

**BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Meeting of
Tuesday, April 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, Dolly Oberoi, Robert Pence, Jeffrey Rosen, Charles Stimson, Farnaz Thompson and Robert Witeck.

ABSENT: Visitors Anjan Chimaladinne, James Hazel, Wendy Marquez and Nancy Prowitt.

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; Rose Pascarell, Vice President for University Life; David Burge, Vice President for Enrollment Management; Anne Gentry, University Counsel and Sarah Hanbury, Secretary pro tem.

I. Call to Order

Rector Blackman called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Rector Blackman stated that the board is accepting public comment at this session and that registration for making oral comments was open until 9:30 a.m. on Monday, March 29 through the form on the Board of Visitors website.

Twelve registrations for oral comments were received. Written public comments that were received will be made a part of the public record of this meeting. In addition, written comments will be accepted through the same form until the full board meeting adjourns today.

Rector Blackman welcomed Farnaz Thompson to the Board who is completing the term begun by Dorothy “Deecy” Gray.

II. Committee Appointment (ACTION ITEM)

Rector Blackman proposed that Visitor Thompson be appointed to the Development Committee and the Finance and Land Use Committee to complete Deecy Gray’s appointment. Visitor Burke **MOVED** the motion which was **SECONDED** by Visitor Stimson. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE.**

III. FY 2025 Financial Plan

Deb Dickenson, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, presented on the FY 2025 financial plan. Ms. Dickenson highlighted the following items:

- FY 2025 Financial Plan:
 - No action is being taken on the FY25 plan today as this is a planning item.
 - The finance plan proposal will be presented and voted on at the May 2, 2024 Board of Visitors meeting.
- Mason is Rising:
 - Mason continues to be the leader for diversity, innovation and social mobility.
 - Mason is Virginia’s largest public research university.
- Mason is Growing, presented by Rose Pascarell, Vice President for University Life:

- More than 16% of Virginian high school 2023 graduates applied to Mason.
- Spring out-of-state enrollment increased 3%.
- Mason is Opportunity:
 - Admission rate of 91% with a 70% six-year graduation rate.
- The Mason Impact:
 - Graduates choose to stay in the DMV area, thereby fueling the economy.
- Financial Aid, presented by David Burge, Vice President for Enrollment Management:
 - The government provides the most financial aid, followed by Mason.
 - In FY14 Mason returned 13% of tuition dollars back to its students with 24% budgeted for FY24.
 - 65% of Mason students receive some form of financial aid.
- Net Price:
 - Mason's average net price has been reduced by more than 17% since FY20 for those earning less than \$75K.
 - Those making \$76-\$110K saw a 12% reduction in net price.
- Commonwealth Budget Status, presented by Ms. Dickenson:
 - The state budget has not been finalized.
 - Final budget anticipated early spring but may stretch to June.
- Thank you:
 - Ms. Dickenson extended appreciation to Mason Student Government, Board of Visitors, Legislative Patron and Mason Leadership for participating in Mason Lobbies in February.
- State Appropriation per In-State Undergraduate (FTE):
 - Mason is still underfunded while being in the highest cost region.
 - The ratio of employees per in-state undergraduate at Mason's nearest peer institution is nearly double that of Mason's ratio.
 - Mason is contending for an increase in state appropriations.
 - Have proposed in the conference budget to receive affordable access for retention and tuition mitigation of \$11.5 million which will still leave Mason at a funding gap.
- SCHEV FY25 & FY26 E&G Recommendations:
 - SCHEV's recommendations were provided in January; however, the governor's and conference budgets were already in play.
- Mason Keeps Tuition Low:
 - Mason continues to prioritize access and affordability despite rising costs and operating in the most expensive region in the Commonwealth.
 - Have only raised tuition two times in five years which was done at a hardship to the university.
- Mason's Challenge:
 - Without equitable state support, tuition increases are needed to keep pace with the escalating cost of delivering quality education.
 - Compensation is 79% of Mason's E&G expense budget:
 - Expecting 3% increase from the conference budget and anticipate this could change. Hope to have an update at the May 2 BOV meeting.
 - While Mason achieved \$13 million in FY24 cost saving, a shortfall of \$21 million is projected.
- FY25 & FY26 Tuition Increases:
 - Proposing 3% in-state tuition increases for FY25 and FY26 to help close Mason's funding shortfall.
 - This approach will help students and families plan ahead and was discussed with the students at a tuition town hall which was sponsored by Student Senate on March 21.
- Tuition Recommendation:
 - If Mason receives the funding recommended by SCHEV, would consider not raising tuition in FY26.
- How a Tuition Dollar is Spent:

- Not spending enough in operations and maintenance as there is a lot of critical deferred maintenance.
- Visitor Brown inquired about the 11-cent shortfall and if it was received where would it be allocated. Please refer to the video for the specifics provided by Sharon Heinle, Vice President for Finance: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8557205/video/915702291>.
 - Visitor Brown requested seeing some of Mason's data trends over time for areas such as administrative costs, faculty instruction, operations and maintenance. Some of this information existed in the Fact Pact that was presented at the previous meeting and will be included in the meeting materials for May 2, 2024.
 - Visitor Peterson inquired whether Mason's acquisition of tier three delegation allowed the university to self-manage its funds. Ms. Dickenson clarified that it did not. He then asked if there is a specific number that the state uses that Mason could run to address the 11-cent shortfall and what those numbers are. Ms. Dickenson responded that Mason's funding disparity would be resolved, indicating that Mason would have earned approximately \$25-\$28 million in the past year if it were able to manage its own funds. For further details, please refer to the video: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8557205/video/915702291>,
 - Visitor Rosen inquired, if Mason were managing its funds, why it is thought the university would do better than the state is currently doing. Ms. Dickenson responded that the state is only investing a small portion and Mason would invest a higher amount of the reserve funds.
- How Tuition Supports Students:
 - Student Services:
 - Coaching & Advising Resources
 - Mental Health Services
 - Regional Campus Services
 - Such as the expansions of Mason Square and SciTech campuses.
 - Academic & Campus Life:
 - Faculty/Student Class Ratio
 - Student Programming & Activities
 - Enhanced Workforce Development
- Lecture Hall:
 - Minimal Update
- Science & Engineering Labs
 - Often rent space off campus.
- How Mandatory Student Fees Support Students presented by Rose Pascarell, Vice President of University Life:
 - A fee is assessed to every student based on the number of credits they are taking. It provides a set of services and activities that are available to all students.
- Mandatory Student Fee Recommendation:
 - 3% increase for all students, which translates to an actual cost of \$108 in addition to the fee, and is a one-year recommendation.
- How a Student Fee Dollar is Spent:
 - \$0.72 of the dollar goes directly to the students.
 - Visitor Brown inquired if the categories were constant year-over-year. Ms. Pascarell responded that the categories are pretty consistent, whereas the amount fluctuates.
 - Visitor Stimson inquired about the students' thoughts on the increase. Undergraduate Student Representative Paul Wyche responded that, of course, no student loves seeing a tuition and fee increase. Mr. Wyche noted that what's more on the students' minds is continuing the transparency of where their dollars are going and having the ability to choose where it goes via the university's fee committee.

- President Washington highlighted that regional inflation stands at 3.6% so the proposed 3% increase is lower than inflation.
- Mason Financial Support Resources:
 - A slide displaying the financial support resources available to students to assist them in figuring out how they can afford the increase was presented.
 - President Washington emphasized that the state's budget has not been finalized, and if Mason receives less funding than expected, the tuition and fee numbers will need to be reevaluated. He wanted it to be known that there could be a different set of numbers seen at the May meeting.
- Proposed Tuition & Fees:
 - Currently, Proposing a 3% tuition for two years and a one-year 3% fee increase.
 - Visitor Brown inquired about the awareness among all the Deans regarding the tuition and fee increases and whether they support them. President Washington responded that these increases are discussed during leadership team meetings, which the deans are members of. Please refer to the video recording for detailed information: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8557205/video/915702291>.
- Student & Board Engagement:
 - Regular Student Government Leadership Meetings
 - Student Government Hosted Town Hall: March 21, 2024
 - Parent & Family Council Meeting: March 21, 2024
 - Open Public Comment Portal
 - BOV Public Comment Session: April 2, 2024
 - BOV Meeting: May 2, 2024

Ms. Dickenson concluded her report.

Rector Blackman expressed gratitude to Ms. Dickenson and proceeded with the following announcements before transitioning to the public comment session:

- Noted that today is Visitor Rosen's birthday.
- Mason Vision Day is scheduled for May 4, 2024, providing an annual opportunity for the community to support causes at Mason. This year donors are able to select which cause(s) that resonate with them.
- Last week President Washington announced that, after careful consideration, Mason will not proceed with the baseball/cricket stadium on West Campus.

IV. Public Comments

There were 12 registrations for oral public comment and 55 written public comment submissions. **(ATTACHMENT 1)**. One oral comment was provided regarding the baseball/cricket stadium, four oral comments regarding Mason's curriculum, two oral comments on Palestine, and five registrants were no-shows. Please refer to the meeting's video recording for specifics: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8557205/video/915702291>.

Rector Blackman thanked the registrants for their comments. Visitor Brown requested the following items in response to some of the oral public comments:

- Mason Alum Brendan Brown provided oral comment regarding the baseball/cricket stadium **(ATTACHMENT 1)**. This prompted Visitor Brown to request the status of the FOIA litigation from the Office of General Counsel and the emails and attachments Mr. Brown sent to the Board of Visitors.
- Professor Bethany Letiecq provided oral comments regarding the Just Societies Core Curriculum. She detailed some of the targeted harassment she has experienced regarding her scholarship and thanked campus police, local police, and the administration for ensuring her and her family's safety. This prompted

Visitor Brown to request a brief update on the security provided to her, the outcome of their investigation, and overall, what measures are taken to protect faculty and staff.

V. Adjournment

Rector Blackman called for any additional business to come before the board. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 11:55 a.m.

Prepared by:

Sarah Hanbury
Secretary pro tem

Attachment 1: Public Comment Registrations (55 pages)

GMU Board of Visitors Full Board Meeting
April 2, 2024
Public Comment Registrations

1. Name: Maribeth B Malloy (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Proposed Cricket Stadium

GMU has failed to adequately address the traffic and parking situation that would result from the construction of a 10,000 seat cricket stadium. In 2017, the university commissioned a study to assess the potential of developing the West Campus. The conclusion at that time was that both Braddock Road and Route 123 would have to be improved before any development were to occur. That was long before the 10,000 seat cricket stadium was conceived. Why is that study being openly dismissed? Dr. Washington glibly states that none of those players are at the university today but just because the players have changed the conclusions remain. If one takes this tact then the churn that would occur with every administration change would cripple forward progress. Why is the BOV allowing these discussions re: cricket to occur without first addressing the traffic situation? A thorough traffic study by a reputable, independent consultant needs to be started before any contract is signed. And it cannot be Brailsford & Dunleavy due to a huge conflict of interest starting with Andrew Lieber.

2. Name: Maribeth B Malloy (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Proposed Cricket Stadium - Lack of Transparency by the Administration

The Concerned Citizens Have processed numerous FOIA requests and 90+% of them have expired with no response from the university. After taking GMU to court they now say there are two relevant documents but they now claim the information is exempted. The judge expressed concern that the documents, in totality, are exempt and has asked the university to provide a redacted set of documents. What is the university hiding and why did they not, in good faith and following up on the pledge of transparency, not make a redacted set of documents available? It appears the Administration is hiding and dissembling to meet their own secret needs. Why does the BOV allow and/or sanction this sort of opacity on a project with such potential for community impact?

3. Name: Maribeth B Malloy (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Proposed Cricket Stadium - Promise of Community Outreach

On February 14, 2024 Dr. Gregory Washington sent an open letter to the community. In that letter he promised outreach to the community. AS of the writing of this comment we are now 34 days from that pledge. the community outreach planned ties to existing land use meetings and will not happen before April 21, 2024 - more than two months after his letter. Why is this Administration holding off? Are they waiting to tell us they have already signed a contract (in essence, get over yourselves this is moving forward)? Delegate David Bulova has urged the university to hold face to face town halls immediately and not make it an after the fact scenario. Why is the BOV not demanding urgent, meaningful and frequent face to face dialogue with the community now?

4. Name: Maribeth B Malloy (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Proposed Cricket Stadium - Disadvantage to current county private businesses
These businesses have to pay property taxes on their private operations. Since this development is on state owned land it raises the question that Mr. Govil may be exempt from property taxes - as is Mason. What are the provisions for this private entity operating on state land to pay county property tax. Recently, Fairfax County proposed a 4% residential property tax increase due largely, per the County Executive, to a shrinking commercial tax base. Doesn't this sort of tax evasion for this one out of state business owner disadvantage every other commercial property owner in the county? Doesn't GMU look like the Bad facilitator in this scheme? Does GMU even believe that this is a fair and just picture to present as the largest public university in the Commonwealth to its' neighbors? Why is the BOV willing to take this black eye?

5. Name: Maribeth B Malloy (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member**Comment:** Proposed Cricket Stadium

If this project is to be a public/private partnership activity why isn't GMU using the statutory framework of detailed steps of execution as detailed in the PPAE statute?

Did the BOV agree to this on off developed framework, if you can call it that, being executed by the president's administration?

6. Name: Maribeth B Malloy (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member**Comment:** Proposed Cricket Stadium - Alignment with NCAA

Cricket is not an NCAA sport and the preliminary designs that have made it into the public domain do not show a baseball layout at all. Why are we supporting a billionaire from Maryland in his dream of building a cricket field in the DC area to support his personal enterprise? Baseball is an afterthought and was a way to seduce this administration into believing they will get something out of it. Who has detailed the costs for converting the field from baseball to cricket and back again? If those costs fall to the university it is a new line item in the AD budget. What does the cost/benefit analysis show for NCAA athletics at GMU? Public research shows this sort of conversion starts at \$85K per turn. Why does Mr. Govil go to DC as they recently received federal approval to develop the RFK site? That site already has public transportation readily available to meet the demands for 10,00 fans or more. I am sure the finances are not as lucrative as this exempt deal on state property. Has the BOV seen ALL of the operational costs with the new costs highlighted for this planned operation?

7. Name: Maribeth B Malloy (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member**Comment:** Proposed Cricket Stadium

Have all 16 members of the Board of Visitors been given the term sheet and Powerpoint presentation that was provided in the Dec. 14th closed session? How is it that only two documents were used to present this project with enough fidelity to call a meaningful vote? Why are those documents not made publicly available? Why doesn't the BOV call another meeting on this subject with the full board present to present and discuss the project in its entirety and then call for another vote?

8. Name: Geoff Keller (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: we have had several FOIAs that have expired with no response from the university. After taking them to court they now say there are now 2 documents but they claim the information is privileged. What are you guys hiding? Additionally, if this project is so great for students and community as Dr Washington says, why is it that he is going out of his way to bring this back to the board with full information?

9. Name: Geoff Keller (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Dr Washington sent a letter on February 14th stating he was going to have a lot more community outreach and involvement in the process. He has had one meeting with a small group only because he was forced into it by Delegate Helmer. Not a single community session has been scheduled to date. Dr Washington is trying to ram this thru without any transparency or community involvement. Worse, on the call with the smaller group he referred to the BOV as "political appointees" and went out of his way to tell us why he did not need to go back to the board for approval even though NOTHING was known when the original vote took place. Why is this project so secretive?

10. Name: Brendan Brown (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Comments will be provided in person. I intend to submit written comments as a separate supplemental to the BOV.

11. Name: David Marks (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: As a neighbor of the University, I am very concerned with the proposed Professional Cricket Stadium on the Mason Campus. I am hoping that there will be some reflection as to how this is going to affect the campus and the surrounding community per traffic and the environment, as well as the appropriateness of having a professional team using State land. Please be transparent with this process. If it is done right, is made public, is not rushed and takes into account the students' and community's concerns, it could be something wonderful! However, if it continues at this pace, it has the makings of a disaster. We are asking the BOV to have some oversight.

12. Name: Geoffrey Keller (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Can someone on the board please explain why there is NO mention of the word baseball in any planning documents including the final engineering drawing? How is this a transformational stadium for the baseball program when the drawing doesnt even show where the dugouts will be? You as a board have the responsibility to better understand what this project is and not hide behind a 7-0 vote on NOTHING. the vote was made without an agreement even in place. How can you not demand to see all pertinent information to at a minimum understand how the field transforms to baseball stadium. Rumors are it will cost the school 87K every time the field is changed from cricket to baseball and vice versa. Who is paying for that? How is that sustainable? and more importantly how can you as a board allow that to proceed without knowing these details?

13. Name: Nic Nusbaumer (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: In the February BOV meeting, a Board member asked how faculty can guarantee "A" grades for conservative students in a Just Societies-tagged course. How can faculty equitably guarantee any grade for any student?

14. Name: Tina Beveridge (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I left a 20 year career as a public school teacher to share my knowledge and love of learning with students who wish to become teachers themselves. Part of what led me to a Ph.D. was the idea that I would have time to apply my practical firsthand knowledge and pursue new areas of knowledge in how we teach, what we teach, and why we teach. This board of visitors has neither the practical nor the evidence-based knowledge to make curricular decisions for George Mason University. We deserve a teaching environment free from political interference, and this board of visitors has overstepped and intruded on that academic freedom.

15. Name: Kimberly I Grindle (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: I oppose the construction of a cricket/baseball stadium on Mason's campus due to the increased traffic congestion it would produce on already congested roads.

16. Name: Joseph O'Leary (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Alumni

Comment: A large cricket stadium is not needed nor wanted on GMUs campus. Take a poll of existing students and ask how many of them know the rules to play cricket. If you want to energize your student base, bring a football team on with a stadium that can be used for swap meets, concerts, and community events,

17. Name: Edmond Ebeid (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Traffic and Parking – in 2017 the university commissioned a traffic study tied to the development of the West Campus? The conclusion at that time was that both Braddock Road and Route 123 would have to be improved before development could begin. That was before a 10,000 seat cricket stadium was even conceived. Why is that study being openly dismissed? Just because the player may have changed, the conclusions remain. Why is the BOV allowing these discussions to occur and progress without first addressing the traffic situation?

18. Name: Geoff Keller (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Why are all other colleges able too build athletic stadiums without needing to house professional sports franchises on their campus in order to do so? Why is the BOV just taking the easy way out by allowing the school to accept a check from a billionaire who is only building his stadium here because it's the only college willing to hand him land and a shortcut to do so? If you want a new baseball stadium do it like every other university int he country does...raise money from community and alumni and build an actual baseball stadium.

19. Name: Jeffrey Grim (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I have watched the past few board of visitors meetings and noticed and increased scrutiny on any program, initiative, or organizational structure related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. I'm hoping these concerns are sincere and not part of a national, ideologically political agenda. Through public comments at the previous two board meetings, I haven't heard a precise reason why board members are skeptical. I would be interested to know if board members are skeptical or seem to dislike diversity of people and identities or the inclusion of diverse faculty/staff/students, or the equitable action universities can take to create equal opportunities and outcomes for faculty/staff/students. Is it all three or just one? More precision from the BOV would be helpful in order to create shared understanding to move forward.

20. Name: Geoff Keller (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: This project is being deemed transformational by the GMU administration as well as Sanjay Govil. It's going to transform Fairfax! If this project is going to have that large of an impact on the community it is a dereliction of duty that the ENTIRE board is not on the record on this subject matter. It should not be rammed thru on a 7 person vote during a special session with minimal data available for consideration. The Board of Visitors will suffer damage to its reputation should this project proceed without any further review by the board. At that point, perhaps Dr Washington is correct in saying you are nothing more than political appointees.

21. Name: Katherine Reeves (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: In regards to the proposed cricket stadium, why is the BOV allowing these discussions to occur and progress without first addressing the traffic situation?

22. Name: Edmond Ebeid (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Building a stadium at this time is irresponsible without going through the proper procedures. Having a traffic study done is paramount as well as a plan for spill over parking in the nearby neighborhoods. Furthermore it's in bad faith that a project of this magnitude not involve the neighbors regardless of GMU's right. This is a stain on the University, not because of a cricket sport being elevated but the manor in which GMU has engaged in this project. There is time to fix this. Please take a step back and evaluate what you are doing in a more considerate and logical manor.

23. Name: Alisha Gardner (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Good afternoon. I am a fellow community member who is extremely concerned about what is happening at GMU. I have lived in the area for 8 years. I have enjoyed living near GMU. My children and I have enjoyed walking the campus and attending sporting events. Having moved from Texas, where we lived near another university, we chose our home knowing what living near a university meant and how it would allow us to be a part of that community.

I first become concerned when a neighbor stumbled upon learning of the professional cricket field that was seemingly imminent to be constructed. Concerned how this would impact the university and the traffic around our neighborhood I attended the Feb meeting of the BOV to gather information in the form of a public discussion. Until I was made aware that the BOV had closed the option of public comment (odd since time was allowed for this at all previous meetings).

It was at that meeting, and upon subsequent investigation, that I realized most of the BOV is also in the dark about this venture. While my concern was initially about the impact of this professional stadium and the lack of it supporting GMU's mission I am now concerned about what is going on under the table at GMU.

Lack of Transparency by the Administration – we have had several FOIAs that have expired with no response from the university. After taking them to court they have said there are now 2 documents but they claim the information is privileged. What are you guys hiding? Why does the BOV sanction this sort of opacity and dissembling.

Who is benefiting from this “deal” that is so good for the university, it is being keep hidden.

Why is President Washington so unwilling to have a discussion or disclose information related to this deal.

Why does the university continue to contradict it's own messaging? The PR guy says one thing, President Washington says yet another, Washington Freedom & Govil say yet another? If a lease is already signed why so many discrepancies?

Why was this vote done in record time, during the holidays, without the majority of the board present or voting.

I ask, again, for transparency, community outreach, student outreach (as they clearly don't support this deal) an understanding of how this supports the university's mission and the the BOV hold another vote.

This does not support higher education, the university mission, the students, the baseball team (and shame on you all for trying to sell that it does) the community or the state of VA.

What are you hiding?

Thank you,

Alisha Gardner

24. Name: Maribeth Malloy (Written Comment) Mason Affiliation: Community Member

Comment: As of today, March 23, 2024 it has been 38 days since President Washington stated in his open letter to hold a series of meetings for community engagement on the cricket stadium issue. There are no special, direct, town hall type meetings on the schedule. Rather, the administration is using district land use meetings as a forum. Those meetings already have agendas and this is an attempt to minimize the time for face to face discussion on this project.

If this is how one executes responses for a highly charged community issue maybe Dr.

Washington and his staff need some training. Deflection and not wishing to be held accountable to your neighbors is not a good look.

Why doesn't the BoV direct him to hold numerous town hall meetings where this cricket stadium is the Only agenda item. The transparency promised does not exist.

25. Name: Maribeth Malloy (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Why the optics of a relationship with Mr. Govil and Cricket is Bad for GMU
Mr. Govil is a major investor in MLC. He will make money from TV streaming rights and from the partnership with Betway. Betway has been confirmed as the official partner of Major League Cricket. The Betway App will be live around the world during matches all from GMU property. Is this the face of the university that we want to be seen worldwide? This does nothing to enhance the academics for which the institution was founded and wishes to be known.

In addition, there is growing concern from mental health experts that student gambling is leading to a much larger societal and mental health crisis. Why would GMU want to be publicly associated with this endeavor? If the university truly cares about its student, they would back away now.

Why college students are at greater risk of gambling addiction

Gambling addiction affects people from all backgrounds and across all ages, but it is an even bigger threat to college students. Adolescents of college age are uniquely likely to engage in impulsive or risky behaviors because of a variety of developmental factors, leaving them more susceptible to take bigger risks and experience adverse consequences.

It's no secret that drinking alcohol is prevalent on college campuses, and this can increase the likelihood of other risk-taking behaviors such as gambling. Like other addictive behaviors, gambling can stimulate the reward centers of the brain, which makes it more difficult to stop even if someone is building up losses.

*The Conversation 2/11/24

26. Name: Gayle Fuller (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: I'm writing again to urge you to reconsider any decision to allow a profession sports team of ANY kind to use state school property for commercial purposes. It's a very BAD precedent to set for the entire state and is allowing the owner to circumvent all the usual procedures, studies and permits normally required. It's not fair to the citizens, the county or the state. There are valid reasons for the normal channels to be honored. You are allowing "cheating" of the system by allowing this to happen! Please, govern fairly in this matter. The reputation of the University is at stake!

Gordon and Gayle Fuller

North Hill residents

27. Name: Gerald (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Thanks to the GMU Board of Visitors for this opportunity to voice my opinion and concerns about the proposed cricket stadium on the campus of George Mason University. The primary reason for George Mason partnering with the owner of a cricket team was to make it possible for the George Mason baseball team to obtain a lighted field for baseball. At least this is what we have been told. This plan comes at a cost: including but not limited to more traffic and more noise etc. especially to the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Has anyone considered modifying the women's softball stadium, which is already lighted, so that it can accommodate baseball as well as softball? Not all baseball games are played at nighttime, and neither are all softball games. The existing baseball field could still be used for day baseball games. Scheduling could be done such that the night games for baseball would not conflict with the night games for softball

Regarding the layout of the field, conceptually one could start with a baseball field and then superimpose a softball field upon this. One such configuration would place home plate for softball and home plate for baseball at the same location. The infield for the softball field would consume less space than the infield for the baseball field meaning that part of the outfield for the softball version would be on the edge of the infield of the baseball version. Some adjustments would be required when switching from baseball to softball and vice versa; however, this is also the case for switching from cricket to baseball and vice versa.

Wouldn't this be a less intrusive plan?

In my thirty-two years on the Mason faculty, I overlapped with President George Johnson, President Alan Merten and President Angel Cabrera. None of these presidents ever proposed anything nearly as objectionable to the surrounding residential neighborhoods as what is being proposed here. I encourage the board of visitors to reconsider this proposal.

Gerald Cook
Earle C. Williams Professor Emeritus
Electrical and Computer Engineering

28. Name: Jonathan Strauch (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: Education is the gaining of knowledge through exposure to other opinions, other cultures, and other perspectives. When limits are put on that exposure, what is bred are people who remain afraid of others unlike themselves. In a society full of fearful people, as demonstrated through recent political upheaval, this limitation is especially dangerous. Moreover, education and government must remain separated. When public education is tailored to personal opinion, the only thing being taught is adherence to those opinions. The students who may have become great thinkers, scholars, and artists are regulated to a predetermined syllabus. However, free thought has always won in the end and is bigger than internal disputes.

29. Name: Tara McDade (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: NCAA rules prohibit student athletes from gambling. However, at GMU, the administration is seeking to partner with a man who has a vested interest in the Betway gaming platform which will be actively used worldwide when his cricket team is on Mason property. The big question is why?

The President of the NCAA, Charlie Baker, so concerned about the gambling issue, recently conducted and has released a survey with his findings. The universities actions appear to be a complete breakdown in the GMU Athletic Department alignment with NCAA interests and RULES for student-athletes. The AD and Assistant AD are actively promoting this project under the guise this will benefit the NCAA baseball athletes.

This project seems to be the complete opposite of the ethical interests of the students of GMU. Why would the BOV sanction pursuit of this project with these glaring gaps in ethical operations? This entire project needs to be readdressed and revoted by the BOV with all the FACTS. Transparency to your own BOV is required so they can make decisions for the best interest of the students.

30. Name: Tara McDade (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Restructuring Act developed this Act to be more autonomous and gave up some state funding and yet Dr. Washington continues to complain that he isn't getting his fair share of state funding. You CAN'T have it both ways.

Is this activity in accordance with 23.1 - 1009

The building of a professional cricket stadium on state property has many features that raise potential legal and ethical questions that which the university administration has not addressed publicly. This activity appears to have benefits to neither the student body nor the university writ large as follows:

- While it remains unclear what framework GMU is using to potentially execute this project they have referenced 23.1 – 1009 A reading of this code cites that:
 - Covered institutions; operational authority; projects
 - A. Each covered institution may acquire, plan, design, construct, own, rent as landlord or tenant, operate, control, remove renovate, enlarge, equip and maintain, directly or through stock or nonstock corporations or other entities, any project. Such project may be owned or operated by the institution, other persons, or jointly, by such institution and other persons and may be operated within or outside the Commonwealth as long as
 - (i) the operations of such project are necessary or desirable to assist the institution in carrying out its public purposes within the Commonwealth and
 - (ii) any private benefit resulting to any such other private person from any such project is merely incidental to the public benefit of such project.

There is no question that Mr. Govil and the Washington Freedom will NOT be earning any monies merely incidentally. The entire premise is for that private sports franchise to earn money. What the Mason share of operating income that is to be gained is unknown at this time and presumably part of on-going negotiations. In either case, this money is planned not incidental. In addition, Mr. Govil is a major investor in MLC. He will make money from TV streaming rights and from the partnership with Betway. The Betway App will be live around

the world during matches all from GMU property. Is this the face of the university that we want to be seen worldwide? This does nothing to enhance the academics for which the institution was founded and wishes to be known.

Our close neighbor, UMD, recently cancelled its gaming contract after reviews show the deleterious effect on students where gambling is available on campus. Other institutions have followed suit. Gambling has been cancelled at many universities due to the impact on the student body

Our close neighbor, UMD, recently cancelled its gaming contract after reviews show the deleterious effect on students. Other institutions have followed suit. Gambling has been cancelled at many universities due to the deleterious impact on the student body.

With all of the other bad press the university is facing, potential loss of accreditation at the law school, on-going DoE investigation, DEI issues, etc. does this board want to allow another questionable project to be undertaken that has the potential to sully the school's reputation further?

31. Name: Bethany Letiecq (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: My comments were sent via email.

32. Name: Timothy Gibson (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: 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.

33. Name: Samirah Alkassim (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I'm concerned about the interference of BOV appointees in curriculum development and decisions at George Mason University, particularly with regard to the Just Societies course designation. The BOV members are not experts in our fields, nor have they any experience teaching our subjects at the higher ed level. They should not be interfering in the curricular development of George Mason, as they are not qualified by their credentials to determine whether we are meeting student learning outcomes. There are designated administrative faculty and teaching faculty who are qualified and hired to do this. The BOV's role is to support and promote the university, not meddle where they have no experience. Such meddling strongly suggests political agendas that are at odds with the principles of academic freedom in higher education.

34. Name: Danny Gardner (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Hello BOV of GMU. I am extremely concerned about how this BOV's handling, or lack there of, the proposal of this professional cricket stadium and all the inconsistencies. As a board, you were put in place to hold GMU leadership accountable. There are so many questions surrounding this apparent vote. Have all 16 members of the Board of Visitors been given the fact sheet referenced as available at the December Special Session with the terms that allow the administration to execute a ground lease? Why is that document not publicly available? Why does the BOV not call another meeting on this subject with the full board present to discuss and re-vote? Who is benefitting from this on the board? Why is the board not insisting these documents or a discussion. Are you aware of the partnership with Major League Cricket and Betway? Surely the BOV wasn't presented with this information. Are you comfortable allowing gambling to be promoted & marketed to college students? I urge the board to demand another vote that is accompanied with ALL documents necessary to make an informed decision. I also urge the BOV to insist that there be meaningful community involvement. I also ask that you provide a reasonable explanation of how a professional cricket stadium supports the mission of this University. Thank you for your time.

35. Name: Brian Andrews (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: GMU has stated that the partnership between GMU and The Washington Freedom is an "extraordinary opportunity" as a "revenue generating" venture. Without having a formal business plan in play, GMU and the BOV are not using good business practices to evaluate the financial gain or loss based on the proposed real estate development opportunity. Let's think this partnership thru so that GMU has their interests on the table in a formalized agreement with The Washington Freedom. Don't build it and figure it out later! With that said, how, when, and how much does both The Washington Freedom and GMU make in this partnership? What's the ROI for GMU?

36. Name: Brian Andrews (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:**

Comment: How does the "average student" at GMU, that is not a member of the GMU baseball team, get to "USE" this cricket/baseball field and the stadium? GMU promotes the idea of the lure/recruitment for students to attend GMU as a result of having this cricket stadium. It's worth noting that the cricket season for the Washington Freedom is during the summer months when the students are not in session and not on campus. How is that "enhancing their athletic experience at GMU"?

37. Name: Brian Andrews (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: President Washington stated in the Teams Meeting on March 12th that there would be a traffic/parking study performed for this stadium in the design stage and before the Notice to Proceed with construction. The 2017 VDOT traffic study was also discussed and was to be considered along with pending traffic/parking study. Mr. Washington asked the people on that call to "keep him accountable". What is the status of those studies?

38. Name: Nick Sorden (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: The Board of Visitors' meeting notes indicate a projected shortfall of \$25M-\$35M for FY24, with "Market Compensation" cited as a contributory factor. Additionally, The George Mason University Antonin Scalia Law School recently received a public notice of being out of compliance with ABA accreditation standards due to inadequate funding. Despite this, leadership compensation at GMU has increased, while there are cuts to core educational programs and increases in tuition costs. This raises questions about prioritizing resources towards administrative compensation over the educational mission.

Board of Visitors meeting records indicate a disconcerting trend: a 6% increase in revenues is overshadowed by an 11% rise in expenditures, primarily driven by compensation. It is critical to note the juxtaposition of escalating administrative pay against the backdrop of reduced funding for academic programs. Concurrently, there is a strategic pivot towards commercial real estate development as a novel revenue stream. Residents should not be financially exploited to serve the administration's desire for compensation increases.

The pursuit of becoming a commercial real estate developer to replace revenues, particularly in partnership with external commercial entities like Washington Freedom Cricket and Mr. Sanjay Govil, without adequate community and regulatory scrutiny, appears to be a deviation from the university's core mission and potential misuse of its tax-exempt status.

39. Name: Nick Sorden (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: The tax-exempt status of public universities is intended to support their educational and public service missions, not to facilitate commercial ventures that do not directly contribute to these goals. The partnership with Washington Freedom Cricket, aimed at developing a stadium on state property, contravenes this principle, potentially diverting taxpayer funds and benefits to commercial interests.

The university is entrusted with a solemn duty under the public trust doctrine to safeguard the stewardship of public lands, ensuring these assets are managed with integrity and foresight for the collective benefit of the community and future generations. University land was not granted for the purpose of enriching commercial entities.

The privilege of tax exemption is expressly designated for educational purposes and must not be extended or conferred upon commercial entities. Furthermore, it is of considerable concern that GMU has elected to divert these advantages to a business beyond state lines, effectively channeling funds derived from county and state taxpayers to non-local interests.

40. Name: Nick Sorden (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: The approval process for the stadium deal, based on incomplete due diligence (as noted in your 2/22/24 BOV meeting), indicates significant governance issues within the university. This rushed decision-making process, without thorough examination or community consultation, undermines public trust and the university's accountability to its stakeholders, including Virginia taxpayers.

The expedited manner in which the land lease agreement has been conducted raises serious concerns about the university's governance and due diligence processes. This deal appears to circumvent the rigorous and transparent procedures that are standard for commercial real estate developments in Fairfax County and the state. Ordinarily, such developments are subject to extensive review, including environmental impact assessments, community input sessions, and adherence to zoning regulations — all designed to ensure that the public's interests are safeguarded and the developments serve the greater good.

The apparent fast-tracking of this agreement suggests a departure from these customary practices, which serve as critical checks and balances in public land use. The lack of comprehensive analysis and the haste with which the agreement is being pushed forward undermine the principles of responsible governance. They also potentially shortchange the public from the due process that is their right, particularly when it involves the utilization of land held in public trust.

Furthermore, the seeming avoidance of established Fairfax County and state policies, which are in place to ensure equitable and sustainable development, sets a concerning precedent. It implies that the university, a steward of public resources, is willing to forgo the usual safeguards and community engagement that give voice to the residents and stakeholders most impacted by such projects. This deviation from standard protocol casts doubt on the transparency and accountability of the university's decision-making and calls into question the long-term implications of this haste for the public good.

41. Name: Nick Sorden (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: The apparent lack of transparency, as evidenced by contradictory statements regarding the temporary nature of the stadium and the lack of public discourse, has led to considerable community concern. The university's efforts to downplay the project's impact and the discrepancies in public communications have further eroded trust.

Before January 29, 2024, there was a conspicuous absence of the term "temporary" in all discourse concerning the stadium by Sanjay Govil and President Washington. In various interviews, Mr. Govil consistently failed to describe the stadium as temporary, while the Washington Freedom Cricket's digital presence suggests a permanent home venue for 12,000 spectators. Following public dissent, President Washington and Paul Allvin shifted their narrative to label the stadium as "temporary" and asserted that "Nothing has been signed." Contrary to these claims, the Board of Visitors' records reveal that an MOU was executed as early as December 2022.

Additionally, there have been instances of President Washington providing state legislators with conflicting information regarding the stadium's capacity and its temporary nature. The proposed seating capacities for the stadium have been notably inconsistent, fluctuating significantly with figures ranging from 3,000 to 5,000, then escalating to 10,000 and 12,000. The large-scale infrastructure changes required for this "temporary" stadium, including the destruction of existing facilities (turf fields, parking lots, lighting, retention ponds) and the impact on local ecosystems, raise questions about the university's long-term intentions and environmental and financial stewardship.

42. Name: Nick Sorden (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: The official renderings of the proposed stadium, conspicuously devoid of any markings of a baseball diamond, further accentuate the concerns surrounding the project's true intent and transparency. This omission is particularly striking when juxtaposed with assertions from Major League Cricket commentators, who have critically examined the feasibility of hosting both baseball and cricket in a singular venue. Their analysis yields a clear verdict: to conduct cricket appropriately and to its fullest potential, a dedicated cricket-specific venue is indispensable, with the implication being that cricket must take precedence in planning and design.

This cricket-centric perspective, as voiced by experts in the field, casts doubt on the facility's purported multi-use nature as equally suited for baseball. It suggests that the stadium, as currently envisioned, may not accommodate a genuine dual-sport functionality but is primarily focused on cricket. Such a scenario would indicate that the dialogue and documentation presented to the public, which may have painted a picture of a shared-space athletic complex, are not fully aligned with the professional insights or the architectural plans.

The absence of a baseball diamond in the formal plans, combined with the professional commentary, raises significant questions about the veracity of the university's communication with its stakeholders. It suggests a possible gap between the university's public statements regarding the stadium's purpose and the underlying planning that has taken place. This disconnect is cause for scrutiny, as it may reflect a broader issue of governance where the

university's actions do not fully correspond with its public narrative, thus necessitating a more transparent and accountable approach to this development.

43. Name: Nick Sorden (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: I urge the Board of Visitors to publicly reverse course on the stadium deal and any further development plans that prioritize commercial interests over the university's educational mission and its responsibilities to the community.

I call for a commitment to transparency and open dialogue with all stakeholders, particularly the families living adjacent to the Fairfax campus, to ensure that future development projects align with the university's mission and contribute positively to the community. Your efforts thus far have shown a complete lack of care for the neighbors that support your mission.

The decisions made today will have lasting impacts on George Mason University's legacy, its relationship with the community, and its ability to fulfill its educational mission. Continuing on the current path will lead to irreparable reputational harm to the university. It is imperative that the university reassesses its priorities, governance processes, and commitment to its core values to restore trust and ensure a sustainable future that benefits both the institution and the broader community it serves.

44. Name: Nick Sorden (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: As a concerned community member, I am compelled to ask whether the media attention and public scrutiny related to the cricket stadium is something that GMU wishes to attract as an educational institution. We have repeatedly raised valid questions about the appropriateness of a public university exploiting its tax-exempt status to develop a professional sports venue and the potential risks and drawbacks associated with such a venture. Leading Virginia lawmakers have stripped plans for a new Wizards and Capitals arena from the state budget, blocking Gov. Glenn Youngkin's stadium plans.

I understand that the university is facing financial challenges and is exploring new revenue streams. However, I strongly believe that GMU must carefully consider whether this stadium project aligns with its core mission, values, and long-term interests. The board must ask itself if the potential benefits of this endeavor outweigh the risks to GMU's reputation, relationship with the local community, and the ability to focus on the primary purpose of education and research.

If, as Mr. Paul Allvin has indicated in news interviews, no binding agreements have been signed, then I believe it is not too late for the board to reconsider its position. I respectfully urge the board to withdraw from the stadium project publicly and instead focus efforts on rebuilding trust and fostering a more positive and collaborative relationship with your neighbors and the broader community. As the Wizards and Capitals stadium failure illustrates, your decision is not in step with public opinion on utilizing state funds to support professional sports teams.

45. Name: Nick Sorden (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Major League Cricket (MLC) has announced a partnership with global online betting and gaming brand Betway for the competition's inaugural season. Betway will be the official sponsor, and the season will be known as "Powered by Betway." The BOV should carefully consider whether online betting and gambling centered around a professional sports team is a positive message on campus.

Gambling addiction risks: Betway will provide "live data and odds for betting on every ball of the competition." Promoting easily accessible sports betting on campus could lead to gambling addiction issues among students. A public university is responsible for prioritizing student well-being and should avoid enabling or endorsing activities that could lead to harmful addictive behaviors.

Integrity concerns: The partnership aims to "protect the integrity of the game" by monitoring betting patterns for potential match-fixing. However, by promoting gambling, especially on a college campus, the university could be seen as implicitly endorsing an activity that has the potential to undermine the integrity of sports. This could tarnish the university's reputation and raise ethical concerns.

Financial risks for students: College students often have limited financial resources and may be more susceptible to the allure of quick money through gambling. Promoting betting on campus could lead to students risking money they can't afford to lose, potentially impacting their financial stability and academic performance. A public university should prioritize financial literacy and responsible decision-making rather than encouraging gambling.

Conflict with educational mission: A public university's primary mission is to provide education and foster personal growth. Promoting gambling on campus could be considered contradictory to this mission, as it shifts focus away from academic pursuits and towards activities that may not align with the university's educational goals.

I respectfully urge the board to consider publicly withdrawing from the stadium project and instead focusing on rebuilding trust and fostering a more positive and collaborative relationship with our neighbors and the broader community.

46. Name: Nichole Smith (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Hello. My name is Nichole Smith and I am a student at George Mason University. I am deeply concerned with the undue influence of the BOV on the JUST Societies classes within Mason and overall with the manipulation that the Board is attempting to exert over the classes and the syllabi that are set by the professors of their own classrooms. The classroom itself is an A and B conversation between the professors and the students, and the Board itself should C its way out of it. These attempts of interference are not only a gross over-reach from the Board, it is dangerous. All political interference from the Board must halt and professors should be allowed to teach to the syllabus that they have created in accordance with their own standards, not the Board.

47. Name: Robert Malloy (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: I will speaking in regards to the West Campus development. I will provide my written comments by April 1st.

48. Name: Christopher Lowder (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I'm am writing in support of the expertise and knowledge that Mason have in creating curriculum that prepare students to succeed while at Mason and who bring these expertise into Virginia. Mason faculty, staff, and students understand the qualifications of what is needed to currently be successful global innovators and entrepreneurs in today's global economy. The work put into the just societies courses is just one example of extraordinary efforts to lead the country in creating a curriculum that is asked for and is needed. Students want to enroll in universities who offer these courses, and graduates with this knowledge are able to succeed. This success, of course, has economic benefits for the Commonwealth, with increased innovators who create new jobs and work to exemplify the global level status that any other state would invest in to pursue. Please listen to the faculty who are explaining why these classes are important and how relevant their expertise is.

49. Name: Alex Zukas (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Emeritus Professor of History, National University, San Diego, CA

Comment: The principles of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) are clear. Having served as the President of the California Conference of the AAUP (2016-2018), I know that 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.

In the past 30 years, GMU has become an economic engine for both Northern Virginia and the entire state, helping students become successful professionals and well-rounded citizens ready to act. The Board has played a key role in this success by following its own bylaws, staying in its lane, respecting the expertise of faculty, exerting oversight over the President's office, and serving as a champion for the university with outside constituencies. If the Board begins to reverse faculty curricular decisions for clearly political reasons, it risks jeopardizing the university's reputation and squandering its history of growth and success.

50. Name: Ted Kinnaman (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I urge the Board not to involve itself in creating or revising University curriculum. All curriculum at Mason goes through a rigorous, multi-step process of approval. In addition, we must vouch for the integrity of our educational program to SCHEV and to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. In short, we know what we are doing, and we do it well. Please respect our expertise.

51. Name: Darcy Healy (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Parent

Comment: Have local officials, not tied to the cricket owner, conducted independent demographic, road and noise pollution assessments? Can you guarantee that local tax payers will not foot the bill for additional police support for traffic control and crime control? I just need to follow the money to understand that GMU wants to expand their international student body by enticing students with a cricket stadium at great profit for the cricket owner and GMU. The Fairfax community does not need to accommodate your plan if it negatively impacts our way of life. How about the cricket owner promise to chip in 5 percent of revenue annually to prevent wear and tear of our roads? Thank you.

52. Name: Karen Foltz (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: 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.

53. Name: Michele Greet (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: 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.

54. Name: Ahsan Chowdhury (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: 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. Political appointees are not qualified academics, they have no training to judge the work of academics

55. Name: Darbyshire Burge (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: When considering the projected raise in tuition, although it is never ideal for students to have to pay more, I know for myself and many students like me that if avoiding or lessening an increase in cost comes at the price of cutting funding to the already threatened DEI support programs- I would far rather have the programs and pay more. The draw of GMU as an institution comes from the diversity of community and the support systems in place which uplift a variety of marginalized identities that make up GMU's student population. Without these in place, it makes students like me less able/willing to further our education with GMU when we could seek out institutions that better serve our needs by having these supportive structures in place. If it comes to it, I know that I am willing to pay more for support structures that benefit me and my fellow students; I know others share my sentiment. And, ultimately, I believe you will see a negative impact on student attendance and/or retention if these programs are defunded- counterintuitive to the funding issue at hand. Consider how heavily the marketing for GMU relies upon its status as the "#1 in Virginia for Diversity" and how a loss of student diversity support through DEI programs could impact the university's public face in conjunction with that marketing.

56. Name: Kheira Bekkadja (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: n/a

57. Name: Virginia Hoy (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: My name is Virginia Hoy and I have been teaching at Mason for the last 16 years. I want to express my deep concern about the politically inspired questioning of the Just Societies flags on some of the Mason Core courses. This appears to be a clear affront to language in the university's Faculty Handbook, section 2.11.1, that states faculty have "the right to unrestricted exposition of subjects (including controversial questions) within one's field and professional obligations," and well within the Handbook's emphasis on the role of a university, which is "the critical examination of ideologies and institutions." The concept of Just Societies would seem to be in compliance with such an examination. It should also be pointed out that the entire Mason Core was approved by the Board whose members recognized its merit. At this point in time the courses are in the pipeline for fall and beyond with the blessings of those earlier Board members who recognized that faculty have the final say in the creation of curricula. It is also worth noting that Mason Core requirements represent a small number of courses and that students must take to earn their degrees and that Just Societies represents an even smaller number of the 120 credits students need to graduate. The Board should be conscious of the message the criticism of these classes sends: that they would impose their own ideology in opposition to the mandate of a university committed to the free expression of its faculty.

58. Name: Patrick Willette Healey (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: 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 of Visitors 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.

59. Name: todd cryblskey (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: will provide my comment in person.

60. Name: William Keen (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: Title: Unveiling the True Agenda: A Critique of Conservatism and Capitalism at George Mason University

Introduction:

Visitor Cully Stimson's quote serves as a catalyst for deeper examination, highlighting the tension between diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and conservative ideologies at George Mason University (GMU). However, upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that

the conversation transcends DEI, shedding light on a broader agenda of spreading conservatism and stifling change within the institution.

Shifting Focus:

Rather than solely attributing GMU's challenges to DEI, it's essential to recognize the underlying currents of conservatism permeating the university's culture. This agenda manifests in various facets, including the composition of the Board of Visitors (BOV) and the influence of external organizations like the Heritage Foundation.

Viewing Students through a Capitalist Lens:

The BOV's perspective on students mirrors a capitalist framework, reducing them to mere products and faculty to workers. This capitalist mindset prioritizes economic returns over the intrinsic value of individuals, perpetuating a culture of commodification within the university.

Lindsey Burke and the Anti-DEI Narrative:

Visitor Lindsey Burke's alignment with the Heritage Foundation's anti-DEI stance epitomizes the clash between conservative ideology and inclusive principles. Her sentiments echo a broader agenda to undermine DEI efforts and maintain the status quo of conservatism at GMU.

Responding to Conservative Agendas:

While conservatism finds a stronghold at GMU, it's crucial to question why certain ideologies are prioritized over others. The university's history reveals a pattern of elevating conservative voices while marginalizing alternative perspectives. This imbalance stifles genuine intellectual discourse and limits students' exposure to diverse viewpoints.

The Role of Education:

A university should serve as a battleground of ideas, where students are exposed to a spectrum of beliefs and encouraged to form their own opinions. However, the dominance of conservatism undermines this principle, hindering the exploration of alternative ideologies such as socialism or liberal approaches to law.

Conclusion:

The struggle at GMU extends beyond DEI, encompassing a broader battle for intellectual diversity and academic freedom. To truly fulfill its educational mission, the university must transcend the constraints of conservatism and capitalism, fostering an environment where all ideas are welcomed and critically examined. Only then can GMU uphold its commitment to inclusivity and genuine academic inquiry.

61. Name: Jill Mobley (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Thank you for holding off on the stadium venture at this time for the good of the student body and the community. George Mason, as an institution of learning not conducted for profit, is the beneficiary of a Constitutional tax exemption when its property is primarily used for literary, scientific, or educational purposes. This venture would have been an engagement in a for-profit activity with the result in denying student access to parking services, when many are commuters. There was no net benefit to students or the community. Thank you for tabling the stadium.

62. Name: Jena Chanaa (Oral Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: Will be delivered orally

63. Name: Kelby Gibson (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:**

Comment: As both a graduate student and an instructor at GMU, I trust in the years-long, faculty-led, collaborative process that produced the Just Societies flag. The process of setting and approving curriculum must be led by Mason's faculty. Only faculty members have the expertise and years of experience to develop and approve learning goals and courses. This kind of political interference from the Board threatens the success and reputation of GMU as a world-class educational institution. In the past 30 years, GMU has become an economic engine for both Northern Virginia and the entire state, helping students become successful professionals and well-rounded citizens ready to act. The Board has played a key role in this success by following its own bylaws, staying in its lane, respecting the expertise of faculty, exerting oversight over the President's office, and serving as a champion for the university with outside constituencies. If the Board begins to reverse faculty curricular decisions for clearly political reasons, it risks jeopardizing the university's reputation and squandering our history of growth and success.

Finally, it would be irresponsible to delay implementation of the Just Societies flag at this late hour. Students are registering for fall classes as we speak, and faculty are designing lessons, creating assignments, and creating course materials. A decision to delay would throw many of our students' academic plans, and faculty livelihoods, into disarray. Please listen to the students, alumni, community members, staff, and faculty who are all asking you to uphold the principles of academic freedom and shared governance which have allowed the university to thrive. Please reject any call for a delay of implementing the Just Societies flag.

64. Name: Geoff Keller (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: A few days ago, President Washington made comments on a podcast that insinuates that the community was racist and that was the reason why they pushed back on the cricket stadium. These comments are irresponsible and unprofessional....and most importantly false. The reason why the community supports baseball is because it is an NCAA sport unlike cricket. Not because we don't like the people that play cricket. Also, these comments

completely ignore all of the legitimate concerns the community had surrounding this project (traffic, parking, transparency). Most importantly, these comments are not the way to start a better working dialogue with the community as President Washington suggests he would like to have. It's no wonder you are having money raising money for projects from the community when this is how you feel about us.

What are the BOV's thoughts on these comments?

Here is a link to the podcast.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/access-to-excellence-podcast/id1498236015?i=1000650378180>

65. Name: Bridget McCarthy (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: While we appreciate the latest updates regarding the decision to not pursue the construction of a temporary MLC Cricket Stadium. However, at this time I/we remain deeply concerned at the divisive rhetoric and character maligning that is generated by President Washington and the offices of GMU. A recent podcast, March 25th, between Washington and Fairfax City Mayor Reid blatantly accuses the surrounding communities of racist, xenophobic attitudes towards individuals who play or who would watch cricket matches. At NO POINT IN TIME did anyone of the community groups, meetings, emails and postings reflect or condone such beliefs. The concerns of all parties outside of GMU was to ascertain what, how, why and when GMU students/college would directly benefit from the development of a commercial stadium for a Maryland owner, with no local ties/taxes and a sport that was not a collegiate sport. We respectfully request that ALL BOV members review this podcast and determine if President Washington's comments are appropriate and representative of the policies and beliefs of GMU.

66. Name: Alexander Monea (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: It would be unprecedented for the Board of Visitors to intervene in matters of curriculum at George Mason University and, in my opinion, would set a bad precedent going forward. Further, the BOV would be doing so while chasing a red herring. Despite attempts to politicize the 'just societies' course designation as part of the ongoing culture wars, the just societies course designation seems to me to be relatively banal and open-ended. Faculty were consulted at every step - I heard about the revisions to Mason Core and had my opinions solicited repeatedly in both faculty senate and CHSS meetings. While I can imagine an individual faculty member missing the information, the idea that whole departments were excluded from the discussion seems implausible. Also, the idea that our curriculum has to align with tax payers' beliefs seems like a bad standard to set for evaluating curriculum. We should and do teach many things that run counter to tax payers' firmly held and reasonable beliefs (on both sides of the political spectrum and in terms of apolitical issues as well). University curriculum should be established by faculty experts on a discipline-by-discipline basis following proper procedures in our bylaws and handbooks. As far as I'm aware, the process for creating the just societies flag was done by the book. The just societies designation should only be changed by the book - i.e. by faculty experts on a discipline-by-discipline basis following proper procedures from our bylaws and handbooks.

67. Name: Nick Sorden (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: In his public message on 3/28/24, Mr. Washington announced "that this opportunity does not meet the strategic objectives and interests of our campus and community and the Washington Freedom." However, Mr. Washington sat down for a podcast with Mayor Read on 3/25/24. During their conversation, Mayor Read and Mr. Washington used their time to imply that those who opposed the stadium were racist, xenophobic, ignorant, and culturally deficient.

Here are some excerpts:

Read: "So people were like, we should have a university, a university is a good idea. Yeah, a university, that would be a good idea. But then suddenly, it's like, but we don't want to be a college town. We don't want to be Charlottesville. Like that's not what we had in mind. So you go do your university over here, but we want Mayberry over here. And Mayberry did not have college students in it."

Washington: You hit the nail right on head, and we're seeing some pushback from some members about cricket. And I believe it's the same thing about our cricket baseball stadium, right? No one pushes back against the baseball side of that. But the cricket side of that, what is cricket? What does it mean?"

Read: "I agree. You know, and I think people don't understand cricket. And even though people are like, no, that's not it, that's not it, I'm like, but it is it. It's kind of like if there's nothing in it for you, you can see yourself going to a baseball game at Mason. But it's like, cricket, what is it? Who plays it? I don't know anything about it, so why would I go there?"

Washington: "Well, you know what? I really appreciate it, because hearing this is energizing in terms of what we've been dealing with today with cricket, it's really interesting. This is fantastic."

Read and Washington dismissed the community's concerns, attributing them to ignorance, small-mindedness, and resistance to demographic and cultural changes rather than any potentially legitimate issues with the stadium project or the stated reasons for not moving forward with the deal.

I am calling on the BOV to publicly denounce these statements from Mayor Read (a GMU alumnus) and Mr. Washington. Their comments are highly objectionable, misleading, inflammatory, and offensive. From the beginning, this has been about the scale of the project, the private inurement of GMU's tax-exempt status, a failure to engage with the community, and a complete lack of transparency.

If Mr. Washington, a public servant, cannot engage with the community in honest dialogue and chooses to label anyone who questions him as ignorant, he should resign immediately. Several elected leaders also engaged with GMU regarding this project. Are Washington and Read prepared to call those elected leaders ignorant xenophobes as well? The BOV must take a stand against this type of behavior. It is completely outrageous, and the BOV should be ashamed to have someone represent the university in a manner so bereft of character and grace. If the BOV fails to take action, one can only view it as the BOV's endorsement of these comments against the concerned citizens of this community.

68. Name: Robert Malloy (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: My name is Robert Malloy. I previously requested to speak at the BOV meeting, but no longer need to speak. In the interest of time, I am rescinding that request.

I am a Fairfax County resident who lives near the West Campus. I was pleased to see the March 28th announcement that the University will not proceed with the professional cricket stadium on West Campus. I would like to thank those in the administration and the Board of Visitors who listened to the comments and concerns of the local community residents.

I was also pleased to see that Dr. Washington committed to maintaining a dialogue with the local community and improving opportunities for feedback. I look forward to participating.

Thank you.

69. Name: Christopher Clarke (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I respect the BOV's role in University governance while at the same believe that curriculum-related decisions pertaining to what could/should be taught (whether concerning the Mason Core or any other related matters) are best left to faculty and administrators with requisite expertise in these areas.

70. Name: Alex Tabarrok (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: The Just Societies addition to the core should be killed. This was a poorly-disguised attempt to turn the GMU core into an indoctrination camp. Many faculty agree.

71. Name: Denise Albanese (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Members of the Board of Visitors have clearly delineated responsibilities. These do not include overseeing curricular design and blocking faculty-approved curriculum change, for which those member lack the relevant expertise in any case. I call on the Board to show some fundamental respect for faculty knowledge and expertise and to stop substituting incendiary polemics for knowledge and expertise.

72. Name: Paul So (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: 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.

73. Name: Aditya Johri (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Hello, my name is Aditya Johri and I am a professor at GMU. I am here today to join my colleagues in voicing concern over the Board's actions at the February 22 meeting regarding the Just Societies flag. As a faculty member, I was a part of this initiative and I trust in the years-long, faculty-led, collaborative process that produced the Just Societies flag. The process of setting and approving curriculum must be led by Mason's faculty. Only faculty members have the expertise and years of experience to develop and approve learning goals and courses. This kind of political interference from the Board threatens the success and reputation of GMU as a world-class educational institution. GMU Board has played a great role in making the institution a success over the past decades but if the Board begins to reverse faculty curricular decisions for clearly political reasons, it risks jeopardizing the university's reputation and squandering our history of growth.

My colleagues and I have been working hard to design lessons, create assignments, and course materials and it would be highly irresponsible to delay implementation of the Just Societies flag at this late hour. Please listen to the students, alumni, community members, staff, and faculty who are all asking you to uphold the principles of academic freedom and shared governance which have allowed the university to thrive. Please reject any call for delay of implementing the Just Societies flag.

74. Name: Lia Lister (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: My name is Lisa Lister, and I have been a full-time faculty member GMU since 2005. As a faculty member, a Faculty Senator, and a program coordinator, I trust in the years-long, faculty-led, collaborative process that produced the Just Societies flag. The process of setting and approving curriculum must be led by Mason's faculty. Only faculty members have the expertise and years of experience to develop and approve learning goals and courses. BOV Members, as outsiders without our academic and pedagogical expertise, should have no role in curriculum approval or development!

This kind of political interference from the Board threatens the success and reputation of GMU as a world-class educational institution. The Board has played a key role in Mason's success by following its own bylaws, staying in its lane, respecting the expertise of faculty, exerting oversight over the President's office, and serving as a champion for the university with outside constituencies. If the Board begins to reverse faculty curricular decisions for political reasons, it risks jeopardizing the university's reputation and squandering our history of growth and success.

Finally, it would be irresponsible to delay implementation of the Just Societies flag at this late hour. Students are registering for fall classes as we speak, and faculty are designing lessons, creating assignments, and creating course materials. Please listen to the students, alumni, community members, staff, and faculty who are all asking you to uphold the principles of academic freedom and shared governance which have allowed the university to thrive. Please reject any call for a delay of implementing the Just Societies flag.

75. Name: Theodore C. Dumas (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Dear Board of Visitors (BOV) of George Mason University, I am writing with concern for the apparent inclination of the BOV to attempt to unilaterally alter Mason Core Curriculum. To do so would be to overstep the boundaries of the BOV. This is clearly a political action and BOV members who would act in such a way are simply pawns for a higher authority. Mason will not be part of this sad attempt to impose the ill-conceived perspective of a lame duck politician. Any "gains" made by such aggressive BOV members will last less than a year and then wiser minds will prevail. Please do not waste time and breadth and do the right thing; i.e. listen more than talk and work with, rather than against, persons who have dedicated their lives to education.

76. Name: Richard D. Kauzlarich (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Faculty, not political appointees, must set Mason's curriculum. To do otherwise violates foundational principles of shared governance, free inquiry, and academic freedom.

77. Name: Robert DeCaroli (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Democracy depends on an educated populace who as adults are able to exercise empathy for the views of others - even when they differ from their own. Grappling with the problems of the future requires confronting difficult differences and grappling with them in an open and free environment. We cannot run from this vital responsibility. Learning to disagree with civility and eye towards common ground is essential for democracy to thrive. Please let us do our jobs and allow us create and informed and engaged populace that works towards compromise and commonality rather than discord.

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.

78. Name: Adam Winsler (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Hello, my name is Adam Wiinsler 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 at the February 22 meeting. As a faculty member, I trust in the years-long, faculty-led, collaborative process that produced the Just Societies flag. The process of setting and approving curriculum must be led by Mason's faculty. Only faculty members have the expertise and years of experience to develop and approve learning goals and courses.

This kind of political interference from the Board threatens the success and reputation of GMU as a world-class educational institution. In the past 30 years, GMU has become an economic engine for both Northern Virginia and the entire state, helping students become successful professionals and well-rounded citizens ready to act. The Board has played a key role in this success by following its own bylaws, staying in its lane, respecting the expertise of faculty, exerting oversight over the President's office, and serving as a champion for the university with outside constituencies. If the Board begins to reverse faculty curricular decisions for clearly political reasons, it risks jeopardizing the university's reputation and squandering our history of growth and success.

Finally, it would be irresponsible to delay implementation of the Just Societies flag at this late hour. Students are registering for fall classes as we speak, and faculty are designing lessons, creating assignments, and creating course materials. A decision to delay would throw many of our students' academic plans, and faculty livelihoods, into disarray. Please listen to the students, alumni, community members, staff, and faculty who are all asking you to uphold the principles of academic freedom and shared governance which have allowed the university to thrive. Please reject any call for a delay of implementing the Just Societies flag.

79. Name: David B. Wilson (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: The principles of the American Association of University Professors are clear. Only faculty have the disciplinary expertise and professional backgrounds to set university curricula. The board's proper role 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 violates foundational principles of shared governance, free inquiry, and academic freedom.

80. Name: Edmund Bedsworth (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Alumni and Donor

Comment: President Washington's interview with Mayor Read provides a concerning narrative that neighbors of GMU did not support his efforts with Mr. Govil because we oppose cricket. In fact, neighbors opposed: 1) a mega stadium that appeared to have nothing to do with GMU Baseball; 2) a commercial venture on State property that appeared to be skirting any and every regulation that those of us in the community must follow; 3) a mega stadium without any plans being provided for infrastructure or mitigations to issues that would impact the surrounding communities; 4) an opaque project that appeared to have little foundation (plans, details, etc.) and that sought to hide anything and everything, including missing FOIA deadlines and fighting FOIA requests in court.

Dr. Washington was too busy to ever conduct that robust, sustained, and fruitful dialogue; however, after listening (and comprehending) his interview with Mayor Read I seriously doubt that the promised dialogue with the community would have been fruitful. His comments, like his smirks in the last Board meeting, make it clear his mind was closed and he wanted nothing but for the neighbors to give in to his plans. Dr. Washington and Mayor Read talk about making Fairfax (City) a college town. As an Alumni I would support seeing that happen; however, it will not happen as long as he refuses to work WITH neighbors. By demanding his way be the only way, turns Mason's neighbors into Mason's opponents. It is up to the Board of Visitors to ensure he works with the community or #MasonNation will find stiff opposition during the remainder of his time with the University.

81. Name: Dr Stephen Ruth (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I have been a proud faculty member at GMU for nearly 46 years, and have loved every moment of it. "Freedom and learning" is our motto and to me that means the freedom for faculty to determine collegially the best approach to giving our students the very best education to make them responsible and caring citizens of the nation and the world. I urge the board of visitors to leave the current, approved curriculum in place as is.

Sincerely

Stephen Ruth, Professor of Public Policy Schar School

82. Name: Amanda Bryan (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: The practices of academic freedom and 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 the board be making decisions about student learning goals and course requirements. This kind of impingement in the classroom clearly violates foundational principles of shared governance, free inquiry, and academic freedom.

Faculty members only must set Mason's curriculum.

83. Name: Bryan Caplan (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Please kill the Just Societies flag in its entirety. To do so is not "politicization" of the curriculum. The flag IS politicization of the curriculum - an anti-intellectual effort to teach DEI ideology as fact. As the representatives of all Virginians, the Board of Visitors should put an end to this abuse of students and taxpayers.

84. Name: Matthew Kelley (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: 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.

85. Name: Kara Oakleaf (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I wish to express my concern over the Board's actions at the February 22 meeting. As a faculty member, I trust in the years-long, faculty-led, collaborative process that produced the Just Societies flag. The process of setting and approving curriculum must be led by Mason's faculty, who have the expertise and years of experience to develop and approve learning goals and courses.

Political interference from the Board threatens Mason's role as a world-class educational institution. In the past 30 years, GMU has become an economic engine for both Northern Virginia and the entire state, helping students become successful professionals and well-rounded citizens ready to act. The Board has played a key role in this success by following its own bylaws, respecting the expertise of faculty, exerting oversight over the President's office, and serving as a champion for the university with outside constituencies. If the Board interferes with faculty curricular decisions for clearly political reasons, it risks jeopardizing the university's reputation and squandering our history of growth and success.

Finally, it would be irresponsible to delay implementation of the Just Societies flag at this late hour. Students are registering for fall classes as we speak, and faculty are designing lessons, creating assignments, and creating course materials. A decision to delay would throw many of our students' academic plans, and faculty livelihoods, into disarray. Please listen to the students, alumni, community members, staff, and faculty who are all asking you to uphold the principles of academic freedom and shared governance which have allowed the university to thrive. Please reject any call for a delay of implementing the Just Societies flag.

86. Name: Tamara Harvey (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: In regard to ongoing BOV discussion of the Just Societies flag for Mason Core, I want to first of all strongly insist that the BOV has no jurisdiction to question curriculum that has already gone through Mason's curriculum process. In order to be added to the Mason Core, classes are reviewed and held to standards that ensure academic rigor and meet the needs of all students. Students are now enrolling for fall classes with the assumption that the core classes that have been approved will in fact be offered, so any disruption in offering these already approved classes will get in the way of students moving through their degree programs efficiently and with clarity. Finally, I am constantly telling students that they need to remind employers that the George Mason experience is unusual and that attending one of the most diverse universities in the nation in terms of race, ethnicity, life experience, age, ideology, and many other factors has prepared them for the workplace in ways that employers value. Having that experience visible on their transcripts is an important benefit.

87. Name: Kristin F Samuelian (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I am writing today voice my deep concern over the Board's actions at the February 22 meeting. As a faculty member, I trust in the years-long, faculty-led, collaborative process that produced the Just Societies flag, and I believe strongly that the process of setting and

approving curriculum must be led by Mason's faculty, who alone have the expertise and years of experience to develop and approve learning goals and courses.

Such politicized interference in curriculum setting threatens the success and established reputation of GMU as a world-class educational institution and as an economic engine, for over 30 years, for both Northern Virginia and the entire state. Mason prepares students to become successful professionals and well-rounded citizens ready to act. If the Board begins to reverse faculty curricular decisions for what are clearly—and only—political reasons, it risks jeopardizing the university's reputation and squandering our history of growth and success. Moreover, it is irresponsible in the extreme to consider delaying implementation of the Just Societies flag at this late date—when students are already registering for fall classes, and faculty are designing lessons, creating assignments, and building course materials. A decision to delay would throw many of our students' academic plans, and faculty livelihoods, into disarray. This is clearly not in the best interests, not only of the students, but of the University. For all of these reasons, I ask the Board to listen to the students, alumni, community members, staff, and faculty who are all asking you to uphold the principles of academic freedom and shared governance which have allowed the university to thrive and reject any call for a delay of implementing the Just Societies flag.

I'm sure we can all agree that faculty must set Mason's curriculum, not political appointees.

88. Name: Meredith Lair (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I am a tenured associate professor in the Department of History and Art History. Mine is a nuanced position. I have concerns about the Mason Core, but I object to this intrusion on faculty autonomy. The Board of Visitors should not be designing or revising curriculum, but neither should some of the administrators who pushed through the Mason Core revisions. ***

Part of my concern about the Mason Core reflects my role as an educator and faculty member. For example, the Mason Core revision process has been time intensive, requiring faculty to seek re-approval for courses already approved under previous iterations of the Core. (It took me 15 hours to generate one Mason Core course proposal.) I am also concerned that some of the new Core's "learning outcomes" prioritize student "self-reflection" at the expense of actual learning. My other concerns about the new Mason Core reflect my perspective as a historian. The new Mason Core reduces student engagement with the humanities, and it reduces the overall amount of historical instruction Mason undergraduates receive. The new Core also seems to empower faculty not trained in history to teach history, by way of the Just Societies flag and the Global Contexts requirement. ***

As concerned as I am about the new Mason Core, I am even more concerned about the Board of Visitors intruding into curriculum design (and, for that matter, reappointment, promotion, and tenure decisions). The Visitors' job is to ensure that GMU officials are adhering to process, not to make decisions for us. In effect, this is a family dispute, in which Mason faculty will (as always) navigate the rules to do what is best for their students. The Board must stay out of it.

89. Name: Catherine E Saunders (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I write to reiterate my concern that the Board of Visitors is considering interfering with curriculum development, which is the purview of the faculty, by attempting to change Mason Core requirements due to go into effect in Fall 2024. During the most recent revision of the Mason Core, which dates back at least as far back as 2017, I attended a number of listening sessions, presentations, public fora and workshops related to the revision process. I was impressed by the care and thoroughness with which committee members approached their task. As I understand it, their final product addresses a number of factors, including student needs and desires, articulation agreements, transfer and graduation requirements, accreditation and certification criteria, and employer expectations. While it is important that the BOV be informed of this work (which the committee has facilitated by offering periodic updates), it is also important that Visitors recognize the complexity of the revision process and respect the expertise of faculty who have expended extensive time and effort in creating a plan that meets the needs of the Mason's students and the other affected stakeholders.

As a faculty member who teaches primarily Core courses (including one that I am in the process of revising to satisfy Just Societies criteria), I would also call the Board's attention to the purpose of courses in the Core. While content plays a role in these courses, their primary objectives are to expose students to the modes of research and analysis associated with a range of academic disciplines and to give students a chance to practice related skills. Faculty teaching these courses do not tell students what to think; instead, we give them the opportunity to frame questions and develop their own responses, informed by the methods of the discipline the specific Core course showcases. Courses carrying the Just Societies flag will share these qualities, and will undoubtedly evoke a range of responses from students, allowing them to learn from each other as well as from the instructor. The goal is not indoctrination, but skill development, including practice in discussing sometimes-difficult topics in a group whose members hold a variety of views. This practice will serve students of a variety of political persuasions well in their professional, personal, and civic lives.

Finally, a personal note: while I believe that is important for faculty and BOV members to adhere closely to the boundaries imposed by the Faculty Handbook and other key documents defining our respective roles in this particular instance, I hope that sometime in the near future we -- BOV members and faculty, especially faculty teaching courses which some BOV members find troubling -- might be able to come together for informal discussions of our understandings of the goals of the university, and how we can best serve our students and the Commonwealth. At a time when polarization has reached an alarming level, such conversations could provide a valuable model for students of how people with differing views can reach better, if not complete, understanding.

90. Name: Rose Cherubin (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Thank you for reading and considering this comment.

My name is Rose Cherubin and I am a faculty member who has been teaching at GMU since 1995. I am writing today to join my colleagues in voicing concern over the Board's actions at

the February 22 meeting. I find good reason to trust in the years-long, faculty-led, collaborative process that produced the Just Societies flag. This process solicited and received input and discussion from the whole faculty, from graduate assistants, and from students. The process of setting and approving curriculum must be led by Mason's faculty. Only faculty members have the expertise and years of experience to develop and approve learning goals and courses.

In addition, I must note that the Just Societies flag – it is not a program – has been approved by the State Council on Higher Education (<https://www.schev.edu/about/overview>). SCHEV is a nonpartisan organization, in accordance with the State Code of Virginia. In other words, a state body has agreed that courses developed with a JS flag are of significant educational value to our students.

This kind of political interference from the Board threatens the success and reputation of GMU as a world-class educational institution, as well as the authority and judgment of SCHEV. In the past 30 years, GMU has become an economic engine for both Northern Virginia and the entire state, helping students become successful professionals and well-rounded citizens ready to act. The Board has played a key role in this success by following its own bylaws, staying in its lane, respecting the expertise of faculty, exerting oversight over the President's office, and serving as a champion for the university with outside constituencies. If the Board begins to reverse faculty curricular decisions for clearly political reasons, it risks jeopardizing the university's reputation and squandering our history of growth and success.

Finally, it would be irresponsible to delay implementation of the Just Societies flag at this late hour. Students are registering for fall classes as we speak, and faculty are designing lessons, creating assignments, and creating course materials. A decision to delay would throw many of our students' academic plans, and faculty livelihoods, into disarray. Please listen to the students, alumni, community members, staff, and faculty who are all asking you to uphold the principles of academic freedom and shared governance which have allowed the university to thrive. Please reject any call for a delay of implementing the Just Societies flag.

Thank you again for listening.

91. Name: Shora Moteabbed (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Hello, my name is Shora Moteabbed and I am a faculty member teaching at GMU and serve on the Mason Core Committee. I am here today to join my colleagues in voicing concern over the Board's actions at the February 22 meeting. As a faculty member, I trust in the years-long (it took 10 years), faculty-led, collaborative process that produced the Just Societies flag. The process of setting and approving curriculum must be led by Mason's faculty. Only faculty members have the expertise and years of experience to develop and approve learning goals and courses.

This kind of political interference from the Board threatens the success and reputation of GMU as a world-class educational institution. In the past 30 years, GMU has become an economic engine for both Northern Virginia and the entire state, helping students become successful professionals and well-rounded citizens ready to act. The Board has played a key role in this success by following its own bylaws, staying in its lane, respecting the expertise of faculty, exerting oversight over the President's office, and serving as a champion for the university with outside constituencies. If the Board begins to reverse faculty curricular decisions for

clearly political reasons, it risks jeopardizing the university's reputation and squandering our history of growth and success.

Finally, it would be irresponsible to delay implementation of the Just Societies flag at this late hour. Students are registering for fall classes as we speak, and faculty are designing lessons, creating assignments, and creating course materials. A decision to delay would throw many of our students' academic plans, and faculty livelihoods, into disarray. Please listen to the students, alumni, community members, staff, and faculty who are all asking you to uphold the principles of academic freedom and shared governance which have allowed the university to thrive. Please reject any call for a delay of implementing the Just Societies flag.

92. Name: Terrence Lyons (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I have been teaching at Mason since 1999. I believe strongly that faculty must set standards for curriculum and that political appointees should defer to those who design and teach these courses.

Thank you.

93. Name: Bethany Letiecq (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Dear Board of Visitors,

My name is Bethany Letiecq. I am a faculty member in the College of Education and Human Development here at Mason. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Just Societies core curriculum. In short, Mason's faculty should determine our curriculum—not political appointees. Please stay in your lane.

But I also want to point out that this scrutiny of Mason's Just Societies core curriculum appears to be part of a larger, manufactured DEI crisis that is being used to attack higher education, weaken the academic freedom rights of faculty, and threaten our very democracy. Frontline targets of this “war on woke” are Black scholars and leaders and other critical scholars like me. Recently, this all got very personal when my colleague and co-author, Dr. Christina Cross (a Black sociologist at Harvard) and I (a White scholar of family life) were subjected to these attacks.

In my case, unreliable sources like the College Fix, amplified by social media, falsely claimed that I espouse in my writings that marriage is a racist institution. For the record: I am not against marriage and do not think it is racist. But these absurd, intentional distortions of my scholarship have led to a vile and hateful campaign of targeted harassment.

For example, social media posters and emailers have labeled me “satanic,” “idiotic,” and “dangerous.” One emailer stated, “the world would be a better place without you” in it. Another wrote, “I hope some Black men break into your house and rape you. You c***.” I have also received horrific voicemails, forcing me to shut down my office phone and seek police protection both at work and at home.

The following voicemail is particularly hard to hear/read for its threatening and hateful words. Fair warning. The transcript reads: “Bethany Letiecq. God damn, you're a stupid c***. We need to drag bitches like you. Bitches like you, you need to be drug, you fucking racist c***. God, you're an ugly c***. I wish. I hope you live in fear. I hope you live in fear.

Knowing...knowing how many people want you dead.”

Also troubling is a retweet from Jay Greene of the Heritage Foundation's Center for Education Policy who has been an outspoken critic of DEI at Mason (Visitor Burke is his boss, I believe). Greene's retweet linked an unfounded allegation of plagiarism against my co-author, Dr. Cross, with distorted claims about my scholarship, and called on Governor Youngkin to “clean out GMU.”

I am deeply troubled by the apparent alignment of some members of this board with agendas that perpetuate racism and sexism and foment targeted harassment of scholars under the guise of opposing DEI efforts. I implore the BOV to cease interference with our core curriculum, take a stand in defense of academic freedom, and unequivocally and publicly denounce these toxic, political campaigns targeting scholars and the academy writ large. The rights of faculty to teach and pursue knowledge without fear or favor are central to our democracy and must be protected.

Before I conclude, I want to thank the Mason police department, my local police department, and the administration for their unwavering support and their efforts to ensure my safety and the safety of my family during this challenging time.

Thank you.

Bethany Letiecq, PhD

Associate Professor, CEHD, George Mason University
 President, National Council on Family Relations
 President, Virginia Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP)
 Vice-President, GMU-AAUP

94. Name: Todd Kashdan (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: The BOV is doing the job of preventing the politicization of the Mason curriculum. Unfortunately when it comes to protecting students the BOV appears to be valuable here. There should not be a mandated social justice bend to student courses. Students should be given reign to have viewpoint diversity. Getting rid of the Just Societies designation is a way to protect students against political indoctrination.

95. Name: Anonymous Mason faculty (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: The Mason Core must be cancelled. It is *incredibly* hypocritical of the GMU-AAUP to spam every Mason faculty with their emails arguing that the BoV is infringing on Mason's academic freedom by thinking of abolishing the Core. The Core is itself imposed by the Mason administration on Mason students and is a gross violation of these students' academic freedom. This is soft despotism. The Mason administration has no right to tell students nor faculty what should count as justice

96. Name: Daniel Klein (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

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

97. Name: Patrick Vora (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: 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.

98. Name: Benjamin Steger (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: As a faculty member, I trust in the years-long, faculty-led, collaborative process that produced the Just Societies flag. The process of setting and approving curriculum must be led by Mason's faculty. Only faculty members have the expertise and years of experience to develop and approve learning goals and courses. Under no circumstances should BOV appointees be making decisions about student learning goals and course requirements. This kind of interference in the classroom clearly violates foundational principles of shared governance, free inquiry, and academic freedom.

99. Name: Brendan Brown (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Community Member

Comment: Comments sent via email.

100. Name: Colleen Vesely (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: As a faculty member, I trust in the years-long, faculty-led, collaborative process that produced the Just Societies flag. The process of setting and approving curriculum must be led by Mason's faculty, as faculty have the disciplinary expertise and professional backgrounds necessary to lead curricular efforts.

The 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.

Please listen to the students, alumni, community members, staff, and faculty who are all asking you to uphold the principles of academic freedom and shared governance, which have allowed the university to thrive. Please reject any call for a delay of implementing the Just Societies designation of courses.

101. Name: Elizabeth DeMulder (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Hello, my name is Dr. Elizabeth DeMulder and I have been a faculty member teaching at GMU for 30 years. I am now Professor Emerita. I attended the Board of Visitors meeting on February 22 and I want to voice my concern over the Board's actions that day. As a longtime faculty member, I trust in the years-long, faculty-led, collaborative process that produced the Just Societies flag. The process of setting and approving curriculum must be led by Mason's faculty, as articulated by the principles of the American Association of University Professors. Only faculty have the disciplinary expertise and professional backgrounds to set university curriculum – to develop and approve learning goals and courses. The appropriate 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. Thank you for taking seriously these vital university principles.

102. Name: Grace Francis (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Academic freedom is not only a pillar of democracy, but also advances student critical thinking skills. Academic freedom challenges group think by protecting faculty and students alike to freely express ideas without fear of retribution. Maintaining academic is essential to societal advancement, as well as the maintenance of of core American ideals and values.

103. Name: Rachael Goodman (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: Hello, my name is Dr. Rachael Goodman and I am a faculty member teaching at GMU. I have been a faculty member since 2010 -- GMU has been my academic home for my entire career. I am deeply concerned about my academic home, my colleagues, our students, and the future of the university. I join my colleagues in voicing concern over the Board's actions at the February 22 meeting. I urge the Board to maintain the principles of academic freedom and faculty governance that have allowed our university to grow in intellectual contributions and profile over its relatively short lifespan. The interference of the Board threatens the success and reputation of GMU as a world-class educational institution. It speaks of oppressive regimes around the world trying to control education and stop progress. The outcomes of these actions inevitably result in harm to the institution's reputation -- and ultimately its financial sustainability. Please reject any call for a delay of implementing the Just Societies flag.

104. Name: Levi Van Sant (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: 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 support 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 make decisions about student learning goals and course requirements. This kind of 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.

105. Name: Eric Auld (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty**Comment:** Hello,

My name is Eric Auld, and I am a Term Faculty Member at GMU.

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.

Thank you,

Eric Auld

106. Name: Marissa Catherine Mack (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: The Board of Visitors at GMU does not have a say in the content of curriculum. Faculty, and the committees of faculty who work together to enact strategic planning and QEPs, have the expertise needed to determine curricular goals and content.

107. Name: Carlos Chism (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: I am writing with deep concern in regard to attempts by some Board members to delay the Just Societies flag, which is set to begin in Fall 2024. The faculty handbook, the principles of the American Association of University Professors, and the Board's own bylaws 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. As a public institution, George Mason functions as a pillar of democracy by helping provide the freedom to learn. In overreaching its role, the Board threatens to interfere not only in the freedom of faculty to teach according to the latest research and best practices in our fields, but also with the freedom of our students to learn and become well-rounded citizens ready to act. The university strives to meet the academic needs of its diverse student body and the diverse communities of Northern Virginia. And considering how many of our students get jobs in and stay living in this area, the university serves as an economic engine of the region as well. These achievements have been the result of shared governance, and by violating that shared governance, the board threatens to impede the continued development of the university as an institution for the common good. The Board should stay in its lane and leave decisions of curriculum to the faculty who are qualified to make these decisions. Please listen to the students, alumni, community members, staff, and

faculty who are all asking you to uphold the principles of academic freedom and shared governance which have allowed the university to thrive. Please reject any call for a delay of implementing the Just Societies flag.

108. Name: Eric Eisner (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: As a faculty member at Mason, I wish to register my alarm about the Board's actions at the Feb. 22 meeting regarding the Just Societies designation in the Mason Core. Faculty at Mason have been developing the new Just Societies flag through a deliberative, reflective process over a number of years. One of the chief aims of this process has been to ensure that courses carrying this designation function as a space for the consideration of multiple viewpoints and ideas about what constitutes justice, and about what a just society would look like, and about key issues confronting societies past, present, and future - to show how many different disciplines provide tools for thinking about these questions from many different angles - and to ensure that these courses have at their core an open but rigorous, thoughtful exchange among students bringing different perspectives to a set of shared texts and questions - not one exclusive answer. The Just Societies flag, as designed, reflects this aim quite well. The designation is thus exactly the opposite of the caricature version - assembled on the basis of some tweets and suppositions - that I heard brought up in the Board of Visitors discussion at the Feb. 22 meeting. The Board of Visitors discussion seemed driven by politics - not the Just Societies flag. The call for a delay in implementing this flag, and the politically-charged rhetoric in the discussion, signal a clear disrespect for the principles of shared governance as well as for faculty expertise. To delay the Just Societies flag at this point would not only be a massive disservice to Mason's students; it would also deal a blow to Mason's reputation as a top-notch research university that puts learning first. A delay when students are already registering for classes would introduce unnecessary confusion and frustration and siphon off resources. I urge the Board of Visitors to continue its practice of working with the faculty in fostering the university's growth and serving its mission, and I ask the Board to refrain from interfering with the implementation of the Just Societies flag.

109. Name: Rebecca Bushway (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: An attack on DEI is an attack on the students of George Mason. The Board of Visitors is straying outside of its lane in shared governance and interfering where they are not wanted, needed, or welcome.

110. Name: Rebecca Bushway (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Student

Comment: The Board of Visitors has a fiduciary responsibility to the University, one that it is disregarding to push the governor's narrative. We've already had to unKoch our campus once; don't make us do it again. Stay in your lane.

111. Name: Esther Peters (Written Comment) **Mason Affiliation:** Faculty

Comment: GMU's faculty must lead the process in designing and approving curriculum due to their expertise and years of experience. The BOV has aided GMU's success by respecting this process and supporting it for many years. The Just Societies courses will present insights based on historical events and facts to provide awareness of our human nature and situations; deleting or delaying the implementation of these course options based on political interference will alter the educational outcomes of our students and faculty members. Please respect academic freedom and shared governance to keep GMU thriving!

Board of Visitors

From: Brendan Brown <brendanbrownpc@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 2, 2024 2:30 AM
To: Board of Visitors
Subject: Fwd: GMU BOV Comments - BBrown

Good morning President Washington, Board of Visitors, faculty and student reps.

My name is Brendan Brown, I'm a resident of the North Hill neighborhood, just south of Mason, and a GMU MBA grad, class of 2016.

First, thank you for GMU's decision to not move forward with the baseball-cricket stadium. I think it's the right decision, the outcry from your neighbors, at the very least, just wanted transparency and community participation for such a large project. Zoom meetings, PowerPoints, and press statements shouldn't be satisfactory.

But the past 60 days have been disappointing, and I'm asking the BOV to recognize this major PR and community relations disaster.

I'm disappointed GMU is still fighting us in court to prevent a FOIA release of WHATEVER approved or proposed lease was voted on at the 14 December Special BOV Meeting. You voted on SOMETHING - 7 of you did, 2 abstained, and the rest weren't present. That's a sad minority endorsement for a major construction project and allowing a pro sports team to anchor itself on State owned, University-purposed land. Mr. Pence voiced his frustration at not having all the documents, and a less than robust vetting of Sanjay Govil's financials at the Feb meeting.

I'm disappointed that we heard from Sanjay Govil, news reports, and finally CONFIRMED through a FOIA of the Mixed-Use Study by Brailsford & Dunlavey, that the stadium was planned for a 10,000 seat capacity without any infrastructure improvements. Despite smaller numbers given to State Senator Pekarsky, State Delegate Helmer, and an undisclosed number from GMU's Spokesman Paul Allvin, GMU couldn't publicly confirm this major detail - hence our mistrust.

I'm disappointed that as we sought to have President Washington, Sanjay Govil, Athletic Director Lewis - anyone - hold in-person town halls for Q&As - yes, before ground broke - that President Washington's response to the audience at the Feb BOV meeting to "When?" was to smirk, throw up his hands, and just stare at us. That's not an exaggeration, it's on video, and if the BOV doesn't know it, that was a personal slap across the face to GMU's neighbors. Even some who want the cricket stadium, didn't want to be cast aside like that in public, it was palpable. Did the BOV speak to GMU's leadership about how that looked? It's sure when the media noticed.

I'm disappointed that in an effort to promote transparency, GMU and its Athletic Department didn't disclose in its January Zoom townhall that one of the presenters, Sr. Assc AD Andrew Lieber, was hired in 2021 from Brailsford & Dunlavey, the same company that in 2022 was awarded GMU-1828-23 contract for \$260,000 for the "Mixed Use Market Feasibility Study." This study then executed a change order in 2024 for an additional quarter million dollars - what for? - the public doesn't know. What's more, within the Study, Mason briefs Brailsford & Dunlavey's own slides (pg 13, Oct 2023 report) that lists the Old Glory DC rugby club as attendee, and a possible private-public partner for the West Campus "Town Center" development. The full FOIA'd document confirms a possible 10-15K seat Rugby stadium is an option - even bigger than the cricket stadium. Well, guess who OWNS Old Glory DC rugby club, and is looking for a new stadium in the DMV? Yup, Chris Dunlavey, the co-founder and namesake of Brailsford & Dunlavey. The same company that did the feasibility study for GMU, is highlighting the owner's private rugby club as a possible partner and likely stadium candidate for the west campus. Is all this conflict free? I have no idea, it may be, but in the interest of the public's trust, while you may not have to disclose it, you ought to.

My last disappointment, ironically, came only hours after hearing of the stadium's termination. I listened to Dr. Washington's latest podcast with City of Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read - a key partner for GMU. I'm not impressed, in fact, I'd ask the BOV to listen to it and ask themselves if they want the apology that I think Dr. Washington owes us.

Let me quote Dr. Washington and Mayor Read, when discussing Fairfax City residents/voters/neighbors and then who voiced concern over the cricket-baseball stadium project. Let me ask you, what should I tell my 8yo, 5yo, and 2yo kids what the local GMU and City leadership thinks of them, of their neighbors:

Mayor Read: "The 20% who tend to turn out [for Fairfax voting] were a demographic: older, educated, white property owners."

Dr. Washington: "Ok. And I know what the outcome of that was!"

Mayor Read: "Right? So you have a government that reflects the electorate... A graduate of GMU said he didn't really feel like the city wanted us being there... I said well, that is not your imagination."

Dr. Washington: "Every system is perfectly designed to get the result it gets. You don't want those folk in your establishments, in the downtown, you develop systems to keep those kind of things from happening. You develop covenants [restricting housing numbers]"

Mayor Read: "I like your systems thinking. GMU is a commuter school, and people are like, we should have a University... but we don't want to be a college town. You go do your university over here, but we want Mayberry [Andy Griffith's fictional NC town] over HERE."

Dr. Washington: "We're seeing some pushback from some members [of the community] about cricket. And I believe it's the same thing, about [the] cricket-baseball stadium, right? No one pushes back against the baseball side of that, but the cricket side of that... of, what is cricket, what does it mean? It's gonna bring a whole new community of people to this area, and the ultimate beneficiary will be the City of Fairfax."

Mayor Read: "I agree. I think people don't understand cricket, and even though people are like, no that's not it, that's not it... I'm like, but it is it! It's kind of like if there's nothing in it for you, you can see yourself going to a baseball game, but it's like cricket, what is it? Who plays it? I don't know anything about it, so why would I go there? ... people just don't like change and they don't like things that are unfamiliar. But to me the cricket stadium is a reflection of the diversity of this university and this region."

Dr. Washington: "I really appreciate it. Hearing this is energizing in terms of what we've been dealing with today with cricket."

No talk of lack of transparency on the cricket project. Nothing about holding ZERO in person town halls. Just Dr. Washington & Mayor Read basically calling GMU Fairfax neighbors - me, my family, my kids, my neighbors, my community - racist and xenophobic against GMU students. Racist and xenophobic against the business interests of Sanjay Govil, the Washington Freedom, and cricket sports fans. They accuse residents of not wanting GMU students in their neighborhood; they accuse GMU neighbors of targeting cricket as an "unfamiliar" sport.

What a disgrace. What a personal affront to your local neighbors. What an amateur hour.

We asked for transparency. We asked for public meetings. We asked for opportunities to ask questions. We asked to be a part of the GMU community. Instead, we get dog whistles and hints of racist accusations thrown against us - "white property owner" labels, and Andy Griffith "Mayberry" town analogies. Ask yourselves if this represents the Mason Core Value of "Diversity is Our Strength?" Why exclude, marginalize, and demonize us?

That's the GMU leadership before you right now. I'd ask the BOV to evaluate, oversee, and correct this community relations disaster.

Thank you.

Note: Dr. Washington's 25 March 2024 *Access to Excellence Podcast* link: <https://t.co/3TMshxS0V0> (Available on Apple Podcasts; ***Catherine Read, mayor of Fairfax City, Va., is outspoken, unfiltered***). Select podcast excerpts taken here are located within the last 8 mins of the episode.

Brendan Brown
Mason MBA Class of 2016
4898 Oakcrest Drive
Fairfax, VA
22030

Board of Visitors

From: Brendan Brown <brendanbrownpc@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 2, 2024 1:27 AM
To: Board of Visitors
Subject: GMU FOIA document response to request #24-2024073 (GMU Pres trip to Dallas, TX with Washington Freedom)
Attachments: GMU FOIA files Dallas TX trip Pres Wash Provost Walsh pdf.pdf

Good morning George Mason University BOV members,

My name is Brendan Brown, a resident of North Hill neighborhood near GMU's Fairfax campus.

Attached you'll find some of the relevant documents released by GMU from a FOIA request on Dr. Washington and other GMU personnel's trip to Dallas, TX to attend a GMU Foundation-hosted dinner and events with the Washington Freedom Cricket Team. In the interest of transparency, I received 25 documents/emails/receipts, some were held back or redacted due to VA law on University President's working papers, personnel information containing identity information, and "information maintained in connection with fundraising activities by or for a public institution of higher education."

As local neighbors began inquiring with the University about the proposed GMU-Washington Freedom stadium project, we felt that we became stonewalled, as little information was publicly available, and FOIA for proposed contracts, stadium design, and details on the public-partnership with the cricket team were being denied, delayed, or responded to without documents. I noticed that Dr. Washington attended an event in Dallas, Texas in July 2023 with the team, only due to the team posting a short video on its YouTube channel that had an interview with Dr. Washington and Mason's logo on the banquet hall television. Was this a University sponsored event or a team sponsored event? There was nothing on Mason's website. Did the University or Sanjay Govil pay for it? We were curious.

Some of my key takeaways (not all the documents are attached here):

1. This was not a Washington Freedom hosted event; it appears to be a 5-day GMU Foundation series of events to meet, greet, mingle, with the team and its owners, as well as possible donors to GMU. The full itinerary ran from Wed July 12, 2023 to Sunday July 16.
2. The trip included Dr. Washington, his wife Nicole, Interim Provost Ken Walsh, and his wife, Tobi (also a GMU executive), Trishana Bowden, Jenn Robinson, and possibly other members associated with the GMU Foundation; donors, team associated personnel and others are on the guest list and museum tour list.
3. The purpose or justification of all GMU attendees travelling down for the events was worked through prior to the trip's confirmation, with Dr. Washington explaining the need for additional University members and family.
4. According to Dr. Washington, "the primary purpose of this trip is both project development and Advancement related and as such the main players and their spouses should be engaged as is the case most places this kind of work is done. At least four people on this trip who have given or are considering major gifts to Mason who are a part of this project. If GMU personnel are engaged with potential donors, the spouses are there to engage with the donors [and their] spouses. ... while we are currently pursuing a management authority to help lead this project, it does not mean we will end up there. This may very well be a Mason owned property and if others are paying for it, who cares if it's on our books. There are a number of potential donors engaged on this project who can write a check and pay for the whole thing... I spoke to my Chancellor friend at NC State and they were intimately involved in the design and development of their football stadium, which was led by a private developer and is "off book"."

5. Trishana Bowden indicated that the whole trip cost \$60,000.

6. The trip provided opportunities for guest/travelers to i) go to Wash Freedom practice, ii) Dallas Museum of Art guided tour, iii) Welcome reception in hotel ballroom iv) Cricket 101 lunch and learn with WSHF team personnel v) Cricket game vs Seattle vi) private tour and dinner at Dallas Arboretum (presumably where WSHF video was filmed), vii) Cricket game vs Texas Super Kings viii) Farewell dessert reception

7. The only travel receipts provided were from Mr. Ken Walsh and his spouse. No receipts were provided for Dr. Washington and his spouse, or for any other GMU personnel.

I was not given any "after action" emails or documents from any of the parties within the FOIA request - no documents providing any opinion on the trip or discussing its results.

Thank you for your attention. I wanted to ensure that all BOV had the highlighted documents GMU neighbors were asking for in their FOIA requests. This request was answered on 30 March, exactly 29 days after my initial request.

V/r,
Brendan Brown