

**BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Special Meeting of
Wednesday, June 29, 2022
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201)**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Rector James Hazel, Visitors Anjan Chimaladinne, Mehmood Kazmi, Ignacia Moreno, Carolyn Moss, Dolly Oberoi, Jon Peterson, Nancy Prowitt, Edward Rice, and Robert Witeck.

ABSENT: Vice Rector Horace Blackman, Secretary Simmi Bhuller, Visitors Juan Carlos Iturregui, Wendy Marquez, Paul Reagan, and Denise Turner Roth.

ALSO, PRESENT: Erin Rogers, Staff Representative; Gregory Washington, President; Mark Ginsberg, Provost and Executive Vice President; Deb Dickenson, Interim Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance; David Drummey, University Counsel and Sarah Hanbury, Secretary pro tem.

I. Call to Order

Rector Hazel called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m.

Rector Hazel informed the Board that Governor Youngkin requested all public higher education institutions in the Commonwealth that passed a tuition increase for the 2022-2023 academic year to reconsider and rescind the tuition increase, which was the purpose for this special meeting.

Rector Hazel further informed the Board that the newly elected Board student representatives Sophia Nguyen and Ayondela McDole were unable to attend the meeting. Ms. Nguyen and Ms. McDole provided written statements on behalf of the Student Body and the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA) that will be made part of the record of this meeting (**Attachment 1**).

Rector Hazel announced that he would bring a forth an additional option for the Board to consider toward the end of the meeting. He continued to note that if Mason stays the course with the FY 2023 University Operating Budget that was passed at the May 5, 2022 Board meeting, no action would be required, but if any change is considered, an action is required.

Rector Hazel read the following codes of Virginia specific to what the duties of the Board of Visitors are:

- § 23.1-1012. Covered institutions; operational authority; financial operations generally.
 - B. Subject to the express terms of the management agreement, the governing board of each covered institution has the sole authority to establish tuition, mandatory fees, room and board, and other necessary charges consistent with sum sufficient appropriation authority for all nongeneral funds as provided by the Governor and the General Assembly in the general appropriation act.
- § 23.1-1500. Corporate name; name of the University.
 - A. The board shall at all times be under the control of the General Assembly.
- § 23.1-1301. Governing boards; powers.
 - 5. Fix the rates charged to students for tuition, mandatory fees, and other necessary charges.

Rector Hazel concluded that the purpose of reading the aforementioned codes was to remind the Board of their fiduciary responsibility.

Rector Hazel then recognized Mason President, Dr. Gregory Washington, to provide his comments. The highlights of Dr. Washington's comments follow:

- The Governor sent letters to university presidents requesting no raise in tuition.
- When the Governor's request was received, Mason started working in earnest to develop options.

- Mason's financial stability and health were reviewed.
- Commended the fiscal services, student life and government relations staff for the extensive time they committed to the process in order to prepare for proper review of the Governor's request.

II. Finance Matters

A. FY 2023 University Operating Budget, Tuition and Fees (ACTION ITEM)

Rector Hazel recognized Interim Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance, Deb Dickenson, to provide an overview of possible amendments to the FY 2023 University Operating Budget. Ms. Dickenson highlighted the following items:

- During the February 24 Finance and Land Use Committee Meeting, the 3% tuition rate increase was presented.
- The Governor sent a letter to university presidents on May 10, 2022 (**Attachment 2**) and June 23, 2022 (previously provided in the meeting materials) requesting no raise in tuition. Both requests came after Mason's Board approved the university's budget on May 5, 2022 and the second request came after the state budget was signed on June 21, 2022.
- Rector Hazel noted that after Mason's budget was approved on May 5, 2022, a meeting date was reserved on June 13, 2022 should the Board need to reconvene on Mason's budget once the state budget was finalized.
- Visitor Moreno inquired when the Board approved the budget on May 5, 2022 had a formal request from the Governor been received to hold tuition flat? Ms. Dickenson responded that it had not.
- Conversation ensued regarding the purpose of the Governor's tuition request and if Mason consulted other Virginia universities on how they are handling the request. Please refer to the meeting's video recording for specifics: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8557205/video/725050565>.
- The 3% tuition increase was structured methodically to address Mason's growing needs. The increase was designed to fund the most critical priorities and increased costs due to inflation:
 - Unexpected contract escalations.
 - Academic success initiatives.
 - Faculty and staff compensation.
- In 2022, Mason's undergraduate tuition was the fifth lowest of the six Virginia doctoral institutions while having the highest enrollment and most diverse students.
- Challenges of no tuition increase:
 - Mason is a young university that has experienced tremendous growth. In many instances, Mason's systems and infrastructure have not kept up with the growth.
 - Necessary work has begun to modernize systems. This includes automating and improving business processes so efficient services can be provided.
 - Mason's commitment to increase financial aid and access to excellence.
 - Some of the challenges of the unprecedented inflation follow:
 - Increased insurance fees.
 - Increased legal fees.
 - Increased technology and financial service contract costs.
 - Increased janitorial fees.
 - Other universities are moving into the region and Mason is not able to offer the same level of compensation.
 - Mason experienced significant critical job turnover in 2022. Due to the competitive market, multiple searches had to be made for one position because the competitive salary could not be met. In some cases, because it was critical to Mason's Business operations, offers were made that were 20-40% higher than what was budgeted for that position.
 - Mason has worked hard to sustain financial stability, which puts the university in a good position for the future. However, only a set amount of the Mason reserves can be used to sustain that financial stability.

- The budget that Mason received from the state was about \$2 million higher than expected.
- The following tuition options were presented:

Option A: 3% Tuition Increase		Financial Impact
A	• As approved in May; no change	\$0

Option B: 3% Tuition Increase with Offset		Financial Impact
B1	• One-time tuition grant for IS UG* family incomes up to \$70,000	(\$2,049)
B2	• One-time tuition grant for IS UG* family incomes up to \$70,000 • Allocate additional \$1M to Stay Mason to support FY23 tuition relief for all other UG & Grad students experiencing financial hardship due to tuition increase	(\$3,049)
B3	• All I/S UG* awarded one-time tuition grant regardless of need	(\$4,874)

**Students taking at least 6 credit hours per semester*

Option C: No Tuition Increase		Financial Impact
C	• No tuition increase	(\$15,094)

- A B3+ option was presented as well which would add \$500K to Stay Mason Student Support Fund. This option would have a financial impact on Mason of about \$5.5 million.
- Dr. Washington noted that most Virginia peer institutions have chosen option B3 for all in-state undergraduate students who had a tuition increase.
- Visitor Chimaladinne inquired if option B2 covered international students. Ms. Dickenson replied yes.
- The extra \$2 million that Mason received from the state would be used to offset any extra costs without using reserves.

From this point forward, significant conversation ensued. The meeting video is available for referencing at the link provided above.

Rector Hazel presented a draft resolution as another option for the board to consider which would establish a special tuition committee of four (4) board members to meet and make tuitions recommendations to the Board for the remainder of the 2022-2023 academic year. Rector Hazel noted the purposes of the resolution was to ensure Mason was responsive to the Governor's request and allow more time to make an informed choice for the Mason community. Rector Hazel continued that there is one edit he would like to make to the resolution which would be for the special tuition committee to report back to the full Board with their findings at the December 1, 2022 meeting. Conversation ensued and some of the highlights follow:

- Visitor Prowitt suggested noting in the resolution preamble Mason's underfunding.
- Visitor Moss relayed her concern of what impact delaying a decision would have on the students. Dr. Washington responded that by going with the special tuition committee resolution that Option A, the 3% tuition increase, would remain intact and followed for the fall 2022 term.
- Dr. Washington is a proponent of B3+ given the extra \$2 million received from the state as Mason can absorb the one-time cost for this year and not put the institution at future risk. This stance generated a conversation between Dr. Washington and members of the Board.

Visitor Peterson **MOVED** that the board approve the resolution regarding the Governor's letter dated June 23, 2022 with the addition that the special tuition committee will report its recommendations to the Board at its December 1, 2022 meeting. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Moreno. Rector Hazel opened the floor for discussion. Discussion by Visitor Prowitt to add two clauses to the resolution: Mason did not increase tuition for the 2021-2022 academic year and has been underfunded on a per student basis compared to other public educational institutions in the Commonwealth. Visitor Peterson **ACCEPTED** the amendments proposed by Visitor Prowitt (**Attachment 3**). Visitor Moss **SECONDED**.

MOTION CARREID BY MAJORITY VOTE.

Yes – 9

No – 1 – Visitor Kazmi

Absent – 6

III. Adjournment

Rector Hazel called for any additional business to come before the board. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 3:39 p.m.

Prepared by:

Sarah Hanbury
Secretary pro tem

Attachment 1: Board Student Representatives Written Comments (1 page)

Attachment 2: Governor's Letter Dated May 10, 2022 (5 pages)

Attachment 3: Resolution – Special Tuition Committee Creation (1 page)

Special Board of Visitors Meeting
June 29, 2022
Board Student Representatives Written Comments

1. Name: Sophia Q. Nguyen Mason Affiliation: Student Body President

Comment: Hello, my name is Sophia Nguyen, and I am the current Student Body President of George Mason University. Please forgive my absence from this meeting as I am unable to attend. In regard to the tuition update and the options that were presented to me prior to the Board of Visitors meeting, I believe that option 2 offset 2, is the best option and deserves and has my full support. This option would prevent students with a family income of 70k from having to pay the 3% increase. As it would lightly lift the financial burdens that families must endure in order to have their children attend Mason, I support this option to exclude them from having to pay the 3% increase. To add, it would also allow an additional \$1,000,000 to be sent to the Mason State funds, which any undergraduate and graduate students can apply for and receive assistance, regardless of their financials. I am a representative of both graduate and undergraduate students, and as such, I recognize that graduate students need assistance as well; the Mason State funds allow everyone to apply for assistance. An increase of \$1,000,000 to the fund will benefit more students, thus, I must support it. I ask you all to consider why it is you do what you do - if not for the furtherance of education, if not for the increased opportunity for success of the university's students, then for the passion and need for discovery that Mason students can put out into the world in times like these where everyone is searching for answers and possibilities as a result of reduced debt for them and their families. I hope you can take my statement into consideration not as one person, but as 40,000 people speaking, and demanding, in your best interest and ours, that you prioritize the students first.

2. Name: Ayondela McDole Mason Affiliation: GAPSA President

Comment:

A statement from the Graduate and Professional Student Association

My deepest apologies for not being present for this meeting. However, I am grateful to the board for the chance to amplify concerns on behalf of the graduate and professional student body. While we respect the final decision to increase tuition, we ask the board of visitors to seriously consider a deliberate plan to allocate revenue from the increase toward the graduate and professional student body directly.

A significant portion of graduate students do receive stipends and tuition waivers to supplement the cost of living while obtaining graduate degrees but, there is a considerable portion of graduate and professional students who do not receive assistance of any kind and struggle to cover all expenses out of pocket. Please seriously consider increasing the financial aid available for all graduate professional students in the coming school year as well as modify the stipends across the university to reflect the tuition increase.

This decision would only afford Mason grads a shot at keeping pace with our peers nationally, it would have yet to address the issues of inflation, recession and supply chain deficits set to plague us in the coming years. Ultimately, we are asking for resources and funding to appropriately reflect the contributions of the graduate and professional student body.



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Glenn Youngkin
Governor

May 10, 2022

Dear Presidents, Chancellors and Superintendent:

Thank you for your time and effort in meeting with me. I greatly appreciate and value our conversations and enjoy the learning that occurs when we are together.

Thank you for your leadership during one of the most trying and disruptive eras in our education system. These past two years have had a serious negative impact on mental health, academic achievement, social and emotional development, and sense of community. Your leadership is critical as we turn from crisis management to recovery and rejuvenation.

As we adjust to post-pandemic life, this is not a time to simply go back to normal. Yes, we must foster community and relationships, *and* we must grab this opportunity to reset and think about how we meet the challenges of today in new ways. As you identified, we have many shared challenges that we can address together.

In that spirit, I would like to reiterate the themes and follow up which I shared at our meeting, and I look forward to engaging with you on a quarterly basis to ensure that Virginia is the best state in the nation for postsecondary education.

Vibrant Campus Life

- **Ensure students continue to learn in-person and are part of safe and vibrant campuses**
 - *I ask you to prioritize in-person learning to allow our students to foster and grow relationships with as few restrictions as possible.*
- **Value and promote a culture that embraces free inquiry and a commitment to free speech**

Thank you for the rich conversation we could have spent all day on this topic alone. I am heartened to hear that each one of you agrees that this is an issue and a priority. There is so much we can do together.

I ask the Council of Presidents to:

- *Develop a collective shared statement that supports freedom of speech and inquiry in concert with the ideals and principles of the University of Chicago statement of free expression.*
- *Create a framework to guide each of your campuses in their efforts to nurture a culture that prioritizes civil discourse and debate, **both inside and outside the classroom**. This framework and accompanying toolkit of emerging best practices, policies and protocols should address annual faculty, staff, and student training, approaches to prioritize the hiring of staff and faculty with diverse political perspectives, support of events and forums to model the exchange of ideas from different perspectives in a civil and productive manner, the set of non-negotiables around behaviors that will not be tolerated on our campuses, and other steps to further these fundamental freedoms on your campuses.*
- **Prioritize the mental health and well-being of your students, faculty and staff**

We must all prioritize mental health and well-being. I appreciate that the Council of Presidents has been leading an effort focused on this priority.

I ask the Council to:

- *Continue to coordinate with the Secretariats of Education, Health and Human Resources and Public Safety to develop policy recommendations to support the mental wellbeing of our K-12 and higher education students.*
- *Share your needs, your ideas and suggestions for how we can improve the mental wellbeing of our students, teachers, professors and staff across the Commonwealth. Critical parts of this effort are a listening tour over the next four months and a Fall Summit; throughout this process we will explore together ways to create a set of policy proposals that we can propose to the General Assembly.*
- **Keep your campuses safe**

I ask the Council to:

- *Partner with my Violent Crime Task Force as we grapple with some of our biggest challenges in our Commonwealth. We need to continue supporting our police and first responders.*
- *Utilize the Department of Criminal Justice Service's Emergency Crisis Management resources and tools that were presented in the recent webinar for higher education:*
<https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/resources-emergency-crisis-management-colleges-and-universities-webinar>. *Please let my Administration know how we can better help you prepare and respond.*

Affordability and Reducing the Cost of Higher Education

- **Reduce costs and keep tuition low**

It is important to focus on ensuring higher education is affordable for all. As we discussed, we are facing conflicting objectives. We want to provide the finest infrastructure and services, but we are facing a demographic reality of fewer students in the education pipeline. This reality requires rethinking business as usual.

I ask each of you to:

- *Keep your tuition flat for the 2022-2023 academic year. I would like for us to work to lower the net cost of higher education for Virginia's students. Keeping tuition as low as possible must be part of the answer.*
- *Be creative and strategic problem-solvers to keep tuition increases low for the long-term. These solutions can come from leveraging technology, more efficient delivery methods, partnerships with community colleges, and innovating and finding new or expanded sources of revenue. I also encourage you to undertake a tough review of staffing, overhead, review of all majors and course offerings, and increase attention on spending and procurement oversight.*
- **Prioritize operating cost transparency**

My Administration will work with your Council of State Senior Business Officers over the next year to reimagine the six-year plan process to reinforce the strategic aspect of this annual financial data collection process.

I ask you and your budget officers to:

- *Work with the Secretariats of Finance and Education to develop and implement a process that is efficient and promotes transparency and strategic planning around cost containment, financial health and outcomes.*

Prepare students for the increasing demands of the knowledge economy

Our shared overriding goal must be to have every student graduate career ready—our Administration's definition for success for jobs (preferably in Virginia). I am pleased that the Council of Presidents has led the charge for every graduate of our four year higher education institutions to have an opportunity for a paid workplace internship, reflecting our shared objective to prepare every college student to graduate in a timely manner and launch a meaningful career.

- **Redefine success as job attainment**

Our Administration is committed to leveraging the power of labor market information to better connect Virginia students with Virginia jobs. We will prioritize the collection, use and reporting of data that tracks postsecondary outcomes by employment and wage in addition to graduation rates.

To further support this goal of ensuring all our students are prepared for success in the workplace, I ask you to:

- *Work with our Administration to report the data as we redefine postsecondary success to be not just graduating, but being hired into a good job within six months of graduation.*
- *Take steps to align curriculum, programs and requirements to our state's most in-demand workforce needs.*
- *Continue to prioritize a meaningful internship as part of the college experience.*
- **Prioritize efforts to support efficient attainment of credentials & degrees in the most in-demand skill areas**

I am excited to learn about the transfer study presented at your Council meeting this past week. Aligned with this effort, Secretary Guidera has asked SCHEV to explore a multi-year Workgroup to ensure our higher education system is focused on preparing our graduates for the jobs of the knowledge economy. This involves learning from emerging best practices both in the Commonwealth and across the nation, expanding pathways such as dual enrollment and transfers across community colleges and four year institutions, and exploring “outside the box” ways to prioritize affordability and credential attainment.

I ask the Council to:

- *Actively participate in this Workgroup to ensure we create a system that is built to last and meet the needs of students of all ages and prepares all learners for success in the knowledge economy in a cost-effective way.*

Build the college and career ready pipeline in partnership with K-12 school divisions and other key stakeholders through lab schools or innovation schools

Thank you for your willingness to partner with my Administration to create lab schools in Virginia. Your leadership is critical in helping to expand the K-12 to college delivery pipeline to offer multiple pathways to successful preparation for in-demand jobs, and particularly to identify and support those students traditionally not seen as “college material.”

I ask each of your institutions to:

- *Consider opening a lab school. The Secretariat of Education looks forward to reviewing your preliminary proposals in the coming month, and we are all eager to learn more about the different partnerships you are considering launching to serve K-12 students and educators.*

- *Create or strengthen "Pathway Programs" which provide pipelines and specific programs for underserved students in your communities. Perhaps this could even be one of the Council's next priorities to build on your success after the VTOP success! I look forward to learning more about your current innovative pathway programs at our next meeting.*

For our Commonwealth to thrive, our colleges and universities must be hubs of innovation. We know that Fortune 100 companies come to Virginia because they seek the best talent in the world; we can't take that for granted. This requires constant focus on being best in class. I look forward to working with you to ensure that Virginia is the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

Without your success in ensuring Virginia is the best place to be educated, none of that is possible.

With appreciation of our partnership,

Glenn Youngkin

cc: Jeff Goettman, Chief of Staff

cc: Aimee Rogstad Guidera, Secretary of Education

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF VISITORS OF GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
REGARDING THE GOVERNOR'S LETTER DATED JUNE 23, 2022**

WHEREAS, on May 5, 2022, the Board of Visitors of George Mason University ("Board") approved tuition rates for the academic year of 2022-2023,

WHEREAS, Mason's established tuition rates for 2022-2023 academic year are approximately three percent (3%) higher than the tuition rates Mason established for the 2021-2022 academic year,

WHEREAS, Mason did not increase its tuition for the 2021-2022 academic year and has been underfunded on a per student basis compared to other public educational institutions in the Commonwealth,

WHEREAS, Mason's proposed budget for the fiscal year of 2022-2023, was in part based upon the Board's established tuition rates for the 2022-2023 academic year,

WHEREAS, the General Assembly has approved the Commonwealth's budget which includes Mason's budget for the fiscal year of 2022-2023

WHEREAS, Governor Glenn Youngkin ("Governor") approved and signed the Commonwealth's budget on June 21, 2022,

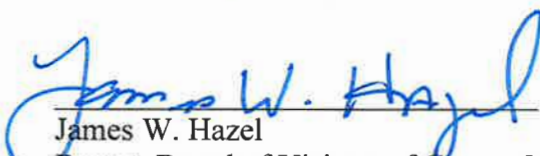
WHEREAS, on June 23, 2022, the Governor sent a letter to Presidents, Chancellors and Superintendents requesting public universities "hold tuition flat" for the 2022-2023 academic year, and

WHEREAS, the Board held the special meeting on June 29, 2022, to give the Governor's request of June 23, 2022, full consideration;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Board has considered the Governor's request and has determined it needs additional information to respond, and as a result
2. The Board hereby creates a special tuition committee to meet and make recommendations to the Board regarding tuition for the remainder of 2022-2023 academic year;
3. The special tuition committee will report its recommendations to the Board at its December 1, 2022, meeting;
4. The special committee will consist of four Board members; and
5. The Board hereby delegates to the University's Rector the authority to select the special tuition committee members, in accordance with this resolution.

Adopted: 6/29/22


James W. Hazel
Rector, Board of Visitors of George Mason University