

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

**MINUTES**

Thursday, April 17, 2025

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** Rector Stimson, President Washington, Visitors: Reg Brown, Robert Pence, Caren Merrick

**I. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lindsey Burke at 10:01 a.m.**

Chairperson Burke informed the Committee that Visitor Rosen requested to participate remotely due to caregiver responsibilities, Visitor Hansen due to business commitments, and Visitor Cooper due to his principal residence being more than 60 miles from the meeting location. Citing the Board's Electronic Meeting Participation Policy, Chairperson Burke called for any objections. Hearing no objections their remote participation was **APPROVED**.

**II. Approval of Minutes (Action Item)**

Chairperson Burke called for any corrections to the minutes from the February 13, 2025 APDUC Committee Meeting. Hearing no corrections, the meeting minutes stood **APPROVED** as written.

**III. New Business**

**A. Provost's Update**

***James Antony – Provost and Executive Vice President***

Provost Antony delivered the Provost's Report, opening with excitement about the upcoming spring graduation, which will celebrate more than 6,200 graduates—an increase from the previous year. He announced the appointment of Cody Edwards as the permanent dean of the College of Science following a competitive national search. The provost highlighted key progress on several strategic priorities set earlier in the academic year, including communications, research and the budget model redesign. He also outlined three new initiatives launching this summer: an undergraduate learning supports committee; a committee to develop a blueprint for the future of doctoral, MFA, and postdoctoral education; and an academic landscape analysis to assess academic programs and potential areas of overlap with other universities in Northern Virginia. Provost Antony concluded his report by recognizing several award recipients, including prestigious external honors such as the Guggenheim Fellowship, and several internal awards including the Presidential Awards for Faculty

Excellence, Teaching Excellence Awards, OSCAR Excellence Awards, and the Peter N. Sterns Provost Scholar Athletes.

## **B. Faculty Senate Update and Proposed Revisions to the Faculty Handbook**

### ***Solon Simmons – President, Faculty Senate***

Faculty Senate President Simmons reviewed the changes to several academic policies that were approved this year by the faculty including academic policies 2.1.3, 2.12.3, 3.6.2, 2.8.5, and 2.11.2.2.

Chairperson Burke called for a **MOTION** to approve the changes to the Faculty Handbook; Visitor Meese **MOVED**; Visitor Olhausen **SECONDED**.

**MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

Yes – 6

Absent – Visitor Prowitt

## **C. Faculty Actions**

Provost Antony provided an overview of the Faculty Actions.

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

1. Promotion and/or Tenure
2. Conferral of Emeritus/Emerita Status
3. Elections of New Tenured Faculty
4. Special Rank Change

**MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

Yes – 6

Absent – Visitor Prowitt

## **D. Announcements**

Announcements were acknowledged for the Committee's benefit.

## **E. Committee Name Change**

Visitor Burke proposed to change the name of the Academic Programs, Diversity, and University Community Committee to the Academic Affairs Committee and to recommend to the full board that the necessary procedural steps be taken in accordance with the Board bylaws.

## **F. DEI Discussion**

### **1. Required Diversity Statements and Hiring**

Provost Antony clarified that George Mason University has never required diversity statements for faculty hiring and that, while some departments have chosen to include them, it was never a university-wide mandate. Although there has been no prior policy prohibiting their use, the majority of searches at George Mason have not involved such statements. Moving forward, departments are advised not to include diversity statements in job postings. This guidance has been shared and will be included in hiring training sessions. Additionally, diversity statements are not part of the Promotion and Tenure process, which is governed by the Faculty Handbook.

### **2. Resolution Regarding the Presidential Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Committee members engaged in a thoughtful and wide-ranging discussion on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in response to a proposed resolution. Visitor Burke opened the conversation by emphasizing the university's obligation to comply with federal civil rights laws and protect funding by ensuring George Mason University fosters an environment grounded in equal treatment, merit, and academic excellence. University leaders highlighted the relevance of "The Mason Way" report—a comprehensive overview of George Mason's DEI approach that reflects the institution's distinctive approach to inclusion and compliance. Faculty, staff, and student representatives emphasized that George Mason's interpretation of DEI is rooted in principles of belonging, fairness, and respect for diverse perspectives—framing it differently than some national narratives. Visitor Burke invited Professor Caplan to share his perspective. Professor Caplan voiced concerns about potential long-term impacts of DEI initiatives on academic freedom and expression of diverse viewpoints. Dr. Sharnnia Artis then provided an overview of actions already underway to align the university's practices with current legal guidance. These include the restructuring of offices, realignment of positions, and comprehensive program reviews to ensure continued compliance. The discussion concluded with a shared interest in ongoing dialogue and collaboration, and a recognition of the opportunity to thoughtfully refine the proposed resolution in a way that reflects George Mason Universities values and legal responsibilities.

#### **IV. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Parnell  
Secretary Pro Tem