

**BOARD OF VISITORS
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

**Full Board Meeting
Thursday, February 26, 2026
Merten Hall, Hazel Conference Room (1201), Fairfax Campus**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Rector Michael Meese, Vice Rector Sumeet Shrivastava, Secretary Armand Alacbay, Visitors Anne Altman, Bruce Caswell, Tom Davis (virtual), Paul Misener, Trevor Montano, Jim Moran, Delbert Parks, Jon Peterson, Shawn Purvis, Jeff Rosen, George Schindler, Sean Spence, and Jennifer Taylor.

ABSENT: none.

ALSO PRESENT: Rachel Spence, Staff Representative; Solon Simmons, Faculty Representative; Nilima Mow, Graduate Student Representative; Jonathan Dubois, Undergraduate Student Representative; Gregory Washington, President; Ajay Vinzé, Interim Provost; David Drummey, Interim University Counsel; and Bridget Higgins, Secretary pro tem.

I. Call to Order

Vice Rector Meese called the meeting to order at 8:14 a.m.

Vice Rector Meese informed the Board that Visitor Davis requested to participate remotely from his location in the Caribbean for personal reasons. Citing the board's Electronic Meeting Participation policy, Vice Rector Meese **MOVED** to approve Visitor Davis's electronic participation in the meeting. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Rosen. The **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

II. Elections & Approval of Committee Appointments

- A. Election of Rector (ACTION ITEM)
- B. Election of Vice Rector (ACTION ITEM)
- C. Election of Members-at-Large to the Executive Committee (ACTION ITEM)
- D. Committee Chair and Vice Chair Appointments (ACTION ITEM)
- E. Committee Member Appointments (ACTION ITEM)
- F. Appointment of Board Liaisons

Vice Rector Meese referred to the Board of Visitors (BOV) Bylaws as he described the composition of the Executive Committee and recognized Solon Simmons to present faculty concerns and those of the George Mason University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (GMU-AAUP) specific to the BOV election and appointment process. Vice Rector Meese provided a detailed description of how appointments were made based on individual conversations with appointees, soliciting their interest, and where best to utilize their expertise. The draft slate was published on February 16 to allow time for feedback. New and existing members had the same voice in the election and committee appointment process.

Vice Rector Meese then recognized Visitor Peterson to make a motion.

Visitor Peterson **MOVED** to elect Michael Meese as Rector and Sumeet Shrivastava as Vice Rector, and nominate Anne Altman and Paul Misener as the two at-large members of the Executive Committee. The motion was **SECONDED** by Secretary Alacbay.

The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 16

Absent: none

Rector Meese congratulated the new members of the Executive Committee and recognized Secretary Alacbay to make the next motion.

Secretary Alacbay **MOVED** that the Board approve the following action items, en bloc, as provided in the meeting materials:

- Committee Chair and Vice Chair Appointments
- Committee Appointments
- Appointment of Board Liaisons

The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Montano.

Rector Meese directed the board's attention to the committee appointments and board liaisons listed in the meeting materials. As part of these appointments, the following individuals have been identified as chairs and vice-chairs of the standing committees (**ATTACHMENT 1**):

- Academic Affairs Committee
 - Chair: Armand Alacbay
 - Vice Chair: Jeff Rosen
- Athletics Committee
 - Chair: Trevor Montano
 - Vice Chair: Jim Moran
- Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee
 - Chair: Delbert Parks
 - Vice Chair: Sean Spence
- Development Committee
 - Chair: Sumeet Shrivastava
 - Vice Chair: Jennifer Taylor
- Finance and Land Use Committee
 - Chair: Jon Peterson
 - Vice Chair: Bruce Caswell
- Research Committee
 - Chair: Tom Davis
 - Vice Chair: Shawn Purvis

In addition, the following individuals were named as Board Liaisons:

- Athletic Liaisons: Trevor Montano & Jon Peterson
- Legislative Liaisons: Jim Moran & Delbert Parks
- Faculty Senate Liaison: Armand Alacbay
- Law School Liaison: Paul Misener & Jeff Rosen

The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 16

Absent: none

III. Recess of the Full Board Meeting

Rector Meese provided a brief orientation to assist new members, specifically explaining how any member may attend any meeting, but only participate in the committees to which they are appointed. The Board went into recess at 8:25 a.m.

IV. Reconvene

Rector Meese reconvened the meeting at 2:12 p.m. and reminded the board that Visitor Davis was approved for virtual participation at the start of the day.

V. Approval of the Minutes

A. Executive Committee Meeting December 4, 2025 (ACTION ITEM)

Rector Meese called for any corrections to the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for December 4, 2025 that were provided for review in the board meeting materials. Hearing no corrections, the meeting minutes stood **APPROVED AS WRITTEN**.

VI. Rector's Report

A. Code of Conduct for Commonwealth Appointees

Rector Meese began by thanking Ambassador Bob Pence and former Rector Cully Stimson, who resigned on January 17, 2026, for their years of service to the Board. He also thanked President Washington and his wife Nicole for hosting a social for the Board at their home.

Rector Meese introduced Anne Altman ('82), Bruce Caswell, Tom Davis, Paul Misener ('93), Trevor Montano ('00), Jim Moran, Delbert Parks, Shawn Chambliss-Purvis ('99), George Schindler, Sean Spence, and Jennifer Taylor ('98) as the newest members of the Board of Visitors, noting that they are exceptionally talented and avid supporters of the university. He next welcomed Jonathan Dubois as the new undergraduate student representative and reintroduced Nilima Hakim Mow as the graduate student representative, Solon Simmons as the Faculty Senate President and faculty representative, and Rachel Spence as the Staff Senate Chair and staff liaison to the board.

Rector Meese responded to a recent question about his agenda for the university. He stated that the Board should be the strategic plan for the university, with members providing their unique perspectives and experiences to implement the plan and serve the needs of students, faculty, staff, and the citizens of our Commonwealth and not to advance individual agendas. He then reminded the Board of the Code of Conduct for Commonwealth Appointees, and their requirement to have civility as part of robust discussions especially with difficult issues.

The Rector's report concluded with several reminders for board members encouraging attendance:

- Thursday, March 31: Full Board Meeting with a budget presentation and a public comment session specific to tuition and fees.
- Tuesday, April 15: Board Committee Meetings
- Thursday, April 30 – Full Board Meeting with annual recognitions and associated guests.
- Thursday, May 14 – Spring Commencement

VII. President's Report

President Washington was recognized by Rector Meese. He welcomed new and current board members, commenting that few endeavors are greater than preparing the leaders of tomorrow, and reported the following:

- Ilia Malinin is a Mason student and an Olympic gold medalist. Like so many of our contemporary students, he is working while taking classes.
- Summarizing the status of the current year's Presidential Performance Metrics, Mason is enhancing the student experience, positioning new programs to help with research, utilizing the Grand Challenge Initiative and AI, managing costs, including those associated with a degree, and building partnerships.

- Higher education is enduring four simultaneous shocks:
 - Demographic: The shrinking of the traditional college-age population, changing racial and gender demographics, and the loss of international graduate students, continues to have an impact across all universities. George Mason is managing those challenges with the success of Direct Admission, the diversification of international programs, initiating earned admission, and expanding ADVANCE. The university's overall enrollment had a small decline due to the reduction of international graduate students; however, undergraduate enrollment increased slightly from last year.
 - Fiscal: The fiscal health of the university is good overall but faces the same headwinds with tuition pressure, reductions in international graduate student tuition, research cuts, federal and state funding volatility, and rising labor and deferred maintenance costs. The university has been chronically underfunded and the challenges are exacerbated with unfunded mandates and no tuition increase. Mitigating the challenges is increased revenue from the rise in overall credit hours from undergraduate students, earnings from the Patriot Investment Fund, and making permanent one-time resources granted by the state. The House and Senate budget proposals are promising and could provide the most state funding the university has received. The university's newly implemented budget model recategorizes funds at the academic unit level, providing deans the ability to make decisions from a profit and loss standpoint. Additional cost savings are being advanced university wide.
 - Political: There has been a rewriting of the social contract of higher education over many years with autonomy no longer presumed and public subsidy, research funding, and regulatory flexibility being tied to measurable economic return, ideological alignment, and visible accountability. George Mason continues to be one of the most scrutinized institutions in the country, with four open investigations and another federal inquiry that began in February. Changes from state and board governance will allow the university to better defend itself. Our core values, clarity in communication, coalition building with corporations, NGOs and other universities, along with courage will get the university through these challenges.
 - Technological: AI is reshaping higher education faster than governance can adapt. Institutions that handle the challenges deliberately will lead and not be reactive. Mason's Grand Challenge Initiative focuses on areas most important to the country and its survival. The university will also undertake a full enterprise systems audit to establish an Enterprise Architecture Strategy with the goal of scaling artificial intelligence to increase efficiency.
- Patriot Laboratories was incorporated on January 6, 2026 with its purpose to consolidate and expand Mason's classified research by leveraging the university's proximity to the Pentagon and government agencies.
- The hiring process has begun in several key leadership positions, including provost, chief financial officer, chief of staff, senior advisor to the president, and dean of the Scalia Law School.
- University leaders will be aggressively engaged with Board members, members of the General Assembly, and the Commonwealth's executive branch.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Academic Affairs Committee

i. Program Actions

a. New Degree Program

- i. CEHD: BS in Hospitality, Tourism and Events Management
(ACTION ITEM)

b. New Degree Change

- i. Schar: BA in Government and International Politics to BA in Political Science (ACTION ITEM)

- ii. Faculty Actions**
 - a. Conferral of Emeritus/Emerita Status (ACTION ITEM)**

Secretary Alabay reported on the Academic Affairs Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations received by Interim Provost Vinzé and Vice President for Enrollment Management, David Burge.

Secretary Alabay **MOVED** that the Board approve the following action items as they are provided in the meeting materials:

- New Degree Program: CEHD: BS in Hospitality, Tourism and Events Management
- Degree Program Name Change: Schar: BA in Government and International Politics to BA in Political Science
- Conferral of Emeritus/Emerita Status

The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Peterson. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE**.

B. Research Committee

Secretary Alabay, in lieu of Chair Davis or Vice Chair Purvis, reported on the Research Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations received by Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact, Andre Marshall.

C. Finance and Land Use Committee

- i. Financial Matters**
 - a. FY 2027 Room & Board Rates (ACTION ITEM)**

Visitor Peterson reported on the Finance and Land Use Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations received by Interim Chief Financial Officer Dan Stephens and Chief Operating Officer Julie Zobel. Visitor Peterson emphasized the timing of the FY 2027 Tuition and Mandatory Fees vote, as it informs incoming students who will submit their deposits on May 1.

Visitor Peterson **MOVED** that the Board approve the FY 2027 Room & Board Rates as they are provided in the meeting materials.

The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Schindler. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE**.

D. Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee

Visitor Parks reported on the Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations received by Interim Vice President and Chief Audit and Compliance Officer, Derek Butler, the Auditor of Public Accounts, Zach Borgerding, the Interim Vice President and Chief Risk Officer, Aurali Dade, and reports covering Audit, Enterprise Risk Management, Institutional Compliance, and IT Risk and Control Infrastructure. The Committee approved the Office of University Audit and Compliance Charter.

E. Development Committee

Vice Rector Shrivastava reported on the Development Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentations received by the Interim Chair of the GMU Foundation, Jenny Herrera and Vice President of Advancement and Alumni Relations, Trishana Bowden. The Committee also received a presentation on Mason

LIFE by Dr. Alexandra Reed, with Mason LIFE student, Nominzul Otgonbayar, speaking of her experience in the program.

F. Athletics Committee

Visitor Montano reported on the first Athletics Committee meeting, providing a summary of the presentation received by Assistant Vice President and Director of Athletics, Marvin Lewis.

IX. Closed Session

- A.** Discussion or consideration of honorary degrees or special awards. (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.11)
- B.** Consultation with Legal Counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.7)
- C.** Acquisition of Real Property (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.3)
- D.** Consultation with Legal Counsel regarding the aforementioned items (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.8)
- E.** Personnel Matter (Code of VA: §2.2-3711.A.1)

Vice Rector Shrivastava **MOVED** that the board go into Closed Session under the provisions of:

- Section 2.2-3711.A.11 for discussion or consideration of honorary degrees or special awards;
- Section 2.2-3711.A.7 for Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation including briefings on:
 - Morrison v. GMU et al.
 - Ochar v. Employment Enterprises, Inc. & GMU, et al.
 - Akerman v. GMU
 - Sei v. Pulis & Castillo
- Section 2.2-3711.A.3 for the discussion of potential acquisition of certain real property to further the mission of the University where discussion in open session would adversely affect the university's bargaining position and negotiating strategy;
- Section 2.2-3711.A.8 for consultation with legal counsel regarding the aforementioned items, Freedom of Information Act, Conflict of Interest Act, Virginia Public Records Act and federal investigations;
- Section 2.2-3711.A.1 for a Personnel Matter to discuss the performance of specific university personnel.

The motion was **SECONDED** by Secretary Alacbay. **MOTION CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.**

Following closed session, Vice Rector Shrivastava **MOVED** that the board go back into public session and further moved that by roll call vote the board affirm that only public business matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements under the Freedom of Information Act were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting, and that only such business matters that were identified in the motion to go into a closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting. Any member of the board who believes that there was a departure from the requirements as stated, shall so state prior to taking the roll call, indicating the substance of the departure that, in his or her judgment, has taken place. **ALL PRESENT BOARD MEMBERS RESPONDED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 15

Absent: Visitor Rosen

As a result of the closed session, Rector Meese **MOVED** that the Board vote to approve Visitors Davis and Peterson to initiate the review of the presidential contract for future consideration by the Board. The motion was **SECONDED** by Visitor Schindler.

The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 15

Absent: Visitor Rosen

Rector Meese then **MOVED** that the Board approve the following action items, en bloc:

1. Satisfactory Performance Rating based on the outcomes of the 2024-2025 presidential goals;
2. Presidential Performance Bonus based on the achievements from the 2024-2025 presidential goals in the amount of \$125,000 for President Gregory Washington; and (**ATTACHMENT 2**)
3. The 2025-2026 Presidential Goals. (**ATTACHMENT 3**)

The motion was **SECONDED** by Secretary Alacbay. The **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY ROLL CALL VOTE.**

Yes: 15

Absent: Visitor Rosen

Rector Meese thanked the Board for their attention and consideration. The meeting was recessed at 5:45 p.m.

Bridget Higgins
Secretary pro tem

Attachment 1: Board of Visitors Committee Roster (1 page)

Attachment 2: Resolution: Performance Bonus for President Washington (1 page)

Attachment 3: 2025-2026 Presidential Goals (8 Pages)

Attachment 4: Public Comments (10 Pages)