AAUP  
On behalf of the Executive Committee of the GMU-AAUP

Becca Hyatt, Student  
Emmanuel  
Ansah, Sara  
Sage, Sandy  
Loredo

As students, the constant uncertainty of funding and potential program changes exacerbates the frustration resulting from the refusal to include DEI in the University’s foundational principles. As students completing the first year of a 2-3 year program the anticipated 2.5% increase in tuition discussed in the April 1st full board meeting of the Board of Visitors compounds our wavering intent to continue education at George Mason University based on the intentional change of values in the DEI Resolution. We COMMIT to George Mason University if George Mason University COMMITs to us.

Sunny Sellers Student

It is deeply disappointing that GMU is willfully bending the knee to a fascist government order attempting to destroy the offices and programs protecting vulnerable students from harm and discrimination based on their personal and racial identities. You can change the name of the DEI office, you can promise to stop supporting us, but marginalized students are the backbone of this university, and it is nothing without us. The university is endangering us by following this new administration threatening your funding, which puts us at risk of prejudiced harm, and gives us no way of reporting hate crimes. The Bias

		<p>Incident Report Team was vital to upholding the equity this university claims to value and ensures harm is properly reported and handled; there is no guarantee that the new office of 'Access, Compliance' and Community' will actually protect us. Instead, I have no idea how this office plans to support student safety. The social work program is vehemently against this change to our deeply valuable diversity of student body and thought, equitable treatment of all students, and the inclusion of all voices in decision-making within the community. These values are clear in our Code of Ethics and amongst the champions of human rights within our field. Allowing this change is a step in the WRONG direction for this University and will result in increased hate, discrimination, microaggressions, and violence within the community towards its most vulnerable students.</p>
<p>India Weisenburg</p>	<p>Student</p>	<p>DEI opens doors for members of oppressed communities and allows them opportunities usually denied. These are people equally as deserving as the next person. To remove DEI places a foot back down on their necks.</p>
<p>Kelly Bennett</p>	<p>Student</p>	<p>Rector Stimson, Vice Rector Meese, and members of the Board of Visitors,</p> <p>My name is Kelly Bennett, and I am a Master of Social Work student at George Mason University (GMU).</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments.</p> <p>I oppose the Resolution of George Mason University Regarding the Presidential Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, specifically the provisions calling for the elimination of programs, trainings, and processes on diversity, equity, and inclusion that are not specifically required by federal or state law.</p> <p>GMU’s student body is highly diverse. Students represent all 50 states and around 130 countries. One in four students is in the first generation of their family to attend college. About 10 percent of GMU students have military backgrounds. I can personally attest that the diverse backgrounds and experiences of my classmates have highly enriched my learning experience at GMU.</p> <p>As the Resolution states, GMU highly values diversity and fosters an inclusive environment. In fact, “diversity is our strength” is one of GMU’s core values.</p> <p>Carrying out diversity, equity, and inclusion-related activities required by law should be the bare minimum standard, and not one that a university professing to value diversity and inclusion adheres to. For example, GMU’s Bias Incident Response Team provides support and resources to those who have experienced a bias-related incident. Such support is not required by law but most certainly serves to strengthen GMU’s valued diverse and inclusive community. If GMU wants to remain All Together Different, it should not confine itself to only those programs, trainings, and processes specifically required by federal or state law.</p> <p>In sum, I call upon the Board of Visitors to oppose this resolution because it contains provisions that violate GMU’s stated priorities and core values. Its passage would undermine the diverse and inclusive community we all enjoy at GMU.</p>

		Thank you for your consideration.
Giang Dang	Student	As a member of the university community, I believe Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are essential to creating a place where everyone feels they belong. When students and faculty from different backgrounds come together, we learn more deeply, challenge our assumptions, and grow in ways we never could alone. DEI isn't just about policies — it's about the daily experience of respect, opportunity, and understanding. It makes our university stronger, more innovative, and a better reflection of the world we hope to lead.
Erin Crawford	Student	I chose graduate school at George Mason University BECAUSE of the diverse and respectful community supporting DEI among the faculty and students striving for higher education. As a social worker, we learn values that adhere to social justice quoting the National Association of Social Work Code of Ethics, "Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people." Social workers have ethical responsibilities to broader society (6.04c) as, "Social workers should promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within the United States and globally. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people." Passing this "resolution" is a contradiction to the field of social work and as I plan to graduate in just a few short weeks, I am hoping to be PROUD walking across that stage and not embarrassed by the decisions being made; taking away what George Mason stands for... diversity, equity, and inclusion of all students.
Gabriel Amram	Student	Decades from now, we will look back to this moment and see who acted in favor of or against the encroachment of fascism. Eliminating DEI policies is the first step in a very dark societal direction, and higher education institutions should not be complicit. George Mason is the largest and most diverse public research university in the Commonwealth of Virginia - please do not tarnish its reputation.
Todd Kashdan	Faculty	I wanted to share that there are many more members of the faculty who quietly share the board's perspective of DEI. I've attended department meetings where colleagues express strong enthusiasm for increasing diversity. Which is a potential net positive for the workplace. However, in terms of execution, it has led to questionable faculty meeting proclamations such as the need to hire a Black man for a tenure track faculty vacancy above all other considerations (before viewing applications). Based on supportive reactions to these kinds of comments and tendencies to split the applicant pool to those who are and aren't a demographic minority, these are broader sentiments than just the most vocal individuals.  At the same time, I hope you'll understand why open dissent has been rare. Over the years, faculty members have raised concerns about certain hiring and tenure and promotion practices and DEI initiatives when we believed they

were interfering with research, teaching, or attempts at objective evaluations. Unfortunately, those who voiced such concerns have often experienced professional consequences, such as reduced leadership opportunities and marginalization. As a result, many have chosen to remain silent.

Please know that there is a broader base of support for the resolution than may be immediately visible. We would benefit from finding ways to promote a true commitment to viewpoint diversity in a manner that protects and encourages open dialogue. So far, I have yet to see strong behavioral evidence that such a commitment exists. I also believe that, while the university's focus on anti-racism was well-intentioned, it has at times created unintended challenges. Some of us are relieved to see efforts now being made to address those concerns thoughtfully and constructively.

Michael Chang  
Faculty

During the BOV meeting of April 17, 2025, Visitor Linsey Burke introduced an anti-DEI resolution which was the center of the meeting's discussion. As was borne out by the testimony of many members of the Mason campus community, the evidence indicates that there is little popular support with our community for Visitor Burke's resolution.

And yet, the supporters of Visitor Burke's resolution continued to refer to a purportedly sidelined and silent majority for which there is no empirical evidence. Even Visitor Michael Meese, who himself has personally talked to members of the University community, repeatedly underscored the empirical evidence which reflects a generally negative sentiment on campus towards the anti-DEI resolution.

Setting all of this aside, to my mind, the very logic of Visitor Burke's resolution itself is specious. The federal and state laws regarding the protection of civil rights at George Mason University is a minimum standard, NOT a maximum limit.

For all of these reasons, I, among many others, stand opposed to Visitor Burke's anti-DEI resolution which infringes upon the independence of the University to set its own policies and to uphold principles of self-governance.

Megan Lavengood  
Faculty

Time is short for me and I don't have much space to consider these issues well. But the trajectory and tone of the messaging in these resolutions deeply troubles me for many reasons.

1) The easiest to articulate is that the resolutions and the letters from the federal government on which they are based remain unclear and vague, which allows them to be easily weaponized for a particular political ideology. The FAQ document in particular emphasizes that activities are illegal if they create a "hostile environment" or if people "feel guilty" as a result of their participation in the activity. Considering that one person's sensitivity and response to these issues could be wildly different from the next person's, the guidance of "don't hurt anyone's feelings by discussing their race" is impossibly vague. Since we can't control how others react to the things we say, the only safe path seems to be not to discuss race at all (by design, I'm sure). And of course a ban on discussion of race flies in the face of academic freedom.

2) The resolution infringes upon faculty governance by forbidding any trainings not required by law. Under what rationale may a university not design their

own trainings?

3) What can possibly be the benefit of eliminating the Bias Incident Response Team, except to make it harder to locate the right place to report such things? A huge issue for the students of the School of Music a few years ago was that they did not know where to report bias incidents; I recall things were essentially being handled in-house, which resulted in issues being swept under the rug with no action or documentation. The establishment and communication of a clear process was one tangible outcome of the turmoil we experienced as a school. Eliminating this office would undo that work.

4) I am concerned that diversity statements are disallowed in various faculty evaluations. Given that Mason's student population is unusually diverse, I have found diversity statements to be an essential component of evaluating applications. It's critical to determine whether a faculty member is prepared to work in an environment with a diverse student body, or if they are only accustomed to working with more homogenous populations of traditional college students.

Ted Kinnaman Faculty

I have been a member of the Philosophy Department at Mason since 1996. I urge the Board to reject the proposed resolution regarding diversity, equity and inclusion. That resolution calls for bringing George Mason into compliance with 1) the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and 2) the "Dear Colleague" letter from the Department of Education sent in February of this year. But 1) the University was already in compliance with the Civil Rights Act. No change is needed on that score. Furthermore, 2) the DCL refers to "toxic indoctrination" of students with the "false premise that the United States is built upon 'systemic and structural racism.'" The University should not do anything at all to comply with the DCL. It does not have the force of law, nor does the Executive Order to which it appeals. What is worse, the reference to the "false premise" of racism in American history is itself simply false. America definitely does have a long and continuing record of racial injustice, and accommodating this DCL threatens the work of any George Mason scholar who teaches her students about the reality of our history.

Current GMU Graduate student & Former GMU undergrad student Student

I urge the Board to not adopt the proposed DEI resolution. Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are vital for fostering an environment where all students are valued and supported in academic spaces. Eliminating diversity, equity, and inclusion undermines the university's commitment to preparing students for a interconnected world.

As a public university, George Mason is not only a place of learning but a pillar of democracy. The Board has a responsibility to uphold values of equal opportunity, and open discourse—core tenets of democracy that DEI initiatives help realize on campus. Restricting inclusive efforts risks eroding the public trust and the democratic norms essential to public higher education.

I encourage the Board to engage in transparent dialogue with students, faculty, and staff to ensure our university remains a place where every individual has the opportunity to succeed and contribute. The Mason community overwhelmingly wants you to vote no on the DEI resolution.

Colleen Vesely Faculty

The BOV's attempt to further dismantle DEI at GMU is ideologically-driven political interference that betrays the university's core values. This move does not help keep GMU an inclusive place where all can come to learn; instead, it

will drag the university into a dangerous and racist past.

Despite failing to move the anti-DEI resolution forward at the APDUCC meeting on April 15, the BOV is trying to push this resolution through at the May 1 meeting. This move demonstrates, yet again, that they don't care about their own bylaws, and they certainly don't care about what faculty, staff, and students at the university have to say about DEI at the university. Representatives of students and faculty spoke unequivocally in defense of DEI at the university, which should send a message to the Board that Mason does not want to go back to a segregationist past.

Unlike the BOV, the rest of the Mason community understands that DEI initiatives help protect vulnerable groups at the university and encourage teaching, learning, and research free from fear or favor; this is why the community turned out so strongly against the Board's attempts to destroy DEI last year, and why faculty and student representatives pushed back on this resolution in the APDUCC meeting. The BOV should respect the will of the students, faculty, and staff who make up the university by dropping this resolution.

Matthew Kelley Faculty

Despite failing to move their resolution on uniformity, inequity, and exclusion forward at the APDUC meeting on April 15, the BOV is trying once again to dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion at Mason at the May 1 meeting. This move demonstrates for the umpteenth time that they don't care about their own bylaws.

They certainly don't care that the real stakeholders of the university—faculty, staff, and students—overwhelmingly support keeping policies promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Representatives of students and faculty spoke unequivocally in defense of diversity, equity, and inclusion at the university, which should send a message to the Board that Mason does not want to go back to a segregationist past. The BOV has no mandate for this resolution.

I urge members of the BOV to choose their legacy well. Refuse to be part of a willful mistake existing only to be corrected when finally tomorrow comes. Vote this resolution down today!

Anonymous American Educator Student

I find it absolutely reprehensible that Dr. Lindsey Burke has been appointed to the BOV of GMU. Though published in peer-reviewed journals, her scholarly work lacks evidence to support her conclusions and relies heavily on specious reasoning, logical fallacies and omission of crucial facts to make her arguments. For example, her published work "Educating the American Citizen: Changes in Schools as Assimilators of Immigrants" ignores significant quantitative and qualitative evidence that forced assimilation has long standing detrimental effects on children, their families and communities and perpetuates discriminatory and authoritarian practices. Her thesis that the purpose of education is to dictate a person's cultural values, beliefs and ways of being in service of citizenship has no basis in recent, factual evidence and runs afoul of the law. In referring to her colleagues in Higher Education as "anti-American elite" she makes it clear that her objective is to target and eliminate dissent from scholars whose evidence based research diverges from her political and ideological viewpoints. Her frank hostility towards our shared community demonstrates her inability to be an effective part of our decision making

processes. Dr. Burke's false claims about credible, evidence based theories and calls for censorship of fact based information further disqualifies her from being a valuable member of the Board of Visitors. Her inclusion as a person of influence inherently undermines the foundational principles of freedom and diversity of thought upon which George Mason University was founded and that are guaranteed under the Constitution. I am in full disagreement with all BOV proposed resolutions to changing GMUs policies, I stand firm in my committment to fight these attacks on our community of free thought, and the valuable concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Additionally, any argument for changes to GMU policy based on the Executive Order issued by Donald Trump should be rejected as this order is still being contested in court as unconstitutional, illegal and an over reach of the Executive Branch that impinges on our constitutional rights to freedom of thought and speech. Until this Executive Order has been completely evaluated by the court, it is a point of order that no persons should be attempting to use it to alter or influence the actions of any person(s) or educational insitution(s). It is therefore an agreggious miscarriage of justice to allow Dr. Burke, any member of the BOV or any member of the George Mason Senior Administration to attempt exert change by force on the GMU community using this Executive Order.

On a more personal note, I sincerely hope that GMU Leadership has the good sense not to make itself an enemy of the Constitution to appease domestic authoritarianism. I urge the Senior Leaderhip of GMU to consider its allegiance, and accept the magnitude of your responsiblity to protect at all costs the Consitutional guarantees of your students, staff and community. Any personal sacrifice you may need to make in order to do so pales in comparison to the sacrifices of those who came before us--who literally fought and died so that we could have liberty. I have sworn to protect the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies foreign and domestic, and I will never abandon that oath, even if it means laying down my life for my country. I urge you to consider what message you are sending to those of us that took that oath if you so lightly abandon us to save yourselves from having to make sacrifices in service of justice and freedom. Please join us in prudently considering the much bigger picture--it certainly won't be the BOV or the Executive Branch that measures our souls come the final Judgement Day, no matter what one's spiritual beliefs may be. I won't conceed my morality and principles to them and you shouldn't either.

Robbie Dieterich Faculty

It is my belief, cliché though it may be, that diversity is our strength.

Proactive efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion serve an effective and necessary countervailing force to economic incentives inherent to the administration of both public and private universities. These systemic economic incentives, left unchecked, can quickly pervert the mission of educational institutions. It is not uncommon for such laissez-faire surrender to economic incentives to masquerade under terms such as "merit". Strong policies regarding diversity and tenure are REQUIRED to maintain a university that serves its students and society instead of just the desires of its wealthiest donors and the fickle whims of a capricious executive.

Angela Barajas Student

We say NO to Visitor Burke's Anti-DEI resolution. We refuse to abandon the promises we have made to foster equity, diversity, and inclusion at Mason, and

Todd La  
Porte

Faculty

we will not let political appointees on the Board return us to a time when racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia went unremarked and unchallenged at Virginia's public universities.

The DEI policy being discussed by the BOV is antithetical to the fundamental mission of the University. There are many careful analyses of anti-DEI policies. I'll quote from one by two scholars from UMass Amherst, <https://theconversation.com/anti-dei-guidance-from-trump-administration-misinterprets-the-law-and-guts-edu>

#### Restricting free speech

The First Amendment to the Constitution protects the right of the people to express viewpoints without fear of punishment by the government. The Trump administration's attacks on DEI are part of a broader assault on freedom of speech in which Trump targets media, businesses and everyday Americans the president disagrees with.

The "Dear Colleague" letter clearly restricts free speech rights. That's ... because creating and pursuing DEI policies is a type of freedom of expression. Banning DEI practices is a form of viewpoint discrimination, which is prohibited by Supreme Court precedent that covers the speech of educational institutions as well as their faculty and staff.

[T]he letter aims to prevent educational institutions from pursuing missions and policies that promote the concepts of DEI. Such missions are common in higher education and can be found in universities from the conservative Brigham Young University to the liberal University of Vermont.

Frequently, these missions are pursued by requiring students to take courses that encourage them to learn about perspectives or cultures that are different from their own.

While the letter is not clear about which courses it would consider a problem, targeting any topics serves to suppress the free speech rights and academic freedom of faculty, including their freedom to design and teach courses....

#### Misunderstanding the law

...[T]he letter also seems to willfully misrepresent the 2022 Supreme Court decision ending race-based affirmative action in higher education, *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard College*.

In that case, Chief Justice John Roberts wrote a narrow majority opinion declaring simply that university admissions policies could not aim to create incoming classes with particular racial balances.

... The letter falsely states, in contradiction with the ruling's own text, that the decision applies much more broadly than the context of admissions, to "hiring, promotion, compensation, financial aid, scholarships, prizes, administrative support, discipline, housing, graduation ceremonies, and all other aspects of student, academic, and campus life."

..There is simply no reading of the Students for Fair Admissions decision that suggests such an encroachment on the inner workings of educational institutions. Roberts' majority opinion says only that students should be evaluated as individuals when applying to colleges and universities.

#### Effort to undermine education

It states that "educational institutions have toxically indoctrinated students with the false premise that the United States is built upon 'systemic and structural racism,'" suggesting that the U.S. does not have such a history.

But ... to teach why affirmative action is now unconstitutional, we would have to explain the concept of strict scrutiny.... [which is] when a court examines a law very carefully to make sure that it does not promote an unconstitutional racial or religious classification. It is a kind of review that is used routinely and appropriately by courts, and was used to strike down affirmative action in Students for Fair Admissions.

That level of judicial review exists because, in the words of Roberts in Students for Fair Admissions, "for almost a century after the Civil War, state-mandated segregation was in many parts of the Nation a regrettable norm. This Court played its own role in that ignoble history, allowing in Plessy v. Ferguson the separate but equal regime that would come to deface much of America."

In other words, the Supreme Court created strict scrutiny as a judicial antidote to the systemic racism that it had helped perpetuate.

Courtney Wooten Faculty

The Mason community understands that DEI initiatives help support everyone at Mason, including those from vulnerable groups, and encourage teaching, learning, and research from a broad variety of perspectives. This is why the Mason community so strongly spoke against the BOV's attempts to wholesale eliminate DEI at the last APDUC meeting. The BOV should respect the will of the students, faculty, and staff who regularly learn and teach at Mason by dropping this resolution.

Geoff Gilleaudeau Faculty

The efforts by the Board of Visitors to end DEI and ARIE programs at GMU are terrible and completely counter to the mission of the university and what makes GMU a special place. GMU STRONGLY BENEFITS from its incredibly diverse faculty and student body; GMU is truly a melting pot of ideas, cultures, and perspectives within a context of strong academic rigor, which is exactly what makes it an incredibly rewarding place to work. DEI and ARIE programs do nothing but bring highly qualified, excellent students from diverse backgrounds into the university, enriching the experience for everyone. Efforts to end DEI and ARIE programs need to be called out for what they are - a clear attempt to advance a FASCIST AND WHITE SUPREMACIST agenda, period. American universities are the cornerstone of our democracy and American cultural, technological, scientific, and economic innovation, and we WILL NOT COMPLY with autocrats and want-to-be dictators. Contrary to popular misinformation, GMU is ideologically diverse and the only point of view that is NOT welcome at GMU is the intolerant, discriminatory, and harmful perspective espoused by the Board of Visitors. Leave our university alone.

Jameson Booth Student

Writing to you is an African American freshman currently majoring in Integrative Studies with a concentration in African & African American Studies. But, before that, I was a potential incoming student that bought into the

narrative that George Mason University's (GMU) diversity indicated that, here, I would be protected and nurtured in a safe environment with support from university leadership. Going into that August, I continued to believe this, casually going to classes and events daily. However, that wouldn't be for long. On one particular day in November, I had heard that the GMU Chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) were collaborating on an event that would discuss the history Black-Palestinian solidarity; however, it would eventually be cancelled for that day. Now, in the present, that this was the SJP's leaders had been raided by GMU police, who were operating outside their jurisdiction, arrested for vandalism, and subsequently weren't allowed, effectively being prevented from continuing their education because of the use of surveillance technology. Additionally, that chapter of the SJP had been suspended, continuing the suppression of the Pro-Palestinian Movement on campus while the university still claims to allow for protest. Mind you, we have yet to see the said vandalism nor any of the photos of the raided home, highlighting the lack of transparency. Also, what is vandalism, which is commonly deemed "violent", in comparison to GMU's continued investment in a genocide of the Palestinian people at the hands of the Israeli State, allowance of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the career fair that happened at the ground floor of the Johnson Center, and continued collaboration with war-profiteering companies (e.g. General Dynamics, Raytheon, Boeing). Infrastructure-wise, Dickerson Hall, and previous residential halls in the past, have flooded, an occurrence that shouldn't be common with housing. The last time I heard about the state of Dickerson, the aforementioned flood left mold across the dorms yet to be properly dealt with, causing negative health effects on its residents. The dining halls have caused complaints of food poisoning (e.g. Aniya's food poisoning hospitalized her for weeks) that, in a previous town hall meeting, were denied due to a lack of evidence. But still, said complaints should still be taken seriously as this is yet another negative health effect yet to be properly addressed. Learning about this university's failings and doing my part to achieve student justice, I've detached from what it purports to be. Now having to face the reality behind that image, it was only then that I truly realized the value of attending a higher education institution, which was the community I learned to struggle alongside with. Consisting of faculty, students, and student organizations, they were the ones to make me feel at home, not the university. We challenged each other intellectually. We affirmed one another. Most importantly though, together, we used our education to realize the systems of oppression that silenced our concerns, turning it into action. This is why, when the Black Men's Success Initiative (BMSI) was shut down as result of the Board's suspicions of its activity, I felt saddened that a program that, academically and personally, meant so much to the black men before me, who benefitted greatly from the mentorship and guidance, was sacrificed in an attempt to avoid the attacks on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives and programs, showing once again the marginalization, oppression, and forced invisibility of Black Mason. The name changes of certain offices, while well-intentioned, ironically erase the "diversity" GMU claims to value, making our actual diverse student population feel unwelcome and disposable. With what I've brought to, I ask you to deeply consider these implications.

Zachary  
Schrag

Faculty

Principle 2 of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (a resource recommended by the State Council of Higher Education for

		<p>Virginia) states that boards should "Respect the difference between the board's role and the administration's role," giving them three primary tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Honor the academic norm of shared governance, which includes the board, president, administration, and faculty. The board has primary fiduciary responsibilities, and it delegates primary management responsibility to the president and primary responsibility for academic programs to the faculty.</li> <li>- Be humble and respect your partners in governance and leadership. Use your position to better understand others' perspectives and take them into account.</li> <li>- Provide advice and counsel but leave operational decisions to the administration. Serve as a thought partner, sounding board, and pro bono advisor by sharing your relevant expertise and experience.</li> </ul> <p>The proposed Resolution of George Mason University Regarding the Presidential Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion violates every element of this principle.</p>
Alexander Monea	Faculty	<p>Despite failing to move the anti-diversity resolution forward at the APDUCC meeting on April 15, the BOV is trying to push this resolution through at the May 1 meeting. This move demonstrates, yet again, that they don't care about their own bylaws, and they certainly don't care about what faculty, staff, and students at the university have to say about diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus. Representatives of students and faculty spoke unequivocally in defense of diversity at the university, which should send a message to the Board that Mason does not want to go back to a segregationist past. The BOV should respect the will of the students, faculty, and staff who make up the university by dropping this resolution.</p>
Martin Winkler	Faculty	<p>Political ideologies of any kind are inappropriate for educational and research institutions. University faculty and students are fully capable of monitoring and governing themselves.</p>
Emily Hendrickson	Student	<p>I strongly condemn the Board of Visitors' attempt to dismantle GMU's remaining diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) infrastructure. The BOV's efforts to dismantle DEI are politically motivated acts of ideological interference that betray the university's core values. Rather than fostering an environment where all individuals can thrive, these actions threaten to drag Mason back to a shameful, segregationist past. It is clear that if this resolution is passed, that the BOV does not represent or understand the students or the faculty. Have the courage and integrity to follow our core value and long-time university phrase, "DIVERSITY IS OUR STRENGTH."</p>
Emebet Neale	Student	<p>My name is Emebet Neale, and I was a member of the Student Senate this past year. I am deeply disappointed at the BOV's lack of transparency and effort in communicating the changes proposed in the Resolution regarding the President's Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to the student body, as well as the substance of the resolution itself. First, there is no basis for removing or restricting DEI at George Mason. While I recognize that reliance on federal funding puts the university in a difficult spot, the proposed resolution treats DEI as threatening equal access to opportunities for students, when in fact it does the opposite. It knowingly omits the last word, Inclusion, and discounts our concerns in favor of actions that inherently politicize students' education without their consent. Second, as a woman of color, DEI programs at Mason are extremely valuable to me. And, though they are not perfect, I find comfort in knowing there are resources and support mechanisms to help me navigate life in a world that was not designed for me. Many of my friends and peers express similar sentiments. That alone should be</p>

<p>Rimsha Abbasi</p> <p>Student</p>	<p>enough to warrant the failure of this resolution. Finally, at the macroscopic level, the consequences of downsizing DEI will be severe. George Mason has centered its mission on diversity, evident in everything from our marketing strategies to student engagement and programs. Diversity is at the core of the university and to turn in the opposite direction so suddenly in a time when the student body most needs the Board’s support will negatively impact institutional trust in a way that cannot easily be undone. This resolution will be detrimental to the long-term health of the university.</p> <p>Thus, I strongly urge the Board to reconsider all actions related to the removal or restriction of DEI programs—if not to protect the rights and education of all of its students then to protect the university’s future.</p> <p>I wholeheartedly reject the proposed resolution to eliminate DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives at George Mason University. The Board’s decision appears to rest on the false premise that DEI is incompatible with merit. In reality, DEI enhances merit by expanding the talent pool and ensuring that individuals of all backgrounds have equitable access to opportunities. Far from undermining excellence, DEI creates the conditions in which true merit can flourish.</p> <p>These initiatives were born out of a historical necessity: for much of American history, women and minorities were denied equal rights and opportunities. DEI exists to address the systemic inequities that continue to influence who gets to learn, teach, lead, and thrive in our institutions. These barriers have not vanished with time—they persist in more subtle but still powerful ways.</p> <p>If DEI were truly the antithesis of merit, how do we explain the fact that many of the recipients announced at the April 17th meeting for the Presidential Awards for Faculty Excellence at GMU have minoritized identities? These honors are awarded for achievement—not identity. They demonstrate that diversity and excellence are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they often go hand in hand.</p> <p>Visitor Lindsey Burke would have us believe otherwise. She portrays DEI as a looming threat, a divisive force, or even a form of discrimination. But we must ask: why? Who benefits from dismantling DEI, and who feels threatened by making space for others at the table?</p> <p>The answer is uncomfortable but clear: those who have historically benefited from a system built to advantage them—often white individuals who have never faced systemic barriers due to their race, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Acknowledging this reality does not deny that white people can face hardship, particularly due to class. But to suggest that DEI initiatives discriminate against them is to ignore the context, history, and purpose of these programs. DEI is not about exclusion—it is about ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, has a fair shot.</p> <p>Rejecting DEI is not a stand for merit. It’s a step backward into a past that too many of us have fought hard to overcome.</p>
<p>Fiona Klotz</p> <p>Alumni</p>	<p>I OPPOSE THE ANTI-DEI INITIATIVE. This goes against EVERYTHING GMU stands for and encompasses! I condemn the BOV’s attempt to dismantle GMU’s remaining DEI infrastructure. Dissolving the Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) would hurt vulnerable groups at Mason, and prohibiting diversity</p>

statements as part of hiring processes is unnecessary. Furthermore, because the APDUCC Committee did not vote during the April 17 meeting to move the anti-DEI resolution forward, the Board cannot and should not consider the resolution on Thursday May 1st 2025.

Zara Sheikh Alumni

Unlike the BOV, the rest of the Mason community understands that DEI initiatives help protect vulnerable groups at the university and encourage teaching, learning, and research free from fear or favor; this is why the community turned out so strongly against the Board's attempts to destroy DEI last year, and why faculty and student representatives pushed back on this resolution in the APDUCC meeting. The BOV should respect the will of the students, faculty, and staff who make up the university by dropping this resolution.

Many students like myself attend GMU for the community of diversity and inclusion it encompasses. A resolution that destroys DEI, destroys that community represented across the entire university.

Christopher Clarke Faculty

\*\* Comment topic: DEI resolution

From a logistical perspective, should the resolution pass, I strongly urge the Board to first ask OACC to prepare a list of a "trainings, programs not specifically required by federal or state law, and if necessary...staff positions" to be potentially eliminated. Such a list should then be shared with the broader university community to the fullest extent possible under confidentiality/personnel policies, and the BOV should then debate - at a separate meeting - potentially eliminating one or more of these areas. This approach preserves the BOV's oversight responsibilities instead of delegating it, inappropriately in my view, to OACC absent broader BOV discussion. It also allows for more meaningful campus community engagement as part of shared governance.

In a broader sense, the proposal to eliminate to prohibit "requiring diversity statements for any potential employee, for promotion of current employees, for faculty tenure considerations, or for any other purpose" directly threatens academic freedom by restricting, unfairly in my view, what materials individual units/departments wish to collect as part of employee recruiting and promotion. I do not feel it appropriate for the BOV to mandate what materials can/cannot be used in this context.

Furthermore, I feel that the DEI resolution presents a barrier to the successful implementation of the recently enacted campus policy on preventing antisemitism. The latter provides a means to identify cases of antisemitism, but the lack of a robust DEI program at Mason - or whatever other term one wishes to use - would arguably present challenges to effectively ameliorating said antisemitism through, for instance, additional support for Jewish students consistent with DEI goals of inclusion and access.

Finally, I recognize recent Presidential Executive Orders targeting DEI and the need for Mason to comply with said Orders as they relate to interpretations of applicable federal laws such as Title XI, among others. At the same time, I feel that Mason is proactively (and unnecessarily) self-censoring its programs out of fear of Trump administration reprisals - a not wholly unreasonable choice given ongoing situations at Harvard at elsewhere but that nonetheless threats

		<p>a university's freedom to exert control over its own policies and procedures in general and as part of shared governance specifically. This concern is further magnified by earlier University pronouncements that existing policies/procedures before the current proposed DEI resolution were consistent with applicable, aforementioned federal guidance. I submit that what changed wasn't applicable federal policies but rather Mason's willingness to stand by its own policies/procedures - a fact that, if true, would be sad on its face in addition a clear threat to university independence.</p>
Preet Kaur	Student	I reject the anti-DEI resolution as a GMU Student and Social Worker.
Enrius Collazo	Student	I reject GMU's anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion resolutions.
Sheri Wilson	Community Member	I am concerned about the Board's resolution to dismantle GMU's diversity, equity and inclusion policies. GMU is such a diverse community, making it a stronger university and benefiting the students, faculty and surrounding community. Please do not take this away from GMU. DEI is important...to folks that are from underrepresented groups, and those of us that are not as well. Please challenge your own thinking on this and support GMU and it's diverse community.
Erin Johnson	Student	Who said, "Mason continues to be on the move as a top research university. I'm particularly pleased to see these rankings confirm that our inclusive approach to excellence is working. Our ratings for both quality and inclusion are strong and getting stronger." ??? George Mason University President, Gregory Washington. According to the U.S. News & World Report 2021 Best Colleges, George Mason is "THE top ranked public university in Virginia for ethnic diversity and tied for 15th nationally." This statistic should not go unnoticed. This is pride. We need to keep the trajectory up and passing this resolution is the opposite direction. I feel seen, heard, and welcomed at Mason. I do not at all support passing the DEI initiatives to erase the progress that many before you have strived to uphold. I fear for the future of Mason if the BOV thinks this is a good idea for the future of our university.
Angelica Guevara-Lopez	Student	<p>As a dedicated social work major, I am deeply committed to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), which are foundational to both my chosen profession and the broader mission of our university. The National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics emphasizes the importance of social justice and the need to challenge social injustices, advocating for the rights and dignity of all individuals.</p> <p>In the field of social work, understanding and addressing systemic inequalities is paramount. Our education must equip us with the cultural competence and awareness necessary to serve diverse populations effectively. DEI programs provide essential training and resources that enhance our ability to advocate for social justice and support vulnerable communities.</p> <p>I urge the university administration to reaffirm its commitment to DEI. The DEI will benefit the university in supporting marginalized communities, foster a sense of belonging, and prepare students to engage effectively in a multicultural world.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my perspective.</p>
John F	Student	I reject the resolution to end DEI at George Mason University. DEI programs are crucial to the formation of meritocratic educational settings. Many

Social Work Student	Student	<p>students face challenges that are outside of their control and DEI programs help level the playing field so that everyone has equal opportunity to achieve their goals. Having diversity in educational settings benefits everyone as it expands our collective pool of knowledge. This promotes innovation and constructive debate which enriches our education. For these reasons, I cannot support the proposed resolution, nor any other attempts to dismantle DEI programs.</p> <p>Growing up in the northern Virginia area, I always heard people describe George Mason University as a diverse campus. This description was not political, and it was not a criticism. Diversity was, and is, one of the aspects of GMU of which I am most proud. I love being part of a university that not only welcomes, but also values and appreciates diverse people and perspectives. I especially love this aspect of GMU as a Masters of Social Work student in the College of Public Health. Two of the six core values of the National Association of Social Work include social justice, and dignity and worth of the person. These are values that have been taught in every single course I've taken at GMU, and they are values that I strongly believe in. I don't understand how this can be taught in classes, be advertised as a major selling point of attending GMU, and also be the subject of this upcoming BOV vote. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are not bad words. They are just the opposite -- these are qualities that should continue to be taught in classes, and that should continue to play a part in how GMU operates overall. It is unbelievable and absolutely heartbreaking that the BOV would even consider voting to end DEI initiatives here at GMU. I urge you to consider the thousands of students, faculty, and staff who will be hurt by these initiatives. Please do not dismantle GMU's remaining DEI infrastructure. Thank you for your time.</p>
Emma Dabolt	Student	<p>The BOV's attempt to further dismantle DEI at GMU is ideologically-driven political interference that betrays the university's core values. This move does not help keep GMU an inclusive place where all can come to learn; instead, it will drag the university into a dangerous and racist past. As a social work student, dismantling DEI goes against everything social work stands for and I strongly condemn this resolution.</p>
Cindy Badger	Student	<p>As a 37-year-old graduate student, a mother of four, and a military spouse, I am speaking today to strongly oppose the Board of Visitors' resolution to dismantle George Mason University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion infrastructure. I am not a traditional student by age or circumstance, but I am exactly the kind of student that DEI programs are meant to support—someone navigating higher education while balancing caregiving and community responsibilities.</p> <p>Eliminating DEI at Mason sends a chilling message: that students like me, and others whose paths to education don't fit a narrow mold, don't belong here. DEI isn't just about race or gender—it's about ensuring that people from all backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences have equitable access to opportunity and support. Whether it's the Bias Incident Response Team, inclusive hiring practices, or support programs that validate our diverse journeys, DEI helps create the conditions where nontraditional students like me can succeed—not just survive—in academia.</p> <p>The notion that dismantling DEI is somehow aligned with "merit" is a dangerous distortion. There is no meritocracy without equity. I've worked hard to earn my place at this university, and I know firsthand that academic success</p>

doesn't happen in a vacuum—it happens in a climate that affirms your worth, acknowledges systemic barriers, and ensures support is available when life gets hard. That's what DEI makes possible.

When the APDUCC Committee chose not to move this anti-DEI resolution forward on April 17, they honored the principles of shared governance and community voice. For the Board to override that decision disregards not only process, but the overwhelming opposition of faculty, staff, and students who have clearly articulated the value of DEI at Mason. We will not allow our campus to regress into an era of exclusion cloaked in the language of neutrality.

I urge you to respect the will of the Mason community and reject this ideologically driven and harmful resolution. We are not statistics or slogans—we are students, educators, workers, and human beings. DEI isn't a political agenda; it's a lifeline. And we are not done fighting for it.

Danielle Davis Faculty

I condemn the BOV's attempt to dismantle GMU's remaining DEI infrastructure. Dissolving the Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) would hurt vulnerable groups at Mason, and prohibiting diversity statements as part of hiring processes is unnecessary. Furthermore, because the APDUCC Committee did not vote during the April 17 meeting to move the anti-DEI resolution forward, the Board cannot and should not consider the resolution today. The BOV's attempt to further dismantle DEI at GMU is ideologically-driven political interference that betrays the university's core values. This move does not help keep GMU an inclusive place where all can come to learn; instead, it will drag the university into a dangerous and racist past. Despite failing to move the anti-DEI resolution forward at the APDUCC meeting on April 15, the BOV is trying to push this resolution through at the May 1 meeting. This move demonstrates, yet again, that they don't care about their own bylaws, and they certainly don't care about what faculty, staff, and students at the university have to say about DEI at the university. Representatives of students and faculty spoke unequivocally in defense of DEI at the university, which should send a message to the Board that Mason does not want to go back to a segregationist past. The Board claims that dismantling DEI is done in the interest of "merit" and "fairness," yet recent research suggests that attacks on DEI are a form of anti-Black racism. These moves are segregationist, and I condemn them in the strongest possible terms. Unlike the BOV, the rest of the Mason community understands that DEI initiatives help protect vulnerable groups at the university and encourage teaching, learning, and research free from fear or favor; this is why the community turned out so strongly against the Board's attempts to destroy DEI last year, and why faculty and student representatives pushed back on this resolution in the April 1 APDUC meeting. The BOV should respect the will of the students, faculty, and staff who make up the university by dropping this resolution.

Daphne King Faculty

As a social work professional, I want everyone to be included and have access to the same resources, opportunities, and practices. In our society, we know that there are groups that have been historically and systemically blocked from full participation in many facets of society to include education, access to employment where they can earn a living wage, and access to affordable and adequate healthcare to name a few. It is my belief that Diversity, Equity, and

		<p>Inclusion programs are a way to ensure that all are included and have access to the same resources, opportunities, and practices. I am not in support of the DEI resolution proposed by the Board of Visitors. Institutions of Higher Education are meant to be places where free speech and exchange of ideas are encouraged, and students develop skills to think critically and freely for themselves. I believe this resolution as written infringes upon those rights and is in conflict with the mission of George Mason University to have a place of higher learning where everyone has access to the same learning opportunities for upward mobility and advancement in society.</p>
Katrina Smith	Alumni	<p>Mason—and indeed the entire country—needs diversity and inclusion initiatives now more than ever. There is no need to preemptively adjust these programs.</p>
Rimsha Abbasi	Student	<p>I strongly reject the antisemitism resolution proposed by the Board of Visitors (BOV) at George Mason University, which dangerously conflates Judaism—a religion and cultural identity—with Zionism, a political ideology. Including Zionism as a protected category is deeply problematic and misleading. Zionism is a nationalist movement that has been used to justify the creation and ongoing expansion of the Israeli state, often at the expense of Palestinian land and rights. While some Jewish communities support Zionism, it is important to note that others—including certain Orthodox Jewish groups—oppose it on religious or political grounds.</p> <p>Zionism is not synonymous with Jewish identity; it is a political ideology that, like any other, should be open to critique. People regularly criticize governments such as China or North Korea for their human rights abuses, and such criticism is not considered anti-Asian. Similarly, criticism of Israel or its policies should not be conflated with antisemitism.</p> <p>This resolution appears to be less about protecting Jewish students and more about silencing pro-Palestinian voices on campus. It risks weaponizing accusations of antisemitism to stifle legitimate political discourse and student activism.</p> <p>Lastly, the term "Semite" historically refers to a group of peoples who speak Semitic languages, including Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic. While "antisemitism" has come to refer specifically to hostility toward Jews, it's important to recognize that Palestinians—many of whom speak Arabic—are also Semitic people. Therefore, supporting Palestinian rights, especially in the face of violence and displacement, is not inherently antisemitic.</p>
Lauren Stanley	Student	<p>DEI ensures equal opportunity for individuals of all backgrounds, while upholding the importance of individual merit. As one of the largest and most diverse universities in Virginia, George Mason would be undermining its core values by dismantling DEI. GMU has built the reputation of being a place that is safe and inclusive for all. Eliminating DEI would jeopardize the diverse perspectives of faculty, staff, and students that make Mason unique.</p>
Bradley Tull	Student	<p>George Mason University's recent resolution aligning with the Presidential Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is an alarming affront to the core values of both social work and higher education.</p> <p>This resolution dissolves programs designed to ensure that every member of the campus community is seen, heard, and valued—such as the Bias Incident</p>

Response Team and the Access to Research and Inclusive Excellence initiative—silences the voices of historically marginalized groups and abandons the university’s stated mission of building a more just and inclusive world.

Equity does not threaten merit but recognizes it within historically marginalized groups. The prohibition of diversity statements and the stripping of DEI considerations from hiring and promotion reflect a chilling disregard for academic freedom and institutional self-determination. This is not about compliance with the law—it is about conformity to an ideology directly opposed to those of the entire social work field and department.

This resolution betrays not just the values of social work but also the promise of higher education itself: to serve as a catalyst for critical thought, human dignity, and social transformation. Should you continue down this path, I would consider leaving George Mason.

Louis Volker Student

To do away with DEI, especially considering the fact that George Mason has been test-optional and race neutral since 2007, is to actively enforce a narrative of systemic oppression and retract years of work that has aimed to properly represent the American people in higher education and the opportunities available to those that can obtain said education. It is to grant the government a scary amount of power in dictating and censoring vital ideas that are necessary to educate America's people. Members on Mason's BOV oppose DEI because they are afraid of change, of change to culture and power systems that have systemically benefitted them and placed them in positions of power throughout their lives- they are afraid of giving up their power to the oppressed. They are afraid of change for the better.

Every totalitarian regime is anti-intellectual. We must not allow those in charge of our government to dictate how students must think, the criteria they are allowed to learn, or who is allowed to learn and to teach. For freedom's sake, education must be allowed to operate outside of government censorship.

Bruce Williams Senior Student

I was wondering when the board will start employing little brown shirt to run around the campus making sure everyone is following MAGA rules? It appears that the school board members side with White Supremacy culture and not the culture of free thinkers. I was informed an ART student was told to remove his art work from the wall on the second floor of the art building and he refused. I was told an official from Mason University confiscated the art work. I would like to request a copy of the letter sent to the student and the name of the individual who removed it. I think the Washington Post might be interested in this activity.

I'm also wondering when you will start restricting students of color and LGBTQ students from attending this University?

It's time for the board to stand up to the MAGA lunacy or resign from your position.

Marlena Rose Rabago Thompson Student

I chose George Mason University because of their commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. The University is a bastion of free speech. Limiting the language used to promote inclusion and diversity is an infringement of the duty of the public institution to not discriminate on protected classes. I urge you to protect free speech of our faculty and to protect students from

		discriminatory practices. Shield faculty, staff and students from governmental overreach.
Jewel Clark	Student	I condemn the BOV's attempt to dismantle GMU's remaining DEI infrastructure. Dissolving the Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) would hurt vulnerable groups at Mason, and prohibiting diversity statements as part of hiring processes is unnecessary. Furthermore, because the APDUCC Committee did not vote during the April 17 meeting to move the anti-DEI resolution forward, the Board cannot and should not consider the resolution today. The BOV's attempt to further dismantle DEI at GMU is ideologically-driven political interference that betrays the university's core values. This move does not help keep GMU an inclusive place where all can come to learn; instead, it will drag the university into a dangerous and racist past.
Rachael Graham Lussos	alumni	I ask that you not pass the RESOLUTION OF GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY REGARDING THE PRESIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE ORDER ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION as currently written. Ending programs like the Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) and the Access to Research and Inclusive Excellence (ARIE) undoes generations of work in response to an impulsive and unconstitutional threat to pull federal funding mandated by Congress. You know that the university benefits from these programs. When I joined George Mason as a student in 2006, the university proudly publicized its ranking as a diverse school. As someone coming from a very conservative, white family, I embraced the experience of being in a truly diverse environment for the first time. When people asked me for my opinion of the university, I described the diversity as my favorite part. And I wasn't just referring to the different appearances of the students. I appreciated the inclusive culture in the classroom and at university events, where people from all different backgrounds had their voices heard, even if I disagreed with them. These programs that the resolution proposes to end help nurture the diversity of thought and experience that catapulted George Mason University in national rankings in recent years. You can end these programs in one moment, but recovering from their loss will take years. Be on the right side of history now.
Colleen Sweet	Faculty	The diversity of Mason's student body, faculty, and staff is our greatest strength as an institution. Providing equitable access for our students to a high quality education is what makes us great and helps us stand out as a university. I urge the Board of Visitors to vote down the proposed resolution.
Shannon Gifford	Student	I am writing to express my strong opposition to the removal of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs. As a social work student and a military veteran, I have seen firsthand the critical role DEI initiatives play in creating fair, informed, and compassionate communities. For social workers, DEI programs are not a luxury — they are essential tools that help us address systemic inequities, advocate for marginalized communities, and deliver culturally responsive care. Without them, the profession's commitment to social justice is compromised, and the people we serve are left more vulnerable to discrimination and disparities. As a veteran, I personally benefit from DEI initiatives that acknowledge the diverse experiences within the military community, including issues related to race, gender, sexuality, and disability. These programs create spaces where veterans from all backgrounds feel seen, supported, and valued.
		Dismantling DEI programs sends a harmful message and undermines the vital work being done to build equitable systems. I urge decision-makers to uphold

		and expand these initiatives — for the sake of our communities, our professions, and our collective future!!
Jenna Krall	Faculty	Programming related to anti-discrimination is critical to retaining all faculty and staff, and best supporting all our students in the classroom and in research settings.
Anastasia Schroeder	Student	I have attended GMU for a total of 6 years now, 4 for my undergrad and now 2 more for my Masters degree. I moved here at 18 from a small town filled with people that all looked the same and thought the same. The biggest difference in opinions were among what NY sports teams to support. When I came to Mason I was exposed to the most diverse university in VA, and I thrived. Suddenly, in my classes, discussions were interesting and engaging because there was more than 1 major opinion or perspective was being discussed. It made me think more critically, and see things in a different way. The diversity never made me feel threatened, put down, or unheard through their DEI efforts because I too as a white woman was still being granted the opportunity to participate! These experiences are why I chose to continue my education here after I graduated undergrad. I never would have moved away from everything I know for more of the same - one opinion, one perspective and nothing else being valued. I moved away from everything I knew because Mason offered me opportunities to engage with ideas and opinions new to me. For these reasons, I condemn the anti-DEI resolution. I implore the BOV not to weaken Mason's biggest strength and draw, it's diversity and supportive programs. If you are truly here to support the University, and not simply lick the boots of Trump and Youngkin then you should understand that this is a bad move.
Laura Buckwald	Faculty	I object to the BOV's past and current dismantling of GMU's DEI infrastructure. The BOV's attempt to destroy DEI at GMU is ideologically-driven political interference that betrays GMU's core values. GMU must continue to be committed to being an inclusive place which protects its students, faculty and staff from the significant harms of prejudice, discrimination and racism and must be a place of learning, teaching and research without fear or favor. Our students demand places of learning and work where they feel respected and valued. The BOV's actions against DEI are disrespectful not only to our students but to the entire Mason community and detrimental to GMU's ability to provide a quality education to its students. This is why 90% of the community is against the BOV's actions against DEI and why the BOV must permanently drop its current anti-DEI resolution and immediately end all attempts at dismantling DEI at Mason.
Vanessa Veiock	Student	Before any policy is adopted, we must ask ourselves, "What does this policy do and how does it support the mission, vision, and values of the organization? GMU's mission to be "an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world." This mission is further supported by GMU's core values to thrive together in "a positive and collaborative community that contributes to the well-being and success of every member." When considering RESOLUTION OF GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY REGARDING THE PRESIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE ORDER ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION, we must ask then, "Can GMU fulfill it's mission to be an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world if we eliminate the very programs that support inclusivity, equity, and diversity? The opposite of INCLUSION is EXCLUSION. The opposite of EQUITY is UNFAIRNESS. The opposite of DIVERSITY

		is SAMENESS. Passing this resolution is a vote for EXCLUSION, UNFAIRNESS, and SAMENESS. That is antithetical to GMU's mission. Please vote NO on the resolution and SAY YES to the more just, prosperous, and free world that GMU strives to achieve.
Anonymous	Faculty	The BOV's attempt to remove DEI at GMU is political interference that betrays the university's core values. Removing DEI does not make GMU a place where all can come to learn (as US News and World Report signaled when it awarded Mason one of the top 100 schools for social mobility); instead, it will drag the university into a dangerous and racist past.
Callie Brinker	Student	Diversity is the cornerstone of America, and taking away programs intended to foster equity and inclusion is fundamentally un-American. I have been proud to be a student at GMU during my time here, but if the board votes in support of anti-DEI resolutions, I will no longer be able to call myself a "Patriot". American Patriotism stands for protecting our people, all people, regardless of race, ability, age, gender, or sexuality. Making space for diverse populations to feel safe, seen, and valued is an essential part of the American dream and is vital to the future of the country. If protecting your students and upholding the TRUE values of America is not enough to garner your support for DEI, maybe money is a stronger motivator. I will be graduating in a few weeks, and can confidently say that if GMU becomes anti-DEI, I will never donate so much as a penny as an alumna. I know many current alumni who hold similar views to me and will immediately halt all donations if GMU chooses to lick the boots of a corrupt wanna-be fascist dictator in his attempts to undermine, poison, and pervert true American values. I truly hope that I can trust this school of Patriots to not bend the knee to a tyrant.
Arielle Gradney	Student	<p>We are asking that the BOV verbalize the impact these changes will have on the GMU community in both a positive and negative light. While we, as students in the Master of Social Work program, support the University's need for funding, we ask that the University support the continuance of services that help all students feel safe, heard, and informed.</p> <p>Thank you, Arielle Gradney Lindsay Miller Ayelet Coronado</p>
Asher Ackman	Student	Mason has always prided itself as one of the most diverse campuses on the East Coast if not in the US. So many of the students come from diverse backgrounds and cultures and, as such, so much of the school's fame, renown, and money comes from diversity. Getting rid of diversity programs and education will make the school hostile to a huge percentage of its students and so much of the school's fame, renown, and money will vanish as the years progress. Through our diversity we thrive and if we lose it, we will crumble and fail.
Galilea Sejas-Machado	Community Member	Going to Mason and seeing the breadth of student opportunities to feel closer connected to the Mason community and to pursuing my higher education (Masters Degree) is BECAUSE of the DEI programming and support student groups had. Stripping this away or limiting the support strips students from the opportunity to think about higher ed avenues in the lens of their own community.
Peyton Wilson	Student	As a George Mason University student, an integral aspect of our university is our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion for all students. Diversity in

not only the various cultures of our peers and professors but also in our course selection . I have the ability to take courses such as bioethics , political campaign communication and African art to name a few . This unique courses are taught by experienced professors. Equity is the fair and equal treatment of everyone. Equity ensures individuals can thrive because they are given an equal chance. Equity helps promote social inclusion and positive change. We need to ensure equity at George Mason University because it allows students regardless of their background to have a fair opportunity at quality education. Equity allows students various accommodations such as flexible seating and housing that meets their needs. Inclusion is another key element that makes George Mason so unique. At George Mason you can interact with students of various religions, backgrounds and sexual orientations. Faculty , students as well as other organizations have always ensured that every student feels welcome . Our student body can be described as the most diverse in Virginia. This is something students take pride in.

As the board of visitors, it should be your responsibility to consider the students best interest not those of politicians such as Donald Trump or Glenn Youngkin. Eliminate training that you don't see necessary is dangerous. Through training offered by George Mason I was able to take part in intersexuality training which is important for my major as a Social Worker. Eliminating staff positions, the Bias Incident Report Team , and other key programs put students in jeopardy.

Eliminating key positions at George Mason University also puts staff members and faculty's job in jeopardy. As we are already living in unprecedented times why add extra stress to someone's life ?

As a student at George Mason University, I am highly disappointed and disgusted that you , the Board of Visitors, is even considering an Anti DEI policy. I speak for all students when I say this , **DO NOT PASS THIS RESOLUTION!**

Sam Harrington	Student	I reject GMU's anti-DEI resolution. The BOV's attempt to further dismantle DEI at GMU is ideologically-driven political interference that betrays the university's core values. This move does not help keep GMU an inclusive place where all can come to learn; instead, it will drag the university into a dangerous and racist past.
Aaron Thompson	Student	If "Diversity is our greatest strength", as has always been repeated, then why vote to take that away? If diversity is TRULY our greatest strength, then we should work to build upon it, not dismantle it.
Bri'Yana Merrill	Student	I am here, writing as a graduate student in the MPH program at Mason, and a soon-to-be alumna this May. The resolution regarding DEI is unequivocally harmful to students at Mason. It eliminates essential structures like the Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT), restricts DEI-related programming, and limits Mason's capacity to proactively support students and employees facing bias. These actions directly contradict the Board's earlier resolution on antisemitism.
		How can the Board, in February, pass a resolution affirming protections for students based on shared ancestry and national origin while relying on DEI offices and programming to do so? Now in May, the Board wants to pass a resolution dismantling those very offices and tools. These resolutions cannot coexist without contradiction.

Are protections valued for some, but not for others?

I am here not to merely debate ideology, but to also raise concerns and inconsistencies on the Board's supposed support for students. Adopted in February, the Board passed a resolution explicitly affirming Mason's commitment to combating antisemitic discrimination, using the IHRA definition, and reinforcing the role of the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (at the time) in training, education, and policy enforcement.

Yet, the new resolution eliminates or reassigns those very offices and functions, and dissolves key mechanisms like bias reporting teams and educational programming. It is unclear how these critical protections will continue under a narrower compliance model that intentionally avoids language, training, and resources associated with DEI—even though those tools are essential for fulfilling the obligations outlined in the antisemitism resolution. Nevertheless, institutional consistency is lacking.

How can the board expect students and employees to trust in your commitment to safety and nondiscrimination if you simultaneously dismantle the very structures built to ensure them? How can education around shared ancestry and ethnic origin discrimination continue without DEI infrastructure?

I must ask my question again: Are protections valued for some, but not for others?

Under this new resolution, students who previously turned to BIRT for support after incidents of bias will be left with a gap in resources and timely care. As stated online: "The Bias Incident reporting process itself does not investigate, mediate, arbitrate, adjudicate, discipline, or replace other George Mason procedures or services, and has no adjudicatory or disciplinary authority."

This resolution undermines the success of students by eliminating structures that support student engagement, retention, and belonging. These functions correlate with performance metrics like graduation rates, alumni engagement, and even local and national rankings. It is important to emphasize that many of the programs and offices now being dissolved were not political: they were functional and student-centered. They helped prevent student attrition for vulnerable and contemporary populations, increased students' sense of belonging on campus, and supported first-generation and nontraditional students as they navigated Mason.

I urge the Board to view this resolution not through the lens of political philosophy, but to vote in alignment with students, faculty, and staff on the matter. Vote no on this resolution.

Alyssa Cazier Student

As a graduate student at GMU, I'm deeply disappointed in the messaging and intentions of the Board to dismantle the very commitments and values that the university has identified as core beliefs. As a reminder, these core beliefs (quoted from President Washington's Letter on Strategic Direction) include: "inclusivity over exclusivity," "advancing our mission by being willing to take risks," "our best work is only possible when we apply our diversity of origin, identity, circumstance, and thought," "at Mason, education is opportunity's

		<p>great equalizer,” and “we grow wiser and stronger from examining our full truths.” The proposed resolution presented to the Board today not only directly refutes these beliefs but is a clear political gambit. The intention is a chilling effect, propagating messaging and virtue signaling as GMU administration has proven that such a "discrimination" as a result of DEI commitments does not exist. The student body is not fooled by this farce. The dissolution of DEI programming and initiatives at GMU is performative and representative of political meddling in higher education.</p>
Allison Krzywicki	Student	<p>As an out-of-state student and a member of the honors college, I had a lot of options when it came to choosing which university I would attend. One of the main factors that drew me to George Mason was the great diversity of this school. We are branded as "All Together Different". Keeping Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion measures is crucial to keeping Mason as an innovative school. DEI, no matter how it is publicly branded, is a priority for many Mason students.</p>
Julia Holcomb	Faculty	<p>Visitor Burke and Rector Stimson are supporting an anti-DEI resolution, in the face of overwhelming opposition from the students, faculty, and staff of the Mason Community. Mason's diversity is its strength. As a professor in the English Department since 2003, I have had the opportunity to observe how our varied student body gives everyone in my classes a chance to learn and grow without limitations. As for equity and inclusion, they support fairness in everything that happens at Mason. To oppose them is to oppose equal opportunities; to oppose equal opportunities is unacceptable. I urge the BOV to listen to the voices of Mason: they are what democracy sounds like.</p>
Kelby Gibson	PhD candidate and GTA/instructor of record	<p>I have had the privilege of teaching Mason students for four years. In these four years I have had to continually rise to the challenge that is working with a diverse student body. This is a good challenge. I am able to rise to these challenges because of the support Mason had for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the past. Mason itself is a testament to the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our student body is diverse, and our faculty has been provided with the resources to serve this student body. What happens to Mason when you strip away the important support faculty, staff, and students have here that creates an environment where students are empowered to be open minded and learn from one another as much as they are learning from their classes? How can one claim we don't need diversity, equity, and inclusion at Mason when the success of our students and faculty has thus far been informed by the programs, trainings, and support that include attention to these values?</p> <p>This year this board has rushed through a few resolutions, all ideologically driven, including the recent “DEI resolution.” Is a policy that prohibits diversity statements really what is important to this board or is this yet another ideological move that makes some particular visitors feel like they are “winning” the “war on woke”? The April 17 APDUCC meeting was one of the first times all year I heard many board members ask some crucial questions about the work they are doing and how it benefits GMU and hit pause on actions that have shown to be largely unpopular with the Mason community. I encourage the board to listen to the Mason community—there are many students, staff, and faculty who are happy to lend their expertise and share their experiences with the ways diversity, equity, and inclusion have made Mason the institution that it is today. Mason is nothing without its students</p>

and it certainly is not an R1 without its excellent faculty and staff. Resolutions like the one the APDUCC brought forward on April 17 drive away our best and brightest; it communicates to people that the unique ideas and perspectives they bring to our campus, community, and scholarship is not valued and that the university is not interested in conversations and work that drive the world forward.

The Mason brand is built on diversity, equity, and inclusion. For years I have read the narrative that we celebrate our differences and see value in them, we pride ourselves on how “free” we are while still maintaining a safe environment. Where is the proof of that narrative in the boards efforts to dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion at Mason? If you are going to talk the talk, walk the walk. Our community deserves to receive the experience they signed up for whether it be with tuition dollars or a contract.

Every single semester for four years I have had at least one student thank me for challenging them and bringing difficult conversations into our classrooms; students want to grow and learn, so don't stomp out their ability to do so in the name of a so-called culture war. Protect diversity, equity, and inclusion at George Mason University.

Elizabeth Bigham Alumni

As a proud George Mason University alumna with a degree in Psychology, I am deeply disappointed by the Board of Visitors' resolution to dismantle DEI programming and remove the university's diversity mission statement. These actions undermine the values Mason once proudly claimed to uphold values that shaped both my education and my professional commitment to community mental health.

During my time at Mason, cultural responsibility and diversity were central themes throughout my curriculum. These teachings were not performative, they were essential. They helped me understand my own privilege as a white woman and taught me how to ethically and effectively support individuals from different backgrounds. Today, I serve a densely diverse population in the field of community mental health, and it is because of my education at Mason that I can do so with compassion, competence, and humility.

This resolution doesn't just erase programs, it erases progress. When institutions remove DEI frameworks, they do not remove inequality. They simply remove the university's responsibility to address it.

I also want to make clear that I had seriously considered returning to Mason for my graduate education. I applied to and was accepted into the MSW program, hoping to continue learning from an institution that had once prepared me to be a better advocate and professional. But I ultimately chose to attend another public university, one that has refused to compromise its values, even under political pressure. I could not in good conscience align myself with a university that chooses silence and regression over courage and justice.

As I wrote in one of my application essays: "I will only align myself with institutions that recognize the injustices occurring today and refuse to turn a blind eye for the sake of profit. Social work is not a field for personal gain, and I expect the institutions that represent it to reflect that belief." Sadly, Mason no

longer meets that standard.

At this time, Mason has removed its public DEI statement, yet its Writing Center still instructs students on how to write one. I have thankfully still been able to use this resources to write this today. The irony is the writing centers website cites research affirming that diverse teams perform better. If DEI doesn't belong at this university, why does the Writing Center still teach it? Why did it shape my success?

I understand the pressures placed on public institutions in today's climate, but this is not the time to retreat. This is the time to lead. I urge Mason's leadership to reject this resolution and recommit to building a university where equity, inclusion, and diversity are not political talking points but shared values reflected in action.

Sydney  
Berkley      Staff

When I first wrote my college essay, I was mad. Mad at my mother, mad at the world, but most of all mad at Mikey Fulton. Mikey always says my name wrong. I've known him since I was 3. I grew up in Fairfax County, but my story starts long before that, long before Martin or Harriet. My story started before 1619. My story started with the pain that was put into someone else the first time. A pain that is dirty and that makes you feel guilty. A pain you can't see when you look at me.

My first name, Sydney, comes from French origins, and it means wide island, or as my mom likes to elucidate: a wide open heart. My last name, Berkley, comes from Scottish origins. If you were to investigate my genetic makeup, my ancestry would dance across the DNA helix. However, when you look at my face, it is hidden. When you look at my history, it is hidden. My face reflects a paradox, for it too contains an untold history, but a different one.

An employee at Giant takes her arms and crosses them one at a time at her chest, making an X, as she sees me walk by with my natural hair. "Chief Powhatan!" she calls at me. She calls me a name that is not my own. My mother immediately pulls me into an aisle and begins braiding my hair. She curses under her breath like there is something to be repentant for, like my hair is bad. I feel a deep shame. Had I done something wrong? At the time, I didn't completely understand what the woman meant. Well, I was in first grade and knew who Chief Powhatan was, but I certainly didn't recognize the connotation of her words. I didn't know why my mother was so upset back then. Now I wonder if she was more upset with the employee for her racist words, or at herself for pulling me aside to braid my hair.

Sometimes I hate my hair, but it tells the story of me that my name does not. It's a tight curl, small but mighty. I can put it in water. I can braid it. I can brush it, and the curl will still stay. My hair can do all these things, yet sometimes it still makes me feel shame. My hair tells a story, a story that is greater than me. My hair is history; a history that shows pain, transformation, and healing. My hair shows my genetics. It shows the side of me that lived on the plantation that's now a tourist attraction and a sad Google search. It shows the side of me that my name hides.

All my life, I've been called different names. Some may say they are labels or diagnoses, but they are just another way of naming. I've been given these on

the quest to discover who I am: names to describe depression, anxiety, PTSD, attention disorder, and autism. A name tells a story. It is vital to the story: a story of triumph and victory, as well as defeat and sorrow. My name is known to me and unknown all at once; it is who I am, and yet also holds a history of which I know only a little. It makes me think about how I will be remembered. I wonder what a young girl will find in ten to twenty years if she searches my name as I once did: What story will I tell? How will I be remembered? Or will my story be hidden, too?

That's what I wrote for my college essay. I want you to know I hated George Mason University at first. I wanted to go to Howard. I got into Howard, too. I couldn't go because of the pain my mother passed onto me, pain that overflowed into my life. There was only one thing I liked about George Mason for a long time. I liked Great Sue, Hagar, Hannah, and the list goes on. The name of the enslaved people who lived here. I didn't just like them, I loved them. I loved that they told a story, a story that said I turn my pain into power. I want you to know that Donald Trump has no power. He may write legislation to erase my history, programs, and maybe even legacy, but I have power. I have power through my pain and the pain of my people. You have a choice to turn that pain, guilt, and shame you carry from your ancestors into the power to love and make change. I challenge you to choose power over pain and protect DEI.

Graham  
Gillman

Student

My name is Graham Gillman. I am a transgender American, a Mason student, and a critical patriot. I have a deep love for both my institution and my country, despite all the ways they have failed our most vulnerable.

I would like to tell you a story about how George Mason failed on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

3 years ago I was attacked in Washington DC from behind by a young man while I was wearing women's clothes, something that at the time I thought of as crossdressing, and now understand to be my clothes. First the young man pushed me to the ground, and then repeatedly started stomping on my face and body. I suffered no broken bones, just many bruises and a shattered psyche. If I was not safe in DC, a deeply progressive queer enclave, where was I safe?

I was damaged enough that I missed my first two classes the following day, and when I finally pulled myself together to go on campus, icing half of my face, who do I encounter on the way back from class but the young man who attacked me. He was on campus, in the courtyard right in front of Horizon Hall. I don't know if he was a student, or protesting with an off campus hate group, but I recognized his face, and his laugh.

I made it back to my car, and went home, and had a complete mental breakdown. I failed every class I was in at Mason at the time. I didn't wear the clothes that make me happiest for another 2 years, and didn't pursue medical transition at all until, something that would have brought me a great deal of clarity and stability.

That young man almost succeeded in killing a queer person. My deepest regret is that I never told anyone so he might have been held accountable. I hope he

		<p>never succeeded in bringing another person as low as he brought me. But I cannot deny that Mason failed me in my time of need. I went from 4 As to 4 failed classes very quickly, and no one reached out. No alarm bells were tripped.</p> <p>Mason has the tools to deal with my pain, but didn't know it needed to implement them in the case of someone vulnerable. It makes me furious to know that the school isn't working very hard to make sure these programs are expanded and given more funding, but are instead trying to roll these tools and trainings back. DEI saves lives, and the truly brave thing to do here would be to protect and expand it. I beg of you to what is right.</p>
Betzy	Student	<p>Removing DEI means disregarding the building blocks of American society. America was built on the backs of immigrants and every population that became marginalized.</p>
Amrita Singh	Student	<p>I am a student at GMU that values our diverse communities and the efforts our communities have put into uplifting communities of color and individuals from multifaceted backgrounds that have been historically underrepresented and underserved. I believe DEI and all of the programs at GMU relating to diversity, equity, inclusion, and beyond, are vital to our school's mission and to supporting and uplifting all individuals. We must invest in programs that foster a diverse environment and uplift underserved communities. Diversity, equity, inclusion programs enrich students and individuals, and make education and access to opportunities more accessible. DEI at Mason helps shape the lives of incredibly bright students and empowers the next generation of individuals that will have a tremendous impact on our world.</p>
Rachel Williams	Student	<p>The actions of the BOV show a deep fear of the student body of this university. Instead of bravely participating in dialogue, the BOV has decided to wield power like the authoritarians they claim to be stopping. History will remember them poorly.</p>
RHS	Student	<p>I have concerns not just for the safety of my fellow students, faculty and staff but I have concerns for my own program, an excellent one which has not only changed my life but in many ways saved me. I am a proud Social Work student and a veteran. If it wasn't for this university and this program I would still be in a place longing for my purpose-this school and my teachers gave it back to me, empowered me and supported like many other students. GMU is the most diverse university in the state of Virginia which is a big reason I applied and continue my studies here. DEI isn't a hindrance it's a measure in order to protect students and staff alike from discrimination and harassment because of factors like gender, sex, ableness, age, culture, whom theyve married, their age, etc. This is a massive concern that this is even being voted upon, our president of our university is a person of color is there no regard for him either? Our teachers are diverse which is a necessity to our learning. To do away with DEI is disheartening, concerning and frankly a hindrance to the betterment and progress of the student body and all within it. Please, please don't do away with DEI, please don't turn a blind eye to what is really at stake here. Please, if you love GMU the way many of us do, do not do away with these protections. Thank you for hearing my concerns, and I hope you take this into consideration during a heavy time and a heavy vote.</p>
M. Reece Mack	Faculty	<p>The GMU community believes in its core values, that diversity is our strength. This is the main draw of our university. Our growth and development are because we are a welcoming environment who support students, faculty, and</p>

(Marissa Mack)

staff who are “all together different.” This is appealing to the record number of students we have each fall. This is what brings them.

GMU needs to stop complying in advance with the current federal administration and bending to the particular whims of the conservative members of the Board of Visitors. The Board of Visitors should respect the learning and culture of this university and respect the wishes of its constituents: the people who study here, who work here, who belong here. At the April 17 APDUC committee, there was a large showing of support of DEI efforts at Mason. For many of us, these are the experiences that made our time at Mason what it was. Last year, we made a huge showing against BOV efforts to undercut DEI. We won't let it go. This resolution, and any others like it, need to go away.

I was an undergraduate here, and I felt so much belonging to this place, I am still here 20 years later as a full-time faculty member.

At the 16th annual LGBTQ+ Resources and Women and Gender Studies Cording Ceremony (I was a graduate in the first Lavender Graduation, in 2009), a representative of the university administration told the graduates and all of us in the room that Mason will not leave us behind even among our uncertain times. That has to be true. We have to do everything in our power to keep Mason what it is: the most diverse university in Virginia, and highly ranked nationally. This is who we are.

This anti-DEI resolution goes far behind what has been legally suggested at the federal level and it will have impacts on all of us. Diversity is in our mission statement and it isn't going anywhere. Having diversity statements on job ads is common sense. Bias incident reports harm no one, but they help those who are harmed. The support offices you seek to dismantle and undercut are essential to the learning and functioning at this university.

Mason has been my home for a long time. Don't send me away. Don't keep people like me away. You need us.

Michael S. Zdanovich Faculty

I would like to inform the Board of Visitors convening this afternoon that George Mason University, like all universities in this country, enjoys both freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. To take actions that would contravene both of these rights would not only be an affront to academic freedom, but to the First Amendment of Bill of Rights found in the U.S. Constitution as well. Furthermore, it is my understanding that there is some controversy regarding the enforcement of the Presidential Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and that in a video-recorded statement of April 17th, 2025, Lindsay Burke and others have suggested that there are links between DEI and Critical Race Theory (CRT). This is ludicrous if one were only to peruse what each term actually means. In short, CRT addresses systematic racism that is embedded in policies, not only at universities but throughout society. Currently, it only has its place in law school class discussions focusing on "equity." DEI, on the other hand, acknowledges differences in our multi-ethnic society and advances the notion that everyone should have an opportunity to have entrée to programs, systems and positions of power that they may have been previously denied access to. Ms. Burke and others have called DEI a "virus" causing "mass hysteria," and have likened DEI trainings to Maoist "struggle sessions." Frankly, these claims seem to be wide of the mark and ought to be condemned as both fallacious and fearmongering. I hope that the Board of Governors will rise above the hysteria generated by the mere mention of DEI, and for that matter, CRT, and chart a reasonable path forward for George Mason University's students, faculty, administrators and programs.

Let us leave aside the divisive comments of those seeking to build walls here for political points rather than tear them down.

Catherine E. Faculty  
Saunders

I write to express continued concern with the 2nd draft version of the “Resolution Of George Mason University Regarding The Presidential Executive Order On Diversity, Equity, And Inclusion,” beginning on p. 658 of the May 1 BOV meeting book. This version is certainly an improvement on the earlier draft, especially in terms of recognizing the extensive work that Mason staff have already done to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, legal decisions, executive orders, and other guidance from the executive branch of the federal government.

However, the second draft endorses the narrowing of OACC activities, and the elimination of staff positions in that office, at a time when GMU needs staff with relevant expertise to help us respond to the legal and cultural context the resolution describes.

I join Visitor Meese in urging any members of the BOV who did not attend or have not yet watched a recording of the listening sessions held in Spring '24 and/or read the resulting “Mason Way” report, to do so. At the listening sessions, Mason students from a variety of backgrounds described far more eloquently than I can how programs sponsored, supported, or facilitated by what is now the OACC, as well as other Mason offices, enabled them to take full advantage of the opportunities Mason offers, and to succeed in their academic and subsequent professional careers.

In my 25-year career teaching at Mason, I have been impressed by the university’s ability to recruit and admit students from a wide variety of backgrounds who are fully capable of making the most of a Mason education. Since I teach a 4/4 load of core composition classes, mostly English 302, which nearly every Mason student must take, I’ve met a broad cross-section of Mason students in my classrooms. The number of students I’ve encountered whose basic ability to complete the work needed to earn a degree struck me as doubtful is vanishingly small – fewer than I can number on the fingers of one hand.

I do, however, regularly encounter students who are struggling for non-academic reasons: most often the need to devote so many hours to paid work that they have insufficient time for their academic work (let alone sleep, exercise, and other activities necessary to sustain healthy life), but also significant family responsibilities, and, in some cases, physical and/or mental illness. I’ve also met a number of students who could and often do benefit from additional academic and/or professional mentoring because their families and/or communities include relatively few members with college degrees and/or experience in the sort of professional positions to which the students aspire.

The programs offered and/or facilitated by OACC and its predecessor offices address exactly those needs. We need such programs, and our students need opportunities to gather with other students and mentors with similar backgrounds and experiences, as well as to share experiences and ideas with those of very different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. Both kinds of activities are key to supporting Mason values as described in both the draft

resolution and the Mason Way report.

I hope the BOV will take steps to support the continuation of such programming, while also, perhaps, encouraging additional programming that offers opportunities for students, faculty, and staff with differing experiences and viewpoints to come together more often in conversation aimed at increasing mutual understanding.

Catherine E. Saunders  
Instructional Professor of English

Darbyshire Student  
Burge

The Board of Visitors, as defined by the GMU Administrative/Professional Faculty Handbook, "exercises its authority principally in policy making and oversight." This is reflected in the qualifications of the Board of Visitors: lawyers, business owners, real-estate developers, military advisors, and more. Only two voting members of the BOV have degrees related to Education. Only five voting members of the BOV have been teachers. These positions are not intended to make decisions on the curriculum within our classrooms or the design of our academic programming. Board members are to set the legal and monetary interests of the university for the purpose of growth and development via policy. You are here to provide your relevant insights into the many successes you have in your respective fields so that the university may thrive. You are here as advisors, not educators. So, I must ask: Why are you taking it upon yourselves to restrict- against the recommendation of countless professors- the rights of our educators?

The GMU Faculty Handbook states that educators "...have primary responsibility for such academic matters as unit reorganization, the design of programs, development and alteration of the curriculum, standards for admission to programs, and requirements in the major.". It also states that faculty members have, "the right to unrestricted exposition of subjects (including controversial questions) within one's field and professional obligations, both on and off the campus, in a professionally responsible manner". Your inquiries into the validity of courses that do not align with certain member's viewpoints through requests to review curriculums - specifically those related to the Just Societies section of the Mason Core - is a violation of the rights of these educators and the policies that you are meant to uphold. The lack of adherence to the University's Document and Records Request Policy as well as the violation of University Policy 4002, which states that course materials, including syllabi, are owned by their creator (the faculty member) shows you are not primarily concerned with issues of policy as you are obligated to be. In order to review these courses (which is not your primary duty) you are breaking your own regulations in the acquiring of documents as well as the unlawful publishing of said documents in the BOV meeting postings for all open sessions.

But truly, what I want to know is this: how are your actions today with the proposed DEI resolution adhering to your obligations of policymaking and oversight? Why do you find it necessary to amend DEI policies on the basis of disallowing "race-based admissions" when this university has not engaged in such since 2007? Why do you find it necessary to disallow the "requirement of diversity statements" when no such requirement exists in the University's policies or faculty handbook? Why implement these policies now when you

have had numerous meetings regarding DEI over the past year and beyond where a policy like this could have been detailed if these areas were truly lacking clarity? Why not include such policies in the updated faculty handbooks in July 2024? Why now?

In combination with the actions of certain board members to threaten the academic freedoms of our educators, it seems to me that this resolution reflects a desire to adhere to the politicized whims of the current administration based upon the opinions of individual board members rather than a true interest in updating policy. I implore you to protect our long-held commitments to the freedoms of speech and expression that our namesake pioneered in the Virginia Declaration of Rights. If you believe in the freedoms of this university, the policies which you are meant to uphold, and your place as board members in the structures of checks and balances here at Mason, you will abide by the rules and regulations of your position and respect the authority of educators in their fields.

Griffin Crouch Student

I am a second-year George Mason student, and writing today to express my support for identity and accessibility based programs and offices at Mason. While definitions of these might be disagreed on, they provide invaluable services to students. Any approach to these that seeks to outright cut or uproot them first will only hurt students, and for programs already shutdown because of this like the BMSI, the right approach should be creating new programs that copy successful models rather than shutting something down based on warped and agenda-driven labels of 'exclusivity'. The focus should be on expanding services and making new ones before shutting anything down at all, and especially not shutting down programs that are having measurable and positive academic impacts on students.

Members of our Board of Visitors need to make a stronger effort to connect with diverse and broader students across Mason, and focus on fixing problems over pushing agendas. Making resolutions that cut first will hurt students, especially if Board members don't know the lived experiences of students with these programs or offices, such as George Mason's BIRT. Any votes that would impact student programs should wait, and be focused on expanding and improving, rather than dissolving, student support and opportunities. They also should not occur over the summer, to ensure that students are able to give their feedback about specific programs. Overall, George Mason thrives because of its diversity, it makes the University experience richer and more successful. Ensuring identity is a part of how we make a more inclusive and accessible campus is something we should not give up on.

Anonymous Student

Good afternoon. I am a first year African American student, so, what you're deciding today is going to actively affect my future. Rolling back DEI, the thing that keeps the institution of George Mason University going strong. This is the most diverse campus of Virginia and you're willing to throw it all away? Do better. Be better. For this generation and all the ones that come after.

Thank you.

Oakley Thomas Hill GMU Ph.D. Candidate & Graduate Lecturer

I believe George Mason University has an opportunity to authentically embody its historical values in a way that strengthens and unifies our community, and contribute to the growing coalition defending the American institutions that protect peace and foster civility. I propose that we defend DEI as a historically American enterprise whose roots go the very beginning of our national history.

For example, the bicameral legislature George Mason advocated (as well as the electoral college he did not advocate) are, in their very essence, DEI programs. They were institutionalized in part to prevent an urban majority from dominating a rural minority. They were institutions explicitly designed to foster electoral equity, diversity, and inclusion in the legislature. DEI is enshrined in America's founding document by men who, like the defenders of DEI today, had a healthy fear of majoritarian power and wanted to limit its most abusive expressions. The founders and contemporary DEI defenders may be concerned with different types of minorities, but they share a common concern with majoritarian power and its abuses.

Progressives and conservatives alike have a vested interest in preserving DEI programs, even if the latter has been slower to recognize this interest. The signers of the U.S. constitution understood the risks of non-inclusion, of creating a class of citizens who had no real say in their own society. The risk is destabilizing political violence, and they understood that risk because they themselves enacted political violence against the British Crown for their exclusion in the English system. "No taxation without representation" is nothing short of a call for inclusion within a governing structure. George Mason was a part of a DEI revolution. And that revolution is alive and well today in our efforts to protect our DEI traditions from an executive gone too far.

Today, George Mason University is amongst the most diverse and inclusive universities in the United States, and our commitment to the American DEI tradition has been anything but shallow. Together we have created a national, gender, racial, religious, ethnic, ideological, and political pluralism that is worth preserving. Our diversity has not been partisan as indicated by the names that mark our campus: Antonin Scalia as well as Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter; George Mason as well as Confucius. When it comes to this fight, we are not in the wrong, be it by progressive or conservative standards. The American tradition is on our side, as are the pluralistic values of progressives. We may disagree elsewhere, but here the true conservative and the true progressive are allied. If we are strategic in our messaging, we can appeal to the real values of conservatives and progressives alike, and do so in the defense of DEI. Whether our audience cares more about the dignity of the marginalized, the unity of society, or the stabilizing continuity of tradition, our prescription can be the preservation of DEI. Because of what we have accomplished together, because of our name and our brand, we can embody that message better than anyone.

A punitive executive branch forcing the nation to abide the values of a political party is a threat, but it is also an opportunity. If we capitulate, we may very well divide our community. If we innovate a new defense, we may very well constitute a unifying pattern for others to follow.

Briana Rachel Student  
Taylor

Hello, my name is Briana Taylor. I am a fourth-year doctoral candidate at the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution. I am concerned about tonight's vote for the University to scrub all DEI statements from the University. While an affirmative vote like this may express GMU's desire to the Trump administration to keep federal funding, you are sending a signal to marginalized students like me, to not feel safe. Scrubbing DEI from the University means that queer and disabled students like me, along with

other marginalized groups, may not receive services they need to feel safe on campus and succeed academically. The exclusion of DEI statements is also a statement to existing members of the campus community, as well as future members about how much the University values their presence and views on campus. As a top-tier university in the state of Virginia, we must take a stand for inclusivity and academic freedom. As a member of the Mason and Carter School community, I am proud to take a stand against the erasure of diversity and inclusion.