

BOARD OF VISITORS GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Meeting of April 1, 2021 MINUTES

MEETING NOTE: In accordance with Code of Virginia § 23.1-307.E and the provisions in the 2020 Commonwealth Budget Bill: § 4-0.01.g.1, due to safety concerns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the April 1, 2021 meeting of the Board of Visitors of George Mason University was held through electronic means to receive public comment. Board members and university leadership met via Zoom videoconference. The session was streamed live via webcast for public viewing at <https://gmutv.gmu.edu/live-broadcast/>. An online form was posted on the Board of Visitors webpage (<https://bov.gmu.edu/>) to accept written public comments and registrations for oral public comments. One written comment submission was received through the form. The full video recording of the meeting may be accessed at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8317364/video/531923703>.

PRESENT: Rector James Hazel; Visitors Anjan Chimaladinne, Tom Davis, Juan Carols Iturregui, Mehmood Kazmi, Wendy Marquez, Ignacia Moreno, Carolyn Moss, Jon Peterson, Nancy Prowitt, Paul Reagan, Edward Rice, Denise Turner Roth, and Robert Witeck.

ABSENT: Vice Rector Horace Blackman and Secretary Simmi Bhuller.

ALSO PRESENT: Lauren Reuscher, Staff Liaison; Shannon Davis, Faculty Representative; Lilianna Deveneau, Student Representative; Gregory Washington, President; Ken Walsh, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff; Carol Kissal, Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance; Brian Walther, University Counsel; Rene Stewart O'Neal, Associate Vice President for Strategic Planning & Budgeting; Deb Dickenson, Vice President for Finance; Sarah Hanbury, Secretary pro tem.

I. Call to Order

Rector Hazel called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

II. FY 2022 Financial Plan

Carol Kissal, Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance, gave the FY2022 financial plan presentation. Ms. Kissal specifically noted that the recommended tuition and fee changes would be discussed in this presentation as the final FY2022 budget would be voted on during the next meeting of the board on May 6, 2021. Ms. Kissal continued by highlighting the following items:

- Macroeconomic indicators show improvements.
 - The regional economy is better than the national economy.
- Higher education trends showing change.
 - Mason still faces challenges but the outlook is cautiously optimistic.
 - Moody's recently upgraded its outlook to "stable" from what was negative during the pandemic.

- The national college enrollment had a decline of 2.5%, while Mason's fall 2020 enrollment was up 1.4% with an expected growth of 3% for the fall 2021.
 - Auxiliary revenues were reduced this year. The increased student presence on campus during fall 2021 should help restore that gap.
- Overview of risks & mitigation:
 - Seven of the macroeconomic factors were presented along with industry-specific risks. Three of the macroeconomic factors are on target and the rest are developing. None of the microeconomic factors are at risk.
- Learning through COVID:
 - Mason kept pursuing academic excellence by upgrading more than 200 classrooms with cameras and microphones to facilitate hybrid learning.
 - Instructional video uploads increased by more than 220,000 this year.
 - Blackboard collaborative sessions between students and faculty increased by more than 266,000. More than 6.5 million items were graded on blackboard which is an increase of 85% over last year.
 - Student hardships were recognized and support was provided through remote services and the Mason Care Network. Distance learning fees were removed.
 - \$26 million in financial aid was administered to students and about \$1 million was raised by the Mason community.
- Moving forward through COVID:
 - New tools for telework will continue to roll out. Mason is looking at ways for other current technology tools to be more efficient and will eliminate old technologies.
 - Cyber security features were added to protect the workforce and students.
 - Appreciation was extended to GMU-TV for the hundreds of virtual events and videos they have produced.
 - The campus continued to transform with the completion of Horizon Hall. Forward progress was made on the Arlington campus expansion and the master plan which will shape the campus for decades to come.
- The challenges of COVID provided opportunities such as hybrid learning models, leveraging technology in the classroom and commercializing business opportunities that will benefit Mason and its students for years to come.
- FY2022 Commonwealth & federal update:
 - There was a 23% increase in financial aid from fiscal year 2020.
 - Mason is expected to receive an additional \$63 million in federal funding because of the latest stimulus bill, and half of that will go directly to students who need financial aid.
 - Mason will allocate the state authorized 5% salary increase for all full-time instructional, research, administrative, and professional faculty, and classified staff. Adjunct faculty, GRE, graduate teaching assistants and casual wages will also be increased by 5%.
 - Mason has been allocated \$31 million of new base funding which represents a 20% increase from the prior year.

- Mason is to receive one-time funding to reimburse for COVID-19 testing and unaffordable cost escalation driven by the pandemic. Mason will use the other half of the \$63 million in federal funding to offset increased institutional cost associated with COVID-19.
 - An additional capital contribution of \$30 million was received to extend a floor in the life sciences and engineering building on the SciTech Campus.
- FY2022 enrollment update & expectations:
 - Upcoming undergraduate enrollment for fall 2021 is consistent with the fall 2020 levels and is above the fall enrollment for 2019.
 - Graduate enrollment applications have increased by 19%.
- FY2022 tuition rate recommendations:
 - Mason recognizes that its students and their families continue to face financial pressures. Given the state commitment to Mason's base funding, Mason's commitment to access and affordability can be seen in the recommendation of a 0% tuition increase for undergraduates.
 - Due to the increased demand for graduate programs, tuition is increasing at a modest rate of \$441 for both in-state and out-state students. Most of this increase will go toward supporting additional graduate stipends.
- FY2022 mandatory student fee rates recommendation:
 - There was careful consideration before making the recommendation to increase the mandatory student fees by 3%. This fee is a flat charge for all students at an increase of \$105 for full-time students and \$77 for law students.
 - This increase will support many student activities such as student health services, intercollegiate athletics, art venues, student transportation and technology. It will also help with recreational programs and the maintenance and operations of student centers.
- FY2022 proposed room & board rates:
 - The proposed room and board rates reflect a 5% increase in housing and a 3.7% increase in dining. This is consistent with contractual inflation cost that need to be recovered for dining and meal plans as well as deferred maintenance funding for housing.
- To conclude this presentation, the board will see a complete budget in the meeting on May 6, 2021 where the FY2022 Financial Plan will be voted on.

Rector Hazel inquired if the tuition and fee recommendations were publicly available prior to this meeting. Ms. Kissal noted that the materials were posted quite early and have been spoken about at many of Mason's townhalls.

Rector Hazel then recognized President Washington for any comments he might have on the financial plan or other topics at Mason. Dr. Washington stated that Mason is still student-centric with staff and administration helping students achieve their academic goals and pursue them safely. Dr. Washington highlighted that Mason has vaccinated more than 33,000 individuals in the community which was largely a volunteer effort. Mason has funded the cost of the

vaccination clinics which has been done at no additional cost to the state. He concluded by noting Mason is moving from an exclusive framework to an inclusive framework and he is excited to see Mason's future.

Rector Hazel then opened the floor to discussion.

Visitor Iturregui thanked the management team as a whole, including Ms. Kissal and Dr. Washington. He noted that Mason continued to invest throughout the crisis and is astounded by the successful data.

Visitor Peterson commented that Virginia recognizes what Mason is to the state's higher education system which is evident in the support they are beginning to show. Visitor Peterson noted that when you can say no tuition increases and increasing salaries by 5%, that shows Mason is healthy as an institution. Visitor Peterson asked what other universities in the state are doing with tuition and salaries. Ms. Kissal noted that some intuitions are increasing their tuition by 3%. Dr. Washington stated that Virginia Tech is increasing tuition and expects that other Virginia institutions will increase rates. He continued to note Mason's economic situation is such that tuition rates do not have to be raised which is a testament to the support received from the state and this board. Dr. Washington thanked the board for its guidance.

Visitor Davis stated that last year Mason raised the cost of tuition which received criticism. He continued that Mason students are reaping the benefits of that decision this year. Visitor Davis then thanked Dr. Washington for his work engaging with state officials and legislators.

Shannon Davis, Faculty Senate Representative, thanked the board for investing in the faculty with the salary increase, including adjunct professors and graduate teaching assistants.

Lauren Reuscher, Staff Liaison, echoed Dr. Davis' sentiments specific to the staff. Ms. Reuscher noted that she has worked at Mason for 12 years and this is the largest across-the-board raise that she recalls which will make a big difference to Mason staff. Ms. Reuscher relayed that the staff are grateful for this increase.

III. Public Comment

There were no registrations for oral public comments. One written public comment was received prior to the start of the meeting and was directed to the full board. (ATTACHMENT 1).

Rector Hazel called on Visitor Reagan. Visitor Reagan stated that during the February 25, 2021 Board of Visitors meeting that the board unanimously approved going into negotiations for a comprehensive agreement for the Institute for Digital Innovation project with the Prosper Mason Innovations Partners. Visitor Reagan continued to note that he voted in favor of the motion and since learned that other attorneys in his firm may represent a potential participant in the project that could constitute a conflict of interest. Consequently, Visitor Reagan changed his vote to "abstain".

IV. Closed Session

Rector Hazel invited the student, faculty and staff representatives to join closed session. Visitor Moreno **MOVED** that the Board go into closed session under the provisions of Section 2.2-3711.A.11 to discuss special awards and the potential awarding of the Mason Medal. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Witeck.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.

Yes – 13

Absent – 3 – Vice Rector Blackman; Secretary Bhuller and Visitor Davis.

Following closed session, Visitor Moreno **MOVED** that the Board go back into public session and further moved that by roll call vote the Board certify that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the meeting by the Board. Any member of the Board who believes that there was a departure from the requirements as stated above, shall so state prior to the roll call, indicating the substance of the departure that, in his or her judgment, has taken place. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Rice.

ALL PRESENT MEMBERS RESPONDED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE BY ROLL CALL.

Yes – 13

Absent – 3 – Vice Rector Blackman; Secretary Bhuller and Visitor Davis.

Visitor Moreno **MOVED** that the Board of Visitors approve the awarding of the Mason Medal to the candidate discussed in closed session for that purpose. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Witeck.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.

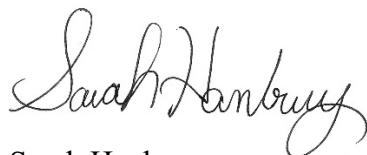
Yes – 13

Absent – 3 – Vice Rector Blackman; Secretary Bhuller and Visitor Davis.

Adjournment

Rector Hazel thanked the board and called for any additional items to come before the Board. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

Prepared by:



Sarah Hanbury
Secretary pro tem

Board of Visitors Electronic Committee Meetings and Full Board Meeting
April 1, 2021
Public Comment Registrations

First Name	Last Name	Meeting	Mason Affiliation	Comment
Stephen	Beretzky	Full Board Meeting	Alumnus - 2005	My comments were provided in a letter (dated March 5, 2021) to the Board of Visitors sent by email on March 9th to bov@gmu.edu.

March 5, 2021

Subject: GMU President's Task Force on Anti-Racism

To: George Mason University Board of Visitors

Dear Board members,

I was shocked and dismayed to read in the Fall issue of the Mason magazine about the new GMU President, Gregory Washington's comments and plans for an "Anti-Racism Task Force" to eliminate "systemic racism" at GMU.

Washington begins his message stating, "In the days following the murder of George Floyd, I sent you a message that promised action to address racial inequities that persist here at George Mason University." It's clear from his statement that he was motivated to these actions by the social outcry about Floyd's death, especially by groups like Black Lives Matter. However, his statement about systemic racism at Mason rings hollow. What are the racial inequities he speaks of and who is perpetrating them? What specifically is he referring to? He doesn't say. Nor does he refer to any reports of systemic racism at Mason by anyone. I encountered none of the racism he speaks of when I attended GMU in the early 2000's. Racism has generally been steadily declining over the decades in the US (not increasing), as I'm sure it has at Mason. Public institutional systemic racism in the US today is a BLM myth. The alleged systemic racism at Mason didn't prevent Washington from attaining his position as President, did it. Washington is clearly caught up in the leftist rhetoric and fever of the day in social media and not actually motivated by "persisting racial inequities" he claims exist but fails to identify. These are the kinds of dubious claims we constantly hear from radical organizations: generalized accusations with no specifics or evidence.

Washington goes on to say that "...the uncomfortable truth is that not everyone at Mason feels equal, or is treated equally". It is an axiom of life that no matter how many policies are put in place to engender fair and equal treatment, there will always be someone who doesn't "feel" equal or that they've been treated unfairly, but this doesn't mean there is systemic bias. Again, Washington provides no details about what he is talking about nor does anyone else.

One of his Task Force bullets indicates, "We need to know where systems, practices, and traditions of racial bias exist at Mason so that we may eradicate them". This is backwards. You need to have evidence of racial bias before you investigate for racial bias or else it becomes an inquisition and self-fulfilling prophecy. When you task a team to root out some evil (that you somehow feel sure is there, but don't know where it is) they always seem to come up with something no matter how specious. After all that's their *raison d'être*. Washington

makes the assumption that there is racial bias and then sets out to attack it. It's very sad to see an illogical fiasco like this occurring at my alma mater.

Another Task Force bullet identifies the "Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Campus Center". Any time one encounters the name of an organization that includes the word "truth" in its title, one should be very wary. It smacks of an Orwellian nature. Whose view of the truth are we referring to? Who in the organization will decide what the "truth" is? This unsophisticated view of truth is dangerous. Washington indicates that the Center will be "one of the first of its kind in the nation". Let's hope it will be the last.

It's very clear that Washington identifies with the Black Lives Matter movement, an avowed radical Marxist organization committed to destroying the US economic system and radically changing the US government if not overthrowing it. Patrisse Cullors, one of the founders of BLM, confirms in a 2015 video that "We are trained Marxists". Apparently Washington isn't aware of these facts. BLM was founded in 2013 on a false narrative that Trayvon Martin was "murdered by a white supremacist". The overwhelming evidence, substantiated in a court of law proved that Trayvon Martin was the aggressor and was shot in a self-defense action. I watched the entire Trayvon Martin trial on TV as it occurred, and I know that the verdict was clearly just. BLM merely used the widely inflammatory event as a springboard for their agenda.

I was appalled to see a picture of the BLM logo in the Mason magazine pages of Washington's message to Mason alumni. BLM, a deceptive, anti-American group, promoted and was involved in much of the violence and destruction that took place in various cities around the US in 2020 that also led to numerous deaths. They claim their goal is to eradicate white supremacy, which they insist is rampant throughout American society. This is a great lie, which Washington obviously bought into. Some of BLM's real goals as were posted on their website over a year ago, are to "...engender the destruction ... of the nuclear family structure" and "promote pro-communist resistance to the US Empire". In short, they want to destroy American culture and the American political system, including the concept of private property and free speech. You won't see these statements on their website anymore as they employ the well known communist practice of purging history to hide their true agenda. Those statements along with other material unpalatable to Americans (including the use of the word, "comrade"), were deleted, leaving the highly sanitized website seen today.

To accomplish their ends BLM uses identity politics and race baiting under the guise of "institutional racism" and "white privilege" to prey upon white guilt and upset and divide the country to create chaos. Radical activist trainer Saul Alinsky would be proud. BLM, claiming to be rooting out white racism, sets up conflict in classes of race (instead of the classic Marxist economic classes) utilizing identity politics. In functioning this way, BLM is actually itself a racist organization. Unfortunately Washington guzzled down the pernicious BLM Kool-Aid that will

only serve the BLM goal of dividing the community and creating an atmosphere of conflict at GMU to ultimately indoctrinate the academic community to the BLM philosophy and crush any independent dissenting thought. Washington claims that George Mason will be a leader in the nation with his Anti-racism Task Force, but he isn't leading, he's following - the BLM blueprint.

GMU has built a reputation as a top research university, but Washington's Anti-racist Task Force activities don't reflect or live up to that accomplishment. Perhaps Washington should enroll in some basic research courses so he could learn to objectively research organizations like BLM to enlighten himself, instead of imbibing the latest heavily biased talking points from main stream media.

It's unthinkable that a school of Mason's caliber, would be following and promoting BLM's irrational and racist ideas wholesale, without resistance from Mason's faculty and administrators. It will have a chilling effect on the Mason community, including academic freedom of speech and thought and will perpetuate the deleterious cancel culture and mass hysteria that is sweeping the nation. Washington will be wasting valuable GMU resources on a pseudo-intellectual snipe hunt based on unscholarly and unscientific radical narratives like critical race theory, that could otherwise be spent on actually improving academia and the pursuit of knowledge at Mason. GMU should be an academic bulwark against irrational, prejudicial and detrimental trends, not a promoter of them. Washington's misguided Anti-racism Task Force activities should be immediately ended and/or he should be removed as President.

With the folly of Washington's disgraceful engagement of BLM's racist Marxist agenda and their anti-American stance, my pride in Mason is greatly diminished and I will no longer support the University, financially or otherwise.

Stephen Beretzky

Mason Class of 2005, Alpha Chi