

**SPECIAL TUITION COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Meeting of
Friday, September 9, 2022
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201)**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Chair James Hazel, Rector Horace Blackman, Visitors Reginald Brown and Mehmood Kazmi.

ABSENT: Nancy Prowitt

ALSO PRESENT: Vice Rector Simmi Bhuller, Secretary Jon Peterson, Visitors Anjan Chimaladinne, Carolyn Moss, Robert Pence and Bob Witeck; Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Faculty Representative; Sophia Nguyen, Undergraduate Student Representative, Ayondela McDole, Graduate Student 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; Rose Pascarell, Vice President for University Life; David Burge, Vice President for Enrollment Management; René Stewart O’Neal, Associate Vice President for Strategic Budgeting & Planning; and Sarah Hanbury, Secretary pro tem.

I. Call to Order

Chair Hazel called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

Chair Hazel began by commending Deb Dickenson, Interim Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance, and her staff for the extensive research they completed since the initial tuition review request made during the Special Board Meeting on June 29, 2022.

Chair Hazel announced that he personally had two meetings with the Secretary of Education on the topic of tuition since the June 29 Special Board Meeting. Ms. Dickenson added that on August 23, 2022 she had numerous meetings in Richmond which were coordinated by Mark Smith, Executive Director of State Government Relations. Ms. Dickenson met with Aimee Rogstad Guidera the Virginia Secretary of Education, Stephen Emery Cummings the Virginia Secretary of Finance, the State Treasurer, the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget and State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV).

Chair Hazel recognized Ms. Dickenson to present the financial item.

II. Financial Matters

A. FY 2023 University Operating Budget, Tuition and Fees

Ms. Dickenson highlighted the following items:

- Per the Code of Virginia, the Board has the authority to manage the funds of the institution and approve an annual budget, as well as determine tuition and fees and other charges for students.
- Tuition Review and Planning: FY 2023 Tuition Increase & Budget Process:
 - The 3% tuition rate increase was presented on February 24, 2022.
 - There was a public comment session for the tuition increase on April 5, 2022.
 - The Board had tuition discussions in May and June.
 - The Board established a Special Tuition Committee on June 29, 2022 and today is the first meeting for this committee.
 - Challenges of No Tuition Increase:

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- The approved budget focuses on competitive compensation for faculty and staff and increased financial aid for students which would impede the implementation of these items.
 - Increased investment required for planned strategic initiatives and core business due to inflation compounded by high cost of Northern Virginia.
 - An inability to address historic funding disparities.
- Mason Impact: What We Value and Who We Are:
Ms. Dickenson recognized David Burge, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Rose Pascarell, Vice President for University Life to present Mason's story:
 - This Is What We Value:
 - Student success is important to Mason.
 - Want to reduce faculty and staff inequities, as well as recruit and retain top notch faculty and staff in a competitive market.
 - Optimize organizational design and decision processes to support academic excellence.
 - Sustain R1 research through investment in faculty and research infrastructure.
 - This Is Who We Are:
 - Mason is a top 50 public university in the U.S.
 - Mason is a top 12 public law school in the U.S and 30th overall.
 - Mason is nationally respected for both its academic and social impact.
 - The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) ranks Mason 9th in free speech among public universities nationally.
 - Mason was one of 40 institutions in the country that received a five-star rating for having an LGBTQ-friendly campus.
 - Mason is also ranked as the best college nationally for veterans.
 - Mason provides a strong return on investment.
 - The Mason Virginia Promise is a pledge to the Commonwealth that Mason will offer a pathway toward a bachelor's degree or a personal business for every Virginian who wants it.
 - The ADVANCE program is a seamless transfer pathway between Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) and Mason.
 - Student Success:
 - Mason is the most diverse four-year public university in Virginia.
 - Mason has minimal disparities in six-year graduation rates across all ethnic groups.
 - Approximately 86% of Mason students choose to stay in the DMV area.
 - Mason Student Debt:
 - Mason's borrow and debt rates are below the national average and 2% higher than other four-year public institutions in Virginia.
 - Mason's return on investment is among the highest in the state.
- Mason Funding Disparities: Financial Framework:
Ms. Dickenson resumed presenting.
 - Despite increased state funding the FY22 shortfall was \$58 million.
 - Mason has the second lowest endowment in the Commonwealth.
 - René Stewart O'Neal noted that approximately 20% of Mason's operating budget comes from state appropriations which has declined over time. The E&G budget which comes from tuition revenues and state appropriations is roughly 70% currently.
- Operational Efficiency
 - The total employee FTE to total student FTE is 0.15.
 - Faculty and staff are being asked to work harder and accept less money. Chair Hazel opened the floor for the Board representatives to respond to this issue:

- Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Faculty Representative, stated that colleagues have left Mason for up to 50% more pay to do the same job with less students.
 - Erin Rogers, Staff Liaison, echoed Melissa’s comments about staff leaving. She added that when staff members leave, they depart with institutional knowledge and history leaving a significant gap with new hires that slows work progress.
 - Ayondela McDole, Graduate Student Representative, noted that graduate students are leaned on to fill in faculty gaps. She is a graduate lecturer and has a class of 50 which does not come with health insurance. Additionally, she is paid \$3K to teach this class and could go to American University and get \$5k.
 - Sophia Nguyen, Undergraduate Student Representative, stated that less financial aid is being received. She would like to find a way to help faculty and staff with their salaries without affecting students.
- Market Compensation
 - Addressing market competitiveness is a long-term initiative.
 - The salary for many faculty members is below the minimum market range.
 - The cost of living in this area is the fifth highest in the U.S.
 - Summary of Tuition Increase Options:

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	• Option B1 plus 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)
B3 Plus	• Option B3 plus additional \$1M to Stay Mason as detailed in B2 above	(\$5,874)

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

Option D: 3% Tuition Increase With Offset		Financial Impact
D	• For Spring 2023 Semester only, Option B3 Plus	(\$2,937)

- Two Additional Tuition Options:
 - Solution #1:
 - Maintain 3% tuition increase for FY23 and FY24.
 - Provide FY23 and FY24 tuition credits, thus students realize no tuition increase.
 - Requires \$46.1 million in support (cash, not base funding).
 - Solution #2:
 - No realized tuition increase* in FY23 or FY24.

- State meets Mason's per-student underfunding by providing \$58 million in support (permanent base funding) *A one-time tuition credit would be provided to all in-state undergraduate students.
- Ms. Dickenson clarified that if a no tuition increase solution is selected Mason would have to provide tuition grants for the fall 2022 academic term. Chair Hazel also noted that the Board would have to decide by October in order to have a positive impact on the spring 2023 academic term.

Significant conversation ensued during this meeting. Please refer to the meeting's video recording for specifics: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8557205/video/747781248>.

Chair Hazel noted that there is urgency to bring a recommendation to the full board and that the goal of this session was to share relevant information with the entire committee.

Visitor Brown inquired how students feel about the tuition increase and if there is a data source to determine this. It was determined that there is not currently a data source which would answer this inquiry by the time the full board needs to decide on how to proceed with Mason's tuition. Ms. Nguyen offered to gather the students' opinions with the assistance of Vice President Pascarell within the needed timeframe.

Chair Hazel reminded the committee that their next meeting is on September 29, 2022 following the full board meeting.

III. Adjournment

Chair Hazel adjourned the meeting at 2:41 p.m.

Prepared by:

Sarah Hanbury
Secretary pro tem