

**BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Meeting of
Tuesday, April 5, 2022
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201)**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Rector James Hazel, Visitors Juan Carlos Iturregui, Wendy Marquez, Ignacia Moreno, Carolyn Moss, Dolly Oberoi, Paul Reagan, Edward Rice, and Robert Witeck.

ABSENT: Vice Rector Horace Blackman, Secretary Simmi Bhuller, Visitors Anjan Chimaladinne, Mehmood Kazmi, Jon Peterson, Nancy Prowitt and Denise Turner Roth.

ALSO, PRESENT: Erin Rogers, Staff Representative; Melissa A. Broeckelman-Post, Faculty Representative; Steven Zhou, Graduate Student Representative; Natalia Kanos, Undergraduate Student Representative; Gregory Washington, President; Ken Walsh, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff; Mark Ginsberg, Provost and Executive Vice President; Carol Kissal, Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance; Anne Gentry, Interim University Counsel and Sarah Hanbury, Secretary pro tem.

I. Call to Order

Rector Hazel called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. Rector Hazel provided the opportunity for the student representatives to the board, Natalia Kanos and Steven Zhou, to give comments after the FY2023 financial plan presentation or at the May 5, 2022 Board of Visitors meeting.

II. FY2023 Financial Plan

Carol Kissal, Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance, presented on the FY2023 financial plan. Ms. Kissal specifically noted that the recommended tuition and fees changes would be discussed in the presentation of the FY2023 budget. Ms. Kissal continued by highlighting the following items:

- FY2023-FY2024 Commonwealth Budget
 - An update was provided on where the Commonwealth stands on the status of their budget. Currently, the state budget is pending finalization. The state is convening a special session at the end of April to conclude the budget discussions. Mason's FY23 budget is delayed as the state budget is typically known by April.
 - Rector Hazel inquired of Paul Liberty, Vice President of Government and Community Relations, if he has any insight on the state budget. Mr. Liberty stated that the General Assembly met yesterday for the beginning of the special session and then recessed. The house and senate budget committees have not met in person since the general assembly in March. There is anticipation that they will begin work this week. He continued that it is important to note that Chair Barry Knight feels, despite what is in the media, the two committees are not that far apart on the numbers. Paul mentioned that the special session scheduled to reconvene at the end of April, deals with the normal vetoing of legislation; it is anticipated that the state budget will be brought back at that time.
- Fall Enrollment Update
 - There has been an enrollment growth of 1.5%
 - Students are enrolling in less credits per semester which is problematic and is the impact of the beginning phase of the demographic shift in the DMV region due to the decline of high school graduates.
 - Strong freshman admission for the fall semester.
 - Students are choosing institutions closer to home which Mason is benefitting from.
 - There has been a significant increase in Masters applications for the fall semester.

- Financial Aid Overview
 - Mason enhanced the financial aid strategy that deployed this year.
 - Mason is aligning its tuition and fees, and the increases of those, with an enhanced financial aid commitment. This will help moderate the impact of any tuition increase to the students who are most in need. The goal is to decrease the debt level of the neediest students.
 - Mason is committed to providing additional support to graduate students with more competitive graduate stipends and post-doctoral fellowships.
- Aid by Source
 - From 2017 through 2021, institutional aid has far outpaced state aid for undergraduate students.
- Doctoral Institutions Funding Disparities Remain
 - Mason's in-state tuition is the fifth lowest among the six doctoral institutions in Virginia.
 - Mason receives the lowest state general fund per in-state student per full-time equivalency (FTE). Significant progress has been made with receiving increased state funding, which Mason appreciates, but a funding gap remains between Mason and its peers.
- FY2023 Tuition & Fee Recommendations
 - A 3% undergraduate and graduate tuition increase is recommended.
 - Mason's two major funding sources are tuition and state funding. The state has authorized employee salary increases. Mason's cost share of this salary increase is about 50% and the only other driver to cover this cost is tuition.
 - There is not a mandatory student fee increase.
- FY2023 Tuition Rate Recommendation
 - One-third of the recommended tuition rate increase will be allocated to enhance financial aid for Mason's students who are most in need. This is about an increase of \$5 million to the existing institutional aid.
- FY2023 Tuition & Fee Recommendations
 - For in-state undergraduate students the 3% increase equates to \$285 a year.
- FY2023 Mandatory Student Fee Recommendation
 - Savings from debt restructuring covered the no fees increase.

Visitor Reagan inquired if the 3% tuition increase is consistent with what Mason's sister institutions are doing. Ms. Kissal responded that the University of Virginia's Board approved a 5% increase in December. She continued that some institutions are higher than Mason; some are at 5% and others are at 3%. Ms. Kissal stated that she is not aware of any institution that is currently lower than 3%.

Visitor Rice asked if Ms. Kissal has looked at ways to keep tuition increases down. Ms. Kissal stated that the difficulty is when there is a state salary increase of 5% and Mason has to cover half of it. The only other driver of revenue funds is tuition.

Visitor Oberoi inquired how inflation is being handled as the 3% tuition increase will not cover inflation. Ms. Kissal stated that Mason is obligated with the dining and housing contracts to increase them with inflation. Dr. Washington added that Mason employees will also experience a cut in pay because whichever salary increase the state approves, none of them are above 5%, which will not cover inflation that is closer to 7%. Dr. Washington continued that this is recognized as a challenge.

III. Public Comments

There were no registrations for oral or written public comment. Rector Hazel noted that this was an information-only session and no actions will be taken on the recommendations given today. He continued that actions would be taken at the May 5, 2022 meeting and that hopefully the state's budget will be known by then. Rector Hazel expressed that he wanted to keep the written comments open for two weeks longer and encouraged the student

representatives to speak with their fellow students about the proposed financial plan as he would like to receive their input.

Visitor Moreno inquired how long the proposed financial plan had been available to the public to determine if a two-week extension is sufficient. Sarah Hanbury, Secretary pro tem, noted that the FY2023 financial plan presentation was available on March 25, 2022 through the Board's website and that meeting notices were posted in the Johnson Center, the President's Office, The George, The Provost's Newsletter and Around Mason.

Visitor Iturregui stated that other public universities in Virginia are increasing their tuition by more than 5% and that Mason's proposed 3% tuition increase seems reasonable.

Steven Zhou, Graduate Student Representative, requested that the written registration form remain open until April 22, 2022 as the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly meets on April 21, 2022.

Natalia Kanos, Undergraduate Student Representative, also agreed that extending the deadline to receive written public comment would be beneficial for the students. Natalie continued that the financial plan presentation was extremely detailed and made sense, but suggested that options be found to help students alleviate the increased tuition cost; whether that be increasing the availability of financial plans for paying tuition or looking for more scholarship opportunities, as students bear the extra costs.

Rector Hazel noted there is a consensus from the Board to keep written comment open until April 22, 2022, but there is not an opportunity to conduct another oral public comment session.

IV. Adjournment

Rector Hazel called for any additional business to come before the board. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 10:57 p.m.

Prepared by:

Sarah Hanbury
Secretary pro tem