A True Man of Honor

Inside: Stories on Junior Housing, Johnson Scholarships, Faculty Hiring Freeze, and More
Dear Readers,

We at *The Spectator* would like to sincerely thank you for your support throughout the year. It has been a true blessing to be able to put together such a project, and it is with great enthusiasm that we release to you our final issue of the academic year. In reviving *The Spectator* earlier this year, we sensed a need for an independent publication on this campus, a publication that would report on the real issues the university faces in this age of liberal propaganda and political correctness, a publication run by students that would challenge the prevailing views of an administration bent on redefining Washington and Lee. You will not find stories like ours in any other campus publication.

We would also like to extend a warm welcome to all of the alumni who are back on campus this weekend. Though most of you no longer live in LexVegas, we at *The Spectator* believe you are an absolutely essential and important part of our W&L family. As you stroll along the Colonnade or pause for a solitary moment in Lee Chapel, you may think to yourself that this school is the same one you attended. Of course, W&L has resisted some of the measures brought about by the politically correct world of liberal academia, but it is not immune to such debilitating changes. It is the duty of both students and alumni to make sure that this place remains a unique exception to the rule among leading liberal arts colleges. We do not want to become a second-rate Williams or Swarthmore.

As you look over the following stories, we ask that you consider your duty as a member of the W&L community to uphold the best ideals of our school. We hope you enjoy the summer edition of *The Spectator*.

Sincerely,
The Editorial Staff of *The Spectator*

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Three Years In Review

By Nathan Kelly

During my time at W&L I have been honored to serve the student body for three years on the Executive Committee – once as Representative for the Class of 2014, once as Secretary, and this past year as President. My time in these positions was the most rewarding and defining experience of my life, and it has deepened my love for this community and our student body beyond what I thought was possible. I cannot adequately express my gratitude for those who have supported the student body during my tenure and for those who have gone before this generation of students.

Without a doubt, there is something special about W&L. Look no further than the devoted alumni for proof. We students understand the dedication of these alumni because we feel the connection too – a bond to the place that is the Colonnade, to the people who are our peers, and to the ideals that are represented in traditions like the Honor System. We have all spoken with students at other schools that may seem equally as prestigious, but lack the same commitment.

What has made our community so devoted? Why is there such a commitment amongst our peers to ensure future generations have the same meaningful experience? After three years of being on the EC, I believe it is the tradition of student self-governance. Students claim the freedom to lead and govern themselves as they see fit and, most importantly, recognize the weight of responsibility that comes with such a demand.

In my role on the EC, I have interacted with leaders of other student bodies, and I have yet to find another student body that shares this unique demand for freedom and recognition of responsibility. While other systems claim to be "student run," I have only encountered shadows of autonomy. These are places where faculty and administration involvement is patronizing at best and tyrannical at worst.

As we all know, this unique feature of life at W&L starts with the Honor System. To the student body and the student body alone is the Honor System entrusted. Our decisions in that regard are final. But it does not end there. The student body's role in university life is fundamentally greater than any other school I have encountered. As students, we are empowered to live our lives and make decisions with unparalleled freedom. W&L is a community that has stood by the belief that we as students are not sheep to be herded, but true partners in our education, empowered to make decisions about the shape of our education and the life of our university. When we see this unique aspect of W&L, it is no wonder that we feel such an unparalleled ownership of this university as students and alumni.

Some of the greatest accomplishments I have seen within the student body have arisen from our freedom as students. Consider just a few of the events from the past three years. When students felt like there was a mental health problem on campus, applications for peer counseling spots shot up to well over 150 students for less than 15 spots. When we saw a gender divide that seemed to contribute to sexual assault, we began upperclassmen brunches and attended bystander training. In the wake of last semester's tragic accident, students rose up to form a committee to analyze and address patterns of drunk driving. The list could continue but the picture is clear enough. When students recognize their ownership over our institution, we, as students, define its fate.

However, just because those who have come before us have carried the W&L crest forward by taking ownership of their education, doesn't mean we can sit idly by and enjoy the institution of excellence that has been handed to us. We must realize that to be worthy of the torch that we have been handed, we must carry it forward. If we do not better ourselves, we are failing our motto – "Not unmindful of the future." I have one message for students as I leave W&L: Care about the future of this institution and be active in shaping it. We have been granted the ability to influence our education in a way that I believe to be unmatched. But the freedom to govern ourselves is more than a freedom, it is a responsibility.

So what should we as students do? A good place to start is the student body constitution, found at ec.wlu.edu. It defines the system of government that the student body has set forward. If you want to shape our future run for office, start a student organization, or apply for a committee appointment. Running for elected office and taking an active role in a student organization – whether it’s a Greek organization or an on-campus organization – is to recognize your responsibility as a torchbearer of W&L. If you feel that something in the university needs altered, go to an EC meeting or talk with an EC representative. The student body has been handed the right to govern itself. By engaging in student life, you carry the torch. Student self-governance is the underpinning of our education. Don’t let it become a hollow promise.
Johnson Scholarship Not What It Seems?
By Libby Sutherland

In 2007, Rupert Johnson’s donation of $100 million to Washington and Lee established the Johnson Program in Leadership and Integrity which, according to the school’s website, “supports visits by leading experts and professionals, who speak on a range of topics related to the overarching themes of leadership, integrity and honor…endows two new professorships…[and] provides stipends that support all Johnson Scholars and up to 30 additional undergraduates in various off-campus research projects and internships.” The largest portion of the endowment supports the Johnson Scholarship Program, which is “designed to attract students with exceptional academic and personal promise, regardless of their ability to afford tuition and other expenses.” The scholarship is awarded to about 10% of each entering class.

The interview process is conducted over a period of two days and involves the finalists meeting with a panel of professors, previous Johnson Scholars and an admissions representative. According to the school, W&L “weighed writing samples, teacher recommendations and records of leadership, citizenship and involvement in non-academic activities, along with their potential to contribute to the intellectual and civic life of W&L and the world at large in years to come.”

On August 30th, 2008, the first group of Johnson Scholars arrived on W&L’s campus. A press release during this time stated that award was “highly competitive and [recognized] students with outstanding academic qualifications and the promise for leadership in their chosen careers and future endeavors.” This description suggests that this scholarship is unique to those at our peer schools since it is meant to be awarded solely based on merit—both academically and in extracurricular activities as well. Robert Strong, the director of the Johnson Program at the time, stated that these first Johnson Scholars were “a group of excellent students with academic accomplishments measured against the highest national standards.”

According to the 2008 press release, this group was also very involved in activities outside of their academic work. The group included sports team captains, eagle scouts, high school leadership award winners, heads of student judicial boards, president of high school student bodies, and captains of debate teams. Almost every Johnson Scholar was active in volunteer work as well.

Sam Mott, a Johnson Scholar from the class of 2012, said that nowhere else he applied offered an all expenses paid scholarship. He said that the scholarship was also different from others in that it recognized “leadership, integrity, [and] intelligence,” above other potential qualities.

While it seems that academic success and extracurricular involvement used to be at the heart of what was required to become a Johnson Scholarship finalist, many previous Johnson Scholars feel that those qualities have now taken a backseat to diversity.

One scholar from the class of 2012 said that she felt that this was especially true in regards to diversity being held of higher importance than leadership skills. She described one interview that she helped conduct in which she and the interviewing committee asked a candidate what sorts of activities he was involved with outside of the classroom. According to the 2012 Johnson Scholar, the candidate responded that he preferred mostly to keep to himself and spend time working with computers as opposed to participating in organized groups with his peers. The candidate had a strong academic record but not one that was unusual compared to the other candidates. He was a minority and a first generation college student. The 2012 Johnson Scholar stated that she believed that the candidate was selected to be a Johnson Scholar over students with similar academic records and greater extracurricular involvement for this reason.

Other previous Johnson Scholars who assisted with conducting the interview process echoed the same sentiment also adding that often times certain candidates were disregarded because they seemed too much like “the typical W&L student.” One Johnson Scholar from the class of 2015 described an interview with a male candidate who was confident, engaging, and involved. The student was white and dressed in typically “preppy” clothing. According to the 2015 Johnson Scholar, one of the professors involved in the interview almost immediately dismissed the candidate after he left the room saying, “He’s exactly what we don’t need more of at W&L… I already know what fraternity he would be in.”

While diversity at Washington and Lee is important and is definitely something that the school should strive for, a scholarship that is meant to be solely merit-based is not the best way to do it. The Johnson Scholarship is so unique to Washington and Lee in that it is need blind and focuses instead on the success and involvement of the candidate. The value of diversity is significant but is it more significant than leadership and participation? The scholarship should either seek to award candidates that best exemplify W&L’s reputation of academic success as well as leadership and involvement on campus or change the description to more fairly represent what the scholarship is about.
Spectator Writers Accused of Bragging

Recently, I have heard several of your writers bragging about their inclination to take more risks and go after more faculty and administration than writers from the Ring-tum Phi do. As an informed student, I would like to alert you of this egregious error in judgment. The Spectator is a finely published magazine of opinion. The Ring-tum Phi is a newspaper with a small opinions section. But therein lies the issue I have with your writers. They write for an opinion publication. The Phi is a news publication. It would be outrageous and inappropriate for a news writer to include opinion and editorializations in his writing. There is a large and substantial difference between news and opinion and it would benefit your writers to understand this difference before making such unfounded and rash allegations of cowardice against the Phi. I would like to submit my appreciation of your fearless and pointed analysis of this University. But please remember the level of respect that is highly valued among journalists of any kind, be they opinion writers or news writers.

Phi Could be Better

I was looking through some old Ring-Tum Phi's from the 70s and 80s and was surprised to see that the Ring-Tum Phi actually filled its pages with words. Now it seems to prefer photographs clip art, and lame, large font headlines. The current Ring-Tum Phi seems more a house organ of the administration than a serious journalistic publication: in its supposedly objective report of the third-housing debate it framed the debate as between “tradition or more community.” This marks a void of either competence or journalistic integrity, as the arguments for allowing students to live off campus go far beyond simple “tradition.” That kind of reporting should be saved for the Communications Office and the University website.

Keep Classrooms Open for the Students

Over the course of the study sessions, last-minute papers, and caffeine-fueled all-nighters I have staged at W&L one predicament has continued to bother me: the fact that I have been kicked out of classrooms at night by security a multitude of times. Sometimes the library just does not cut it in terms of ideal studying; however, aside from finals week, during the bulk of the semester students are often asked to leave classrooms at nighttime when security makes their runs. I understand that they have a job to do and I believe they factor heavily into creating a safe campus but I consider a stretch to be able to ask students, who are bound by an honor system whose prime goal is to generate and maintain a community of trust, to leave a classroom. If it's a matter of being responsible enough to clean up, turn off the lights, and lock the doors when they are done, I am certain W&L students are more than capable to undertake this task in order to gain a new study space. If we are allowed to take non-proctored exams shouldn't we be allowed to study in classrooms after-hours without professors present?

W&L History Should be Preserved

It is concerning that students who attend a university in such a historic location and with such history in and of itself cannot appreciate the history that surrounds Lexington and W&L but rather use the celebration of that history as part of a publicity that the ultra-liberal media of today gladly grabbed ahold of. “The Committee” acts as if Lee Chapel proudly flies a Confederate flag rather than simply displaying battle flags in its museum. The demand that the flags be removed from the museum is absurd to say the least; historical pieces such as these are what make our university the place that it is and removing such pieces because of the demands of a group of attention-hungry law students would be denying the tradition that created Washington and Lee.
The Case For A Lower Drinking Age

By Ty Mitchell

On July 17, 1984, the United States Congress passed the National Minimum Drinking Age Act, causing the drinking age to be raised to 21. While this act did not explicitly require the drinking age to be raised from 18 to 21, the act punished any state that did not abide by this new requirement. Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) was the driving force behind the movement to raise the drinking age. Proportioning that the increase in drinking age would decrease the number of drunk driving accidents in America.

In recent years, a large movement has developed that wants to reexamine the legal drinking age. In 2008, John McCardell, the current Vice-Chancellor of Sewanee, created the Amethyst Initiative, an organization of U.S. college presidents, including our own President Ruscio, which advocates rethinking the drinking age. These college presidents realize that the system is somewhat broken, acknowledging that the drinking age of 21 does not stop young people from drinking and perhaps even encourages more dangerous drinking habits.

Though I personally believe that lowering the drinking age to 19 would be the most beneficial to the country, for consistency’s sake, I will argue for lowering the age to 18. The following list presents just a few examples of rights and privileges that citizens are granted once they turn 18 in America:

- The right to own and possess a firearm
- The right to vote
- The right to sit on a jury
- The right to enlist in military service or be drafted into service
- The right to get married (which in many states begins at 16)
- The right to operate a motor vehicle without restriction

It seems a bit hypocritical to me that our country would grant us the rights listed above, many of which are dangerous and can life-changing consequences, but have the audacity to say that these same people are not responsible enough to purchase and consume alcohol.

Though statistics show that drunk-driving accidents did decrease in the two decades following the change, a study by the U.S. Department of Transportation: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shows that the majority of this decrease comes from demographic changes in America, rather than the law changes. In the period from 1984 to 2005, the driving population became older, and they tended to drink less, consequently decreasing the likelihood of drunk driving. Also, the proportion of female drivers, who were less likely to drink, grew rapidly over this period of time. Therefore, there is not enough evidence to really argue that the raised drinking age is overall beneficial.

Multiple problems exist within the current system that counteract many of the positive effects the drinking age was intended to have. Firstly, the drinking age of 21 does not prevent minors from obtaining alcohol, especially in a college setting. Though not very prevalent at Washington and Lee due to our Honor System, it is almost a given that an underage college student has a fake ID in order to get into bars and purchase booze. I would bet that some W&L students have fake IDs that they use when they are not in Lexington. Secondly, the minor in possession laws cost college students both time and money. Nearly one out of every three college students will get a MIP, even for something as seemingly minor as holding a beer while waiting for a taxi on the sidewalk. Lastly, having a higher drinking age does not stop drunk driving, even if the person is above the drinking age. Our campus knows the devastating effects of driving under the influence, and everyone knows that stupidity does not magically disappear when a person turns 21.

I believe that the solution to this nationwide issue is a two-pronged approach: lower both the drinking age and the legal BAC limit. America has one of the most lenient BAC limits in the world, despite being so reliant on personal transportation. I propose the following solutions to lower the drinking age to 18 and lower the legal BAC level to .05:

1. Once a person turns 18, he/she becomes eligible to get a new drivers license that enables him/her to purchase and consume alcohol. In order to receive this privilege, the individual must attend alcohol safety courses, much like the requirements most states have to obtain a drivers license. Once the person completes his/her courses, he/she will be able to legally drink with the new permit, which can be revoked at any time due to an alcohol related offense such as a DUI.

2. Likewise, an individual will have the ability to obtain a permit to their license that would enable them to legally drink. Instead of making the requirement simply age-based, the attainment of a high-school diploma is necessary to be able to drink at 18 instead of 21. This solution would provide more high school students with the initiative to graduate.

It is apparent that the issue of drinking, especially in college settings, needs to be re-examined by the United States government. The drinking age is not stopping young people from getting alcohol, whether it’s through a fake ID or asking a friend. Lowering the drinking age in conjunction with lowering the legal BAC level is the right solution to encourage safer drinking practices among young adults.
The construction of a third-year housing complex could threaten the University’s financial health. An examination of the University’s hopes for the project against typical industry pricing suggests that the new third-year housing could cost more than initially expected. To pay for the project, the University could require artificially high rental rates, seriously harming the affordability of W&L.

In 2013, the median per bed cost for a residence hall was $67,973, according to College Planning & Management’s 2013 College Housing Report. For projects of a similar scale to what the University intends to build (200-500 beds), the median cost rose to $79,595. The new complex will likely be built by W&L rather than a private firm, a factor that could also push the price tag higher. This comparison is not to suggest that we let a private firm take over the project, but rather to help estimate what the complex might cost. Today, many private firms—like Capstone Companies—build and own dorms that are then rented and operated by a University. This scenario is both unlikely and probably undesirable for W&L, but the data show that on a per bed basis in 2013, residence halls built by a college cost nearly 28% more than one built by a private firm.

In 2013, residence halls built by colleges not only cost more than those built by private firms but also contained significantly fewer single occupant rooms, including single rooms within a suite. Double occupant rooms, as one would expect, require less overall space per bed, and thus are cheaper on a per bed basis. The style of housing the University has been pushing—townhouses and apartments—would likely require a much larger proportion of single rooms in order to facilitate the proposed “transition” to adulthood. This larger proportion of singles would likely further raise the cost per bed of the new housing complex.

Other factors that could make the project more expensive include the cost of clearing the forest and developing the site for the new housing, the cost to environmentally redevelop the Woods Creek area after its demolition, and the cost of all the new amenities the University intends to provide. Furthermore, there could be costs to maintaining architectural parity with the rest of the institution — long gone are the days when something that looks like Leyburn Library would even be presented to the Board. A former trustee has confirmed that this project could cost more than initially expected, suggesting a likely cost of at least $130,000 per bed.

The construction of dormitories, dining halls, and other revenue generating projects are almost always financed through debt rather than donations. It is extremely difficult to raise money for a project that should pay for itself, and thus the per-bed cost becomes very instructive, giving us an idea of what the University will need to charge for rent. Assuming a per bed cost of $130,000 and that the University issues a 30-year note at 4.5% to finance the construction, the University would face monthly debt costs of $660 per bed or annual debt costs of $7920 per bed.

This figure — which is already higher than the current rate ($7200) of a single room on campus — does not include utilities, housekeeping, maintenance, security, etc. If we allot $2500 for operating costs the total annual cost per bed — and estimated break-even rental rate — becomes roughly $10,400. Spread over the calendar year this is equivalent to $860 per month; spread over the 9 month when the student is actually allowed to occupy the room, the rate becomes an astounding $1150 per month.

Universities across the U.S. are building fancy dorms and racking up loads of debt. Even W&L’s 2011-2012 Financial Report attributes this institution’s recent success with the annual cost of $860 per month.
to its focus on academics and the fostering of moral character and a reluctance to use its resources to create a “country club environment.” College as a four-year “country club” is not a sustainable model. In the coming years, graduates from colleges that focused on dorms rather than teachers and professional training will be bogged down with student debt and no job. As online education improves in both reputation and effectiveness, students and parents will start seriously questioning the price of attending a private college. Students will shun pricey private colleges for more affordable but still reputable universities like UVA and UNC. W&L is certainly capable of withstanding competition from state universities and online education, however building an expensive new housing complex undermines its ability from the endowment fund about half of the University’s financial aid, which in turn helps students fund both their tuition and their living costs. As housing becomes more expensive, the University will need to use a higher proportion of its endowment returns to subsidize its self-inflicted artificially high residential costs. The University needs to apply its resources towards improving and sustaining its academic prowess, because education and professional training, not fancy dorms, will define the University’s ability to resist future competition.

W&L could ease the price of the new housing through alumni donations or through designing a less ambitious complex. However, alumni remain critical of the University’s new housing policy. Such unpopularity in addition to standard difficulty of raising donations for a revenue generating project leave the prospect of funding or subsidizing the housing complex somewhat unviable.

Lowering the actual cost of the project would likely require a much larger proportion of double occupant rooms, marking a divergence from the University’s previous proposals of “independent living.” This means the school would need to force juniors to live in a double occupant room, when they otherwise could very affordably have a room to themselves in an off-campus house. The University should also remain exceptionally frugal as it thinks about adding new amenities to the suburb. Students will still likely spend the majority of their leisure time at their fraternity or sorority houses, and thus such amenities could likely prove not only costly, but unnecessary.

The most effective step the University could take to maintain affordability while fostering independence is requiring juniors to live only within the City of Lexington. While requiring less construction and new debt, this would still keep students in town, fostering “community” and lowering the risks of drinking and driving. Furthermore, this would incentivize the University to compete with market rates and help improve the affordability of W&L.

“College as a four-year ‘country club’ is not a sustainable model. In the coming years, graduates from colleges that focused on dorms rather than teachers and professional training will be bogged down with student debt and no job”
WebAdvisor: A Look At W&L’s Registration Experience

By Ben Atnipp

Every W&L student has their own WebAdvisor horror story. From hellacious spinning rainbow wheels, to surprise instructor consents, to the inability to express class preferences, WebAdvisor hiccups are all too common for the 6:59:59AM registration experience. Given our system’s track record, reputation, antiquated interface, and frustrating class scheduling, a review of its virtues and vices may provide a clearer picture for what W&L’s registration process was, is, and ideally, could be in the near future.

Unknown to some, W&L does not actually own WebAdvisor. Ellucian, a private vendor that provides integrated software systems for over 2,000 higher educational institutions, has proprietary ownership of a host of software programs known as ‘Colleague.’

Similar to Microsoft Office, Colleague is a ‘suite’ of software programs. Within Ellucian’s Colleague ‘suite,’ WebAdvisor—like Microsoft Word or PowerPoint—serves as one of several portals that allow private institutions to customize their own third-party registration window. This ‘open’ architecture allows W&L’s Information Technology Department and the University Registrar to integrate WebAdvisor’s software onto W&L student and faculty databases.

Interface, functionality, and capabilities are all within Ellucian’s realm. When students complain about WebAdvisor’s antiquated look, ‘Web 1.0’ feel, and lack of mobile potential, blame Ellucian. However, when students complain about spinning rainbow balls, unknown holds, inability to waitlist a class that conflicts with a future course, confusion with degree audit, inability to rank the need of a certain class, or any other unique W&L characteristic, look toward the W&L administration.

With all the strife surrounding Ellucian’s WebAdvisor, no current students can fully appreciate the luxuries of our current registration process. Just five years ago, our WebAdvisor system only allowed students to register for a certain class and professor—not a time. This meant students would register for a full load of classes, then find out what times their class actually met several days later—fear of the ‘8 A.M.’ was an unknown variable five years ago.

In 2010, however, our University Registrar, led by Scott Dittman, changed WebAdvisor to its current form—adding class times to student portals. By allowing students to factor in what time each class would meet, the Registrar profoundly altered the decision-making process during registration. For example, take two different microeconomics sections with two different professors. Say one is at 1:00 P.M. with an “okay” professor and one is at 8:00 A.M. with the “best” professor. It may be presumptive, but most would probably sacrifice the quality of their professors for a class time more suitable for their sleeping habits. When students weigh the importance of class time to their academic schedule, the entire system sacrifices ‘top class choices’ for ‘mediocre class choices’—in economic terms, a misallocation of resources ensues.

So, given our current methodology, what sort of changes or alterations would be appropriate to give students a better chance of getting the classes they want? When reflecting on changes to our current system, keep in mind the tradeoffs that come with change. While a new idea may solve one problem within this complex issue, it could easily present a whole new set of problems.

Take Davidson College for example. At Davidson, they use a methodology called the ‘Davidson Tree.’ Like a flowchart, students fill out a “tree” in which they rank their classes in a preferred order. As the diagram below shows, an “if-then” computer algorithm sorts through all of the students’ preferences (the ‘trees’) and tries to maximize the number of “top” choices. While this methodology gives students the ability to express how badly they need a class, it is incredibly complicated to execute. With the “tree”, Davidson sacrifices clarity of the registration process for allocative efficiency—again, a tradeoff.

Another possible registration method is the “point system.” Here, students ‘bid’ a certain amount of allotted ‘points’ for each class they want through an auction based software. The “point system”—trying to mimic a free-market approach—liberates students from systemic constraints of other methodologies. It allows students to express exactly how badly they need a class. Again though, there are tradeoffs. Within a free-market
approach, the entire system assumes that each student will behave rationally. In other words, this kind of allocation collapses if a lethargic senior (or freshman) decides to take the wrong class needed for their major. Registration libertarians might say this punishes dumb students, but then again, W&L does not want students falling to graduate because of a complex registration. Good information on class 'prices', clear rules, and a well-informed student body are the only way this system would work on a campus-wide arrangement.

Looking at the current system, there is no doubt that WebAdvisor has its virtues. It transformed the registration experience from waiting in line on the colonnade to sifting through a menu on a solid Wi-fi connection. But technology changes. Systems improve. If W&L wants to be mindful of the future, it cannot have a registration system that curtails students' chances of getting the classes they want. Nor can it allow administrative miscommunications and technological mishaps to hurt a student's chance. With tuition at $44,660, that makes for quite an expensive 'hiccup'.

Ultimately, further investment in Information Technology and a healthy review of our current registration method must be priorities for years to come. Perhaps school leaders should examine the robustness of our registration process while keeping in mind that other technologies and methods exist. But even more, perhaps students need to remind the school that—at the end of the day—students should be able to study what interest them—not what WebAdvisor deals them.

“Perhaps students need to remind the school that—at the end of the day—students should be able to study what interest them—not what WebAdvisor deals them”
Editor's Note: Below is the letter sent by The Committee to President Ruscio and the Board of Trustees on April 7, 2014. You will notice The Committee quite ironically justifies their actions by calling upon the principles given to us by Robert E. Lee. How 'bout that.

The Committee

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen of Washington and Lee University’s Board of Trustees:

After experiencing alienation and discomfort, we The Committee have assembled. The mission of The Committee is to create a community that welcomes students of color and to free those students from the psychological shackles that currently exist within Washington and Lee University, thereby enhancing the collective personal and educational well being of the student body. Your immediate action is required to help achieve this goal.

For over 150 years, the students of Washington and Lee University have reserved to themselves alone the authority to confront and sanction fellow students for failures of their duty of honor. This responsibility is the hallmark of Washington and Lee’s Honor System.

The trust placed in students of this University is the continuation of a long tradition. Robert E. Lee, President of Washington College in 1865, took deliberate steps to establish the principle that students must accept responsibility for their own conduct. This commitment to honor is grounded upon a recognition of duty.

We established The Committee to fulfill our duty as honorable students of Washington and Lee University. The time has come for us, as students, to ask that the University hold itself responsible for its past and present dishonorable conduct and for the racist and dishonorable conduct of Robert E. Lee.

By appealing to conscience and by standing on the tenets upon which Washington and Lee University’s Honor System was founded, we see the following demands as moral imperatives. Our administration, led by the Board of Trustees, President Ruscio, and Dean Demleitner, must immediately act to implement these mandates:

1. We demand that the University fully recognize Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on the undergraduate campus.
2. We demand that the University stop allowing neo-confederates to march on campus with confederate flags on Lee-Jackson Day and to stop allowing these groups to hold programs in Lee Chapel.
3. We demand that the University immediately remove all confederate flags from its property, including those flags located within Lee Chapel.
4. We demand that the University issue an official apology for the University’s participation in chattel slavery and a denunciation of Robert E. Lee’s participation in slavery.

We expect that from these immediate actions, a long-term, continued commitment to improving the state of racial justice and honor on campus will develop. We believe the student body is eager to learn about, work toward and directly confront both the past and current bigotry and racial discrimination found on our campus. We are confident that when these demands are met, our University will be one step closer to achieving a community that welcomes students of color and frees them from the psychological shackles that currently exist. We are eager to turn our campus into a shining example—a beacon of hope—for not only the town of Lexington, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the South, but for the entire nation.

You have entrusted the student body with responsibility of ensuring that this University remains a place where honor is more than just a tradition. Honor is the moral fabric that binds us together through a spirit of trust and respect. We, the Committee, come to you to petition that the University do what is honorable. The Committee has expressed these concerns and demands to Dean Demleitner, it is now time for the Board of Trustees to act. We expect for these demands to be met by September 1, 2014. During the Board of Trustees spring meeting (May 15-17), we request that members of The Committee be given an opportunity to discuss the implementation of these reasonable and necessary demands. We look forward to receiving a response from a representative of the Board of Trustees by 5:00 pm on April 16, 2014.

With Expectancy,

The Committee

Source: Facebook
Several weeks ago, a few law students, identifying themselves only as “The Committee,” sent a letter to President Ruscio and the Board of Trustees demanding that actions be taken to improve the climate on campus for students of color. The Committee issued the following demands:

1. That the University fully recognize Martin Luther King Jr. Day on the undergraduate campus.
2. That the University stop allowing neo-Confederates to march on campus with Confederate flags on Lee-Jackson Day and to stop allowing these groups to hold programs in Lee Chapel.
3. That the University immediately remove all Confederate flags from its property, including those flags located within Lee Chapel.
4. That the University issue an official apology for the University’s participation in chattel slavery and a denunciation of Robert E. Lee’s participation in slavery.

Threatening civil disobedience if these demands were not met by September 1, The Committee turned to the national media almost immediately after contacting Ruscio and the Board, perhaps not allowing ample time for any kind of thorough response on the school’s part.

Before addressing the content and method of the Committee’s demands, let me state up front that I support the right of these law students to bring up this topic for discussion. Our University community should encourage discourse and debate, not quash it. As President Ruscio said in his email to the student body on April 16th, “the students have raised important questions that relate to ongoing discussions at the University.” W&L can only grow from such discussions.

With that being said, it does not appear that The Committee’s purpose is to foster meaningful discussion, at least on the community level. Rather, in turning so quickly to the national media, which can reliably be expected to get the facts as wrong as it takes to get a sensational headline, The Committee instead revealed its intention to accomplish its goals through external pressure, rather than seeking to foster mutual understanding by means of an honest discussion. Instead of seeking a civil conversation on sensitive issues that involve race, The Committee decided to take an adversarial tone, and, according to multiple news outlets, even threatened to publicly disobey University authority, all before the school even had a chance to respond. These actions, particularly the threat of disobedience, contradict the defining principles of Washington and Lee and the idea of an institution dedicated to fostering a community of trust, civility, and honor.

Because of these circumstances, the discussion has grown more complicated than it should have. Nevertheless, I will seek to address The Committee’s concerns, beginning with the issue of classes on Martin Luther King Day. As President Ruscio stated in a follow-up email on April 21st, “the question of canceling undergraduate classes on Martin Luther King Jr. Day is about how to honor Dr. King’s legacy, not whether to honor it.” Indeed, it would be hard for anyone to argue that the University does not thoroughly observe and celebrate MLK Day. Traditionally, the school has honored Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s memory with a concert by the outstanding University Singers, a birthday party for local children, a day of service, faculty panels, a guest speaker, and a commemorative dinner. Indeed, it even seems that the January MLK events overshadow Robert E. Lee’s own concurrent birthday celebration, so it is puzzling why the law students on The Committee would insist on canceling undergraduate classes on top of all this. Furthermore, as alum Nathan Jensen noted in an op-ed in the Roanoke Times, undergraduates also attend classes on Columbus Day, Veteran’s Day, and President’s Day—all federal holidays. Therefore, it is ridiculous to suggest that by not canceling classes on MLK Day, the University is promoting some kind of prejudiced attitude as the result of underlying racism. We simply have class on King’s Birthday because that is our standard practice. As an educational institution, might we not more effectively carry out our mission anyway by continuing to celebrate King through the current proactive measures rather than simply providing students with a longer weekend and the extra day of drinking that a canceled day of classes would undoubtedly encourage? This writer thinks so.

The Committee also demanded that the University remove all Confederate flags from its property, including the flags in Lee Chapel. The vague wording of this demand is troubling to say the least. Does this group want the school to march through Graham-Lees, police-style, and strip all rebel flags from students’ walls? Such an invasion would not only violate the Constitutional guarantee to freedom of speech, but it would also undermine the traditions of student autonomy.
and self-governance that have been hallmarks of this University since, well, the days of Robert E. Lee’s presidency. Even if The Committee is not salivating at the prospect of Orwellian totalitarianism on this campus, their call for the removal of Confederate flags from Lee Chapel remains worrisome by itself. It would be ludicrous to assume that the University’s display of Confederate flags in Lee Chapel indicates institutional support for slavery or racism.

This sensitivity by many to the Confederate flag is certainly not new, but the assumption that the flag itself as well as all who would fly it are racist is simply not accurate. Though Lee was certainly a man of many facets, to completely deny his role in the Confederacy by removing the flags from a building named after him would seem a bit odd. In his second message to the student body, President Ruscio wrote that W&L is an educational institution, “not a museum and not a historical curiosity.” However, this statement perhaps creates an unnecessary juxtaposition between a university and a museum, and in doing so, it does not really paint the full picture of Washington and Lee. Though W&L is primarily an educational institution, Lee Chapel, however, does, in fact, include a museum on the lower level and is designated as a National Historical Landmark. There are no classes in Lee Chapel, and it has a distinct, reverential aura about it, due to the fact that it serves most importantly as the final resting place for the Lee family. As W&L continues to have this discussion, to lump Lee Chapel in with the other buildings on campus like Leyburn Library oversimplifies things and does the chapel and the family buried there a disservice. The building bears enormous historical significance, and removing the flags from Lee Chapel due to a few protestors would signal an intentional attempt to deny history. There are other, better ways to demonstrate good will than to deny the past, even if the past is not pretty.

If the University were to cave to The Committee’s final demand and issue a denunciation of Robert E. Lee for his “participation in slavery”, by the same logic it must also issue a denunciation of George Washington as well, for Washington owned slaves. Many believe that Lee was ahead of his time on the issue of slavery and his sense of duty, honor, and his Christian faith (the reasons for which he is still admired by many today) informed his belief that slavery was evil. If we accept The Committee’s logic on this matter, we might as well start referring to our school as “And University.”

This point aside, the legacy of Lee at W&L has never really been about his role in the Civil War. Rather, we primarily celebrate his years afterward, in which he came to Washington College to help save a hurting school and heal a broken nation. He not only improved and expanded the school, probably saving it from extinction, but he also promoted the culture of honor and civility that exists today. We honor Lee because he was a great man who loved this place, and we recognize that his ideals played a key role in shaping it. He was a gentleman in every sense, and that is why our school should be proud to bear his name today.

Here at Washington and Lee, we hold ourselves to a high standard. The members of The Committee feel that W&L is not a welcoming community, and we should take their concerns seriously. But we should not give in to bully tactics. Instead, we should renew our commitment to honor and gentlemanly behavior by learning from Lee’s example, and by doing so, we can ensure that our university will be a place for all here to truly call home. The great irony in all of this is that Robert E. Lee singlehandedly did more than any other individual to promote a culture of civility and decency at this school. Now more than ever, we should cling to these ideals and honor the man who lived them out, not denounce him.
Dear Mr. President:

At the Republican Convention I heard you mention that you have the pictures of four (4) great Americans in your office, and that included in these is a picture of Robert E. Lee.

I do not understand how any American can include Robert E. Lee as a person to be emulated, and why the President of the United States of America should do so is certainly beyond me.

The most outstanding thing that Robert E. Lee did was to devote his best efforts to the destruction of the United States Government, and I am sure that you do not say that a person who tries to destroy our Government is worthy of being hailed as one of our heroes. Will you please tell me just why you hold him in such high esteem?

Sincerely yours,
Leon W. Scott

Eisenhower’s response, written on White House letterhead on August 9, 1960 reads as follows:

Dear Dr. Scott:

Respecting your August 1 inquiry calling attention to my often expressed admiration for General Robert E. Lee, I would say, first, that we need to understand that at the time of the War Between the States the issue of Secession had remained unresolved for more than 70 years. Men of probity, character, public standing and unquestioned loyalty, both North and South, had disagreed over this issue as a matter of principle from the day our Constitution was adopted.

General Robert E. Lee was, in my estimation, one of the supremely gifted men produced by our Nation. He believed unswervingly in the Constitutional validity of his cause which until 1865 was still an arguable question in America; he was thoughtful yet demanding of his officers and men, forbearing with captured enemies but ingenious, unrelenting and personally courageous in battle, and never disheartened by a reverse or obstacle. Through all his many trials, he remained selfless almost to a fault and unfailing in his belief in God. Taken altogether, he was noble as a leader and as a man, and unsullied as I read the pages of our history.

From deep conviction I simply say this; a nation of men of Lee’s caliber would be unconquerable in spirit and soul. Indeed, to the degree that present-day American youth will strive to emulate his rare qualities, including his devotion to this land as revealed in his painstaking efforts to help heal the nation’s wounds once the bitter struggle was over, we, in our own time of danger in a divided world, will be strengthened and our love of freedom sustained. Such are the reasons that I proudly display the picture of this great American on my office wall.

Sincerely,
Dwight D. Eisenhower

http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/1721192/posts
Application for 3rd Year Housing Student Advisory Committee

What are your chances of getting to provide input into the new junior housing? Fill out the application below and calculate your total score to see how likely it is that Student Affairs will seek out your opinion.

1. Identify your Gender: Male [−20 pts] Female [+20 pts] Other [+50 pts]

2. Greek Affiliation: Greek [−10 pts] Independent [+20 pts]

3. Are you a Resident Advisor? Yes [+20 pts] No [0 pts]

4. Are you a member of the following organizations? College SHAG Ring Tum Phi The Spectator
   Republicans [−20 pts] [+50 pts] [+30 pts] [−70 pts]

5. Do you believe in student autonomy?
   Yes [−20 pts] No [+30 pts] Only if it's properly fostered by a series of orientation events [+50 points]

6. What do you think is the biggest challenge W&L faces today?
   Gender relations [−50 pts] Anything else [+20 pts]

7. What do you hope to do after graduation?
   Investment Banking [−20 pts] Community Organizer [+20 pts] Secure a spot in W&L administration [+50 pts]

Score Your Application

-150 and below: Immediate transfer to Hampden-Sydney is advised.
-150 to -80: You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a secret committee you know nothing about.
-80 to 0: Reformable. Recommended to visit with university counseling to talk about your feelings.
0 to 80: Shows promise. Become a Women and Gender Studies major.
80 to 150: Qualified for alternate. Take Professor Burstein’s course “Queer Theory” and apply again.
150 and above: The politically correct elite. See one of the deans for the Piers Morgan Scholarship.
Healthy Tips on How to Walk Safely to Class, Chew Food, Conduct Aerobic Respiration

Walking Safely to Class:

1. **Plan ahead:** No use risking a spontaneous stroll, stay at least two steps ahead of your footsteps at all times
2. **Know your limits:** We can't all be Lance Armstrong, maintain a modest pace
3. **Embrace your own fragility:** Remember that in the grand scheme of geological time you are quite insignificant, dress accordingly

Chewing Food:

1. **Open Mouth:** The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, if at first you don’t succeed try again
2. **Chew:** Don’t get carried away, it’s harder than it looks
3. **Keep things neat:** Avoid sloppy messes at the table by using a napkin or preferably a bib. Still hesitant, request to be handed
4. **Never leave your drinks alone:** Don’t accept drinks with unknown contents, be sure to keep track of drinks by... oops wrong topic

Conduct Aerobic Respiration

1. **Inhale:** According to the National Collegiate Health Association for Collegiate Health over 90% of students surveyed forgot the amount of times they inhaled during a night out, always count breaths
2. **Exhale:** Move air out of the bronchial tubes to external environment, if you don’t you will die
3. **Choose your own style:** Whether you inhale with your nose and exhale with your mouth or some other combination be sure that its your preference, lest risk developing SAD and have to read another one of these
Praise For the Professor
By Marshall Woodward

A culture of learning first and foremost derives from the relationship between students and academic faculty. Second only to perhaps the students themselves, professors serve as one of W&L’s greatest assets. However, Washington and Lee has currently put a freeze on hiring new professors, besides refilling vacant positions. Provost Wubah issued the following stance on the matter:

“At this time, the University does not anticipate the creation of new positions within the operating budget unless they can be funded entirely through savings that the position would generate, new funding from grants or endowments or reallocations. The financial model does, however, anticipate the creation of two faculty “bridge” positions in each of the next three years that will allow the University to address enrollment crunches in certain disciplines for a three-year period until the need subsides or reallocation within the undergraduate faculty can occur. In addition, it is anticipated that as Law School enrollment declines, fewer open faculty positions will be filled even on a temporary basis. Departments should work closely with their respective dean or vice president to develop the highest priority needs in requests while being cognizant that faculty and staff growth will be very limited in the coming years.”

Why is it that amongst a host of new buildings and burgeoning initiatives we cannot find room in our operating budget for the one thing that will benefit every student? A freeze on hiring new professors will surely be more detrimental to our students than not having a personal dean or a fancy resort to live in.

Enrollment is rising and changes in student demand are putting pressure on certain departments, like Environmental Studies and Geology. In some departments, no new professor positions will be created for the foreseeable future. We boast of our low professor to student ratio, yet we are focused financially on fringe initiatives rather than growing our faculty. Even those who obsess over our ranking relative to other universities cannot dispute that a high professor to student ratio, especially at a school our size, is both unattractive and a solvable problem. With a growing student body and a faculty that has ceased to keep pace, we must either hire more professors or, less realistically, decrease the size of the student body.

Many view this university as a marketable and profitable institution in which finances come first and where we can sell our product- a decreasingly but still outstanding education - via a brochure and a quaint tour of the Colonnade with some cute facts about Traveller. Yet Professors do not operate as employees; they are unique, highly trained educators that cannot and should not be streamlined to increase efficiency. Education at W&L is not rooted in New Gaines or even the Liberty Hall ruins. Our roots are in the professors we become close with, who trust us, teach us, and debate with us during office hours.

Even during freshman orientation, President Ruscio reminisced of the days when he majored in a professor, not a class. Success in education boils down to one simple relationship: that of the student and teacher. Why then, are we selling ourselves short, investing in facilities and rebranding, rather than the core of education? The current freeze suggests the administration has overlooked and discounted the true value of an outstanding faculty.

If the school does not end its freeze on hiring of new professors, we could lose the unique character of the Washington and Lee professor and the tradition of strong teacher-student relations. W&L is a simple school; an intimate campus, whose social and moral cohesiveness is drawn from the values we are slowly letting loose. The first step we can take to ensure the future success of the University is to begin rehiring professors. Such a reprioritization would ease the stress on both students and professors, and help foster the culture of learning that has thus far enables the University’s success.

The Spectator is looking for students to get involved who are interested in web-design, cartoon drawing, and writing. If you hate your boring Ring-Tum Phi job and spend most of your nights crying yourself to sleep, we at The Spectator can offer you a job that will be both exciting and rewarding. Shoot us an email at wluspectator@gmail.com

Disclaimer: Working for The Spectator will not gain you any brownie points with the administration.
Students with Disabilities Find Help at W&L

By Wyn Ponder

Paqui Toscano, a sophomore at Washington and Lee University, was riding his bike last summer in Ohio when he was hit by a car. He suffered severe spinal injuries and now needs a cane to walk. This makes it hard for him to navigate W&L’s historic, hilly campus where many buildings were built long before wheelchair ramps and elevators were even invented.

“There’s not one thing I can say is the hardest part. There’s a lot of little things that build up,” said Toscano. “The exhaustion of trying to do what I used to do with less energy is up there.”

Toscano said that this change is not only physically exhausting, but emotionally exhausting too.

W&L is in the middle of a large-scale renovation of some of its oldest buildings that will help the university comply with federal law.

The American Disabilities Act was first passed in 1990 with the goal to “provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities.” The act was amended in 2008 to expand the meaning of being disabled. The amendments ensure that all people with disabilities have equal access to everything, including education.

“Disability accommodations are to level the playing field,” said Dean Wendy L. Price in an interview. “We find out what their needs are and go from there.”

The colonnade is considered a National Historic Landmark and it was built at a time before accessibility requirements existed. This makes the buildings exempt from fully meeting all of the ADA requirements.

“[The buildings] have code issues, but the historic building code requirements are a little more flexible than the new building codes,” said Price.

Architect Tim Contos said in an interview that it is difficult to put a ramp where stairs once were, citing DuPont Hall as an example. Contos said he estimates that building a ramp at DuPont Hall could cost an additional $75,000 to $100,000.

Will Coffman, who graduated in 2003, was paralyzed in a car accident when he was 16-years-old.

“They told me they would build whatever was necessary for me to live [in the Phi Kap house],” said Coffman.

W&L built an additional room with a handicap accessible bathroom and an elevator so Coffman could have access to the house.

“They paid God knows how much for that,” said Coffman.

Price said Payne Hall was the most difficult renovation since it is a much smaller building with two staircases. They were able to get rid of one, but there was no room for an elevator.

“An elevator would have gone through Lee’s office,” said Contos.

Price said they had to make a compromise because “the historic fabric is important,” so they agreed not to put an elevator in Payne.

“It is all about finding a happy medium between the history and the accessibility,” said Price.

Price said that there would be a meeting room in Payne on the first floor for students with disabilities to meet with their professors. She said they would also hold classes in different buildings to accommodate students.

Toscano, who is a Classics and English double major, said he appreciates this. W&L moved all of Toscano’s classes to handicap accessible rooms. His professors have also made their office hours more accessible to him so that he can meet them.

Contos said putting an elevator in a building has become standard regardless of ADA requirements because they’re important in moving things like furniture. He said they account for this financially and it does not typically bring additional costs.

Price said Newcomb and Washington Hall already have elevators and they were easy to integrate into the buildings. Robinson Hall will have an elevator when it is finished this summer.

“Professor Delaney was my advisor and I had never seen his office before my 10 year reunion when I was able to go upstairs in Newcomb for the first time in my life,” said Coffman.

Price said Students that are coming to W&L are strongly recommended to request disability accommodations. This allows them early access to registration and guarantees classroom accessibility.

“The campus does pose challenges, but the love and support I’ve felt has made up for that,” said Toscano. “I’m thankful to be here, of all places.”
Over the past 105 years, the Washington and Lee University Mock Convention has grown from a small gathering of politically-minded students to a nationally celebrated organization and political research project. This growth has only been possible with the participation and generous support from the W&L community.

The mission of Mock Convention is to bolster young people’s interest and involvement in American politics. As an interdisciplinary exercise, Mock Convention is reliant on your support in the following three areas:

RESEARCH
group's research by the generals' army: enlist today!

SPEAKERS
contacting them is half the battle, supporting their convention appearance is the other

OPERATIONS
after the work comes the show - help us deliver Spring Kickoff, Presidential Gala, and Convention Weekend 2016

Mock Convention recognizes that your support takes many forms. While our fundraising need are significant, we also appreciate your help in executing our second-to-none research project, securing speakers, and putting on "the biggest and boomingest" mock political convention as said by Time magazine.

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