

Approved 12/5/2024
BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Executive Committee Meeting
Thursday, September 26, 2024
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201)

MINUTES

PRESENT: Rector Cully Stimson, Secretary Armand Alacbay, and Visitor Farnaz Thompson.

ABSENT: Vice Rector Meese, Visitor Bob Pence.

ALSO, PRESENT: Gregory Washington, President; Anne Gentry, University Counsel; Gesele Durham, Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning; Susan Woodruff, Director of Accreditation and State Authorization; and Scott Nichols, Interim Secretary pro tem.

I. Call to Order

Rector Stimson called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

A. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for May 2, 2024 (ACTION ITEM)

Rector Stimson called for any corrections to the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for May 2, 2024 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 welcomed the meeting attendees and noted he would reserve his comments for the afternoon's full board meeting.

IV. President's Comments

Rector Stimson recognized President Washington to offer comments. President Washington indicated he would reserve his comments until the afternoon's full board meeting.

V. Board Self-Evaluation (Gesele Durham & Susan Woodruff)

Rector Stimson recognized Gesele Durham & Susan Woodruff to brief the committee on the board self-evaluation process. Gesele Durham provided an overview of the objectives of the self-evaluation, as well as the survey process and timeline (presentation in meeting materials). Rector Stimson expressed his approval of the process.

VI. Closed Session

- A. Honorary Degrees and Special Awards (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.11)
- B. Public Safety (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.19)
- C. Consultation with Legal Counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.7)
- D. Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.8)
- E. Personnel Matter (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.1)

Secretary Alacbay **MOVED** that the committee go into Closed Session under the provisions of Section 2.2-3711.A.11, for Honorary Degrees and Special Awards, namely proposed recipients for such degrees or awards;

Section 2.2-3711.A.19 for Public Safety Matters regarding campus safety; Section 2.2-3711.A.7, for Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation including briefings on:

Jeong v. GMU et al.
Morrison v. GMU et al.
Wright v. GMU et al.
Zahabi v. GMU et al.

Section 2.2-3711.A1 for a Personnel Matter, to discuss the performance of specific university personnel; and Section 2.2-3711.A.8 for Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice concerning the aforementioned items and pending investigations. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Thompson. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

Following closed session, Secretary Alacbay **MOVED** that the committee go back into public session and further moved that by roll call vote the committee 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 committee 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 COMMITTEE MEMBERS RESPONDED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Absent: Vice Rector Meese and Visitor Pence

VII. Adjournment

Rector Stimson called for any additional business to come before the board. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting.

Prepared by:
Scott Nichols
Interim Secretary pro tem

Approved 12/5/2024

George Mason University Board of Visitors

Development Committee Meeting

September 26, 2024

8:45 a.m. –9:15 a.m.

Merten Hall, Room 1201, Hazel Conference Room

Attendees: Chairman Jon Peterson, Visitor Reginald “Reg” Brown, Visitor Robert “Bob” Pence

Absent: Vice Chair Anjan Chimaladinne, Visitor Dolly Oberoi

Guests: Rector Charles “Cully” Stimson, Visitor Lindsey M. Burke; Visitor Armand Alacbay; Visitor Marc Short; President Gregory Washington; Vice President Trishana E. Bowden; Solon Simmons, full board faculty representative; Bijan Jabbari, faculty representative; Susan Allen, faculty representative; William “Will” Gautney, staff liaison; Maria A. Romero Cuesta, student representative; Carolyn Faith Hoffman, student representative; Nicole Pozinsky, secretary pro-tem; and guest speakers Sumeet Shrivastava and Keith Renshaw.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Jon Peterson called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m.

Chairman Peterson reviewed the meeting procedures for FOIA requirements and then proceeded with the order of business. He noted that a pre-meeting was had and that it is exciting to see the progress that is being made. He said that word is getting out about what George Mason is all about. He said that Trishana Bowden is doing a great job of reaching out, and it helps if board members contribute as well—board participation is definitely encouraged.

**IV. Approval of Development Committee Meeting Minutes from May 2, 2024
(ACTION ITEM)**

Chairman Peterson confirmed the committee meeting had reached a quorum. He called for any changes or edits to the May 2, 2024, meeting minutes. There being no corrections, the minutes were **APPROVED AS WRITTEN**.

Peterson called to the podium Sumeet Shrivastava, the newly appointed Chair of the George Mason University Foundation (Foundation), who delivered an update regarding recent Foundation and Board of Trustees activities.

IIV. New Business

A. GMUF Chair Update – Sumeet Shrivastava

New Trustees and Officers

Effective July 1, 2024, the foundation warmly welcomed a new slate of officers and three new Trustees to the Board:

- Chair Sumeet Shrivastava
- Vice Chair Jenny Herrera
- Secretary Brian Drummond
- Treasurer Nadeem Butler
- New Trustee Michael Gallagher
- New Trustee Craig Havenner
- New Dean representative Ajay Vinzé, Costello College of Business

Board Operations

The foundation's fall board cycle began on September 17, 2024. The committees will be covering the following through October:

The Advancement and University Priorities Committee will continue its efforts to engage the trustee group as advocates for George Mason. Trustee engagement plans are being developed in support of the campaign and fiscal year goals for Advancement. This will leverage networks and areas of expertise to introduce new prospects and steward donors.

The Audit Committee will review the fiscal year 2024 Audited Financial Statements with Cherry Bekaert, the Foundation's external auditors. As of June 30, 2024, the foundation had approximately \$499 million in total assets, \$91 million in total liabilities, and net assets of \$408 million. Academic institutional support expended for George Mason programs and activities exceeded \$128 million for the fiscal year.

The Finance and Real Estate Committee will review the fiscal 2024 year-end budget results and the reserve balances framework, as well as real estate project operations and current related activity.

The Investment Committee met last week and reviewed the fiscal year 2024 investment results. Shrivastava was happy to report that the endowment returned a positive 15.45 percent and the market value at June 30 was \$222 million. The endowment paid out \$6 million in support for university students, faculty, and programs.

The Nominating and Governance Committee will review the upcoming nominations process and timeline. The committee continues to focus on areas of need to best support the Foundation's mission.

Trustee Engagement

Shrivastava shared that Trustee Delbert Parks, vice president and site executive at Micron Technology, is a model of strong engagement with the university and noted that Micron provides opportunities to students, engages alumni, and supports the university philanthropically. In January, Parks organized a Micron night at a men's basketball game, hosting over 30 alumni who work for Micron. As the university's neighbor in Prince William County, the company also supports the arts through the Hylton Performing Arts Center and gala. Parks attended the EIP graduation in the spring and spoke to the Foundation's Board of Trustees at their June meeting about the importance of visibility as a trustee. Micron has been a champion of EIP and Parks was moved by the program and the students. In the year ahead, Micron will continue these efforts and more. They look to bring George Mason to Micron for their employees who are alumni and/or parents of students and graduates.

In the upcoming year, engagement plans are being developed for all trustees to leverage expertise and opportunities in support of the Mason Now campaign. Initial areas of focus will include artificial intelligence; Military, Veterans, and Families Initiatives; and Fuse/TTIP. The board will also continue to emphasize the need for student support efforts around scholarships, mental health programs, diversity, and housing and food insecurity. Shrivastava concluded by stating that he looks forward to sharing success stories of trustees making an impact in the coming year.

Chairman Peterson thanked Shrivastava and opened the floor for questions. With no questions raised, Peterson highlighted George Mason's efforts to connect students with local businesses for internships. He mentioned a recent presentation he attended, which he believes represents a promising direction for businesses to strengthen their workforce. By hiring from within George Mason University, companies can retain talent within the region and in our economy. He anticipates an increase in companies offering internships, particularly to George Mason students, and extended thanks to Micron.

Peterson called on Trishana E. Bowden, vice president of the Office of University Advancement and Alumni Relations. Bowden provided an update.

B. University Advancement and Alumni Relations – Vice President Trishana E. Bowden

Vice President Bowden began by stating that an official report had been submitted for review in advance of the meeting to ensure that the remainder of the time could be focused on the Military, Veterans, and Families Initiative (MVFI). She expressed gratitude to the board members for their personal support and highlighted that the university's FY24 goal was met at \$102 million. She emphasized the importance of

the board's leadership and support in Mason Now campaign efforts; the campaign had reached \$472 million toward the \$1 billion goal. Bowden stated that the university's concerted efforts will continue ahead and that she appreciates the opportunities that the board can provide to connect with their network to have the opportunity to talk about what a great institution George Mason is.

Bowden introduced Keith Renshaw, senior associate provost for undergraduate education and director of the Military, Veterans, and Families Initiative, and noted that Advancement has been partnering with Renshaw since 2019 on this effort.

Before Renshaw spoke, Visitor Brown addressed the board and stated that he read the Development Committee report and wanted to note a gift from the previous speaker. He thanked GMUF Chair Shrivastava for his continued personal leadership by example.

C. The Military, Veterans, and Families Initiative (MVFI) – Keith Renshaw, Senior Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education

Renshaw narrated the following series of PowerPoint slides (thirteen slides)

1. Military, Veterans, and Families (MVFI) – TITLE SLIDE
2. Agenda
3. Background
4. Student Population
5. Curricular Trainings and Programs
6. Research
7. Community Services and Programs
8. New Initiatives Supported by MVFI
9. Opportunity
10. Examples of Possible Initiatives and Outcomes
11. Building a National Model through Philanthropy
12. Building a National Model through Philanthropy contd'
13. Thank You – FINAL SLIDE

Renshaw emphasized that if we can establish philanthropic support, we can build out the endowment that is needed to enhance the initiative in the student success pillar, build out partnerships, develop more programs that can support research at George Mason as well as support service members and veterans' family members at George Mason and our surrounding community while further connecting with our strong alumni base. Renshaw invited the visitors or anyone they know to join us in this effort.

Visitor Brown raised a question: "You said 'more' several times. What kind of numbers are we talking about?"

Renshaw replied that Visitors could be of assistance in helping to identify what is needed to move the initiative forward. He stated that they have a preliminary budget

and are looking at if they are able to have a named center. He believed that number is around \$10 million. Something along those lines. If anybody has their checkbook with them that would be fine.

Visitor Brown asked if \$10 million would be to get the center started or if he was suggesting a figure of \$10 million endowed and that's all the initiative would need.

Bowden stated that \$10 million would establish the center—possibly to name the center. Depending on the dedicated dollars for current use versus endowment, \$10 million would start to fund many of the programs identified by Renshaw.

President Washington clarified that if we were to endow that total amount, it would spin off about \$400,000 in perpetuity every year.

Chairman Peterson asked if MVFI had initial dollars, how would the initiative prioritize what the first, second, and third dollars go towards?

Renshaw stated that the first thing they would need to do would be to “buy” dedicated time to support the initiative, so they need an executive director: “I have been running this for a handful of years on the side, and then as I moved into my role in the provost’s office, we were able to secure a very small amount of funds to support the efforts. That would be priority number one. To help us organize, to continue to promote out to the committee, and help us on the fundraising side.”

Chairman Peterson asked if a strategic plan has been put in place and how far along the initiative is in that process.

Renshaw explained that the strategic plan was developed by faculty members who are not in the business field. He acknowledged that while the plan is comprehensive, they would benefit from additional input. Renshaw invited the visitors to assist in refining the infrastructure business model, emphasizing that although the MVFI leadership believes it is well-constructed, external perspectives would be valuable.

He also mentioned the need for connections to potential investors who might be interested in supporting this initiative. Renshaw extended an invitation to anyone present who might be motivated to invest, expressing a strong desire for such involvement to enhance the project’s success.

Chairman Peterson inquired if there were any questions from any other members.

Visitor Pence expressed his gratitude to Renshaw for his presentation. He shared that, although he never served in the American military, his father-in-law did for many years. Pence highlighted his involvement with the Gary Sinise Foundation, which builds smart homes for severely injured soldiers, emphasizing that every injury, whether physical or mental, is severe.

Pence elaborated on the foundation's activities, mentioning their efforts to respond to tragedies by collaborating with institutions and cities. He provided an example of a soldier in the Middle East who was at risk of losing his home to foreclosure. The Gary Sinise Foundation intervened by purchasing the house, saving it from creditors, and giving it to the university, which allowed the soldier to use it.

Pence stated that he would like to spend some time one-on-one to discuss this matter further, particularly in terms of housing for student veterans.

In conclusion, Pence reiterated his interest in the initiative and looked forward to further discussions.

Chairman Peterson emphasized the significance of the region's high concentration of military personnel, suggesting that it is worth investigating opportunities to support them. He noted that attracting everyone and providing assistance where possible is almost a patriotic duty.

Chairman Peterson asked for additional comments or questions.

Student representative Carolyn Faith Hoffman shared insights about the Health Services Research PhD program she is part of, highlighting its strong partnership with military members. She noted that active military members complete their PhD in three years and then work at the Uniformed Services University in Bethesda, Maryland. Hoffman emphasized the presence of multiple cohort members who are either active military or veterans, and she emphasized the excellence of the partnership. She also stressed the need for more support for these individuals.

Visitor Brown responded and agreed that there is a big opportunity involving defense contractors. He stated that engaging with defense players in the region is crucial and emphasized the need for a concrete proposal. Brown suggested enlisting an intern or someone from the business school to take it on as a project that aligns with the current foundation priorities. He mentioned key defense contractors such as Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, and Boeing, noting that a \$10 million project would be attractive to them. He stressed the importance of bringing them something that is more fully formed and that it should be an easy meeting to get.

Renshaw concluded the discussion by acknowledging that they already have some elements in place but would greatly benefit from additional perspectives and input.

IIIV. Old Business

Chairman Peterson called for any topics of "Old Business" to be discussed. There were none.

Approved 12/5/2024

IVV. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Chairman Peterson adjourned the meeting at 9:16 a.m.

Approved 11/19/2024

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
AUDIT, RISK, AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE BOARD OF VISITORS**

**September 26, 2024
MINUTES**

PRESENT: Chair Oberoi, Vice Chair Alacbay, Visitors Brown, Marcus, and Meese.

ABSENT: Visitor Blackman.

ALSO PRESENT: Rector Stimson; Visitors Burke, Pence, Peterson, Short, and Thompson; President Washington; Provost and Executive Vice President Antony; Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer Artis; Undergraduate Student Representative Cuesta; Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration Dickenson; Staff Senate Chair Gautney; Special Advisor Healy; Vice President of Finance Heinle; Graduate Student Representative Hoffman; Vice President and Chief Information Officer Madison; Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Development Marshall; Associate University Counsel Schlam; Faculty Senate President Simmons; Assistant Vice President and Deputy Chief Information Officer Spann; Executive Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff Walsh; Interim Senior Vice President and Chief Risk Officer Zobel; Chief Audit and Compliance Officer Dittmeier; and Associate Vice President for Institutional Compliance Lacovara.

I. Chair Oberoi called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

Chair Oberoi called for any corrections to the minutes of the May 2, 2024 Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee meeting. Hearing none, the **MINUTES STOOD APPROVED AS WRITTEN.**

III New Business

A. Enterprise Risk Management Program Update

Dr. Zobel reviewed with the Committee highlights related to the enterprise risk management program.

She reminded the Committee the program's purpose is to identify risks; plan, facilitate, and oversee implementation of response strategies; and provide communication to the President and the Committee. Since the prior Committee meeting, the program has worked with senior leaders and

AUDIT, RISK, AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

September 26, 2024

Page 2

risk owners to facilitate development of mitigation action plans for each of the ten enterprise risks. Ongoing monitoring of internal and external changes in the risk environment has also continued. Funding resources, competition, and cybersecurity remain the high-priority risks for the university. Risk drivers and mitigation actions for these risks were discussed with the Committee. The Committee discussed with management the factors influencing the trends in risk levels for the high priority risks, including the competitive environment for students and for high-performing faculty.

IV. Reports

Chair Oberoi asked for the highlights of the reports received by the Committee to be discussed:

Mr. Dittmeier reported that Derek Butler joined George Mason earlier in September as Deputy University Auditor, succeeding Wendy Watkins who retired recently. Mr. Butler has more than 30 years of internal audit leadership experience, most recently as Chief Auditor of Washington Gas Light, and holds professional certifications as a Certified Internal Auditor and Certified Information Systems Auditor. The portfolio of audit work is being transitioned to Mr. Butler's leadership. Mr. Dittmeier also highlighted that there has been a recent uptick of allegation reports which require investigation; he stated that it was too early to tell whether the uptick represents any systemic concern.

Mr. Lacovara noted there were no significant compliance reports, external reviews, or other matters since the prior Committee meeting. Assessment work is continuing and Institutional Compliance is working with several groups to develop response strategies and action plans related to the Institutional Compliance and Ethics enterprise risk, including assessing the Code of Ethics as well as processes for developing policies, surfacing concerns, and addressing instances of non-compliance.

Dr. Madison described recent IT Risk and Control Infrastructure Program accomplishments which include automation of security awareness training enforcement through password resets, and the establishment and use of domain councils to facilitate governance in George Mason's distributed environment.

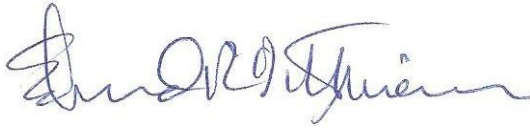
VI. Adjournment

Chair Oberoi adjourned the meeting at 9:50 a.m.

AUDIT, RISK, AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

September 26, 2024

Page 3

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward R. Dittmeier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Edward R. Dittmeier

Secretary pro tem

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF VISITORS
Research Committee Meeting**

**MINUTES
September 26, 2024**

Present: Visitors: Nancy Prowitt, Chair; Lindsey Burke, Farnaz Thompson, Faculty Representatives; Tara Chaplin, Solon Simmons. Staff Liaison: William Gautney; Student Representatives; Maria Cuesta, Carolyn Faith Hoffman

Absent: Visitors: Horace Blackman, Anjan Chimaladinne.

Also Present: President Gregory Washington; Rector Cully Stimson, Visitors: Armand Alacbay, Dolly Oberoi, Jon Peterson, Marc Short.

Meeting was called to order by Chair Nancy Prowitt at 10:15 a.m.

I. Approval of Minutes (ACTION ITEM)

It was **MOVED** by Visitor Prowitt to approve the minutes from the February 22, 2024 Research Committee Meeting. Approval of the February 22 meeting minutes was approved.

II. New Business

A. Office of Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact Update

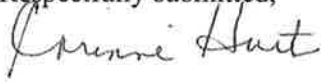
Dr. Andre Marshall – Vice President for Research, Innovation & Economic Impact reported the following highlights:

- Vice President Marshall provided an overview of research funding since February 2024.
- He then outlined the core research activity areas of scholarship, partnership, and translation by sharing how the university and its faculty are succeeding throughout all the colleges.
- Vice President Marshall provided an overview of recent happenings in the three research support areas of infrastructure, services, and culture—noting that George Mason was chosen to serve as mission control for the \$19M Landolt NASA Space Mission, as well as highlighting the opening of the Visualization and Virtual Reality Lab.
- He shared that Amarda Shehu has been named the university's inaugural Vice President and Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer, one of the first in the country at institutes of higher education.
- He also noted that the university is in the process of hiring an Assistant Vice President of Research Security and a Director of Research Computing.

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 10:32 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Corinne Hurst".

Corinne Hurst

Research Committee Secretary Pro Tem

DRAFT
BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Full Board Meeting
Thursday, September 26, 2024
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201)

MINUTES

PRESENT: Rector Cully Stimson, Vice Rector Mike Meese, Secretary Armand Alacbay, Visitors Horace Blackman, Reginald Brown, Lindsey Burke, Ken Marcus, Dolly Oberoi, Bob Pence, Jon Peterson, Nancy Prowitt, Nina Rees (virtual), Jeff Rosen, Marc Short, and Farnaz Thompson.

ABSENT: Visitor Anjan Chimaladinne.

ALSO, PRESENT: Solon Simmons, Faculty Representative; Maria Cuesta, Undergraduate Student Representative; Carolyn Faith Hoffman, Graduate Student Representative; Will Gautney, Staff Liaison; Gregory Washington, President; Ken Walsh, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff; Jim Antony, Provost and Executive Vice President; Deb Dickenson, Executive Vice President for Administration and Finance; Anne Gentry, University Counsel; Gesele Durham, Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning; Susan Woodruff, Director of Accreditation and State Authorization; David Farris, Assistant Vice President for Risk, Safety, and Resilience; David Burge, Vice President for Enrollment Management; Marvin Lewis, Assistant Vice President and Director of Intercollegiate Athletics; Rose Pascarell, Vice President for University Life; Shannon Jordan, Associate Dean and Chief Housing Officer; 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 Visitor Rees requested to participate remotely due to a personal matter, more specifically the need to be in New York City on work travel.

Citing the board's Electronic Meeting Participation policy, Rector Stimson **MOVED** to approve Visitor Rees's electronic participation in the meeting. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Pence. The **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE** with Visitor Blackman and Vice Rector Meese absent for the vote.

II. Approval of Minutes

- A. Planning Conference Minutes for July 25, 2024 (**ACTION ITEM**)
- B. Annual Meeting Minutes for July 26, 2024 (**ACTION ITEM**)

Rector Stimson called for any corrections to the Full Board Meeting Minutes for July 25, 2024 and July 26, 2024 that were provided for review in the board meeting materials. Visitors Thompson, Marcus, and Rees all requested that the minutes for July 26, 2024 be amended to reflect that they abstained from voting on the motion specific to President Washington's evaluation, performance bonus, and base salary increase. All three visitors noted their limited time on the board as the reason for their abstentions. Rector Stimson called for any other corrections to the minutes. Hearing no further corrections, the meeting minutes stood **APPROVED AS CORRECTED**.

III. Rector's Report

- A. View from the Bridge

Rector Stimson noted several items:

- Thanked President Washington and his staff, and Sharon Cullen and her staff for their assistance as he began his term as rector. He also extended appreciation to members of the board for sharing their insights and input.

- He plans to meet with all university deans twice per year, having met with several already.
- He and Vice Rector Meese met with President Washington to discuss and refine the president's performance goals, which will be voted on later in the meeting.
- Noted the feedback received by the community about West Campus and the proposed cricket initiative. As a result of that feedback, the board will take a tour of West Campus as part of today's board meeting.
- A number of colleges and universities have adopted a position of institutional neutrality when it comes to geopolitical matters, with some adopting the University of Chicago Kalven Committee *Report on the University's Role in Political and Social Action*, and others crafting similar principles. The APDUC committee will study the issue as it pertains to Mason and bring its findings and recommendations to the full board at a future meeting. Visitor Brown asked about the inclusion of faculty in the study of the Kalven Report. Rector Stimson confirmed that the APDUC committee would engage faculty and other stakeholders in the process to receive their input.
- In order to allow for sufficient time for board committees to adequately discuss topics, the chairperson for each committee is afforded the option of holding committee meetings between the regularly scheduled full board meetings.
- Reminded the board about registering for the SCHEV Board of Visitors Orientation if members wished to attend.

B. Board Self-Evaluation (Gesele Durham & Susan Woodruff)

Rector Stimson recognized Gesele Durham & Susan Woodruff to brief the board on the board self-evaluation process. Gesele Durham provided an overview of the objectives of the self-evaluation, as well as the survey process and timeline (presentation in meeting materials).

C. Kalven Report (Armand Alacbay & Dolly Oberoi)

Rector Stimson recognized Visitor Oberoi and Secretary Alacbay to present on the Kalven Report. Secretary Alacbay provided an overview of the origins of the report. Visitor Oberoi provided some additional context for the report's application at Mason, noting that while professors, students, and others at the university should be able to express their views, those should not necessarily be the views of the university. Discussion ensued:

- Visitor Brown spoke to whether the process should be faculty-driven.
- Dr. Simmons posed the question of how certain portions of the Kalven Report are applicable to private institutions vs. public institutions. He further sought confirmation that the principles are designed to restrict certain types of statements from university senior leadership, but ultimately protect the speech of faculty, and added there would likely be great interest from the faculty on the matter. Rector Stimson emphasized that process is important, and faculty need an appropriate forum to engage in the process. He also added public institutions have adopted the Kalven principles, and that the issue should be discussed thoroughly without pre-judgement.
- Ms. Hoffman shared her experience taking a course at another institution that featured open discussion about the history of the Israeli-Palestine conflict, featuring perspectives from all sides, noting that it is the university's duty to teach these subjects in a non-biased way. Rector Stimson noted that the intent of adopting a stance of neutrality was not to influence what professors can teach, but to determine the university's role as an institution when it comes to making statements about a topic.
- Ms. Cuesta asked if adopting these principles would apply to university policies, citing recent policy that utilizes language from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Rector Stimson responded that Mason is still bound by state law in its policies, which is how the language in question came to be used. He reiterated that the intent of the Kalven principles would be applicable to public statements issued by the university as an institution.
- President Washington emphasized that the primary group this would be applicable to is Mason's senior leadership, especially him. He also encouraged others to read the Kalven Report in its entirety, because it also outlines scenarios when it is appropriate for the university to make official statements.

- Rector Stimson then confirmed with the board that the matter should be taken up by the APDUC committee to allow for a full conversation with all relevant stakeholders.

D. FY2025 Presidential Goals (ACTION ITEM)

Rector Stimson reminded the board that President Washington's FY2025 goals were discussed at the July 26 board meeting and tabled for additional consideration and would be voted on at today's meeting. He said that following additional review, revisions, and conversations between Dr. Washington and board leadership and members, they had come to an agreement. He offered President Washington the opportunity to speak to the matter, who referred to the revised goals provided in the meeting materials.

Rector Stimson then **MOVED** that the board approve the president's 2024-2025 goals as they are outlined in the meeting materials. The motion was **SECONDED** by Secretary Alacbay. **MOTION CARRIED BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 14

Absent: Blackman, Chimaladinne

Rector Stimson called the meeting in recess at 11:31 a.m. advising that it would reconvene at 12:15 p.m.

IV. Lunch Recess

V. Reconvene

Rector Stimson called the meeting back to order at 12:15 p.m.

VI. President's Report

While referring to the presentation located in the meeting materials, Dr. Washington highlighted the following in his report:

- Mason is experiencing a strong year to date, with the highest enrollment ever, the smartest and most diverse student body, improvement among many rankings, the most efficient on a per-student cost basis, and a successful leadership team.
- There are still numerous challenges facing Mason, including funding resources, competition, and cybersecurity.
- Over the coming year, Mason leadership will consider options for developing and renovating facilities on Fairfax's West Campus and the main campus. This development is needed in order to update aging facilities, enhance campus perception and community building, and to improve cost of living for potential faculty and staff by offering affordable housing and quality-of-life amenities. The area surrounding campus maintains a high cost of housing that is out of reach for new faculty and staff. Mason leadership will participate in extensive community engagement in the development of these plans.

Discussion ensued:

- Vice Rector Meese asked if the timeline for West Campus development included seeking input from other Virginia institutions and SCHEV. President Washington responded that input had already been acquired, including from institutions in the DC metro area.
- Ms. Cuesta inquired about student input on the process and the impact that partnerships with private companies would have on the cost of housing. President Washington responded that students and faculty would be an integral part of the groups involved in the process, and that this type of project allows for a re-evaluation of the cost of housing. Ms. Cuesta also inquired of the number of proposed students the new housing could accommodate, with President Washington indicating 2,000 beds.
- Ms. Hoffman expressed her concern of the potential costs associated with private partnerships, and noted her support of faculty housing within the Mason community amongst students.

- Dr. Simmons noted his support of on-campus faculty housing, expressing the positive impact it has on the sense of community.
- Mr. Gautney expressed his hope that green space on campus would be conserved in the process.
- Visitor Peterson expressed his view that Mason's housing and its pricing needs to be more attractive to potential students to incentivize them living on campus, including central gathering areas for students to socialize.
- Visitor Pence noted a desire to see a plan with a more synergy between housing and student facility development. He also stated that deferred maintenance costs get worse the longer the maintenance is deferred.
- Visitor Burke inquired about a space study to see if there is any consolidation that could allow for more housing. President Washington confirmed that the university was in the midst of a comprehensive space study.

VII. Emergency Operations Plan Adoption (ACTION ITEM)

Rector Stimson called on David Farris who provided an overview of the proposed Emergency Operations Plan that was provided in the meeting materials. Visitor Blackman noted the increased presence of cybersecurity threats and the depth of their impacts, and the importance of an incident-response mechanism for those types of threats. Dr. Farris stated that Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) recognized those risks and is working closely with ITS on its response procedures. Visitor Brown inquired if the emergency management team had the resources and staffing it needed, to which Dr. Farris responded in the affirmative.

Rector Stimson then **MOVED** to approve the Emergency Operations Plan as provided in the meeting materials. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Prowitt. **MOTION CARRIED BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 15

Absent: Visitor Chimaladinne

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Development Committee

Visitor Peterson provided a report on the Development Committee meeting, highlighting the presentations the committee received: an update from the GMUF Chair Sumeet Shrivastava, an update from GMUF President Trishana Bowden, and a presentation on the Military, Veterans, & Families Initiative by Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education Keith Renshaw.

B. Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee

Visitor Oberoi provided a report on the Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee meeting, highlighting the items discussed: an Enterprise Risk Management update by Interim Senior Vice President and Chief Risk Officer Julie Zobel, and a review of the audit, compliance and information technology status reports.

C. Research Committee

Visitor Prowitt provided a report on the Research Committee meeting, noting the presentation provided by Andre Marshall, Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact, which provided updates on research at Mason and noting that Amarda Shehu had been named the first Chief AI Officer at Mason. Visitor Rosen asked what was involved in the designation of an AI officer. Dr. Marshall responded that the role would provide strategic leadership in coursework and academics, research, and AI partnerships, as well as serving as a connection with the Information Technology department on any necessary infrastructure.

D. Academic Programs, Diversity, and University Community (APDUC) Committee

1. Program Actions

a. New Degree Programs

- i. MS Behavior Analysis (CEHD) (**ACTION ITEM**)
- ii. PhD in Cyber Security Engineering (CEC) (**ACTION ITEM**)

2. Faculty Actions

a. Conferral of Emeritus/Emerita Status (**ACTION ITEM**)

Visitor Burke provided a report on the September 17 APDUC Committee meeting, highlighting the presentations the committee received: a report and Just Societies update by James Antony, Provost and Executive Vice President; an admissions and enrollment report by David Burge, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Alan Byrd, Dean of Admissions.

Visitor Burke then **MOVED** that the board approve the following action items, en bloc, as they are provided in the meeting materials:

- New Degree Program: MS Behavior Analysis
- New Degree Program: PhD in Cyber Security Engineering
- Conferral of Emeritus/Emerita Status

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

Yes: 14

Absent: Visitors Chimaladinne and Oberoi

3. Just Societies Update

Visitor Burke called on Provost Antony to brief the full board on the Just Societies update. He advised that the university is currently pausing on any implementation of a Just Societies requirement, and will continue to do so. He further noted that an assessment was ongoing of the learning outcomes of the offered courses, and that the results of that assessment were expected at the end of the year. Vice Rector Meese asked how many students were currently enrolled in courses flagged for Just Societies. Provost Antony responded that there were 22 courses which consist of 77 sections, with 2,900 students enrolled.

4. Enrollment Update

Visitor Burke called on David Burge to brief the board on enrollment. Dr. Burge directed the board's attention to the items noted in his presentation (provided in the meeting materials), where he highlighted Mason's current enrollment numbers, the nationwide enrollment trends and the "enrollment cliff", and the SCHEV 6-year enrollment plans. Discussion ensued:

- Visitor Peterson asked about enrollment trends in states north and south of Virginia. Dr. Burge responded that generally northern states are showing larger declines in enrollment, while southern states are showing smaller declines, and that Mason is adapting its regional admissions representatives.
- Visitor Rosen noted that the 6-year Enrollment Plan anticipates enrollment growth of almost 10% in the next 5 years. He inquired if that necessitates corollary adjustments in facilities, faculty, and resources.
- Visitor Brown questioned whether the level of enrollment growth presented was wise given Mason's resources and levels of funding from Richmond. President Washington responded that growth was part of how Mason is trying to gain resources to compensate for lower funding from the commonwealth. Vice Rector Meese asked if there were corresponding increases in funding from the legislature when Mason is shown to be growing, to which Dr. Burge responded that demonstrating growth does not guarantee resources. Visitor Prowitt noted that Mason is the recipient of funds which are contingent on Mason growing enrollment, with Dr. Burge confirming the Tech Talent Investment Program (TTIP) is one of those programs that Mason receives hundreds of millions of dollars from. Visitor Peterson asked if SCHEV was in agreement with the growth Mason projected. Dr. Burge responded that while there is not

uniform agreement, the projections were approved by SCHEV, with SCHEV staff focusing primarily on viability.

IX. Campus Facilities Tour

Board members, Mason staff, and members of the public embarked on a bus tour of campus facilities, consisting of the following:

- Shannon Jordan pointed out residence halls and explained their styles, capacities, and types of students they housed. She noted that Mason currently has a 1-year residency requirement for freshman students, with exemptions for students that live within 45 miles of campus.
- Members of the board disembarked from the bus to view the interior of a President’s Park residence hall. Inside, members viewed examples of rooms, bathrooms, and the central common area. She cited a lack of community space and a desire to invest in freshman housing.
- The bus tour continued, with Ken Walsh pointing out several facilities including Lot K, the Cabrera Global Center, and EagleBank Arena. He referred to parking lots as “land banks”, noting that over time, as parking lots are replaced with buildings, structured parking is typically built as replacement.
- Rose Pascarell pointed out the site of the Student Activities and Engagement Building, which will offer space for student events and is slated to open in March 2025.
- Marvin Lewis pointed out the Academic Resource Center, which supports academic needs for varsity athletes. He noted that student athletes indicate this facility as having the greatest need for updates. He then said that Mason is building a 30,000 square foot basketball and academic performance center, with 8,000 square feet of academic space and 22,000 square feet of basketball operations space.
- Members of the board disembarked from the bus to view the interior of the Field House. Mr. Lewis spoke to how crowded the space is when there is inclement weather and athletes need to practice inside, which causes scheduling challenges. Additionally, the central practice area is not air conditioned, which is difficult in the summer. He closed by adding that the condition of the facility makes it difficult for athlete recruitment.
- The bus tour continued, where Mr. Lewis pointed out the soccer practice facilities, which Major League Soccer has utilized and invested \$250,000 to improve the fields. Dr. Walsh and Ms. Pascarell described the West Campus parking lots, practice fields 3, 4, and 5, and tennis courts. Mr. Lewis described the softball field. He then described Spuhler Field (baseball), which does not have lighting, concessions, restrooms, and the press box is below standards for Division I events. He emphasized the need to renovate the field to incentivize fans to attend baseball games.

X. Committee Reports Continued

A. Finance and Land Use Committee

1. Campus Facilities Tour Debrief

The board returned to Merten Hall and Rector Stimson recognized Visitor Pence to lead the discussion on the tour:

- Visitor Pence called on members of the board to consider the needs of the campus facilities they had just viewed and provide their feedback and ideas for improvement and replacement. He also called on members to choose a project at Mason and help with fundraising within their communities for said project, noting that the full extent of projects can likely not be paid for solely through only internal or state funds. He then emphasized the need to update the baseball facilities, noting it does not need to be accomplished at once, but the updates could be made over time.
- Visitor Brown posed the question of having students in the College of Business do research on marketing possibilities with the athletic facilities, to include sponsorship opportunities.
- Secretary Alacbay expressed that the Fairfax campus does not seem to reflect a campus for 40,000 students, it lacks the “academic village” feel of a small university, as well as the public transportation infrastructure of an urban campus. Dr. Walsh noted the Fairfax CUE bus system, which Mason utilizes

for public transportation. Secretary Alacbay further noted the cost of living in the Fairfax region as a reason for students and faculty being spread out geographically. Dr. Walsh noted that particularly newer faculty members have long commutes to campus, and pointed to the planned faculty housing as a means of building community, recruiting, and retaining faculty.

- Referencing the Field House, Ms. Hoffmann noted the challenges with athletes from different sports practicing within close proximity in a shared indoor space.

2. Student Fees

Deb Dickenson provided a brief update on the discussion of student fees during the September 17 Finance & Land Use Committee meeting. She noted that the administration would strive to be more proactive and transparent with students about fees, including those for courses and programs. Discussion ensued:

- Visitor Pence reiterated that the topic of student fees is important for many students because it impacts them personally.
- Ms. Cuesta expressed that the Student Government is proposing a structure where fees remain constant each year from the time a student is admitted so that the amount owed each year is known in advance and students do not need to seek additional funding sources to account for fee increases.
- Citing course fees, Ms. Hoffmann noted disparities among which departments cover course fees for students.

3. Financial Matters

- a. Affirmation of State Six Year Operating Plan (**ACTION ITEM**)
- b. University Debt Policy Update (**ACTION ITEM**)
- c. University Investment Policy Update (**ACTION ITEM**)
- d. Revocation of Prior Cricket Authorization (**ACTION ITEM**)

Visitor Pence stated that at the September 17 committee meeting, the Finance and Land Use Committee approved four action items to bring to the full board. He then **MOVED** to approve the following items, en bloc, as they were provided in the meeting materials:

- University Debt Policy Updates
- University Investment Policy Updates
- Affirmation of State Six-Year Operating Plan
- Revocation of Prior Cricket Authorization

The motion was **SECONDED** by Vice Rector Meese. Rector Stimson called for discussion:

- Visitor Prowitt expressed her gratitude for the campus tour and that she looked forward to board members taking responsibility to move those items forward.

MOTION CARRIED BY ROLL CALL VOTE.

Yes: 15

Absent: Chimaladinne

Rector Stimson recognized Visitor Pence for additional comments. Referencing health challenges that he experienced during the September 17 Finance and Land Use Committee meeting, Visitor Pence expressed his gratitude for the concern expressed by those present and for the prompt assistance of the medical team. Changing topics, he then stated that at a previous board meeting, he had remarked that a passage in the meeting materials stated the university should “tell students what to think”, and that upon challenge from others in the meeting, he said he would find the passage. He continued that to date, he had reviewed several meeting books and had not found the passage, and so he offered his “mea culpa”, adding that he took the matter very seriously, as he reads all of the meeting materials.

XI. Closed Session

- A. Honorary Degrees and Special Awards (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.11)
- B. Public Safety (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.19)
- C. Consultation with Legal Counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.7)
- D. Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.8)
- E. Personnel Matter (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.1)

Vice Rector Meese **MOVED** that the board go into Closed Session under the provisions of Section 2.2-3711.A.11, for Honorary Degrees and Special Awards, namely proposed recipients for such degrees or awards; Section 2.2-3711.A.19 for Public Safety Matters regarding campus safety; Section 2.2-3711.A.7, for Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation including briefings on:

Jeong v. GMU
Morrison v. GMU et al.
Wright v. GMU et al.
Zahabi v. GMU et al.

Section 2.2-3711.A1 for a Personnel Matter, to discuss the performance of specific university personnel; and Section 2.2-3711.A.8 for Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice concerning the aforementioned items and pending investigations. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Blackman. **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 committee 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, Marcus, Oberoi, Peterson, Rees, and Short.

Rector Stimson **MOVED** to approve the awarding of honorary degrees to the individuals presented and discussed in closed session for that purpose. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Pence. Rector Stimson opened the floor for discussion; there was none. **MOTION CARRIED BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 9

Absent: Visitors Brown, Burke, Chimaladinne, Oberoi, Peterson, Rees, and Short.

XII. Adjournment

Rector Stimson called for any additional business to come before the board. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting.

Prepared by:
Scott Nichols
Interim Secretary pro tem

| Full Name: | Mason Affiliation | Written Comment |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Sumaiya Hamdani | Faculty | I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by George Mason University. I am deeply distressed by the rising tide of racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism in North America and around the world, and I firmly believe that combating antisemitism and all other forms of racism, bigotry, and discrimination is an essential duty of public officials, universities, and colleges. However, the IHRA definition broadens the definition of antisemitism – properly understood as hostility toward, hatred of, and/or discrimination against Jews – to encompass legitimate criticism of and opposition to Israel, its policies, and/or Zionism as Israel’s official state ideology. This poses a direct threat to free speech and academic freedom. |
| Anonymous | Faculty | I join my voice to the demands that the university rescind its latest revision of UP 1201. First of all, the university must engage in robust discourse with the Mason community when making such substantive policy changes, and that has yet to happen. Secondly, the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism included in UP 1201 threatens my free speech rights and academic freedom as a professor here at Mason. One of the original drafters of the IHRA definition, Kenneth Stern, publicly warned that the definition could be used as a tool to diminish academic freedom, stating in a March, 2024 interview with The Chronicle of Higher Education, “...whatever you do on these issues, do not do something that is going to diminish academic freedom. Don’t do anything that sacrifices it.” |
| Anonymous | Faculty | I write to demand that the university rescind its latest revision of UP 1201. First, because the university must engage in robust discourse with the Mason community when making such substantive policy changes; and second, because the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism included in UP 1201 threatens my free speech rights and academic freedom. Kenneth Stern, one of the original drafters of the IHRA definition, has publicly warned about usage of the definition as a tool to diminish academic freedom. In a March 27, 2024 interview with The Chronicle of Higher Education, he stated that “...whatever you do on these issues, do not do something that is going to diminish academic freedom. Don’t do anything that sacrifices it.” |
| James H. Finkelstein | Professor Emeritus of Public Policy | <p>I am Jim Finkelstein, Professor Emeritus of Public Policy. During my 27 years at Mason, I served in a variety of academic administrative positions, including as the first associate dean in what is now the College of Education and Human Development, the founding associate director for the Prince William Institute—now the Science and Technology Campus, and the founding vice dean for the School of Public Policy which is now part of the Schar School. I believe I would qualify as an "expert witness" regarding the financial overviews presented to Don Scott, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates, in response to his August 16, 2024, letter to the BOV.</p> <p>The Antonin Scalia Law School's financial overview is cause for alarm. From AY 2020 through the projected current academic year, the school has generated nearly a \$43.7M deficit. This includes \$4.1M in loans the school has never paid back to the university and \$1.3M in reserves from FY 2020.</p> <p>In its best year, Scalia Law expenses were 136% of revenues—last year, this was 151%. This year, expenses are projected to exceed revenues by an astonishing 218%. No other academic unit of the university comes close.</p> <p>Based on the financial overview, Scalia's Law's root problem is that it significantly discounts its tuition. This year, these discounts will total nearly \$10.2M. On a net basis, the school offers more discounts than it collects in tuition its students pay. In context, the average discount based on Fall 2024 enrollments would be approximately \$23,500. This would rank Scalia Law 12th, based on the most recent U.S. News "15 Law Schools that Offer the Most Tuition Help" within that group.</p> <p>The solution is not to forgive the previous \$4.1M in loans and then supplement the school's budget by \$10M to cover its tuition discounts. Not only would this be unfair to other units that have managed their budgets and enrollments more responsibly, but it would also reward the dean and his leadership team for mismanaging the school's finances. Any BOV member who is in business knows that they could not stay open with an operating loss of \$13.2M on \$11.2M in revenues. An auditor would be required to issue a warning statement that the company is at risk as a going concern.</p> <p>I acknowledge that Scalia Law is among the highest-ranked programs at Mason. That is a source of pride for the university, regardless of one's views. However, the school has also generated more controversy over the years than any other unit of Mason, often casting a cloud over the entire university. In just the past few days, the Joshua Wright case is back in the news, as are the stories about Judge Aileen Cannon attending lavish retreats sponsored by Scalia Law. This is not a case where any headline is better than none.</p> <p>From the BOV materials, it is unclear if Item Number III.E.iii: Law School Autonomy is about giving Scalia Law more autonomy. If so, this would be a mistake. If anything, the school must be subject to greater oversight by the Provost. The BOV should not interfere, especially given the close ties of several BOV members to Scalia Law, the Federalist Society, and the school's benefactors.</p> <p>I urge the BOV to allow the President and Provost to hold Scalia Law's leadership accountable, including changing leadership if necessary. It is not the place of the BOV to second-guess the administration on management issues.</p> |
| Mariah | Faculty | gmu should immediately end all contracts or any relationships with Israel, which is committing genocide. Pro Palestinian speech and activism should not be suppressed, and by engaging in actions that suppress Pro Palestinian, anti-war, anti-genocide, and pro peace voices then this university is complicit in human rights violations. End all partnerships with a genocidal, settler colonial, apartheid regime (Israel) that is massacring thousands of people en masse, through bombings (that have beheaded people including children and there are true images and videos that show it and have not been manipulated or tampered wit) , forced starvation images that show it, forced displacement, and the systematic and intentional de extrication of hospitals, schools, mosques, churches, cultural institution, and anything designed to sustain and promote life. Shame on george mason university and your disgusting support for a genocidal, settler colonial and apartheid regime that wants to exterminate an entire group of people—Palestinians, and now the Lebanese people. history will not judge and is not going to judge you favorably. |
| Anonymous | Faculty | <p>As a Jewish faculty member at Mason – the grandchild of Holocaust survivors, the child of an Israeli citizen – I am horrified by the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism as University policy under Policy 1201. It is overtly racist to say that “all Jews believe X,” and offensive and harmful to incorporate this view into university policies and practices by conflating criticism of Israel’s actions with antisemitism. The idea that I am now not allowed to criticize the actions of a country to which I have family ties is both absurd and totalitarian. It would be no less absurd and totalitarian if I did not have such ties, or if I were Palestinian.</p> <p>Diversity of viewpoints and freedom of expression are supposed to be key values of Mason and Policy 1201 contravenes these values just as it contravenes the First Amendment. To enforce this policy would go against everything that the university is supposed to stand for as well opening us up to significant legal liability since it is so obviously unconstitutional. It is an embarrassment to us all that a public university has adopted this policy, and I hope that this error of judgement can be swiftly addressed.</p> |
| Alexander Monea | Faculty | I write to oppose the university's adoption of the IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism as policy. According to the ACLU in a letter to Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, “Adopting the IHRA working definition of antisemitism would lead to more censorship on campus, and change the nature of universities, which exist to promote the free flow of information and marketplace of ideas. While we wholly support efforts to fight discrimination and harassment through Title VI complaints and investigations, we strongly caution against adopting the IHRA definition, or any definition of discrimination that threatens to censor or penalize political speech laying at the heart of the First Amendment.” I demand that the university rescind its latest revision of UP 1201, first, because the university must engage in robust discourse with the Mason community when making such substantive policy changes, and second, because the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism included in UP 1201 threatens my free speech rights and academic freedom. Kenneth Stern, one of the original drafters of the IHRA definition, has publicly warned about usage of the definition as a tool to diminish academic freedom. In a March 27, 2024 interview with The Chronicle of Higher Education, he stated that “...whatever you do on these issues, do not do something that is going to diminish academic freedom. Don’t do anything that sacrifices it.” It should be noted that Chapter 471 of the 2023 Virginia Acts of Assembly is an "uncodified" act. As the language makes clear, the IHRA definition is "non-legally binding" and should be used "exclusively as a tool and guide for training, education, recognizing, and combating antisemitic hate crimes or discrimination and for tracking and reporting antisemitic incidents in the Commonwealth." It is not intended to be used as the basis of a claim of discrimination and has no place in UP 1201. |

| Full Name: | Mason Affiliation | Written Comment |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Noname Anonymous | Community Member | In March of 2022, the AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure issued a statement entitled, "Legislative Threats to Academic Freedom: Redefinitions of Antisemitism and Racism" in which they condemned legislative attempts to restrict instruction about Israel and racism. According to the AAUP, fifty-six scholars of antisemitism, Jewish history, and the Israel-Palestine conflict have called the IHRA working definition and examples "highly problematic and controversial," noting that it: 1) would allow for equating criticism of the policies of the state of Israel with antisemitism, 2) privileges the political interests of the state of Israel, and 3) suppresses discussion and activism on behalf of Palestinian rights. Given such concerns, I oppose the recent revisions of UP 1201 to include the IHRA working definition. We must enact policies that foster and protect free speech and academic freedom, not policies that repress those rights. |
| Evelyn Rose Johnston | Student | I know that there will be many comments discussing your adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism. I wanted to voice my support for the measure. I'm the president and founder of George Mason's chapter of Students Supporting Israel, and I wanted to thank you on behalf of all the people I represent. Having a clear, comprehensive definition of antisemitism that includes discrimination against Jewish community institutions and places of worship is vital - just today (9/24/2024) Chabad, a Jewish organization on campus that generally does not operate in the political sphere at all, hosted an event on Wilkins Plaza in center campus. The goal was to spread Jewish joy and light in this time of darkness, and before the High Holidays. A student decided it would be a good idea to run by yelling 'free Palestine' over and over again - there were no Israeli flags or symbols displayed, and it was a religious/cultural gathering. At several schools across the country there have been protests against Hillel, a relatively moderate Jewish religious and cultural organization. There have been vandalized synagogues, protests outside Jewish schools, and personal harassment - how many times at George Mason University has someone ran by a Muslim gathering of any kind yelling 'Am Yisrael Chai'? That would be considered harassment right off the bat and would be treated as such. I know students who have been harmed, threatened, and stalked on this campus - and now the other side of a political issue (that is taking place in a country the size of New Jersey over halfway around the world) was enough to make poor, misguided people on this campus protest that the Jewish students (not Zionist, just Jewish) are being given a modicum of protection by the school they pay to go to. You are doing good work and the Jewish community of George Mason University thanks you for it. No matter how many people protest, no matter how many angry comments you receive, know that you are doing the Jewish students a great kindness by providing this protection. We have been afraid for too long. We have been harassed for too long. We stand tall and we are grateful you stand with us. |
| Anonymous | Community Member | I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by George Mason University. The Association of Jewish Studies states: "Criticism of Israel is not equivalent to antisemitism. This principle is agreed upon by all three of the major definitions of antisemitism, and it is accepted by the vast majority of Jewish Studies faculty and numerous official statements by major Jewish organizations." Therefore, point number 7 of the IHRA's definition of antisemitism is problematic in that it conflates criticism of Israel and its formation with antisemitism, which is not true. |
| Amanda Eisenhour | Student | I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by George Mason University. I am deeply distressed by the rising tide of racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism in North America and around the world, and I firmly believe that combating antisemitism and all other forms of racism, bigotry, and discrimination is an essential duty of public officials, universities, and colleges. However, the IHRA definition broadens the definition of antisemitism – properly understood as hostility toward, hatred of, and/or discrimination against Jews – to encompass legitimate criticism of and opposition to Israel, its policies, and/or Zionism as Israel's official state ideology. This poses a direct threat to free speech and academic freedom |
| Amanda Eisenhour | Student | I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by George Mason University. I am deeply distressed by the rising tide of racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism in North America and around the world, and I firmly believe that combating antisemitism and all other forms of racism, bigotry, and discrimination is an essential duty of public officials, universities, and colleges. However, the IHRA definition broadens the definition of antisemitism – properly understood as hostility toward, hatred of, and/or discrimination against Jews – to encompass legitimate criticism of and opposition to Israel, its policies, and/or Zionism as Israel's official state ideology. This poses a direct threat to free speech and academic freedom |
| Toria Somerville | Community Member | I'm writing to oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by George Mason University. I am deeply distressed by the rising tide of racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism in North America and around the world, and I firmly believe that combating antisemitism and all other forms of racism, bigotry, and discrimination is an essential duty of public officials, universities, and colleges. However, the IHRA definition broadens the definition of antisemitism – properly understood as hostility toward, hatred of, and/or discrimination against Jews – to encompass legitimate criticism of and opposition to Israel, its policies, and/or Zionism as Israel's official state ideology. This poses a direct threat to free speech and academic freedom. |
| Jae Abu | Student | I very much feel that George Mason University is in call for a Latine Affinity Space so that many Latine student and staff can connect and find support within a community. I am currently a freshman here at George Mason and can already tell that the Latine community is quite large, but we do not have a space to formally or informally meet and connect with others. Community is very important to an efficient, educational, thriving, developing and progressing institution which is what I believe George Mason is, especially since many other schools already have one. So I very much want to advocate and pray that George Mason will also progress and create a Latine Affinity Space for the community and the Latine students and staff. |
| Denilson Alcides Elias Escobar | Student | Establish an affinity space for Latinos at George Mason University. |
| Jody Samuels | Alumni and Community Member | It is imperative GMU adopts the IRHA definition of antisemitism. The definition offers a clear and widely recognized standard for identifying antisemitism which helps universities address incidents consistently. Mason emphasizes values such as equality, respect, and justice. Adopting the IHRA definition aligns with these principles by actively combatting discrimination. Adopting the IHRA definition can enhance a university's commitment to combating all forms of hate and discrimination. This will improve the academic environment for everyone. |
| Tona Sengupta | Student | This is Tona Sengupta, I am writing to you because I am in opposition to implementing the bill IHRA. This is because the bill will silence Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim voices in this campus and this is because Antisemitism will be weaponized in order to silence Anti-Zionist Jews and Palestinians so that there will be no freedom of speech and thought in a higher education setting when discussing Zionism, Colonialism, and Human Rights. Palestinians in Gaza are facing Genocide and the students across all semesters have been protesting genocide in a peaceful manner and yet they were called antisemitic because they spoke up against Genocide and have protested against genocide and occupation of Palestine. I have personally met with students not only in George Mason but also students and young people from other universities where they had lost family members, children, mothers, and fathers in Gaza. I hope that the board of Visitors rejects this bill because it stifles academic freedom in discussing those topics in an independently. I hope that you have the ability to make the right decision in this manner. Best, Tona |
| Abby | Student | As students we are calling GMU to uphold its commitments of justice and equity while fostering an environment where all voices can be heard, respected, and protected, explicitly stating Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim Students. Let the BOV and administration know that the IHRA definition undermines GMU's commitment to DEI by stifling open discussions about issues like Zionism, colonialism, and human rights, which are crucial for a truly inclusive environment. We are calling on each one of you to take a minute to leave a written comment to the GMU BOV to express your sentiment towards this new suppressive policy. Please take some time to personalize and share what you'd like for the BOV to know. Remember, the Board of Visitors are the ones who guide and institute the policy at GMU. |

| Full Name: | Mason Affiliation | Written Comment |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--|
| Lucas Cedeno Villegas | Student | <p>Good morning, buenos días. My name is Lucas, and I am a Puerto Rican sophomore living on campus. My cultural identity is rooted in Afro-Caribbean and Latine heritage. I am actively involved in several organizations representing these communities, serving on the executive boards of the Latin Student Association, the Caribbean Student Association, and The Águilas Mentoring Program, a Latino-based mentorship RSO. Additionally, I am engaged with Black organizations, including the Black Student Alliance and Collegiate Black Men.</p> <p>Through my involvement, I've noticed a significant gap in the availability of dedicated spaces for the Latine community at Mason. Currently, our gatherings are largely limited to events organized by student clubs, whereas other communities have access to lounges such as the Robeson Room, the African Studies Department in JC, and the Women and Gender Studies Office. Even spaces like prayer rooms for Muslim students have become common hangout spots. I often study and socialize in the Robeson Room, where I have always felt welcome, seen, and at home. This sense of belonging has made me feel more comfortable at the university, and such a supportive environment is closely linked to student success.</p> <p>Many Latine students, particularly commuters, face challenges staying involved on campus. They frequently find themselves waiting long hours after class with no designated area to relax or socialize before events, which diminishes their campus experience.</p> <p>It's crucial to create spaces for the Latine community that foster connection, collaboration, and cultural exchange. Mason is a minority-serving institution, and the Latine population, both in this area and at this school, is significant. Other Virginia schools, such as Virginia Tech, already offer spaces like El Centro for their Latine students. We should strive to be competitive and have similar support systems for Latinos at Mason. Establishing an affinity space would not only increase visibility for our community but also promote inclusivity and support for all students at the university.</p> <p>Thank you for considering this important matter. I look forward to discussing how we can work together to create a more inclusive environment.</p> |
| Shulie Madnick | Student | I fully support the adoption of IHRA's definition of antisemitism. The Jewish student, faculty, and administration body at GMU must be protected, and adopting IHRA's definition will secure it. Thank you. |
| Anonymous | Community Member | I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by George Mason University. I am deeply distressed by the rising tide of racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism in North America and around the world, and I firmly believe that combating antisemitism and all other forms of racism, bigotry, and discrimination is an essential duty of public officials, universities, and colleges. However, the IHRA definition broadens the definition of antisemitism – properly understood as hostility toward, hatred of, and/or discrimination against Jews – to encompass legitimate criticism of and opposition to Israel, its policies, and/or Zionism as Israel's official state ideology. This poses a direct threat to free speech and academic freedom. |
| Lucas Cedeno Villegas | Student | <p>Good morning, buenos días. My name is Lucas, and I am a Puerto Rican sophomore living on campus. My cultural identity is rooted in Afro-Caribbean and Latine heritage. I am actively involved in several organizations representing these communities, serving on the executive boards of the Latin Student Association, the Caribbean Student Association, and The Águilas Mentoring Program, a Latino-based mentorship RSO. Additionally, I am engaged with Black organizations, including the Black Student Alliance and Collegiate Black Men.</p> <p>Through my involvement, I've noticed a significant gap in the availability of dedicated spaces for the Latine community at Mason. Currently, our gatherings are largely limited to events organized by student clubs, whereas other communities have access to lounges such as the Robeson Room, the African Studies Department in JC, and the Women and Gender Studies Office. Even spaces like prayer rooms for Muslim students have become common hangout spots. I often study and socialize in the Robeson Room, where I have always felt welcome, seen, and at home. This sense of belonging has made me feel more comfortable at the university, and such a supportive environment is closely linked to student success.</p> <p>Many Latine students, particularly commuters, face challenges staying involved on campus. They frequently find themselves waiting long hours after class with no designated area to relax or socialize before events, which diminishes their campus experience.</p> <p>It's crucial to create spaces for the Latine community that foster connection, collaboration, and cultural exchange. Mason is a minority-serving institution, and the Latine population, both in this area and at this school, is significant. Other Virginia schools, such as Virginia Tech, already offer spaces like El Centro for their Latine students. We should strive to be competitive and have similar support systems for Latinos at Mason. Establishing an affinity space would not only increase visibility for our community but also promote inclusivity and support for all students at the university.</p> <p>Thank you for considering this important matter. I look forward to discussing how we can work together to create a more inclusive environment.</p> |
| anonymous | Faculty | <p>I write to oppose the university's adoption of the IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism as policy. I agree with points recently made by the GMU chapter of the AAUP, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. According to the ACLU in a letter to Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, "Adopting the IHRA working definition of antisemitism would lead to more censorship on campus, and change the nature of universities, which exist to promote the free flow of information and marketplace of ideas. While we wholly support efforts to fight discrimination and harassment through Title VI complaints and investigations, we strongly caution against adopting the IHRA definition, or any definition of discrimination that threatens to censor or penalize political speech laying at the heart of the First Amendment." 2. I write to demand that the university rescind its latest revision of UP 1201, first, because the university must engage in robust discourse with the Mason community when making such substantive policy changes, and second, because the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism included in UP 1201 threatens my free speech rights and academic freedom. Kenneth Stern, one of the original drafters of the IHRA definition, has publicly warned about usage of the definition as a tool to diminish academic freedom. In a March 27, 2024 interview with The Chronicle of Higher Education, he stated that "...whatever you do on these issues, do not do something that is going to diminish academic freedom. Don't do anything that sacrifices it." 3. I write to oppose the adoption of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism in UP 1201. It should be noted that Chapter 471 of the 2023 Virginia Acts of Assembly is an "uncodified" act. As the language makes clear, the IHRA definition is "non-legally binding" and should be used "exclusively as a tool and guide for training, education, recognizing, and combating antisemitic hate crimes or discrimination and for tracking and reporting antisemitic incidents in the Commonwealth." It is not intended to be used as the basis of a claim of discrimination and has no place in UP 1201. 4. In March of 2022, the AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure issued a statement entitled, "Legislative Threats to Academic Freedom: Redefinitions of Antisemitism and Racism" in which they condemned legislative attempts to restrict instruction about Israel and racism. According to the AAUP, fifty-six scholars of antisemitism, Jewish history, and the Israel-Palestine conflict have called the IHRA working definition and examples "highly problematic and controversial," noting that it: 1) would allow for equating criticism of the policies of the state of Israel with antisemitism, 2) privileges the political interests of the state of Israel, and 3) suppresses discussion and activism on behalf of Palestinian rights. Given such concerns, I oppose the recent revisions of UP 1201 to include the IHRA working definition. We must enact policies that foster and protect free speech and academic freedom, not policies that repress those rights. 5. End the repression of free speech and academic freedom now! Oppose the IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism as university policy. It is not intended to be used as the basis of a claim of discrimination and has no place in UP 1201. |

| Full Name: | Mason Affiliation | Written Comment |
|----------------------|------------------------|--|
| Mariam Creedon | Alumna | As an alumna holding multiple degrees from GMU, I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by the University. I am deeply distressed by the rising tide of racism, xenophobia, anti-Islamic rhetoric, and antisemitism in North America and around the world, and I firmly believe that combating antisemitism and all other forms of racism, bigotry, and discrimination is an essential duty of public officials, universities, and colleges. However, the proposed IHRA definition broadens the definition of antisemitism – properly understood as hostility toward, hatred of, and/or discrimination against Jews – to encompass legitimate criticism of and opposition to Israel, its policies, and/or Zionism as Israel's official state ideology. This poses a direct threat to free speech and academic freedom and does not (a) protect groups it alleges to uphold; and (b) encourage thoughtful and challenging conversations about other people and beliefs that is critical to educational institutions. |
| Javier Leon Martinez | Student | THERES no place for Latine students on campus? Aguilas, MMP, LSA, ALPFA, and more... why? |
| skibidi jihadi | Community Member | I think ihra at gmU needs to be banned completely it is not halal at all I hate those zionists and their mothers child killing blood thirsty smelly 🤢🇺🇸🇸🇮🇲🇵🇸🇲. |
| ali bing bong | dog | I disagree with ihra being allowed at gmU they are genocidal companies and I dont agree with them being there at all. if you likes kids dying you will allow it to happen. SHAME ON GMU AND ALE SAUD LANALLAH ALA QOUM AZ ZALIMEEN |
| Ralph Casnave IV | Student | There's no department nor space for latinos and latinas. The feeling of unity is comforting to our community. |
| Izait Bautista Bones | Student | Having a space for the Latino community to come together share and celebrate would be a beneficiary addition for the Latino community and the George Mason community as well. There are already other colleges with smaller Latino populations that see greater student evolvment as a result of having a center for students to come together. Having an additional center will allow those commuting and busy students who cannot connect with the Latino community through events be able to go to an established center to meet other of similar culture and be able to experience what they desire. A designated area will be beneficial to share the culture and experience with others, to provide a safe space that feels familiar and welcoming to students, and improve George Mason for all alike. |
| Jewish Student | Student | <p>While SJP is flooding this link, I thought I'd take the opportunity to put into writing that many Jewish students plan to avoid campus this upcoming October 7th. There is a pattern of anti-Israel efforts taking place behind the back of the Jewish communities and none so obvious as student government voting on BDS practices without any real notice to those affected, the students. I am pretty plugged in on Jewish life on campus and we were blindsided by them springing this vote upon the council with little time for outside opinion.</p> <p>More over, I have not been able to express myself in class or feel comfortable relating my experiences at Mason. For example, I have an intersectionality assignment with a partner and am hesitant to speak to my American-Jewish experience, let alone that I have been to Israel (something that I have not spoken about in class for a year.) One action that GMU took that I did appreciate was removing stickers with messaging like "all resistance is justified" from campus signage and street lamps, as those are easily interpreted as advocating for violence.</p> <p>Even as someone who supports a Jewish state but am critical of the current regime, there is no room currently on campus for discussion and nuance. I truly do NOT feel that Mason has a handle on these issues and my concerns only grow as we approach the terrible anniversary of this past year in the Middle East. I say all this while knowing other colleges have seen far bigger and more destructive demonstrations, but pray that things do not escalate at Mason for everyone's safety and security.</p> |
| Katherine Trejo | Staff | It would be extremely helpful in a time where DEI is under attack to continue seeing a commitment from Mason's Board of Visitors to safeguard what little spaces we have left and to create more intentional spaces. It has always been the case that we do not have a Latine affinity space on campus for us to connect with our students and colleagues with ease. As a former student and now staff, I see how pivotal it is for students to have easy access to a cultural space that supports and celebrates their identity. I urge the BOV to take these statements into consideration and hope to see the day a Latine cultural center is built to support our system impacted, minority students that often do not know where to start searching for guidance. |
| Elizabeth Mayes | Community Member | I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by George Mason University. I am deeply distressed by the rising tide of racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism in North America and around the world, and I firmly believe that combating antisemitism and all other forms of racism, bigotry, and discrimination is an essential duty of public officials, universities, and colleges. However, the IHRA definition broadens the definition of antisemitism – properly understood as hostility toward, hatred of, and/or discrimination against Jews – to encompass legitimate criticism of and opposition to Israel, its policies, and/or Zionism as Israel's official state ideology. This poses a direct threat to free speech and academic freedom. |
| Colin McAulay | Student | I am Colin McAulay, the Student Body Vice-President and the Student Representative on the Student Fee Committee. As student fees are a topic of discussion on the agenda I wanted to give some input regarding the topic. The University is moving in the right direction when it comes to transparency and representation with the student fee. As of the last few months they've created the position for a student on the Mandatory Student Fee committee. They have released high-level breakdowns of the allocation which were not as available in the past. The Student Government would like to work with the University to create a detailed breakdown of the student fee allocation that is easily accessible and easily digestible. We'd also like to continue to strengthen student representation in the student fee allocation process. Thank you to the board for being open to these requests. |
| Savannah Martincic | Staff | I am incredibly concerned about the potential adoption of the IHRA's definition of anti-Semitism. I worry that it will stifle important conversations about the genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank and criticism of the Israeli government. Some of the examples could be used for political goals unrelated to tackling antisemitism and to stigmatize and silence critics of Israel and Zionism. In a 2022 statement, 128 scholars, including leading Jewish academics at Israeli, European, UK, and US universities, said the definition has been "hijacked to protect the Israeli government from international criticism" (Aljazeera, Will the US adopt IHRA's anti-Semitism definition? What's the controversy?). Former UN Special Rapporteur on racism, E Tendayi Achiume, said it was being "wielded to prevent or suppress legitimate criticisms of the State of Israel, a State that must, like any other in the United Nations system, be accountable for human rights violations that it perpetrates" (Aljazeera, Will the US adopt IHRA's anti-Semitism definition? What's the controversy?). As a university that greatly values free speech, and is celebrated for doing so, accepting IHRA's definition would be a big mistake and could have a "chilling effect" on the university's core value of freedom of speech. |
| Symone White | Community Member | I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by George Mason University. I am deeply distressed by the rising tide of racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism in North America and around the world, and I firmly believe that combating antisemitism and all other forms of racism, bigotry, and discrimination is an essential duty of public officials, universities, and colleges. However, the IHRA definition broadens the definition of antisemitism – properly understood as hostility toward, hatred of, and/or discrimination against Jews – to encompass legitimate criticism of and opposition to Israel, its policies, and/or Zionism as Israel's official state ideology. This poses a direct threat to free speech and academic freedom. The Association for Jewish Studies has issued a statement saying that "The goal of a university is to facilitate—not shut down—conversations, including ones about Israel, Zionism, anti-Zionism, and Palestinian rights." THE IHRA definition of antisemitism shuts down fruitful and educational conversation. Jewish community is as diverse as any other in their beliefs and ideologies and to suggest they are monolithic runs counter to our university's standards and viewpoints. |
| Hanaan Kazia | Student | The adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism poses an infringement on GMU's core value of protection of freedom of thought, threatening to silence critical discourse and marginalize vital voices, especially those advocating for Palestinian rights. Combating antisemitism is a vital problem, but the IHRA definition only attempts to shield the state of Israel from valid criticism by invoking such an important issue. |
| Nunya Business | Community Member | I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism at GMU. The right to oppose Zionism, colonialism, racism, authoritarianism, and abuses by state regimes is critical to protecting academic freedom and promoting social justice--values that President Washington espoused in his email of August 28, 2024, in which he states that Mason "uphold[s] First Amendment rights while maintaining a safe, welcoming and undisrupted living and learning environment," and that "this moment also calls on each of us to exercise civility and observe rules of engagement that will ensure everyone's voice can be heard and everyone feels safe and welcome here." |
| Shelley D. Wong | Associate Professor En | <p>I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by George Mason University. As a faculty of education emerita professor with a specialization in Multilingual Multicultural Education, I am deeply distressed by the rising tide of racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, anti-Arab and Islamophobia in North America and around the world, and I firmly believe that combating antisemitism and all other forms of racism, bigotry, and discrimination is an essential duty of educators. I was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Birzeit University and researched first hand the effects of occupation for education in the West Bank. The IHRA definition broadens the definition of antisemitism – properly understood as hostility toward, hatred of, and/or discrimination against Jews – to encompass legitimate criticism of and opposition to Israel, its policies, and/or Zionism as Israel's official state ideology. This poses a direct threat to free speech and academic freedom.</p> <p>In light of these concerns, I urge the Board of Visitors to reconsider the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism as outlined in Policy 1201. I request that the Board:</p> <p>Abandon the IHRA definition and instead consider a more nuanced definition, such as the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, which better protects academic freedom while addressing antisemitism.</p> <p>Hold an open forum for faculty, students, and staff to discuss the policy's implications for free speech and academic freedom. The university community deserves transparency regarding how the policy will be implemented and the consequences of potential violations.</p> |

| Full Name: | Mason Affiliation | Written Comment |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| | | Establish regular dialogue with representatives from relevant university groups, such as the Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine (FSJP) and the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), to ensure that the university remains committed to shared governance and upholds free speech. |
| Anonymous | Doctoral Candidate an Dear BOV, | <p>I am seriously concerned regarding the recent adoption of Policy 1201 and its implications for free speech and academic freedom at George Mason University. The policy's endorsement of the IHRA definition of antisemitism risks conflating legitimate critique of Israel with antisemitism, thereby suppressing free expression, particularly in discussions related to Palestine.</p> <p>While antisemitism is a real and harmful issue that must be addressed, the IHRA's definition conflates criticism of Israeli state policies with antisemitism, creating a chilling effect on the university's commitment to free speech. As a scholar I know that academic discourse routinely critiques global instances of colonialism, racism, and state violence, yet, under the IHRA guidelines, any criticism of Israeli state policies, including accusations of racism or apartheid, could be classified as antisemitic. This policy does not only affect critics of Israel but also endangers anti-Zionist Jewish students and faculty, as it wrongly equates anti-Zionism with antisemitism. Jewish Voice for Peace similarly argues that the IHRA definition misrepresents antisemitism and undermines meaningful protections against it by erasing the distinctions between Jewish identity, Zionism, and the State of Israel.</p> <p>George Mason University has a responsibility to uphold its core values of academic freedom and free expression, especially in the face of external political pressures. As a Palestinian American, I trust that the Board will act to protect these principles and ensure that our campus remains a place for open and robust debate with freedom of expression and speech to be protected and safeguarded.</p> |
| Anonymous Anonymous | Faculty | I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by George Mason University. The Association for Jewish Studies has issued a statement saying that "The goal of a university is to facilitate—not shut down—conversations, including ones about Israel, Zionism, anti-Zionism, and Palestinian rights." THE IHRA definition of antisemitism shuts down fruitful and educational conversation. Jewish community is as diverse as any other in their beliefs and ideologies and to suggest they are monolithic runs counter to our university's standards and viewpoints. |
| Shreya Mahajan | Alum, community member | I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by George Mason University. The Association of Jewish Studies states: "Criticism of Israel is not equivalent to antisemitism. This principle is agreed upon by all three of the major definitions of antisemitism, and it is accepted by the vast majority of Jewish Studies faculty and numerous official statements by major Jewish organizations." Therefore, point number 7 of the IHRA's definition of antisemitism is problematic in that it conflates criticism of Israel and its formation with antisemitism, which is not true. |
| Jonathan Fino Vargas | Student | Latine students often find themselves with a lack of direction coming into Mason. Other than classes, it's difficult for us to integrate ourselves into the Mason culture. There are great clubs and organizations that cater to our community. But some club meeting times or events may not fit into the schedule or may not fulfill the needs of Latine students and their current situation. Therefore, George Mason University needs to provide a place where all Latine students can learn, grow, and strive at all times, accommodating of all schedules and situations. |
| Trish Doherty | Community Member | IHRA definition undermines GMU's commitment to fostering an environment of inclusion where ALL voices can be heard! Freedom of thought and calling out Israel's crimes and ethnic cleansing is not antisemitism. International Court of Justice has already said Israel is responsible for apartheid with their genocidal acts towards Palestinians. Please reconsider the new university policy changes. As a fellow student at Mason, I'm very disappointed! |
| Jeremy Edenilson Barillas | Student | As a current freshman, I have been blessed to find this wonderful community. LSA has attracted me ever since I first noticed them at the Get Connected fair. Everyone in the club was very welcoming and enthusiastic. There was no awkward phase and it felt like I found my Hispanic brothers and sisters. Their president gave a thorough explanation of their club and we even talked about our backgrounds. In addition, he was kind enough to take a picture of me with their mascot. Furthermore, the events and meetings are well organized which brought me more connected to the club than I could imagine. This resulted in new friendships being formed and a confidence boost, which is critical for my first year of college. Without a doubt there was an instant connection when I first approached LSA. |
| Lisa-Ann Whitmer Wagn | Community Member | The adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism poses an infringement on GMU's core value of protection of freedom of thought, threatening to silence critical discourse and marginalize vital voices, especially those advocating for Palestinian rights. This would create a chilling effect that would undermine academic freedom and other forms of expression which is necessary in a fully fledged liberal democracy or republic. I don't like Facebook or the Internet because I can't find a job. The library here has blocked my password. Does that make any sense to you? I demand the BOV say No to adopting the IHRA definition. |
| Alberto Del Rio | Proud Latino | As a proud Latino from Mexico mx having a space for Latino/a/x/e students is imperative to fostering student involvement and civic engagement. By creating such a space it shows that you care about the well-being of your students and that they will continue to have a meaningful impact on the Mason community and the world at large. As it has been shown with other diverse communities on this campus, connecting with your fellow community creates that sense of purpose which not only strengthens but uplifts the spirit of the entire campus as a whole which is extremely important for the heart and soul of any college or university. I hope you consider in allowing an affinity space to be created as the Latino community is a vibrant and unique group of hard working and talented people who bring so much to George Mason and the United States. Sí se puede! |
| Bethany Letiecq | Faculty | <p>As a leader of the GMU chapter of the American Association of University Professors, I write to share my concerns about political interference in higher education that threatens the free speech rights and academic freedom of the Mason community. The latest example is the inclusion of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism and examples in Mason University Policy 1201. As the American Civil Liberties Union warns, "Adopting the IHRA working definition of antisemitism would lead to more censorship on campus, and change the nature of universities, which exist to promote the free flow of information and marketplace of ideas. While we wholly support efforts to fight discrimination and harassment through Title VI complaints and investigations, we strongly caution against adopting the IHRA definition, or any definition of discrimination that threatens to censor or penalize political speech laying at the heart of the First Amendment."</p> <p>Even Kenneth Stern, one of the original drafters of the IHRA definition, has publicly warned about usage of the definition as a tool to diminish academic freedom. In a March 27, 2024 interview with The Chronicle of Higher Education, he stated that "...whatever you do on these issues, do not do something that is going to diminish academic freedom. Don't do anything that sacrifices it."</p> <p>It should be noted that Chapter 471 of the 2023 Virginia Acts of Assembly is an "uncodified" act. As the language makes clear, the IHRA definition is "non-legally binding" and should be used "exclusively as a tool and guide for training, education, recognizing, and combating antisemitic hate crimes or discrimination and for tracking and reporting antisemitic incidents in the Commonwealth." It is not intended to be used as the basis of a claim of discrimination and has no place in UP 1201. The most recent revisions to UP 1201 should be rescinded. We must work ever harder to uphold free speech and academic freedom.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.</p> |
| Lana El Eryan | Alumni | I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism at GMU. The right to oppose Zionism, colonialism, racism, authoritarianism, and abuses by state regimes is critical to protecting academic freedom and promoting social justice--values that President Washington espoused in his email of August 28, 2024, in which he states that Mason "uphold[s] First Amendment rights while maintaining a safe, welcoming and undisrupted living and learning environment," and that "this moment also calls on each of us to exercise civility and observe rules of engagement that will ensure everyone's voice can be heard and everyone feels safe and welcome here." |
| FREE PALESTINE | Student | when will you help us free palestine |
| FREE CONGO | Student | so what about congo |
| SAVE SUDAN | Student | SAVE SUDAN |
| Free Palestine | | Free Palestine |
| Anonymous | Faculty | I am writing to demand that the university rescind its latest substantial revision of UP 1201. When making substantive policy changes, the university must engage in robust discussion with the Mason community BEFORE instituting such changes. Had it followed procedure, we would have had an opportunity to raise concerns about IHRA's working definition of antisemitism. As you surely know, Kenneth Stern, one of the original drafters, publicly warned about using this definition as a tool to diminish academic freedom. According to the ACLU, adopting this definition on campus "would lead to more censorship on campus and change the nature of universities, which exist to promote the free flow of information and marketplace of ideas." I am horrified at the increase in racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, and Islamophobia in the United States, and I firmly believe that combatting antisemitism and all forms of discrimination is an essential duty of educational institutions. However, the IHRA definition broadens the definition of antisemitism to encompass legitimate criticism of the Israeli government and its policies and actions, and/or Zionism as an ideology. This definition poses a direct threat to free speech and academic freedom at an institution that, as a public university, is bound by the first amendment. |

| Full Name: | Mason Affiliation | Written Comment |
|----------------------|--------------------------|---|
| John Doe | Student | Comparing the notion of the horrible crime of antisemitism to criticism of the Apartheid state of Israel is a disgraceful attack on the integrity and intelligence of this university. If critical protest and study of a foreign nation that has been ruled by the ICJ and the UN as currently committing the grave crime of apartheid, lead by a man who has a warrant out for his arrest for WAR CRIMES and finally a nation state that is (according to the ICJ) plausibly committing a genocide. If this adopted then you are complicit and I truly hope the decision to support this genocidal regime haunts you for the rest of your life. SHAME! |
| John doe | Student | Cully Stimson claims to serve the people and community at gmU but refuses to listen to the voice of the students who support Palestine. The university takes a stance of neutrality while an ongoing genocide continues go on in Palestine. The complicity of the gmU administration is clear. We will not be silenced. Free Palestine. |
| James H. Finkelstein | Professor Emeritus of IU | <p>It is important to consider the historical context of the Kalven Report, written nearly 60 years ago by a group of seven men, only one of whom was not White. Louis Sherman, Professor Emeritus of Biological Sciences at Purdue University, was a student in the early 1960s at the University of Chicago. In a letter to the editor last year for the Chronicle of Higher Education, Dr. Sherman wrote about the Kalven Report. He said, "There were numerous sit-ins beginning in 1966, as indicated in the article, and these all reflected some component of the Vietnam War. Almost everyone on campus was fearful that the university would become an adjunct of the U.S. government by providing information that would be harmful to students....All discussions and reports after this time were colored by this fear. Thus, it was important for the university to stay "apolitical," because anything less would be equivalent to becoming subservient to the war effort. The Kalven Report must be understood in that context. It allowed the university to take the high road, but it also was useful in deflecting student anger — which boiled over at least two more times in the late 1960s. It is a product of its time, and I think should always be revisited."</p> <p>He also reminds us that there are essential differences between private and public universities, not the least of which is the First Amendment protection of free speech. But even given this, Dr. Sherman says, "To me, the free speech issue is paramount, but that doesn't preclude some universities from taking important positions. As I've suggested above, the University of Chicago was never above reproach in all regards but took a principled stand against an abhorrent aberration in American political life. But did the university squelch free speech? Never....The key issue is to ensure that the states don't prevent free inquiry and discourse and even this element is in trouble in some states."</p> <p>Visitor Brown raises an essential point regarding faculty involvement when considering whether Mason will adopt the Kalven Report principles. As noted above, no governing board members or administrators were on the committee. President Beadle desired to clarify the university's policy for taking a position on political issues. The president, not the board of trustees, formed the committee to draft a statement on the institution's role in political expression. The committee took its lead from him--not the trustees.</p> <p>I urge the BOV to take a different approach and charge President Washington with appointing a faculty committee to make recommendations to him on the institution's role in political and social issues. He can then bring these to the BOV for approval.</p> |
| Aaidah N. | Student | It is not ethical during a genocide to have genocide perpetrators fund an event for students! All it shows is that this is a business and not a community. It's disgusting to see this behavior at George Mason. Represent the students. |
| Isabella Majorowitz | Student | Members of the Board of Visitors, |
| | | <p>I am submitting a comment today concerning GMU's recent adoption of the IHRA's definition of anti-semitism as a part of the university's non-discrimination policy (University Policy Number 1201). I firmly believe that anti-semitism is a historical and present issue, as reflected in both de jure and de facto immigration and housing practices that have sought to exclude Jewish communities, and more recently, the violent white supremacist rhetoric and actions during the Charlottesville rally in 2017. Personally, the most vitriolic and anti-semitic rhetoric I have seen in the news tends to come from white supremacists and Christian nationalist fear-mongers, not Arab, Muslim, and brown people in the US. Falsely conflating anti-Zionism with anti-semitism is not an effective way of addressing and reducing anti-semitism. Many Jewish people globally (including some students at our university) decry the genocidal and violent actions of the Zionist state of Israel, but their voices and experiences are suppressed by defining anti-semitism as inclusive of all criticism of a state. Do the voices of anti-Zionist Jewish students not matter? Jewish people form a diverse global diaspora, with many having no connection to Israel at all. What the adoption of this strict definition of anti-semitism does is infringe on this university's core values of diversity, equity, and inclusion as it silences critical discourse and voices calling for Palestinian lives, history, and experiences to be respected. It is not anti-semitic for students to criticize and protest a government and regime that is actively killing hundreds of thousands of people from Palestine to Lebanon, destroying critical infrastructure, and engaging in the theft of land and homes.</p> <p>I call on this board to engage more directly and meaningfully with students on campus to co-create and adopt a more appropriate definition of anti-semitism that does not suppress the voices of some of the students you're trying to protect in the first place. Students like myself are asking you to use your power to uphold the innovative and inclusive values of this institution, and engage in an open, transparent, and participatory re-evaluation of the university's non-discrimination policy.</p> |
| Adam Rizzoli | Student | Hello! There should be more spaces for disabled students on campus, particularly a disability resources center. Creating these spaces are a terrific way to reduce mental health crises on campus and could help reduce the risk of suicide on campus. As a disabled Mason student that runs a student organization to support disabled students, there is a great deal of interest and high demand for this space. |
| Anonymous | Faculty | I oppose the adoption of policy 1201 and the IHRA definition of anti-semitism by George Mason University. I am deeply distressed by the rising tide of racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism in North America and around the world, and I firmly believe that combating antisemitism and all other forms of racism, bigotry, and discrimination is an essential duty of public officials, universities, and colleges. However, the IHRA definition broadens the definition of antisemitism — properly understood as hostility toward, hatred of, and/or discrimination against Jews — to encompass legitimate criticism of and opposition to Israel, its policies, and/or Zionism as Israel's official state ideology. This poses a direct threat to free speech and academic freedom. |