

From: [Stephen Robinson](#)

Sent: Wednesday, June 9, 2021 2:00 PM

To: [President William C. Dudley](#)

Subject: Recent events at Washington and Lee

We have never met, and have not corresponded before, but recent events on campus have concerned me so much that I am compelled to write you. I will not comment on the Board of Trustees' decision last week—I am sure there will be substantial discussion of that in the weeks and months ahead.

By way of background, I am a double degree holder, 72A and 75L. I entered Washington and Lee in September of 1968, having graduated from a public high school in Fairfax County, Virginia. My older brother was in the class of 1971, and the expense of having two sons at Washington and Lee was a challenge for my parents, particularly since my father had just retired from a career in the United States Air Force.

I loved my 7 years in Lexington. The speaking tradition, The Honor Code, the intellectual challenges, relationships I developed, and the small classes prepared me very well for my legal career. I was the President of my social fraternity, inducted into ODK as a junior, and President of the Student Body as a senior. I was a founder and first Chair of the Student Recruitment Committee, which assisted the Administration to recruit minority students

In law school I was a member of the Student Body Executive Committee, President of ODK, and I received the Dean Frank Gilliam Award at graduation. My law class was the first to include women.

I was fortunate to be mentored and taught by some exceptional leaders during those years. At the invitation of President Huntley, while I was President of the Student Body, I had dinner with his family once a week at Lee House. He and I played tennis and squash weekly. Dean Steinheimer taught several of my law courses, and Roger Groot and Andrew McThenia, among others, challenged me to learn to recognize client issues and problems, and how to solve them.

As you will recall, this was also a time of turmoil in our country. The Vietnam War divided our campus and many others. Due to President Huntley's demonstrated and incredible leadership, Washington and Lee actually became stronger during that time. I am sure you have heard of the standing ovation he received on a hot day in May 1970 as he walked from Washington Hall to Lee Chapel to address an angry, emotional student body when the campus had been inflamed by strident demands to shut down the University. President Huntley embraced the challenges of that time and made the tough, but correct decision to continue with classes and exams. He rejected the easy way out—caving in to the screaming minority of students and faculty that wanted Washington and Lee to join the cause du jour and close. His decision took courage, and it demonstrated the leadership that Washington and Lee needed in very trying times. That afternoon is the most memorable event of my many days in Lexington, even after more than 50 years.

I had an ROTC scholarship and after graduation I served 4 years on active duty in The Army Judge Advocate General Corps. During my time on active duty, I also served as a Class Agent.

In 1980, I became an associate at Boothe, Prichard and Dudley, and retired from the successor firm, McGuireWoods, LLP, at the end of 2020, as a senior partner, having served in various management positions for 25 years, including on the Executive Committee and as Vice Chairman of the firm. I was regularly recognized in Chambers Leading Lawyers for American Business, Best Lawyers in America, and similar publications as an employment litigator.

Until recently, I generously contributed to The Annual Fund, hired Washington and Lee graduates as associates, attended reunions and regularly returned to campus. I was the kind of alum that The University wanted. I felt a strong loyalty to Washington and Lee, and that bond was important to me.

Unfortunately, that changed when Washington and Lee began to drown in a sea of political correctness- “correctness” that in many instances seriously harmed Washington and Lee, its reputation and its integrity. I believe your efforts to destroy many of Washington and Lee’s traditions and its culture played a significant role in those events. Certainly, The University needed to change, to increase the diversity of the faculty and student body (which as noted above was something I helped initiate 50 years ago), and to become more accessible to students from all backgrounds, but many of the decisions you have made (or directed others have made at your instruction) have been disastrous.

Many of those decisions have been frequently and properly criticized, and you do not need to hear about them again from me.

However, in the last few weeks, several new examples of your lack of leadership have occurred, and they deserve comment.

Your desire to change the name of Washington and Lee is obvious. What is even more unfortunate is your failure to demonstrate any leadership in insuring that the debate on campus about this issue would be even remotely fair and even handed.

Your failure to make any effort to adhere to The Chicago Principles is inexplicable, as has been your failure to address the vandalism and theft by students and at least one faculty member of “Retain the Name” signs and banners, despite the fact that they were placed on campus only after the necessary permission was obtained. What possible rationale do you have for not addressing this issue, which would have enforced the University’s Mission Statement and the requirements of the Faculty Handbook? A leader like Bob Huntley would have addressed this issue directly and immediately, not ignore it and suggest that it was a matter for the Student Body Executive Committee, which has no jurisdiction over the faculty member who improperly removed the “Retain the Name” flyer.

Have you shared the professor’s conduct with her “home” institution? If not, why not?

Your treatment of Kameron Spivey, a freshman whose only transgression was to confront you with your leadership shortcomings and failure to properly and impartially perform your duties, is even more egregious. In my almost 50 years of practicing employment law, allegations of retaliation were common, and one of the most significant pieces of evidence in evaluating such claims is the time between the protected activity and the harmful act. The law is well settled that a short period of time is indicative of a retaliatory (and therefor improper) intent. It is my

understanding that the amorphous (and later dropped) charges brought against this student by the Student Judicial Council were made less than a week after he raised his concerns with you. In my years of practice, that is almost conclusive evidence of retaliation. I would appreciate your explanation of whatever communication you had with the SJC or any of its members, either directly or through a third party, relating to this bogus charge. If Mr. Spivey's letter is correct, your retaliation against him—a 19 or 20 year old young man—is reprehensible. On this basis alone you should resign.

What exactly does “Conduct Unbecoming of a Washington and Lee student” mean anyway? This sounds like Dean Wermer at Faber College, not my alma mater.

If the article in “The Spectator” is correct (and I have not seen anything that indicates it is not), the actions of Professor Hasbrook (who had a very brief and apparently undistinguished career at McGuireWoods) demonstrate a total lack of academic integrity and impermissible politicization of a final exam. As you know, in many cases, the exam is the entire grade in a course.

This should have been addressed immediately; why have you, as the leader of faculty, not done so? Yet another example of your lack of leadership.

Professor Hasbrook's feelings about Washington and Lee are well known, but he apparently has no problem cashing a check from Washington and Lee every month. I am sure you have heard the same question that I have had from many alums and folks who do not have any relationship with Washington and Lee: “If he dislikes the place so much, why does he stay there? No one is forcing him to teach there.” He can say and write what he wants, but his lack of judgment and academic integrity are serious shortcomings, that you, as the leader of the University and faculty, have failed to address.

The hiring of Dean Kimber has left me speechless. Were you aware of her profane quilting past? What in her qualifications or experience led you to conclude that she would be an asset to Washington and Lee? I certainly appreciate your obsession with changing Washington and Lee and with diversity over quality, but her past is an example of extremely poor judgment and lack of discipline. Instead of leadership, this is just the latest example of your desire to pander to the woke culture, regardless of the deleterious impact on the institution that thousands of students, alums and parents love.

You cannot seriously dispute that your tenure as President has been controversial and has fractured the Washington and Lee community. You have been a polarizing factor ever since you arrived and have alienated large numbers of students, parents and alumni—and yes, even some faculty. The University has declined in too many important respects since you arrived. That will not change as long as you are President.

I assume you are aware that many in the Washington and Lee community have called for your resignation. I believe you should heed those calls and resign, for the best interests of Washington and Lee and its future.

I am happy to discuss my concerns, in either person in Lexington or by telephone, at your convenience.

Steve Robinson