



# The Spectator



WINTER 2016

A MAGAZINE OF STUDENT THOUGHT AND OPINION

VOL XVIII, NO. 2



## The Many Faces of Inclusion

*The "Diversity" FDR Petition's Well-Meaning Indoctrination*

Inside: Freedom of Speech, Admissions Challenges, Grade Inflation, and More

Dear Reader,

The English writer Lucius Cary once wrote: “When it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change.” Washington and Lee University takes pride in its rich and time-tested traditions, forming a strong foundation in the Liberal Arts that exemplifies the collegiate missions of education and honor. Occasionally, altering the way things are normally done can be both just and necessary. However, many recent changes to school policy, publically proposed or furtively enacted, call into question some of W&L’s central commitments to undergraduate education. This Winter Issue dedicates itself to addressing such worrisome changes, analyzing their consequences on students and school alike. Our leading article tackles the issue of a petition to add a “Diversity” Foundation and Distribution class to the list of undergraduate requirements, a proposal that has engendered much debate on campus. Also addressed include the Administration’s recent decision to heavily restrict student overloads, which created chaos among student long-term schedules; W&L’s connections to free speech, and obligation to defend it; the looming issue of grade inflation; all this, and more. As always, the Spectator is willing and prepared to say what needs to be said in defense of Washington and Lee’s unique educational spirit, regardless of controversy or resistance. On behalf of the Spectator and its many writers, staff members, and supporters, we thank you for reading and wish you a safe winter.

Best Regards,

The Spectator Staff



*Editor-in-Chief*  
BENJAMIN GEE '18

*Publisher*  
BEN WHEDON '18

*Business Manager*  
BURKE UGARTE '17

*Layout Editor*  
CATHERINE AHMAD '18

*Assistant Editors*  
CHUCK DODGE '17  
WIRT DUNBAR '17  
TIM LINDSAY '17  
CAMILLE HUNT '17

*Chief of Advertising*  
SAM BLAKENEY '17

*Head of Development*  
STEPHEN MITCHELL '17

*Head of Operations*  
PHIL AIKEN '17

*Senior Advisers*  
PAUL LAGARDE '16  
CATHERINE ROACH '16  
MARSHALL WOODWARD '16  
TY MITCHELL '16  
ANDREW FOX '16

*Email:* wlspectator@gmail.com  
*Web:* wlspectator.com

Cover Picture: Matthew Rickert

Letter From Staff ..... Inside Cover

Indoctrination: The Real Goal of the Culture and Diversity  
Petition ..... 2-3  
*Paul Lagarde*

A Call to Action: Protecting Freedom of Speech on College  
Campuses ..... 4-6  
*Benjamin Gee*

Limiting Speech is a Double Edged Sword: College Protest  
Movements and the Transference of Power. .... 7-8  
*Camille Hunt*

Overload Restrictions: Stifling Student Initiative Since 2015  
..... 9-10  
*Ben Whedon*

Admissions Data Suggests W&L Has a Marketing Problem  
..... 11-12  
*Paul Lagarde*

The National Controversy Over Grade Inflation..... 13-14  
*Tim Lindsay*

Satirical Spectator ..... 15-16  
*Andrew Fox*

Refugees in Lexington ..... 17  
*Catherine Ahmad*

# Indoctrination: The Real Goal of the Culture and Diversity Petition

By Paul Lagarde

In order to graduate from Washington and Lee, each student must take a certain amount of classes outside of his or her major to satisfy the core curriculum, known as the Foundation and Distribution Requirement. Exposing students to a broad array of academic disciplines, FDRs, as they are called, ensure that no one may graduate from W&L without receiving a

argument these two students offer as to why W&L has a diversity appreciation problem, the petitioners essentially argue that because some students opt not to take classes with a focus on marginalized groups, that means, therefore, that these poor, unenlightened souls necessarily lack a proper appreciation for diversity, which of course, can only be cured, in the writers' minds, with

a few university classes on the subject. This is a nonsensical argument, as it rests on the faulty assumption that one can only gain an appreciation for diversity by taking certain classes in a university setting. Under this logic, no one without a college degree has a proper awareness for diverse perspectives because they have not worshipped at the altar of the Women and Gender Studies Department. Had these two students offered concrete examples of a lack of diverse perspectives as the core of their argument, then they might have a stronger case for instituting a new FDR requirement as a solution to this problem. Instead, as the Left is so often inclined to do, they assume the existence of a problem, and offer more programs and regulations to "fix it."



Kevin Remington

well-rounded education. Students might fulfill the math requirement with introductory calculus, the lab science requirement with a geology course, or the language requirement with four semesters of German. In keeping with the goal of a true liberal arts education, students have broad freedom to decide which courses they will take to fulfill the various requirements, allowing them to explore subject areas truly of interest to them.

Recently, two female members of the Class of 2017 began circulating a petition among the student body calling for the institution of a new requirement, one focused on "Culture and Diversity." The petition, they state, "is motivated by a concern for the overall appreciation of diversity within our student body." They write, "We have witnessed the intelligence and thoughtfulness of our fellow students, but we have also observed a lack of awareness of diverse perspectives. That is to say, though there are numerous available courses about diversity--including issues of gender, sexual orientation, religion, and race--a number of students opt out of those courses."

In the quote above, which constitutes the only

offer more programs and regulations to "fix it."

---

We might cut the American Revolution to discuss the social status of midwives in ancient Greece, or Lincoln to ponder homosexuality's role in 17th-century colonial life. The change might be gradual, but over time, Washington and Lee's curriculum would come to reflect a shift from the study of truth to the study of the inconsequential.

But let's assume that despite their faulty logic and despite the apparent lack of evidence in support of their conclusion, our two young activists are correct that W&L students lack an awareness for diverse

---

perspectives. Is it then the University's job to step in and correct this "problem" through a new course requirement? Furthermore, what kind of constraints might such a requirement impose on a university that has already decided to place a freeze on hiring additional professors for the foreseeable future?

In their petition, the students call the institution of their requirement a "symbolic gesture to our campus's values." Such an assertion could not be further from the truth. A true liberal arts education is one that allows students some choice in what they study, and indeed, we know this from the Latin root *liber*, which means "free." By allowing students to explore their true interests and passions, a liberal arts education frees the mind to discover for itself what is true and what is right.

---

**The admission that Women and Gender Studies classes remain relatively small in size is a testament to the fact that, shocking though it may be to our progressive friends, W&L students might just prefer to take classes where the liberal ideology isn't shoved down their throats.**

The advocates of the Culture and Diversity FDR clearly subscribe to a philosophy of cultural relativism--they believe that all cultures are equal in terms of academic merit, and thus, equally worthy of being studied. They state that their Culture and Diversity FDR will not be an additional requirement, but rather, one that students may fulfill simultaneously alongside another FDR, such as the Literature or Humanities requirement. Such an arrangement is, in this writer's opinion, even more dangerous than having a standalone C&D requirement. Under the proposal, a pre-med student with a heavy course load might take "The Philosophy of Sex" in order to satisfy both the humanities and C&D requirement, when perhaps he might rather take a truly significant philosophy class such as "Plato" or "Nietzsche." A double-major in Business Administration and Economics might have to take "Gay and Lesbian Life in 20th-Century United States," regretfully passing up opportunities to study events of true historical importance, such as the French Revolution or the reign of Peter the Great.

This funneling of unwilling students into classes fitting the latest politically correct trend is of course the goal of the campus Leftists and furthermore, it is necessary to the survival of their cause. The two students admit as much in their petition, writing, "Many of the departments that currently offer such courses lack a

physical presence on campus or are not categorized into a department on the Registrar's website, a problem currently experienced by the Women's and Gender Studies program. Requiring their courses as FDR's would increase dwindling class sizes, attract potential majors and minors, and give much-needed visibility to interdisciplinary studies courses that are often overlooked." Though the student body at Washington and Lee has become more liberal over the years, it remains, on the whole, fairly conservative. The admission that Women and Gender Studies classes remain relatively small in size is a testament to the fact that, shocking though it may be to our progressive friends, W&L students might just prefer to take classes where the liberal ideology isn't shoved down their throats. In the absence of generating actual interest in their program, requiring students to take classes in the Women and Gender Studies Department would, of course, ensure its survival, and this petition reflects a somewhat pathetic attempt to do just that.

Were the Culture and Diversity FDR to be approved, it would likely result in academic departments cutting traditional courses in order to accommodate the sudden spike in demand for courses featuring "diverse perspectives," absent any change in the Board's current policy freezing the hiring of additional faculty members. For every Shakespeare class cut, we might see an additional course titled something like "Transgenderism in Modern Media: How Orange is the New Black and Transparent Shaped a Genre." We might cut the American Revolution to discuss the social status of midwives in ancient Greece, or Lincoln to ponder homosexuality's role in 17th-century colonial life. The change might be gradual, but over time, Washington and Lee's curriculum would come to reflect a shift from the study of truth to the study of the inconsequential.

I do not doubt that the concerned student authors mean well with their petition, but I fear that they are being unduly influenced by the forces of liberal academia. Harmless though this proposal might seem, it would surely set the stage for a gradual descent into politically correct academic tyranny. If Washington and Lee wants to offer courses featuring diversity, then by all means, offer them. But do not force students to take them--we have far, far better things to study.

# A Call to Action: Protect Freedom of Speech on College Campuses

By Benjamin Gee

*In a time when Freedom of Speech is nationally under attack, it is important for W&L to join other Universities in rededicating itself to this fundamental right*

In 2015, the United States became embroiled in intense debate over a series of conflicts on college campuses where student activism took a decidedly totalitarian turn. These movements have professed noble aims, but their actions and solutions frequently conflict with our nation's fundamental values of free speech and expression.

Last year we witnessed Yale students seek the censure and termination of a faculty member, Dr. Erika Christakis, for the mere suggestion that students protesting the perceived offensiveness of Halloween costumes worn by

other students may take political correctness too far. Students then attacked her husband, and fellow Yale employee, for defending her right to express an opinion about the opinion of the protesters. Dr. Christakis has since stepped down, hounded from her position by angry students determined to persecute her for expressing herself in a manner they deemed offensive.

Yale officials acceded to the student pressure with promises and apologies – the “Master” of its Pierson College even requested his title to be withdrawn, as the word “master” to him cruelly reminds his students of slavery and patriarchy. Yale’s capitulation is especially troubling in light of its historically steadfast devotion to freedom of speech, beginning with the 1974 Woodward report that declared freedom of speech one of the college’s most cherished values.

Yale was not the only location of freedom of speech infringement in the past year. Unfortunately, it was just one example in a long and dispiriting line of colleges willing

to abridge free speech for political expediency. After 2015, no longer do Administrations and faculty remain the only threats. Recently, a surge of student action has challenged free speech on college campuses in a variety of unsettling ways. At UC Berkeley, an article in the

school newspaper condemned a Professor for answering a student’s question about transgender inclusion within Karl Marx’s division of labor theory (yes, this was an actual question) by simply stating, “there will always be exceptions.” As a factual and honest answer to a completely non-contextual historical question, the Profes-

The Times

sor’s answer makes perfect sense. However, the article’s budding censors felt that the Professor committed a microaggression by referring to transgender people as “exceptions,” and therefore felt sufficiently triggered to exit lectures in righteous indignation. Instead of going to class, evidently, these students spent their time writing up demands for this Professor’s mandatory “reform,” along with the entire humanities department at UC Berkeley.

When Marx formulated his economic theories in the 1840s, conceptual “transgender” identity did not yet exist in Western society. Psychiatrist John F. Oliven first used the term in 1965, and not until ten years earlier in 1952 did the first publically known medical transgender process occur. No scientific capability existed in the 1840s to conduct transgender medical processes, and nor did society at large possess even a rudimentary awareness of transgender issues. The student’s question inserts modern-day transgender politics into Marx’s prior economic model, unnecessarily complicating and faulting a thinker and his time period for being unaware



Yale University's Old Campus

---

of this contemporary progressive cause de celebre. To these students, the Professor did not immediately cooperate with this irrespective-of-fact agenda, so they retaliated by attempting to restrict that Professor's speech.

At Wesleyan University, its student government suppressed ill-favored speech with totalitarian overtones when in October, it passed a resolution to withhold funding from a conservative publication (The Argus) after it featured an article criticizing the methods of the Black Lives Matter movement. The resolution proposed to cut the Argus' funding by 57 percent, \$30,000 to \$13,000 – a sudden and crippling reduction to the nation's second oldest bi-weekly collegiate magazine. The resolution passed unanimously, 27 votes to zero. At Wesleyan, the tools of student government became instruments of oppression, enforcing a rigid adherence to progressive doctrine at a steep cost to freedom of speech.

Joining Wesleyan's student government in legislative censorship was the University of California at Irvine, where a committee passed a resolution prohibiting the display of flags on campus. According to the resolution, flags serve as weapons of nationalism that perpetuate dangerous cultural narratives, disrupt "safe spaces," and create "paradigms of conformity." Without a trace of irony, the resolution produces the very structures of conformity it professes to detest – because as long as the conformity suits a progressive political end, it justifies their means.

---

**Being mindful of the future requires looking back into the past, into our history, for sources of inspiration and caution. The story of free expression has much to tell us, and should serve as a bold call to action whenever it is questioned.**

Rounding out just a few of these appalling incidences of student-directed free speech infringement stands the University of Missouri (Mizzou), lately the site of large demonstrations to protest a perceived lack of inclusiveness in the campus community. At public rallies designed to provide "safe spaces" for students, journalists were systematically obstructed and in some cases forcibly removed from demonstration spaces. In one notorious example, a student journalist was physically removed from a rally by "muscle" called for by a disgraceful Mass Media Professor. A viral video of the event displays this Professor, whose profession relies entirely on the efficacy and sacredness of the First Amendment, indignantly suppress the offending student from exercising his right to express himself as a member of the media. This Professor and her "muscle men" exemplify the expanding hypocrisy that unfortunately characterizes many recent anti-free speech movements at our colleges and universities, attacking the very rights that enable them to voice their calls for change.

In late 2015, Washington and Lee University witnessed a student-led demonstration expressing solidarity with the Mizzou protesters, requesting a broader understanding of the W&L community's interactions with race. The rally was conducted with open inclusiveness, featuring students who stepped forward to share their race-oriented experiences at W&L with others. It should be noted that this rally was markedly different from those at other colleges, where freedom of expression took a forceful backseat to carefully constructed "safe spaces." Everyone was invited, and the goal of the organizers was to maximize the amount of people present, rather than restrict those they disagreed with. Although this rally did not contend with freedom of speech at W&L, the school still must face challenges to freedom of speech from its administrative policies and the student government.

---

**Free speech is not a relic of an outdated age, and it never will be. It is a hallmark of civilized society, protecting the most contemptible along with the most respected because every person, no matter how enlightened or "correct" they are, deserve a chance to speak.**

Washington and Lee University currently has several rules in place that risk abridgements of students' freedom of speech. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), a prominent organization dedicated to protecting constitutional liberties, labels Washington and Lee with a "yellow" rating on its three-tiered scale of green to red. The yellow rating owes itself to three regulations that potentially interfere with free speech. The first, a statement on student behavior in the Student Handbook, asks that "instances of uncivil behavior involving students" be reported to the Associate Dean of Student Conduct – although "uncivil" can be easily interpreted as speech that violates the Handbook's dictum for "mutual respect." Next, a Student Judicial Council statement recommends students to issue complaints against fellow students for "conduct unbecoming a Washington and Lee student," another broad phrase that could easily imperil speech. Finally, the school's policy on Bias and Hate Speech declares that "bias incidents," or actions reasonably concluded to intimidate or demean others, must incur a swift and forceful response from the University in order to preserve "the climate of civility and respect necessary to achieve and maintain a diverse and inclusive community." Without a more direct affirmation of free speech principles, these policies pose a danger to freedom of expression at W&L, as their ambiguous definitions of terms like civility and bias could be used to persecute student speech.

Amid all the grave threats and challenges facing freedom of speech on college campuses today, certain Universities have stepped forward to bravely defend the right to free speech in both word and deed. Their efforts center upon mutual adoption of the University of Chicago's renowned declaration of support for free

speech. The statement reads, “In a word, the University’s fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the University community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the University community, not for W&L as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose. Indeed, fostering the participation of the University community members in such debate and deliberation is an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the University’s educational mission.” So far Princeton, Purdue, Johns Hopkins, and several more schools have incorporated this admirable declaration into their own University policy.

This group of well-regarded, highly selective Universities has distinguished itself from the national collegiate malaise of debilitating, censorious speech codes and spineless capitulations, by taking a stand in support of free speech. The Spectator believes that Washington and Lee University can and should adopt the University of Chicago’s free-speech declaration. In agreeing to the declaration, W&L will reaffirm its commitment to a central component of the liberal arts education – the ability for ideas and thoughts to interact with one another unimpeded, ensuring free and open dialogue necessary for the development of intellectual maturity.

Washington and Lee’s motto, *non incautus futuri* (not unmindful of the future), pays homage to Horace’s Satires and the family crest of former President Robert E. Lee. Combined with its mission statement, which pledges “Graduates will be prepared for lifelong learning, personal achievement, responsible leadership, service to others, and engaged citizenship in a global and diverse society,” W&L evidently weighs its students’ readiness for the future as one of its most vital institutional goals.

Being mindful of the future requires looking back into

the past, into our history, for sources of inspiration and caution. The story of free expression has much to tell us, and should serve as a bold call to action whenever it is questioned. Today, free speech may appear to some people as inconsistent with “civilized” society. However, they would fail to recognize that prior to the First Amendment’s birth in 1788, no “civilized” society had

ever before declared its support for freedom of expression in all its forms, for all individuals. Restricting speech, on the other hand, has been the tyrant’s dearest friend; the book-burners, speech code writers, dissent-crushing, media-controlling monarchs and despots of history have shown us that free speech is the greatest foe to those who wish absolute control over their fellow man.

Free speech is not a relic of an outdated age, and it never will be. It is a hallmark of civilized society, protecting the most contemptible along with the most respected because every person, no matter how enlightened or “correct” they are, deserve a chance to speak. If we lose reverence for this right, or allow it to be sublimated beneath antagonistic “values” like political correctness, we

compromise the very essence of our future’s promise. What good is it for W&L graduates to think “freely, critically, and humanely,” quoting our mission statement, in a world that restricts graduates’ capacity to do so? Is it not “unmindful of the future” for W&L to allow other Universities to trample free speech, without taking a stand for this vital component of our society’s past, present, and future? These are questions the Washington and Lee community must ask, and the answer will help shape the future that awaits us. The Spectator urges W&L to join the brave schools in favor of free speech by adopting the University of Chicago’s declaration. Such an action would be fitting for Washington and Lee, a school that justly takes pride in creating a future of promise for its students. It is left to us to create that future; let us choose wisely, not by giving in to old and tired totalitarian ideas, but embracing the wisdom of the still-revolutionary freedom to speak one’s mind without fear of suppression. It is on foundational principles such as this that a better future is made.



Lee Chapel, the site of many student gatherings

Catherine Ahmad '18



# Limiting Speech is a Double Edged Sword: College Protest Movements and the Transference of Power

By Camille Hunt

The Bill of Rights grants all citizens freedom of speech, but in light of recent trends across college campuses, it seems that free speech isn't quite so free anymore. The intolerance of diverse thought on college campuses has transformed the 'freedom to speak' into the 'freedom to remain silent and avoid inducing unrest', and the accompanying concept of the college campus as a safe space for a diverse student body has inadvertently become a paradox. Instead of encouraging and accepting a wide array of opinions, the 'safe space' acts as a breeding ground for intolerance against everything but homogenous thought. As author Kristen Powers has written, "Campuses should be places where students are able to make mistakes without fear of retribution. If there is no margin for error, it is impossible to receive a meaningful education."



Students Taking Exams During Exam Week

**By immediately running to an authority with complaints and demands to remove anything that sparks disagreement, college students relinquish the power to mitigate the situation themselves.**

This hindrance of free speech has yet to become obvious at W&L, but I often find myself mentally checking myself before speaking in class. Instead of asking a question, I have on multiple occasions relinquished the opportunity to ask it for fear of broaching a topic considered politically incorrect.

After each occurrence, I regret being too timid to make that comment or ask that question because in hindsight, there was nothing wrong with what I wanted to say; I was just too paranoid to say it. Powers touches on this timidity by remarking, "the politically correct university is a world of landmines, where faculty and students have no idea what innocuous comment might be seen as an offense." Yet, even while applying immense pressure on fellow college to control speech inside the 'safe space' of campus, the forces demanding censorship are cheating themselves of their own power.

The Yale lecturer in early childhood education Erika Christakis best illustrated his concept. In an email she sent out to a student community, her innocent message sparked an unwarranted and explosive response. In that email, she reflected on the Halloween costume guidelines suggested by Yale's Intercultural Affairs Committee that Fall. Part of her email reads:

American universities were once a safe space not only for maturation but also for a certain regressive, or even transgressive, experience; increasingly,

it seems, they have become places of censure and prohibition. And the censure and prohibition come from above, not from yourselves! Are we all okay with this transfer of power? Have we lost faith in young people's capacity – in your capacity – to exercise self-censure, through social norming, and also in your capacity to ignore or reject things that trouble you?

This email, which wrapped up with a cheery "Happy Halloween," exposes the two most pressing problems of the increasingly common collegiate habit of immediately raising defenses whenever they encounter a challenge to their own views. In return for sharing her thoughts in an informal email, Christakis and her husband Nicholas, a Yale professor, received outrageous backlash from some of Yale's students, and as a result do not plan on returning to Yale in

Kevin Remington

the future. In light of what happened at Yale, we students must ask ourselves: can we not, as young adults, handle a college professor telling us to relax a little? And who is really gaining power from these protests?

By immediately running to an authority with complaints and demands to remove anything that sparks disagreement, college students relinquish the power to mitigate the situation themselves. If our generation is so eager to stand up for itself, why are we whining for someone else must to do it for us? We must defend everyone's right to speak freely; by demanding that administrations punish each individual that gives offense, we freely surrender our own power to that authority. Doing so might prevent a person from speaking further offenses, but in reality censorship steals the right to free speech from both sides of the argument, resulting in one absolute voice of authority. George Washington once said, "If the freedom of speech is taken away then, dumb and silent, we may be led like sheep to the slaughter." Today's college campus environment has added an ironic twist to Washington's metaphor. While we all might still be sheep headed to the slaughter, the shepherds policing freedom of speech are unknowingly headed for the slaughter house as well.

---

**There is a difference between a legitimate injustice and an excuse to pick a fight. The intentions of our generation are valiant; we strive to support the good and fight the bad. We grew up studying historical acts of progress for social justice and were taught to stand up for what we believe in. What many of us have embarked on now, however, is a misguided and poorly substantiated conquest of a molehill when we could be conquering mountains.**

That no one should dispute a person's right to equality goes without saying. Persecutors of any group of people should not go unpunished. The drawing of a swastika in human feces at Mizzou was a horrendous offense, as were the racial slurs shouted at Mizzou senior Peyton Head and directed towards the school's Legion of Black Collegians. These kinds of acts are unacceptable.

Unfortunately, serious offenses like those at Mizzou are undermined by ridiculous incidents happening on college campuses across the country. This November, a group of students at Amherst College made demands for "disciplinary action and mandatory 'ra-

cial and cultural competency' training for students behind a series of signs on campus that lamented the death of free speech," the Washington Times reported. Do we college students truly want to be remembered for protesting free speech? Because of irrational stands like this one, will society see each future student-led cause as just another temper tantrum?

There is a difference between a legitimate injustice and an excuse to pick a fight. The intentions of our generation are valiant; we strive to support the good and fight the bad. We grew up studying historical acts of progress for social justice and were taught to stand up for what we believe in. What many of us have embarked on now, however, is a misguided and poorly substantiated conquest of a molehill when we could be conquering mountains.

In his commencement speech for Dickinson College, author Ian McEwan offered the 2015 graduates some advice. "Being offended is not to be confused with a state of grace; it's the occasional price we all pay for living in an open society," McEwan said. In closing, he offered these final words: "I hope you'll use your fine liberal education to preserve for future generations the beautiful and precious but also awkward, sometimes inconvenient and even offensive culture of freedom of expression we have." I hope that as students of W&L, we strive to preserve the privilege to speak our minds. That said, this article is an opinion piece. If it differs from your own opinion, I hope we can agree to disagree.

Sources: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/nov/13/amherst-college-students-protest-free-speech-flier/>

<https://www.thefire.org/email-from-erika-christakis-dressing-yourself-email-to-silliman-college-yale-students-on-halloween-costumes/>

<http://time.com/3883212/ian-mcewan-graduation-speech-dickinson/>

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/05/11/how-liberals-have-ruined-college.html>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/the-new-intolerance-of-student-activism-at-yale/414810/>

# Overload Restrictions: Stifling Student Initiative Since 2015

By Ben Whedon

Every year, Washington and Lee University graduates approximately five hundred of the nation's best and brightest. A liberal arts institution by tradition, W&L prides itself on the diverse range of subjects to which its students are exposed. The opportunity to pursue multiple fields of study is an invaluable asset for those seeking to broaden their academic background and improve their future professional prospects. Indeed, a substantial majority of graduates now leave W&L with two degrees, a double-major, or several minors. Sadly, these days may be coming to an end as a strict new overload approval policy threatens to hinder the opportunities of enterprising students.

Within the same academic disciplines, several majors share prerequisites where a single course can satisfy both requirements. Majors such as History and Classics can be declared with multiple courses counting towards both fields of study. Primarily in the liberal arts, some double-major choices can be accomplished without the need for an overload. Difficulties arise when students seek to diversify their interests and declare two majors in decidedly unrelated subjects. When a student declares majors in Philosophy and Physics for example, they will find that few if any courses satisfy prerequi-

sites for both disciplines. Those W&L students seeking to pursue diverse academic interests, even should they receive credit hours during matriculation, will often find that they must take an overload for at least one term.

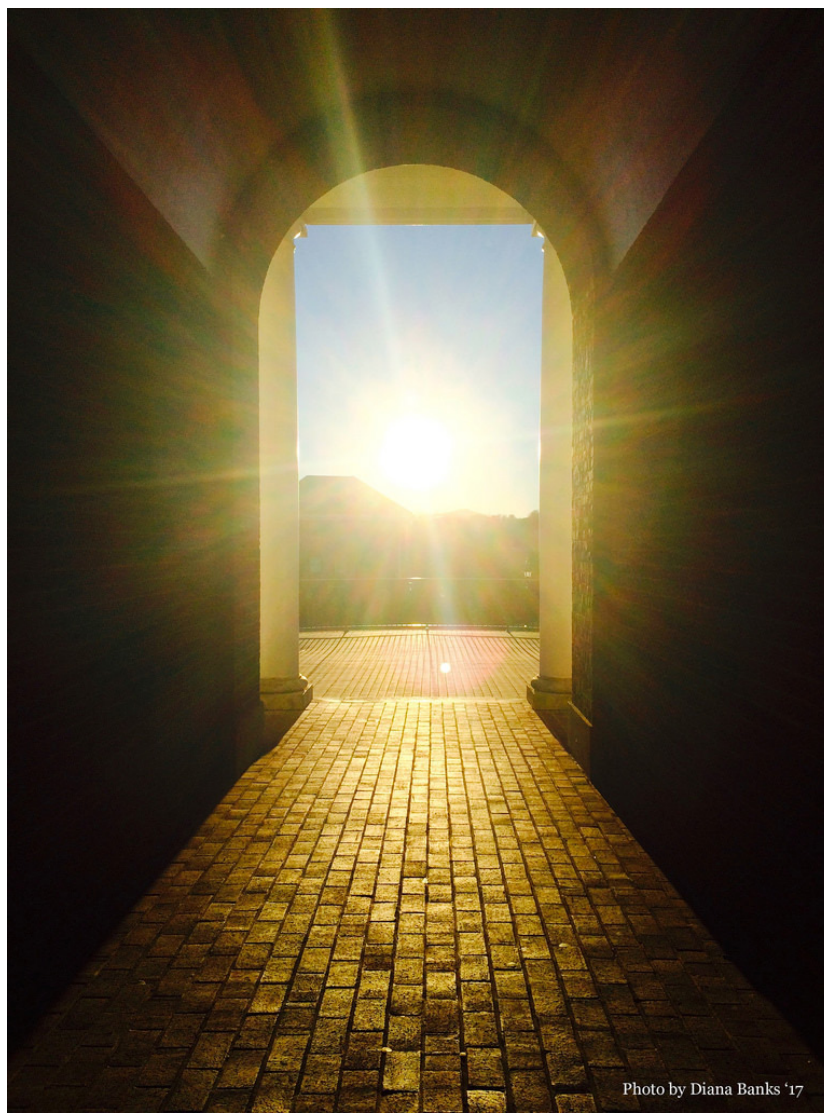


Photo by Diana Banks '17

Graham-Lee's Tunnel

Previously, approval for an overload was relatively easy to obtain. When filling out the application form, students merely had to state their regular coursework, identify their intended overload courses, and offer a brief statement explaining why they desired a larger course load. The request would then be sent to the student's academic advisor who would forward it to the appropriate dean. If the request was for fewer than eighteen credits, then the dean's decision was final. Otherwise, it would go to the Faculty Executive Committee for review. Though not invariably approved, students with reasonable GPAs generally could get approval for five or more courses with no justification other than their own initiative. Some students even received approval for as many as twenty-three credits.

Scene on Campus (Washington and Lee)

Over the course of last year, the Academic Deans met to address the relatively lenient overload approval system. The results of these discussions were a series of restrictions on the application process. The overload request page on the University website has been updated to display the new criteria by which each application is consid-

---

ered. As before, approval may be granted for independent research, summer internship credit, or additional one-credit music courses. Exceptions are also granted for one-time attempts to retake failed courses or if a student's schedule includes multiple four-credit classes, though they are still limited to four. Small requests of fifteen to seventeen credits are still reasonably attainable should they satisfy the given conditions. Qualified students desiring to enroll in five or more regular classes, either to complete a second major or minor or solely for the sake of interest, now ought to discount the probability of success. The new restrictions prevent overloads past 14 credits unless a proven need from the student, such as a graduation requirement or lab, puts them over the edge. Even in such cases, necessity has become the primary standard in Administrative approval of overloads.

---

**Perhaps the most egregious oversight of the new system's implementation was the absence of a grandfather clause shielding students who had already officially declared majors that would necessitate overloads. With no such clause incorporated into the restrictions, a plethora of students now must make difficult choices.**

The Deans' decision to restrict overloads was a largely unanticipated move and was by no means well-publicized. Students and faculty advisors alike were not given ample time to plan, disheartening many students who have had to delete their majors or minors. The fallout from this new policy raises the question of why it was implemented. In a previous issue of this publication, one of our writers interviewed former Provost Daniel Wubah regarding the need for change in the registration process. He outlined a series of potential changes to the system such as the newly-implemented "pick one, pick three" process. To his credit, the ordeal of registration has been lessened considerably with server crashes now at an all-time low. Despite this, the competition for classes, particularly within the Williams school, has remained high. Intending primarily to alleviate the competition for those classes, but also to simultaneously address the issue of burnout, the Deans chose to implement the overload restrictions. Rather than expand the class sizes, to the benefit of few, they made an understandable move to curb demand for them.

Perhaps the most egregious oversight of the new system's implementation was the absence of a grandfather

clause shielding students who had already officially declared majors that would necessitate overloads. With no such clause incorporated into the restrictions, a plethora of students now must make difficult choices. Faced with the improbability of receiving administrative assent, those ambitious students with multiple declared majors or minors must now alter their academic plans. The forced deletion by students of their official fields of study is a contradiction of the values of this liberal arts institution. Prominently displayed at the base of the University coat of arms are the Latin words *Non In Cautus Futuri*, which translate to "not unmindful of the future". The new overload policy flies in the face of our motto. As a highly competitive job market continues to demand more and more from its entrants, these harsh restrictions limit students' abilities to distinguish themselves and prepare for their futures beyond their undergraduate studies.

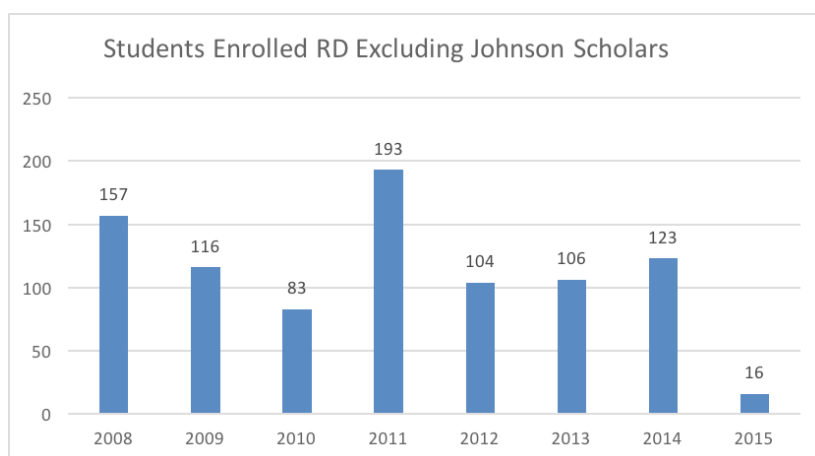
Washington and Lee University has a place among the greatest schools in the nation and offers competitive programs in nearly all fields of learning. It is the stellar education and the plethora of academic prospects offered by this University that attract such inquisitive, ambitious minds to Lexington. How long will this last? As the opportunities for students to explore their interests here diminish, one wonders if they may begin to look elsewhere. Immediate repeal may not be feasible as the issues surrounding registration remain. That said, a partial relaxation of the restrictions at least is in order. With previous overload approvals reaching highs twenty-three credit terms, it is no wonder that classes were overbooked. To make approval nearly impossible, however, was too harsh of a step. A schedule including five regular classes is an undertaking. One with six or more is an ordeal. To be sure, some restrictions on the process are reasonable to curb student excess. However, the University might make some alterations to increase flexibility. Rather than end the option to take an additional course altogether, perhaps simply limiting overloads to five regular courses would be prudent. Moreover, a high minimum GPA requirement might be a reasonable way to combat excess demand for classes. Though a final, satisfactory resolution to the issue may take time, let's hope the Deans reevaluate and adjust this policy in the interim.

# Admissions Data Suggests W&L Has a Marketing Problem

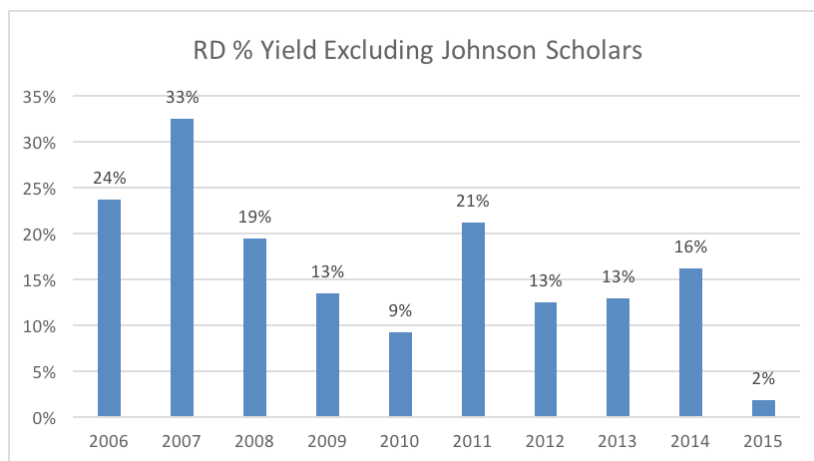
By Paul Lagarde

Every year, the Washington and Lee Office of Institutional Effectiveness releases what is known as the Common Data Set, a collection of data related to University programs such as admissions, academics, and financial aid. Based on the data available regarding admissions and enrollment, it appears that in 2015 Washington and Lee had some trouble convincing students accepted under Regular Decision to actually enroll.

Since 2008, excluding 40 or so Johnson Scholars each year, W&L has filled incoming freshman classes with an average of 126 students admitted under Regular Decision. In 2015, however, W&L managed to convince just 16 students from the Regular Decision pool to enroll, despite extending offers of admission to 876 students from Regular Decision.

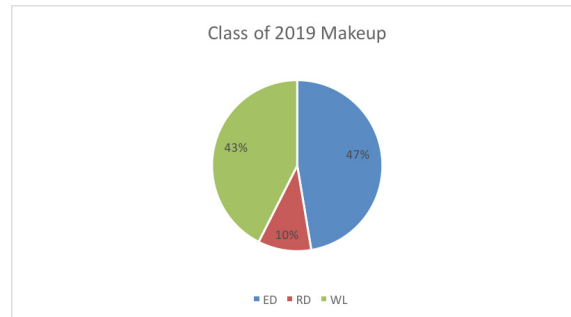
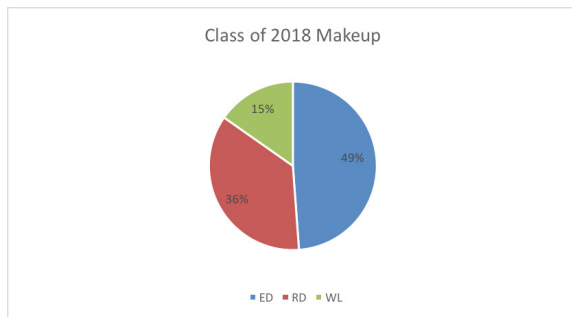
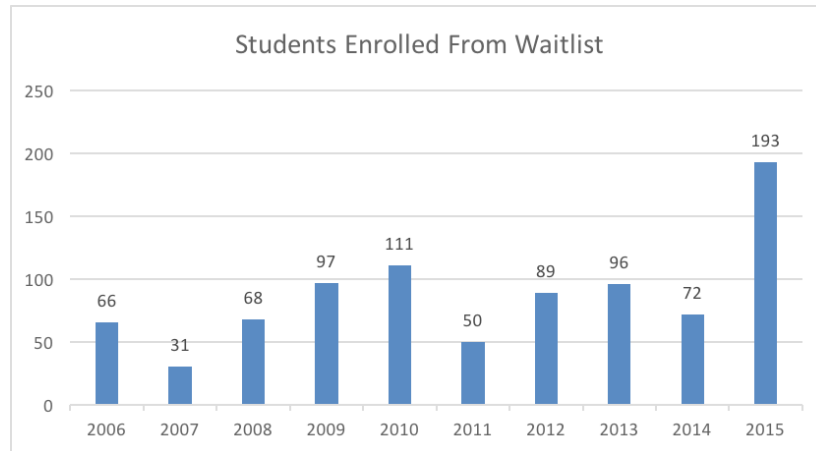


This constitutes a meager 2% yield on RD enrollment, by far the lowest of the last decade. Despite an increase in available financial aid, notably in the inception of the “W&L Promise” which guarantees full tuition to any student with a household annual income of less than \$75,000, this discrepancy makes one wonder why W&L struggled so much to attract students last year.



In order to make up for the unusually low Regular Decision haul, W&L admitted far more waitlisted students than usual in 2015. As the following charts illustrate, W&L had to almost triple the number of students it accepted off the

waitlist from 2014 to 2015, ultimately filling the Class of 2019 with 193 waitlisted students, for about 43% of the overall class.



This is not to suggest that the quality of the Class of 2019 suffered as a result of an increased number of students admitted off the waitlist; on the contrary, the class compares favorably to other W&L classes in terms of grades and standardized test scores. What these statistics do suggest, however, is that W&L failed to convince many of those admitted under Regular Decision to ultimately choose W&L as their alma mater. While the reasons behind this are not clear, it seems safe to assume that financial factors are not to blame for this drop, as the University has improved financial aid offerings each year. What seems more likely are W&L admissions initiatives that target more nontraditional students than usual, perhaps hoping to improve the diversity of the student body. Those pitches apparently did not go well, and as a result the admissions office had to scramble to fill the class.

While W&L was able to salvage the Class of 2019 through the waitlist, this seems an unsustainable practice moving forward. If the University wishes to attract more students under Regular Decision, it clearly needs to improve its sales pitch. W&L likely spent a substantial amount of money convincing Regular Decision students to enroll, and in today's age of sky-high tuition prices, there is little room for this kind of administrative waste. Admissions in 2016 for the entering class of 2020 will provide further telling information, indicating whether 2015 was just a fluke year in enrollment statistics or a sign of trends to come. Hopefully the new Dean of Admissions Sally Stone Richmond and her team are up to the challenge.

# The National Controversy Over Grade Inflation

By Tim Lindsay

The topic of grade inflation has, of late, permeated University conversation and raised ethical questions at institutions of higher education not just in the United States but throughout the world. But as schools continue to address this issue, although it is not new, the facts must be presented unambiguously and without bias; otherwise, “grade inflation” might only be the subject of futile arguments. And while there are multiple ways to define grade inflation, this piece will subscribe to the modest and prevalent description: grade inflation is the progressive increase in grades for the same quality of work performed by individuals throughout the past. To illustrate the reality of this situation, a 2012 study by 2 professors at Duke and Furman University respectively found that “A” grades represented 43% of all letter grades at that time among 200 four-year colleges and universities, up 28% from 1960 and 12% from 1988.[1] Yet a study conducted with data from 1984 to 2005 confirmed that average test scores and literacy levels have remained fairly stagnant.[2] In fact, in 2013 the median grade awarded at Harvard College was an A-, and at the same time, Harvard dispensed more straight A’s to its students than any other letter grade.[3] These studies neither represent an anomaly nor do they unveil a new dilemma; grade inflation undoubtedly exists. Therefore it is imperative to understand the root of this predicament, its societal ramifications, and the potential solutions.[4]

Minnesota State University, Mankato Economics Professor Richard C. Schiming outlined a litany of possible sources for grade inflation - some less likely

or less significant than others, such as evolving school missions pivoted around research, changing “grading policies and practices” like group work, and a gradual slide in difficulty of actual course content. However, others factors in his list contain more substance. For instance, Schiming indicates that some institutions have experienced grade inflation as a means to retain current students and as a means for teachers to attract students to their classes: “With students seeing themselves more as consumers of education and more eager to succeed than to learn, the pressure on institutions to provide more success can be persuasive.”[5] Another viable factor in grading by teachers that Schiming lists is an increased ubiquity of subjective measures such



View of Washington and Lee’s Colonnade

as participation and attendance. Lastly, he specified that the emphasis of student evaluations on promotions or tenure decisions encourages artificially higher grades, even though studies have refuted a dominant relationship between grades and teacher assessments.[6] But whatever the main sources of grade inflation may be, it is clear that many institutions have found it necessary to saturate their own students GPAs as a means to remain competitive.

Of course, this form of inflation isn’t similar to economic inflation, where prices rise indefinitely. Contrarily, GPAs have a fixed cap at 4.0. So it’s important to discuss the societal implications and solutions to this preponderance of A’s and B’s because current GPAs evidently have reached that cap. Most visibly, grade inflation will derail the value of A’s throughout colleges and Universities. Employers and graduate schools might find it easi-

er and more convenient to gauge work experiences and extracurricular involvement in its applicants than core education. Additionally, students and teachers alike might not afford academics the appropriate attention if everybody earns an A or B. This too should contribute the downward spiral of grade worth. Furman's Christopher Healy further claims this could dissuade students from certain subjects in which they exhibit a superior performance; tremendous grades across the board and consequently, ambiguous feedback leaves no room for differentiation of strengths and weaknesses and seriously undercuts potential achievement.[7] It could even deter students from subjects branded as more difficult.

Schiming offers one viable solution – including overall class grades in transcripts. The perspective of the mean class grade alongside students' grade could devalue an A in an easy course. Thereby, teachers might give a high grade more consideration than in past years. Schiming also suggests an adjustment to the grading scale, eliminating the presence of (-) and (+), to reduce teacher bias and subsequently, to boost a marginal grade.[8] However this might elicit such an overhaul of our grading system that its potential seems unrealistic.

**Most visibly, grade inflation will derail the value of As throughout colleges and Universities. Employers and graduate schools might find it easier and more convenient to gauge work experiences and extracurricular involvement in its applicants than core education. Additionally, students and teachers alike might not afford academics the appropriate attention if everybody earns an A or B.**

Grade inflation has infiltrated educational systems throughout the world but most prominently in the United States, and it exists at Washington and Lee, but by no means is it confined to Lexington. The opinion of many experts on the subject suggests it is a problem with serious ramifications for gauging individual qualifications and merit. Yet, grade deflation, as University of North Texas Economics Professor Michael McPherson asserts, has its own swath of consequences. Deflation excuses grade manipulation, which would add further scrutiny to the debated corruption of colleges and Universities.[9] It seems the combined initiative of a union of schools is the only vehicle towards creating an achievable solution, and W&L's prestige and storied reputation make it an invaluable player in this effort.

[1] Rojstaczer, Stuart and Healy, Christopher. (2012) Where A is Ordinary: The Evolution of American College and University Grading, 1940-2009.

[2] Katsikas, Aina. (2015, January 13). Same Performance, Better Grades. The Atlantic. Retrieved from [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com)

[3] Slavov, Sita. (2013, December 26). How to Fix College Grade Inflation. US News. Retrieved from [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com)

[4] Rojstaczer, Stuart and Healy, Christopher. (2012) Where A is Ordinary: The Evolution of American College and University Grading, 1940-2009

[5] Schiming, Richard C. Grade Inflation. Minnesota State University, Mankato. Retrieved from [www.mnsu.edu/cetl/teachingresources](http://www.mnsu.edu/cetl/teachingresources)

[6] Schiming, Richard C. Grade Inflation. Minnesota State University, Mankato. Retrieved from [www.mnsu.edu/cetl/teachingresources](http://www.mnsu.edu/cetl/teachingresources)

[7] Katsikas, Aina. (2015, January 13). Same Performance, Better Grades. The Atlantic. Retrieved from [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com)

[8] Schiming, Richard C. Grade Inflation. Minnesota State University, Mankato. Retrieved from [www.mnsu.edu/cetl/teachingresources](http://www.mnsu.edu/cetl/teachingresources)

[9] Katsikas, Aina. (2015, January 13). Same Performance, Better Grades. The Atlantic. Retrieved from [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com)



**The Spectator is proud to be an Intercollegiate Studies Institute member publication**



---

# *Satirical Spectator*

*By Andrew Fox*

## ***Ban on on-campus hoverboarding leaves students with no choice but to hoverboard off-campus***

Reports are filing in that the recent ban on on-campus hoverboarding has not limited the number of students hoverboarding, as the administration had hoped; rather, it has compelled students to partake in more off-campus hoverboarding. When asked to comment on this emerging phenomenon, junior Mickey Gorman noted, “Look, if you’re a student at Washington and Lee, of course you love to hoverboard. You love to hoverboard at the fraternity houses, you love to hoverboard during o-week, you love to hoverboard during Christmas weekend.” This sentiment is far from unique. According to a recent strawpoll, many students went on record saying that they enjoyed going out and hoverboarding 3-4 nights a week during the semester. More so, this strawpoll fails to account for the spring term, when many seniors will spring option in order to hoverboard 6-7 days per week. Banning hoverboarding on-campus has led to a boon in the Lexington real estate industry, as many landlords have filled their houses with students looking to get in on the burgeoning off-campus hoverboarding scene. In fact, many students regard off-campus hoverboarding as one of the defining worthwhile aspects of W&L. Of course the administration was quick to point out the numerous fun activities with absolutely no health risks at all that are still allowed on-campus, such as drinking from fourth-floor Leyburn’s water-fountains or collecting mold from Woods Creek. **NOTE: We here at The Spectator would like to remind everyone that we maintain a “pro-hoverboarding” stance.**

## ***Administration Announces Moratorium on Your Complaints - All Grievances will now be Handled by the Director of Intramurals’ Office, Please hold for the next Millennia***

In a sweeping decision, the administration agreed to issue a moratorium on “all your complaints.” From now on, the administration will hear absolutely none of your qualms, regardless of their severity. Fourth-year housing? No. Toilet paper quality? No. The 7 DEA agents staked out behind D-hall? Not in your life! Grievances will now be safely entrusted in the trustful arms of the trustworthy intramural department. Referred to as “streamlining,” all complaints will be submitted through the university website, printed up in Early-Fielding, stuffed in a burlap sack, fastened to a dying animal, and dumped outside the IM director’s door to slowly await the end of days. “Yeah I filed a complaint with the IM director regarding the mold in Woods Creek,” mentioned one disgruntled student, “after weeks of ignoring my emails he finally responds

---

and tells me he'll have a full response shortly. Long story short about a month later I get an email saying I should submit my team's application for flag football by February 5th. Turns out flag football ended in October." In response to the deliberate nature of the IM director complaint hotline, the school offers these suggestions to pass the time: retaking alcohol edu, watching paint dry, or enrolling at W&L law. If that's not all, for those who feel the hotline is wasting their time, the WLU bookstore will be running a time buyback table all week, offering a refund of 2 seconds for every eon spent.

***Chairman Mr. McRuscio announces decade-long feud between Stone Cold "Deen" Evans and Greek "Life" Holmes will come to an End this Sunday night at Wrestlemania***

Today Chairman of Operations Mr. McRuscio issued an announcement that echoed throughout the W&L universe: one last time, Evans vs. Greek Life at the granddaddy of them all, Wrestlemania. Employing his trademark snarl, Mr. McRuscio told a sold out Washington Hall crowd, "You want your match?... Well YOU'VE GOT IT!!!" as the entire stadium erupted in a massive "YES!" chant. "MAH GAWDDDD!!! King, did he just say what I think he said?!" cried play-by-play commentator Jim Ross to his partner Jerry "The King" Lawler before declaring, "you've seen it here folks, Mr McRuscio is not messing around. THE BATTLE LINES HAVE BEEN DRAWN!" In a live event already packed with dream matchups, long-standing rivals Greek Life and Evans will rise above the rest and square off in a retirement match: career vs. career, two fighters enter, one leaves. The big question going into the match will be how Greek Life hopes to combat Stone Cold "Deen" Evans' deadly submission holds acronymically known as the SAC and the SFHB. As of this Tuesday, no wrestler has ever successfully escaped these submission holds. However, the fact that the match will be No-Disqualification should play into Greek life's favor since the use of items like tables, ladders, chairs, kegs, liquor bottles, paddles, and yes, even hoverboards, will be legal. No word from either contestant yet, at press time both were receiving medical attention following a brutal barbed wire vacuum cleaner cage match.

# Refugees in Lexington

By Catherine Ahmad

Throughout the world discussions concerning the Middle East, terrorism, and the conflicts that are imbedded within the region have gained a pressing importance. In the latter half of 2015, conflicts developed within Western nations as displaced Syrians sought safety and security in Europe and the United States. The consequences of that debate opened up a much more personal debate reaching into the homes of European and American citizens. Will we allow Syrian refugees to reside among us?

Almost instantly, concern over our own safety and wellbeing was raised. Donald Trump, a front runner in the Republican Presidential race, has called for the surveillance of mosques and believes that the Syrian refugees should not be let into the country. However, Lexington City Council member Patrick Rhamey had a very different response to the Syrian refugee crisis. In a statement on November 19th, he wrote "We declare it our patriotic duty as Americans to welcome refugees, from Syria or otherwise, with open arms into our community, commit to assist them in whatever manner we are able, and encourage our fellow citizens to do likewise." Despite Rhamey's sentiments, it is unlikely that Syrian refugees will be entering the city of Lexington anytime soon - although rumors to the contrary exist as well.

The vast majority of Virginia's congressional representatives have voted for stronger measures for the screening of Syrian refugees. Only Bobby Scott and Don Beyer, two Democrats, voted against these new proposals.

The legislature asks for the FBI to conduct background checks on both Syrian and Iraqi refugees prior to entering Congress. In addition, the FBI, Department of Homeland Security, and US National Intelligence would have requirements to certify before Congress that each individual refugee would not be a security threat.



R.E. Lee Church whose church leaders are interested in helping the refugees

As Congress continues to debate policy with regard Syrian refugees, Governor-elect and Washington and Lee alumnus Matthew Bevin has come under fire for his stance on the Syrian refugee crisis. Opposing allowing Syrians in Kentucky, Bevin stated, "The recent terrorist attacks in Paris serve as a warning to the entire civilized world that we must remain vigilant. It is imperative that we do everything in our power to prevent any similar attack by evildoers from taking place here in America." A cartoonist at the Lexington Herald-Leader depicted a cartoon in which Bevin is seen as cowering behind

his desk from the fear of his adopted children being terrorists. Bevin condemned this portrayal and denounced the cartoon as racist and deplorable. Bevin and his wife adopted four Ethiopian children in 2012.

As this debate continues to boil amongst policymakers and members of communities, it is vital for us to exchange these discussions with respect. Lawmakers and citizens alike cannot serve the best interests of our localities when they choose to embrace name-calling and partisanship. The Syrian refugee debate, as well as its consequences, are not over. But what remains under evaluation is our response, both locally and globally, to the ongoing Syrian civil war and the resulting refugee crisis.

Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia



# Haywood's

Haywood's, our casual restaurant offering seasonal cuisine, craft cocktails and nightly entertainment  
2 North Main  
540.463.2508

# THE GEORGES

EG

Lexington's premier boutique inn

# TAPS

TAPS, our lobby lounge featuring sandwiches, soups, salads, snacks creative cocktails and craft beer  
11 North Main  
540.463.2504

