

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Meeting of
Thursday, May 2, 2024
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201)**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Rector Horace Blackman, Vice Rector Jon Peterson, Secretary Michael Meese, Visitors Reginald Brown and Wendy Marquez.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Visitors Lindsey Burke, James Hazel, Robert Pence, Nancy Prowitt, Jeffrey Rosen (virtual), Charles Stimson and Robert Witeck; Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Faculty Representative; Will Gautney, Staff Liaison; Paul Wyche, Undergraduate Student Representative; Vikas Velagapudi, Graduate Student Representative; Gregory Washington, President; Ken Walsh, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President; Deb Dickenson, Executive Vice President for Administration and Finance; Anne Gentry, University Counsel; and Sarah Hanbury, Secretary pro tem.

I. Call to Order

Rector Blackman called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. He mentioned the adjusted approach to the meeting format that commenced at the February 22, 2024 meeting, which aims to provide informative, on-time, read-ahead materials to facilitate focused discussions and questions/clarifications during meetings.

II. Approval of Minutes

A. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for February 22, 2024 (**ACTION ITEM**)

Rector Blackman called for any corrections to the minutes for the Executive Committee Meetings for February 22, 2024. Hearing none, the **MINUTES STOOD APPROVED AS WRITTEN**.

III. Rector's Comments

Rector Blackman provided the following comments:

- Individually thanked Visitors Jimmy Hazel, Jon Peterson, Wendy Marquez and Bob Witeck for their service to the Board as their terms expire on July 1, 2024; noting that Vice Rector Peterson is eligible for reappointment.
- Reminders:
 - All recognition and award receipts have been invited to join the Board for lunch and encouraged the Visitors to take the opportunity to connect with the honorees.
 - Commencement is on Thursday, May 9, 2023 at EagleBank Arena
- Appointed Visitors Prowitt and Burke to present the slate of officers for Board consideration and election in preparation for the Board election during the annual meeting on July 26, 2024. Visitors Prowitt and Burke will also be in contact with each board member to ascertain committee preferences.
- Stated that he is not seeking reappointment as Rector for his final year of service (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025).

This concluded the Rector's Comments.

IV. President's Comments

Dr. Washington stated that he would reserve his formal comments for the full board meeting and emphasized that Mason has maintained a consistently strong performance.

V. Closed Session

- A. Consultation with Legal Counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.7)
- B. Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.8)

Rector Blackman relayed that the committee did not need to go into closed session and would do so during the full board meeting.

VI. Adjournment

Rector Blackman adjourned the meeting at 9:20 a.m.

Prepared by:

Sarah Hanbury
Secretary pro tem

**BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Meeting of
Thursday, May 2, 2024
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201)**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Rector Horace Blackman, Vice Rector Jon Peterson, Secretary Michael Meese, Visitors Armand Alacbay, Reginald Brown, Lindsey Burke, Anjan Chimaladinne, James Hazel, Wendy Marquez, Dolly Oberoi, Robert Pence, Nancy Prowitt, Charles Stimson, Jeffrey Rosen (virtual), Farnaz Thompson and Robert Witeck.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Faculty Representative; Will Gautney, Staff Liaison; Paul Wyche, Undergraduate Student Representative; Vikas Velagapudi, Graduate Student Representative; Gregory Washington, President; Ken Walsh, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President; Deb Dickenson, Executive Vice President for Administration and Finance; Anne Gentry, University Counsel and Sarah Hanbury, Secretary pro tem.

I. Call to Order

Rector Blackman called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m.

Rector Blackman relayed that Visitor Rosen requested to participate remotely due to his need to be out of state for a personal matter. Rector Blackman approved the remote participation request in accordance with the Electronic Meeting Policy.

Rector Blackman noted that when members of the board participate remotely, voting is accomplished by roll call.

Rector Blackman mentioned the adjusted approach to the meeting format that commenced at the February 22, 2024 meeting, which aims to provide informative, on-time, read-ahead materials to facilitate focused discussions and questions/clarifications during meetings.

Rector Blackman stated that due to the truncated agenda timing, the board is only accepting written public comments through the form on the Board of Visitors website. In addition, written comments will be accepted on the same form until the full board meeting adjourns (**ATTACHMENT 1**).

II. Recognitions

A. Appreciation Plaque Presentation to Outgoing Representatives

Rector Blackman recognized the 2023-2024 student representatives to the board, Paul Wyche and Vikas Velagapudi. He offered for Paul Wyche to provide remarks and introduce his successor. Mr. Wyche expressed gratitude to Rector Blackman, the Board, President Washington, Rose Pascarell, faculty, staff, and most importantly his fellow students for granting him many experiences and the privilege to represent the student body.

Mr. Wyche then introduced Maria Romero Cuesta who will serve as the Student Body President for the 2024-2025 academic year. Ms. Cuesta is a sophomore double majoring in government and international relations and economics. She is a first-generation student, Latina, an international student, and a woman who has received considerable support for her identities at Mason. Ms. Cuesta advocates for the support of the JUST Societies curriculum to foster cultural competency and social awareness, aiming to build a healthier Mason community and global environment.

Rector Blackman invited Vikas Velagapudi to share remarks and introduce his successor. Mr. Velagapudi extended his gratitude to the Board, Rector Blackman, President Washington, and his advisor Dr. Julie Choe Kim. He emphasized the

importance of hearing all viewpoints of the Board and expressed his hope that he and Mr. Wyche effectively conveyed the student perspective. Mr. Velagapudi concluded by expressing his appreciation to the Board for their support.

Mr. Velagapudi introduced Carolyn Faith Hoffman, who will serve as the 2024-2025 President for the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA). Ms. Hoffman is a third-year doctoral student in the health services research program in the Department of Health Administration and Policy in the College of Public Health. She is also pursuing a graduate certificate in health informatics and data analytics in the College of Public Health. Since May 2021, she has been a Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) in the Department of Health Administration, with a keen interest in disabilities and access-to-care factors such as health insurance and place of residence. Ms. Hoffman has been an active representative for the past two years from her program to the General Assembly that GAPSA chairs, advocating for various issues and also serving as a bridge of communication between the program students and GAPSA. Her efforts have greatly facilitated effective communication and collaboration between these bodies, enhancing the effectiveness of GAPSA.

Rector Blackman presented Mr. Wyche and Mr. Velagapudi, each with their own plaque of appreciation for their contributions to the Board during the past year.

Rector Blackman recognized Dr. Melissa A. Broeckelman-Post as the 2021-2024 faculty representative to the board, praising her invaluable contributions and insights. He expressed gratitude for her dedication and noted the rewarding collaboration. Both he and the Board learned significantly from her engagement, greatly benefiting the Board and the Faculty Senate. He then invited Dr. Broeckelman-Post to share remarks and introduce her successor.

Dr. Broeckelman-Post expressed it was an honor and privilege to serve as Faculty Senate President and board representative, acknowledging the weight of the responsibility. Reflecting on the challenges faced during her tenure, she emphasized the importance of shared governance, which strengthened Mason despite the pandemic and personal challenges of the university community. She highlighted achievements such as improved support for students, updated policies, and alignment of evaluation processes. She expressed hope for the continuity of these governance processes in serving the university effectively.

Dr. Broeckelman-Post introduced Dr. Solon Simmons as the incoming Faculty Senate President. Dr. Simmons brings extensive experience, having served on the Faculty Senate for several years and chaired key committees such as the Faculty Matters and Faculty Handbook Committees. Additionally, he has been involved in various other committees and responsibilities, including the Coach Leadership Team. Dr. Simmons also directs the Narrative Transformation Lab in the Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter School of Peace and Conflict Resolution. Dr. Broeckelman-Post expressed confidence in his leadership and looks forward to collaborating with him, and passing the gavel next week.

Rector Blackman presented Dr. Broeckelman-Post with a plaque of appreciation for her contributions to the Board.

B. Recognition of Boren Scholarship and Fulbright U.S. Student Program ETA Award

Rector Blackman introduced Dr. Megan Bruening, Director of the Office of Fellowships to present this year's student scholars. Dr. Bruening highlighted the following items:

- The Office of Fellowships advises Mason students and alumni as they apply to external, nationally competitive awards that support scholarship, research and professional development.
- The Fellowships Office aims to raise the academic profile of Mason through competitive awards.
- Two student scholars were recognized in the following awards:
 - Boren Scholar:
 - Janai Byrd, a senior double majoring in foreign languages and business, has been awarded a prestigious scholarship sponsored by the Department of Defense. This nationally competitive

award allows recipients to study a foreign language overseas, identified as critical to national security. Janai will be studying Korean in South Korea and intends to utilize her language skills in her future career as an economics officer in the Department of State.

- Fulbright U.S. Student Program Award:
 - Chelsea Lebron, a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) candidate in creative writing in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, has been selected for the prestigious Fulbright Program. This renowned fellowship program, one of the nation's oldest and most respected, aims to foster international cooperation and cultural exchange. Ms. Lebron will serve as an English Teaching Assistant at a university in Spain, specifically the Canary Islands. Utilizing her enhanced Spanish skills, she plans to leverage her experience as a published author and advocate for incarcerated individuals and their families.

Both student scholars were in attendance and recognized with applause.

C. Recognition of Early Identification Program (EIP) Graduating Students

Rector Blackman reported that the names of the graduates and the history of EIP were provided in the board materials for this meeting. Rector Blackman introduced Dr. Khaseem Davis, Executive Director of EIP who highlighted the following items:

- On behalf of the programs 820 plus students, their families and staff he thanked the board for their continued support of EIP.
- EIP serves as a Mason college preparatory program and provides access to educational resources for middle and high school students in Northern Virginia who will be the first in their families to attend a college or university.
- The EIP graduates are on the verge of realizing their lifelong dream of receiving their baccalaureate degrees, with some also achieving master's degrees. Additionally, the program is celebrating 130 students graduating from partner high schools, many of whom have opted to continue their education at Mason.
- Dr. Davis proceeded to introduce Mina Al Hashimi as this year's student speaker, mentioning the presence of her parents in the audience:
 - Ms. Al Hashimi stated that it is with immense pride that she stands before everyone as a representative of the EIP graduating class of 2023.
 - She will be graduating with a Master's Degree in Accounting, marking a decade-long journey with Mason that began when she was 13.
 - She is the second child in her family to graduate from college and the first to attain a master's degree, an achievement not solely her own but shared with her family. Their journey from Iraq, under harrowing circumstances, in search of safety and opportunity, adds profound significance to her accomplishment.
 - EIP served as both a beacon and a promise of support and opportunity for her. She vividly remembers the day she was awarded a full tuition scholarship to Mason, a moment that fundamentally changed her life.
 - She often reflects on how she can repay EIP and Mason for the profound impact on her life, acknowledging that she could never fully repay it, but she can pay it forward. This realization led her to support and mentor the next generation of EIP students. Whether tutoring younger students in STEM fusion, assisting as a financial wellbeing peer mentor, or serving as a program support specialist, she is committed to ensuring the cycle of giving and growth continues. In her dedication to giving back to Mason, she has also served as a residential assistant and a graduate teaching assistant, providing direct guidance and assistance to her peers. Additionally, she has embraced leadership opportunities, such as serving as President for the Association of Latino Professionals for America at Mason, a role she pursued thanks to the encouragement of an EIP mentor.
 - She will soon embark on a career as a technology risk assurance professional at Ernst & Young.

- In closing, she expressed gratitude to all the dedicated staff and mentors within EIP and encouraged her fellow graduates to embrace the responsibility to empower and elevate the generations that follow, ensuring the program continues to thrive.

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

D. Jack Wood Awards Presentation

Rector Blackman mentioned that stories for each Jack Wood Award recipient in their respective categories were included in the board materials. He then introduced Toni Andrews, Senior Associate Director for the Office of Community and Local Government Relations, to present this year's Jack Wood Awards. Ms. Andrews explained that the award is named after former Fairfax Mayor, John C. Jack Wood. Mr. Wood's son joined this segment and assisted with presenting each award alongside President Washington. Ms. Andrews offered congratulatory remarks for the following recipients of the five award categories:

- Business/Nonprofit Category:
 - Mind the Mat Pilates & Yoga is this year's recipient. Sarah VanderGoot accepted the award on the behalf of her company.
- Student Category
 - Anthony Amos is this year's recipient and was in attendance to accept his award.
- Faculty/Staff Category:
 - Matt McLaughlin, Off-Campus Coordinator for Contemporary Student Services is this year's recipient and was in attendance to accept his award.
- Partnership Category:
 - LEAD Office Student Leadership Consultants and Terraset Elementary School in Reston, Virginia are this year's recipient. Members from both organizations came forward to accept the award.
- Legacy Award:
 - Janet Walker, Transportation Programs Manager for Parking and Transportation, is this year's recipient and was in attendance to accept her award.

On behalf of the board, Rector Blackman congratulated and extended appreciation to all the award recipients for their leadership in fostering mutually beneficial relations between Mason and the community.

III. Approval of Minutes

- A. Full Board Meeting on February 22, 2024 (ACTION ITEM)**
- B. Full Board Meeting on April 2, 2024 (ACTION ITEM)**
- C. Continuing Education Session on April 2, 2024 (ACTION ITEM)**

Rector Blackman called for any corrections to the minutes for the full board meeting on February 22, 2024, the full board meeting on April 2, 2024, and the continuing education session on April 2, 2024, that was provided in the board meeting materials. Hearing no corrections, Rector Blackman **MOVED** to approve the minutes. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Witeck. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes – 15

Absent – 1 – Visitor Pence

IV. Rector's Report

- A. Board of Visitors Meeting Schedule for 2024-2025 (ACTION ITEM)**
- B. Board of Visitors Meeting Schedule for 2025-2026 (ACTION ITEM)**

Rector Blackman reminded the board that during the February 22, 2024 meeting that the two February meeting dates didn't align with Visitor Rosen's schedule and suggested exploring alternate options. He emphasized the need to make a decision regarding whether to maintain the approved meeting schedules or adjust them as outlined:

2024-2025 Meeting Schedule

- Thursday, February 20, 2025 - Full Board Meeting, Previously Approved Date
- Thursday, February 27, 2025 - Full Board Meeting, Proposed Alternate Option

2025-2026 Meeting Schedule

- Thursday, February 19, 2026 - Full Board Meeting, Previously Approved Date
- Thursday, February 26, 2026 - Full Board Meeting, Proposed Alternate Option

Rector Blackman invited Visitor Rosen to share his thoughts. Visitor Rosen noted that the proposed alternate options would address his concerns and doesn't mean to inconvenience anyone else but if it was a matter of indifference, the one-week shifts would work well from his standpoint. Rector Blackman then asked for any additional thoughts or comments from the board.

Rector Blackman moved to approve to adjust the February meeting dates to February 27, 2025 and February 26, 2026. The motion was **SECONDED** by Secretary Meese. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes – 16

Rector Blackman reported the following items:

- Reminded the board that Commencement is on Thursday, May 9, 2024 at EagleBank Arena.
- In preparation for the Board elections during the annual meeting on July 26, 2024, he appointed Visitors Prowitt and Burke to present the slate of officers and ascertain committee preferences for Board consideration and election.
- Secretary Meese was recognized to provide an update on the amended Document and Records Request Policy, which was approved during February's meeting. He explained that according to the policy, whenever board members have questions, they are to send them to Sarah Hanbury, Executive Coordinator to the Board of Visitors, Secretary pro tem, who will then forward them to him. He noted that two requests had been made in the last three months, which were directed to the staff and subsequently answered. He added that if there are any issues or problems with this process, board members are encouraged to contact him directly.

C. Campus Security Briefing

Rector Blackman reminded the board that during the public comment session in April, Visitor Brown requested a brief update on the security provided to Professor Bethany Letiecq, the outcome of their investigation, and overall measures taken to protect faculty and staff. He then recognized Carl Rowan, Jr., Chief of Police and Assistant Vice President for Public Safety, to provide the campus security update. Chief Rowan presented the following information:

- Chief Rowan summarized the Letiecq case due to time constraints. Professor Letiecq's viral article led to her receiving abusive messages across various platforms, prompting her to seek help from campus police. These cases are handled with utmost seriousness. Unless the victim declines police involvement, Mason Police take extensive measures to ensure community safety.
- Mason Police monitored messages to Professor Letiecq, identifying one as a law violation and direct threat. They tracked the message to an individual in Urbana, Illinois, seeking assistance from the Champaign County sheriff's department. Upon identification, local deputies interviewed the suspect, who admitted to venting and denied intent to harm. An arrest warrant was issued for Rodney Prosser for criminal harassment by phone, a class one misdemeanor in Virginia. Though extradition is uncommon, further abusive behavior will result in Mr. Prosser's arrest and return to the Fairfax Adult Detention Center.
- Before addressing questions, Chief Rowan mentioned that more detailed information is available in his testimony provided in the meeting materials.

Visitor Brown thanked Chief Rowan and Mason Police for their follow-up. Visitor Stimson relayed that the professor could also consider obtaining a civil restraining order as an additional precaution in his state of residence. He then thanked Chief Rowan for his thoroughness in handling the matter which concluded the briefing.

Rector Blackman individually thanked Visitors Jimmy Hazel, Jon Peterson, Wendy Marquez and Bob Witeck for their service to the Board as their terms expire on July 1, 2024, adding that Vice Rector Peterson is eligible for reappointment and invited them to share remarks. Please refer to video recording for specifics: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8557205/video/942461377>.

This concluded the Rector's Report.

V. President's Report

Dr. Washington provided the following highlights:

- Bottom Line Up Front:
 - Mason has continued strong performance while experiencing a difficult academic environment.
 - Mason has achieved its highest enrollment to date.
 - It's been the highest fundraising year to date.
 - Mason is ranked number one for social mobility.
 - Mason is the largest 4-year institution in Virginia by headcount and is also the most diverse institution in the state.
- Best rise in rankings:
 - The Doctor of Nursing program is ranked number one in the country among other public institutions and second overall.
 - Scalia Law School is ranked eleventh among public institutions and twenty-eighth overall, making it the third-highest-ranking law school in Washington DC, Virginia, and Maryland.
- The Mason Impact:
 - Mason students are doing well, as evidenced by their post-graduation outcomes. The median salary for graduates is \$74K, and 87% of them achieve positive career outcomes. A positive career outcome is defined as being employed, continuing education, volunteering, or serving in the military within six months of graduation.
- 2023-2024 Presidential Metrics:
 - A few months remain to achieve some of the remaining goals, and will have another year of mostly completed goals.
- The Hazel Peterson Scholarship:
 - Created by Gregory and Nicole Washington in honor of the Hazel and Peterson families for their generations of commitment to the university.
 - Supports Costello College of Business full or part-time undergraduate students pursuing a minor in real estate development and who graduated from high schools within 50 miles of the Fairfax Campus.
 - The Washington's donation was matched by corporate contributions.
 - Donations can be made at go.gmu.edu/hazel-peterson.
- General Issues:
 - There are challenges with cultural issues. Mason's diversity is its secret weapon, and it should be embraced. Any attempts to change that will be met with resistance from the university community.
 - 80% of all new graduates' growth in the state is attributed to Mason. When President Washington inquired of leadership from companies like Amazon, Microsoft, Northrop Grumman, etc., why they are coming here, they responded that Mason is a net producer of talent.
- Challenges Ahead:
 - Cost inflation

- Increasing bureaucracy relative to increasing reporting and operations nationally and statewide.
- Culture war issues in an election year.
- Enterprise Risk Priorities, Trends, and Heat Map:
 - Have started to rank the risks; please refer to the rankings and graph in the meeting materials.
 - Highlighted that the top seven risks are present and increasing. It is the responsibility of leadership to focus on these entities and position the institution for success moving forward.
- Our Plan for Success FY25: Redefining Excellence:
 - Students First:
 - Students' Bill of Rights
 - Mason Virginia Promise
 - Free Speech Campus
 - Cost of Attendance:
 - Reduce cost of attendance
 - 3-year degree
 - Partner or Perish:
 - Fairfax West Campus expansion
- Welcomed New Provost and Executive Vice President, James Antony:
 - Current dean of graduate education and postdoctoral affairs at the University of California, San Diego.
 - Begins new role on July 1, 2024.

This concluded Dr. Washington's report.

VI. University Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Just Societies Update

Rector Blackman mentioned during February's Academic Programs, Diversity, and University Community Committee meeting that he designated Visitors Meese and Witeck to collaborate with the administration regarding board oversight of the Just Societies requirement and report back to the board at this meeting. He then gave Visitors Meese and Witeck the floor. Visitor Meese relayed that after a brief presentation from the other four members of the university committee, they will conclude with brief comments from himself and Visitor Witeck.

The University Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Just Societies provided the following updates:

- Committee Members:
 - Mike Meese, Board of Visitor Member
 - Bob Witeck, Board of Visitor Member
 - Rose Pascarell, Committee Chair & Vice President of University Life
 - Sharnnia Artis, Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer
 - Melissa Broeckelman-Post, President of the Faculty Senate, Professor and Basic Course Director, Department of Communication
 - Keith Renshaw, Senior Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education, Professor of Psychology
- Ms. Pascarell began by noting the full report and an executive summary were provided in the meeting materials and that they would summarize that information.
- Committee Process (Pascarell):
 - Was data driven.
 - Conducted 13 working session meetings with committee members from March 7, 2024 through April 30, 2024.
- The Mason Way (Artis):
 - The committee reviewed the DEI critics and Mason's response to each which were displayed and are available in the meeting materials.
 - The committee also looked at how Mason's approach aligned with Governor Youngkin's Executive Order 10.

- Just Societies (Broeckelman-Post & Renshaw):
 - The report outlines the why and how the Just Societies are required in the Mason Core:
 - Why:
 - Students have been asking for courses focused on understanding diversity for more than a decade and faculty identified intercultural competence as a key gap in the Mason Core.
 - Numerous employer surveys indicate that colleges should place more emphasis on collaborating with others in diverse group settings. Mason's top employers have expressed that Mason's diversity and its students' experience working with others from a variety of backgrounds are among the primary reasons they recruit them.
 - The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) have statements that place value on developing the capacity to work productively with diverse people and perspectives.
 - How:
 - Mason Core revision process
 - Relevant Laws & Policies that guided the process
- Visitor Witeck's comments:
 - Stated that Mason's DEI philosophy is unique to Mason. It fits its values and what unites our community of scholars. The Mason Way emphasizes that being altogether different means welcoming differences but not inciting division. Reason and argument are embraced, not conflict. The passion to learn is celebrated, not the passion to disrupt, censor, or silence anyone. It's about teaching students how to think, not what to think.
 - DEI Infrastructure Recommendations:
 - Emphasized the importance of inclusive excellence within Mason's diversity mission, aligning with directives from the Commonwealth.
 - Highlighted the success of student support programs in fostering a positive climate, promoting student success, and mitigating negative outcomes. The recommendation is to maintain current staffing roles deemed appropriate.
 - Expressed a strong belief in the necessity of reviewing titles, roles, and accountability, alongside proposing a campus climate survey conducted by a qualified third party to ensure objectivity and assess alignment with promised goals.
 - Advocated for expanding offerings that emphasize civil discourse and dialogue, as they strengthen freedom of expression and teachshow to align free speech with intellectual diversity and welcome all points of view.
 - Mason Core Recommendation:
 - Urged the Mason Core Committee to be vigilant, ensuring that the Just Societies student learning outcomes are plainly and effectively communicated.
 - Also urged the Mason Core Committee to further expand the number and breadth of courses eligible under the requirement to ensure the greatest freedom of choice to all students in pursuing their general education, as well as their degree obligations.
 - Recommended that the Mason Core Committee accelerate its assessment to determine if the desired outcomes and student learning objectives are being achieved.
 - Recognized the provost as the academic leader with the designated authority to assess the timing and implementation of the Just Societies framework in consultation with the Mason Core Committee and with the faculty.
 - Finally, there is a call for increased dialogue within this administration, faculty, and Board of Visitors to share, review, and discuss significant curriculum updates and assessments. It is crucial for members and stakeholders across the community to understand the well-defined roles of the faculty, the Board of Visitors, and the administration in curriculum matters, especially to ensure compliance with SCHEV and SACSCOC requirements.
- Secretary Meese's Comments:

- Noted that when he started with the university committee, he was skeptical. However, as he delved deeper into the matter, he discovered that Mason is aligning closely with what the governor outlined in his diversity, opportunity, and inclusion plan.
- Governor Youngkin in Executive Order One defines what inherently divisive concepts are as it applies to K through 12 educations but Secretary Meese thinks it should also apply to post-secondary education.
- After meeting with offices for Center for Culture Equity, and Empowerment (CCEE), LGBTQ, and DEI to inquire if they are engaging in inherently divisive concepts, it was almost laughable because their primary concern is responding to the communities they serve. This sentiment was echoed in the comments during the listening session that was held on April 2, 2024.
- Inclusive Excellence:
 - He learned about the Black Male Success Initiative (BSMI). Highlighting that the graduation rate for black males from public universities is 39%, whereas at Mason, it's 69% due to the support provided by CCEE.
- The extent to which the core curriculum should be required is open for debate, and the provost, in consultation with the board and faculty, is best positioned to make this decision.

Visitor Witeck **MOVED** that the Board accept the Achieving Inclusive Excellence: The Mason Way Report that was provided for review in the meeting materials and approve the recommendations in the report. Rector Blackman opened the floor for discussion. Significant conversation ensued. Please refer to the video recording for specifics: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8557205/video/942461377>.

After robust conversation Visitors Meese and Witeck accepted to modify the motion. Rector Blackman **MOVED** that the Board accept the Achieving Inclusive Excellence: The Mason Way Report that was provided for review in the meeting materials. The motion was **SECONDED** by Secretary Meese. **MOTION CARRIED BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes – 15

Abstain – 1 – Visitor Burke

Visitor Brown expressed concern about a course mandate. Ken Walsh, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President, spoke to the board and assured them that he had taken note of their discussion and the concern regarding the core course mandate.

VII. Committee Reports

Rector Blackman mentioned that, due to the shortened meeting format, the Research Committee did not meet today, and a growth update was included in the meeting materials. He thanked Dr. Andre Marshall, Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact, for the update.

A. Academic Programs, Diversity and University Community Committee

Visitor Burke briefed the board on the topics presented and discussed during the Academic Programs, Diversity and University Community Committee meeting, which included:

- During the APDUC meeting, Interim Provost Ken Walsh provided an overview of the upcoming spring graduation, with commencement set for May 9 at 10 a.m. at Eagle Bank Arena and degree celebrations running through May 11 and he reviewed the size of the graduating class in historical context.
- Interim Provost Walsh reviewed international enrollment by country and addressed the recent FAFSA disruption, noting that financial aid packages were sent on April 15 and the freshman enrollment deposit deadline was extended to May 15.
- He also noted the positive impacts of Mason's test-optional policy since 2017, including market expansion, stronger academic quality, and improved retention.

- Melissa Broeckelman-Post provided an overview of the proposed revisions to the Faculty Handbook, and welcomed the New Faculty Senate President, Solon Simmons.

Visitor Burke **MOVED** to approve the following eight actions items en bloc as provided for review in the meeting materials:

- a. New Degree Programs:
 - i. PhD in Robotics (**ACTION ITEM**)
 - ii. MS in Artificial Intelligence (**ACTION ITEM**)
- b. Degree Program Name Change:
 - i. BSEd in Early Childhood Education for Diverse Learners to “BSEd in Inclusive Early Childhood Education” (**ACTION ITEM**)
- c. Proposed Revisions to the Faculty Handbook (**ACTION ITEM**)
- d. Faculty Actions:
 - i. Promotion and/or Tenure (**ACTION ITEM**)
 - ii. Conferral of Emeritus/Emerita Status (**ACTION ITEM**)
 - iii. Elections of New Tenured Faculty (**ACTION ITEM**)
 - iv. Special Rank Change (**ACTION ITEM**)

The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Hazel. Rector Blackman opened the floor for discussion. There were none.
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE.

Yes – 15

Absent – 1 – Secretary Meese

B. Finance and Land Use Committee

Visitor Pence briefed the board on the topics presented and discussed during the Finance and Land Use Committee meeting, which included:

- The Committee voted to approve the proposed FY 2025 University Budget within the Scenario ranges, including FY 2025 Tuition, Mandatory Student Fee, Room and Board rates, as well as FY 2026 Tuition rates.
- This includes a 3% increase for in-state tuition in FY 2025 and in FY 2026, and a 3% increase in the mandatory student fee in FY 2025. The FY2025 Room and Board increase of 4.2%.
- Since the General Assembly has not yet finalized the FY 2025 Commonwealth budget, three budget scenarios are being recommended with different assumptions for State General Fund Appropriations and Salary Increases.
- The Committee voted to approve Mason’s Six-Year Capital Plan that includes Board funding approval for:
 - EagleBank Arena Air Handling Units
 - ITS Core Network Replacement
- The Committee also voted to approve the annual Land Use Certification submission with the significant changes from the last report being:
 - Acquisitions of Vernon Smith Hall, 922 N. Kenmore St., and 950 N. Jackson St. in Arlington
 - Easements on the Mason Square and SciTech campuses

Visitor Pence noted that the committee’s three actions items would be voted on individually and differ in some ways from the provisions he just stated.

1. Financial Matters
 - a. FY 2025 University Operating Budget, Tuition and Fees (**ACTION ITEM**)

Visitor Pence **MOVED** to approve the FY2025 University Budget within the scenario ranges, including FY2025 Tuition, subject to final resolution of the amount of increase for FY2025 Tuition to take effect Fall of 2024, Mandatory Student Fee, Room, and Board rates, as detailed in the board book. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Witeck. Rector Blackman opened the floor for discussion:

- Secretary Meese relayed that they were not approving the FY 2026 budget, which Visitor Pence confirmed was accurate.
- For future discussions, Visitor Alacbay would like to know what would getting to a zero tuition increase look like.
- Visitor Brown indicated that if it's not the decisive vote, he may cast a protest vote. Mason's highly successful model is underfunded, despite producing exceptional outcomes that deserve global recognition and investment. Considering the current financial constraints, capping growth needs serious consideration. He proposed prioritizing discussions on such significant matters during the July meetings.

MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

Yes – 12

No – 2 – Visitors Brown & Pence

Abstain – 2 – Visitors Burke & Thompson

2. Capital Matters
 - a. Six-Year Capital Plan (**ACTION ITEM**)

Visitor Pence **MOVED** to approve the Six-Year Capital Plan as detailed in the Board book. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Hazel. Rector Blackman called for discussion. There were none. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE.**

Yes – 16

- b. Land Use Certification (**ACTION ITEM**)

Visitor Pence **MOVED** to approve the Land Use Certification as detailed in the Board book. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Witeck. Rector Blackman called for discussion. There were none. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE.**

Yes – 15

Absent – 1 – Visitor Burke

C. Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee

Visitor Oberoi forwent the report for the Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee after Rector Blackman expressed that it would be acceptable to do so, considering there were no action items to bring before the full board.

D. Development Committee

Visitor Chimaladinne forwent the report for the Development Committee as there were no action items to bring before the full board.

VIII. Closed Session

- A. Consultation with Legal Counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.7)
- B. Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.8)

Secretary Meese **MOVED** that the Board go into Closed Session under the provisions of Section 2.2-3711.A.7, for Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation including briefings on:

Ganley and Surber v. GMU et al.
Jeong v. GMU et al
Morrison v. GMU et al.
Wright v. GMU et al.
Zahabi v. George Mason University et al.

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. The motion was **SECONDED** by Vice Rector Peterson. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes – 14

Absent – 2 – Visitors Burke & Pence

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

Yes – 15

Absent – 1 – Visitor Burke

IV. Adjournment

Rector Blackman called for any additional business to come before the board:

- Visitor Pence expressed that upon leaving the boardroom, each board member should depart with the belief that we are doing what is right for the university.
- Visitor Rosen relayed that there were two items in the meeting materials that weren't review today and would like to flag them for a future meeting in either July or September. They are standardized testing and the definition of antisemitism that Virginia adopted.
- Visitor Brown commended President Washington for the security measures taken at Mason.
- Visitor Stimson thanked Rector Blackman for his leadership. Rector Blackman stated it has been an incredible honor to serve the university.

Hearing no further business Rector Blackman adjourned the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

Prepared by:

Sarah Hanbury
Secretary pro tem

Attachment 1: Written Public Comments (10 pages)

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1. Name: Colin McAulay **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: I am Colin McAulay, the newly elected Student Body Vice-President. I briefly want to share my experience from campaigning to achieve this office. Our platform, and core values, included support for DEI support units and Just Societies. We spoke with over 35 clubs which consisted of hundreds of students. We also spoke with many students sitting in the student centers, the dining halls, and the library. Overall, we spoke with over a thousand students. In each of these conversations, we mentioned the our support for DEI and Just Societies. Once, we faced pushback for this stance. Once in our three week campaign was someone against these programs. This, to me, is unequivocal evidence that the student body supports DEI and Just Societies. I hope that the Board of Visitors reflects that opinion.

2. Name: Gustavo Lanz **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: DEI is something that must be preserved within the budget by the BOV.

3. Name: Keshawn Brown **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: I believe in DEI programs. Cutting funding for this is very anti-black and would detrimental to the overall health of not only blacks , but also all minorities within the Mason community.

4. Name: Oluferanmi Olugbemi **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: I love this school and I love my blackness but there are times I feel like I am not fully accepted here.

5. Name: Abeeku Morrison **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: DEI provides opportunities to those who would not otherwise not have them. DEI has given me a feeling of belonging at a PWI.

6. Name: Jonathan Ogebe **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: The Just Societies requirement needs to be upheld because our world is only becoming more diverse. By ignoring the histories and discrimination faced by BIPOC, Women, Disabled and LGBTQ+ people, not only would you be voting against the interests of Mason - considered to have one of the most diverse student bodies and the largest public school in VA - but you would also be devaluing the experiences of marginalized students and the quality of education of Mason's student body. Our lives and stories must be learned and valued.

7. Name: Sai padma sriya pothula **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: Diversity matters to me because, it should matter to everyone.

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8. Name: laila nahidian Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: FREE PALESTINE!!! Gmu needs to acknowledge the genocide and how they're complicit

9. Name: Darshini Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: Diversity = broader knowledge

10. Name: Pranet Ok Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: Cookies

11. Name: kavitha viswanadhan Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: Diversity is important because it brings inclusion.

12. Name: Kai M Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: Multiple perspectives

13. Name: Savannah Eakes Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: diversity at george mason matters because without diversity there wouldn't be all these cool people at this school

14. Name: Bianca Johnson Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: diversity is important because it allows everyone to see different perspectives of life.

15. Name: Giorgia Potter Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: Diversity is important because it brings people together and it teaches people love and compassion for others

16. Name: Destiny Mercado Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: Allows everyone to see and learn about different cultures

17. Name: Leah newlin Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: Diversity is important because it creates a space for fun ! Everyone gets to meet new people and learn new things.

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18. Name: Sebastian Gutierrez Sandoval Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: Diversity allows for different lines of thought to cross and build upon each other, and this is important to celebrate because of that. Emphasis on cultural clubs is one thing, but it would be nice to see a unison of representation while each retain their own values.

19. Name: Ian Dinwiddie Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: Diversity important because of the diversity of opinions and life stories provides good insights into making a better campus and community.

20. Name: Austin Diaz Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: The campus when it comes to diversity is very important to the community as a whole. Having different cultures and perspectives allows for discussion between everyone on campus

21. Name: Shauna Rigaud Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: The Just Societies tag offers students an opportunity to learn about how we can be better humans to each across disciplines. It is not an indoctrination but rather a critical analysis of our current world. The faculty agreed on the implementation of this core study based off of the demands of students. It is an ill practice for the BOV to step in an attempt to supersede a decision made through shared governance of the faculty.

22. Name: Denise Albanese Mason Affiliation: Faculty

Comment: In mounting an attack on the Just Societies course approved by two previous BOVS, the current Board has exceeded its role as guarantors of fiduciary and procedural oversight and moved into realms for which its members have no relevant expertise. In so doing, they have violated the Faculty Handbook as well as the principle of academic freedom. I further note that their projected fears about students being “forced” to conform to professorial beliefs are an insult to faculty integrity—and they are one-sided fears, since it is equally likely students taking (e.g.) economics are also in the same position, but no concern was expressed by the BOV about that. Why the asymmetry?

23. Name: Dan Klein Mason Affiliation: Faculty

Comment: The leftist-flag initiative is unjust and should be scrapped.

24. Name: Sarah Ochs Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: It is extremist, and unconscionable, that the BOV engage in interference in curricula. This must remain under the sole discretion of faculty, not administration. This

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interference is purely political, it is a power grab, and does nothing to improve student education or the quality of George Mason as an institution.

25. Name: Rose Cherubin **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Thank you for offering this forum. I think it is crucial to maintain faculty control over, and student input into, curriculum content and requirements. It is our (faculty) responsibility, and our research priority, to lead with well-informed research and changes based on that, selected to the benefit of students.

The Just Societies course flag is not a new program but rather a way of preparing students to think about and examine (not telling them what to think) about their own experience and those of others as they interact and lead locally and globally. It was approved by SCHEV, a state-mandated independent body. Attempts to override SCHEV would set a terrible precedent of ignoring non-partisan oversight in favor of personal views.

You have heard, at the previous meeting, the testimonies of students whose lives have been enriched and made safer by some of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives. That alone would be reason to retain the. But it is also relevant to mention that these initiatives were also crafted with input from faculty, staff, and students: not just by people specifically hired to DEI positions (of whom there are very very few at GMU), but by the community at large.

26. Name: Stephanie Kane **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: It is imperative that decisions regarding student learning goals and course requirements be made solely by faculty members, in alignment with the principles of shared governance, free inquiry, and academic freedom. Allowing politics to interfere in the classroom would violate these principles. Faculty members are responsible for setting the curriculum at Mason, and any deviation from this standard would compromise the freedom to teach and learn on campus.

27. Name: Bethany Letiecq **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Dear GMU Board of Visitors:

My name is Bethany Letiecq. I am a faculty member at Mason in the CEHD and a leader of the GMU chapter and Virginia Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The AAUP alongside the American Council on Education and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges articulated in their 1966 joint statement that "When an educational goal has been established, it becomes the responsibility primarily of the faculty to determine the appropriate curriculum and procedures of student instruction." Good governance of our university requires that the BOV stay in their lane and cease their encroachment on faculty responsibilities. The BOV interrogation of the Just Societies core curriculum and the threat to derail the implementation of this new element of the core is a prime example of BOV overreach. The committee established to write up a report about Just Societies and the report itself likewise represent overreach. The Just Societies (JS) "flag" is not a program in need of monitoring. The BOV's interest in the JS appears to be predicated on its focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Anti-DEI efforts appear motivated

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by political operatives and their big money donors seeking to weaken public institutions of higher education. The BOV should resist political interference and uphold their commitments to academic freedom, and to Mason's faculty and students first and foremost.
Thank you.

28. Name: Dr. Mciehelle LaFrance Mason Affiliation: Faculty

Comment: The BOV should refrain from ideological oversight over curricular matters at GMU. Under no circumstances should political appointees or political operatives make decisions about student learning goals and course requirements. This kind of political interference in the classroom clearly violates foundational principles of shared governance, free inquiry, and academic freedom. Faculty, not political appointees, must set Mason's curriculum. Anything else is a structural violation of the freedom to teach and learn on campus.

29. Name: Min Park Mason Affiliation: Faculty

Comment: Under no circumstances should political appointees or political operatives make decisions about student learning goals and course requirements. This kind of political interference in the classroom clearly violates foundational principles of shared governance, free inquiry, and academic freedom. Faculty, not political appointees, must set Mason's curriculum. Anything else is a structural violation of the freedom to teach and learn on campus.

30. Name: Mark Koyama Mason Affiliation: Faculty

Comment: I believe very strongly in academic freedom and in faculty determining what they teach their students. However, this freedom only makes sense if students have full freedom to sort into classes they are interested in! I am deeply concerned about the Just Societies requirement because it obligates students who might not otherwise be interested to take certain courses. In other words, it reduces the ability of students to specialize in their fields of interest.

If it is true "employers have increasingly rated the ability to work effectively in diverse teams and to understand different cultures as key characteristics needed in college graduates" then students will choose these courses. They do not need to be required to do so.

Moreover, I share the concerns of many that the specificity of the learning outcomes, such as requiring students to "define key terms related to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion" and "articulate obstacles to justice and equity, and strategies for addressing them," veers too close to compelling faculty to teach and assess a particular ideology or set of beliefs. Despite the assertion that "students are not expected to espouse a particular set of values," in practice these learning outcomes suggest certain conclusions deemed acceptable by the university. True academic freedom must allow for a wide range of perspectives to be shared and debated, without fear of administrative sanction if certain viewpoints are not sufficiently emphasized.

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Allowing faculty to organically incorporate themes of diversity and equity if and when relevant to their subject, rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all requirement, is more in keeping with principles of academic freedom and faculty autonomy over curriculum.

31. Name: G. Chesler **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: As a university educator of 24 years and faculty at Mason for 11 years, I am appalled that a few members of the Board of Visitors are considering injecting their political beliefs into our curriculum design. Through Just Societies and the Mason Core, my colleagues have worked on an innovative curriculum that is appropriate to the world in which we live. That serves the tens of thousands of students at Mason. And which builds upon countless hours of research, assessment, consideration, deliberation, historical knowledge, socio-cultural analysis and quantifiable evidence.

The voices of our students at the listening session linger in my mind. How would they be served and respected if 4 voices on this board shift curricular design for thousands?

Leave the educating to us. The faculty.

I wish to reiterate the words of my colleagues who have been most vocal so far. "This kind of political interference in the classroom clearly violates foundational principles of shared governance, free inquiry, and academic freedom. Faculty, not political appointees, must set Mason's curriculum. Anything else is a structural violation of the freedom to teach and learn on campus."

32. Name: Maria Alejandra Romero Cuesta **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: The programs, policies, and practices that create a space for students of all backgrounds are under attack. DEI doesn't just help build community, it is our community. Please don't destroy all the work and money that has already been placed into this programs. Taking away the funding will be the same as destroying your investment. If you care about your students and our community. Vote in favor of DEI and Just Societies. Vote for a Mason filled with love, community and knowledge. Thank you!

33. Name: Alexander Monea **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Hello, my name is Alexander Monea and I am a faculty member teaching at GMU. I am here today to join my colleagues in voicing concern over the Board's actions over the last couple of months. As a faculty member, I trust in the years-long, faculty-led, collaborative process that produced the Just Societies flag. We made our voices heard via public comment at the February 22 and April 2 Board meetings to demand the BOV keep its hands off the Mason Core. And then dozens of students, faculty, and staff came together at the Listening and Information Gathering Session on April 17 to ask the Board, again, to stay in its lane regarding Just Societies and other Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives at GMU, and that message carries through to today.

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The principles of the American Association of University Professors are clear. Only faculty have the disciplinary expertise and professional backgrounds to set university curriculum. The proper role of the board is to champion the university and exert oversight over the President's office regarding the financial and operational health of the university. Under no circumstances should political appointees or political operatives be making decisions about student learning goals and course requirements. This kind of political interference in the classroom clearly violates foundational principles of shared governance, free inquiry, and academic freedom.

Faculty, not political appointees, must set Mason's curriculum. Anything else is a structural violation of the freedom to teach and learn on campus.

34. Name: Amanda Leach Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: The Board of Visitors fulfills an incredibly important role here at Mason, and we as the students respect all that you do for our community. That said, the Board members are not educators. While we recognize that you have been given the authority to make curriculum and academic decisions, we urge you to listen to and rely on the statements and knowledge of the experts in these fields. We recognize that the Board's decision may be influenced by political tensions, but we urge you to recognize that Just Societies is not any more political than the simple recognition that the world around us is full of people with different backgrounds and experiences. The Just Societies courses aim to help students navigate a diverse world. Please do not cancel an already approved program. We strongly urge you to approve the Just Societies requirement.

35. Name: Jeremy Otieno Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: The Board of Visitors' meeting to even debate the end of DEI programs is extremely disturbing. As a student who is part of the African community at George Mason, DEI programs have given me access to community and information crucial to my personal development thus far. They have truly made me enjoy everything available at the university, and there is no chance I would have had as good of an experience without my brothers and sisters who orchestrate the DEI programs on campus.

I think the BoV fails to understand and recognize that people who don't fit into the majority demographic have a fundamentally different experience of institutions. There is a different path we need to navigate, and without the guidance of people who understand the nuance of these institutions, we cannot provide our utility and abilities to the highest degree. Students who are POC or in the LGBTQ community want to be useful and beneficial to society at large, which I think opposers to DEI are confused about. These programs are not about creating separation within the Mason community. They only allow us to find our voices and give us the knowledge and confidence necessary to be more productive and constructive in our community, regardless of our varying identities.

36. Name: Shelby Adams Mason Affiliation: Student

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Comment: As a Black woman, DEI offices, curriculum, and initiatives are and have been fundamental to my academic success, future career, and personal growth. I completed my undergraduate years and am currently pursuing my Master's in Public Policy here at Mason. I chose to come back to Mason due to the richness in diversity that comes from students, staff, and faculty here that have truly support me. I've taken classes that deepen my understanding of how the world works, how social frameworks interact, and how to make an impact in my community. Learning about the real history of not only my community, but other communities have given me the foundations of becoming a global citizen. Having the opportunity to deliberate with peers who I don't always agree with has allowed me to gain perspectives on worldly issues. DEI doesn't just mean amplifying the voices of marginalized communities, but also allowing an open space for opposite viewpoints to interact. I believe continuing the process and implementation of the "Just Societies" course will allow future generations to be able to gain that cultural understanding that the current trajectory of the world needs and demands. Most importantly, I wouldn't be where or who I am today if it wasn't for DEI offices, such as the Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment that have supported my journey here as a Mason student and given me a sense of belonging. CCEE and other DEI initiatives have given me the tools of civic engagement, community building, cultural understanding, and overall building my voice. They've allowed an open space for students, faculty, and staff to affirm or challenge their thoughts. This can be seen through the workshops, events as well as the open space that continues to foster healing spaces for students. The lessons, the hard truths, the resources, all gifted to me by Mason, specially the academics and DEI offices, have made me prepared to tackle real world issues and truly make the impact I would like in this world.

37. Name: Ben Dover Mason Affiliation:

Comment: The new logo just sucks

38. Name: Gabriel Curtis Mason Affiliation: Student

Comment: Board of Visitors,

I hope this message finds you well and that you will make time to read the entirety of it. My name is Gabriel Curtis, I have serious grievances with the financial decision-making of this university and despite many provided solutions and efforts to work with Rose Pascarell and Deb Dickenson, the executive administration has done nothing to remedy these grievances. Thus the Board of Visitors, with whom I hope share the same values of stewardship, transparency, and importance of choice, is the only group that can now help.

My first grievance is that Mason has not properly informed student of why tuition and fees are increasing, demonstrating a lack of good stewardship, nor involved them in the decision making, demonstrating a lack of stakeholder consideration. I asked Deb Dickenson for details regarding what costs are increasing and what additional projects the university pursuing that requires the additional money. Her response was the the budget is still in the works and that it will be prepared on May 2nd which is not helpful as the budget will be voted on that date. I

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have asked for students to be included in discussions surrounding the allocations of this funds, considering students are required to pay them, and every time I have been met with different forms of stonewalling or redirection. The 2023-24 Budget reports that George Mason University will collect over \$514M in tuition and fees from students, 66.32% of the total revenues. Not only is our money more than half of the budget but it represents an estimated increase of 3.62% despite the estimated increase in state appropriations of 22.47% to \$327M; for comparison UVA's estimated increase in state appropriations is 9.44%. George Mason University is requiring students to pay more to attend despite a massive boost in state funding, that students advocated for during their annual visits to Richmond during Mason Lobbies. Students worked hard to get the additional funding and our reward is no involvement in how the money is spent. If you value transparency and stewardship this should not sit well on your heart, please help provide students with the details of how their money is being spent or at least provide them a representative.

A good financial steward is transparent about how they spend their client's money, how would you feel if your wealth advisor did not respond to your request to see the equities that make up portfolio they have invested your money into? This has been my continual experience regarding tuition and fees. Many students have questions regarding the

39. Name: Malda Kocache Mason Affiliation: Faculty

Comment: Under no circumstances should political appointees or political operatives make decisions about student learning goals and course requirements. This kind of political interference in the classroom clearly violates foundational principles of shared governance, free inquiry, and academic freedom. Faculty, not political appointees, must set Mason's curriculum. Anything else is a structural violation of the freedom to teach and learn on campus.

40. Name: Julia Jarvis Mason Affiliation: Faculty

Comment: Faculty, not political appointees, must set Mason's curriculum. Anything else is a structural violation of the freedom to teach and learn on campus.”

41. Name: James H. Finkelstein Mason Affiliation: Professor Emeritus

Comment: I want to commend Chief Rowan for his report to the Board of Visitors regarding the Mason Police Department's investigation of the threats made against Professor Bethany Leteicq and their swift action to protect her academic freedom. In the current climate, it should not escape anyone's attention that perhaps the most aggressive protectors of academic freedom turn out to be Mason's law enforcement officers. I hope that the Board of Visitors will demonstrate its commitment to academic freedom in as demonstrably a manner as the Mason Police.

42. Name: Todd Mason La Porte Mason Affiliation: Faculty

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Comment: My name is Todd La Porte; I am a faculty member teaching at the Schar School here at GMU. I am concerned about recent Board actions with respect to possible limitations on the faculty's independence in curriculum development, course topics, reading selections and teaching approaches. Academic freedom is a cornerstone principle of American higher education, a principle that has made our education system the envy of the world. It is a beacon of freedom and dignity that all humans aspire to.

It is also the product in part here at Mason of years-long, faculty-led, collaborative processes, one outcome of which is the general education system, which includes a number of key areas that the faculty believe deserve foundational status in our teaching, as we assist in the pursuit of a healthy, fair and equitable society.

I urge you to resist efforts to undermine these principles and practices through over-reaching into curricular matters. The principles of the academic freedom are clear. Only faculty have the disciplinary expertise and professional backgrounds to set university curriculum. The proper role of the board is to champion the university and exert oversight over the President's office regarding the financial and operational health of the university.

Under no circumstances should political appointees or political operatives be making decisions about student learning goals and course requirements. This kind of political interference in the classroom clearly violates foundational principles of shared governance, free inquiry, and academic freedom. Once started, political interference in curricular matters does not stop, and leads inexorably to a deterioration of inquiry and discourse, ultimately resulting in second-rate thinking and loss of economic vitality and diminished freedom.

Faculty, not political appointees, must set Mason's curriculum. Anything else is a violation of the freedom to teach and learn on campus.