Initial Decision
On Renaming Ryland and Freeman Halls
March 17, 2021
Statement from the Board of Trustees

March 17, 2021

Dear Members of the University Community,

As Trustees, we deeply appreciate our students’ candor in the Statement on Black Student Welfare about their experiences at the University of Richmond. We recognize that we still have important work to do to become the truly inclusive community we aspire to be. We also understand the disappointment and hurt associated with our decision regarding the names of Ryland Hall and Mitchell-Freeman Hall.

We share President Crutcher’s deep commitment to ensuring an honest, transparent, and more inclusive account of the University’s history. This work has revealed the University’s complicity in slavery in the Ryland era and the advocacy of past-Rector Douglas Southall Freeman for segregation, disenfranchisement, racial purity measures, and eugenics — advocacy arising from false, racist, and abhorrent beliefs. Many of the actions and views brought to light by the research are wholly inconsistent with the institution we are today.

In numerous conversations, the Board gave careful consideration to the question raised by the student governments of removing Ryland’s and Freeman’s names from the buildings on our campus. We believe, however, that removing building names is inconsistent with the pursuit of our educational mission, which informs all of our actions.

We also share President Crutcher’s view that the University’s commitment to a more accurate and inclusive history must be manifest in visible ways on our campus. The Board unanimously supports recognizing permanently in Ryland Hall the names of those enslaved by Robert Ryland and those hired out to Richmond College, naming the Humanities Commons Terrace in honor of an enslaved person or persons whose names were recovered through the research into the Ryland era, and adding John Mitchell Jr.’s name to Mitchell-Freeman Hall. Future work will ensure recognition on campus of milestones and pathbreakers not presently part of our institutional narrative.
We are immensely grateful for President Crutcher’s steadfast leadership in advancing the University’s commitment to ensuring a more inclusive University community and for the expectations our students have established for our community. We remain committed to continuing this work.

Board of Trustees, University of Richmond

410 Westhampton Way
University of Richmond, VA 23173
(804) 289-8000
(800) 700-1662
Initial Communication
From President to Campus Community
March 17, 2021
Dear Members of the Campus Community,

Even in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the past several weeks have been especially challenging for our Spider community. As the Black Student Coalition poignantly wrote in their letter to me, Black students on our campus continue to experience deeply the pains of racism, exclusion, and most distressing to me, their perception that we do not see, hear, or value them as full members of our community.

Today, I write to address the core concerns raised in their recent letter, which has understandably gained support and recognition from others on campus and elsewhere, and to unequivocally restate, as I did when I met with Black student leaders yesterday afternoon, our continuing commitment to creating a campus climate and culture where all students can find a sense of belonging and fully participate.

The release of the Rev. Robert Ryland and Douglas Southall Freeman reports, which advanced our understanding of the University’s deep ties to enslavement and segregation, was difficult for many students and members of the University of Richmond community. As a descendant of enslaved persons, I recognize how painful these histories are — and I understand that my and the Board’s decisions regarding campus building names have disappointed and hurt members of our community.

The Board of Trustees has determined it will not remove names from campus buildings. The Board has provided a statement to accompany my letter, and you can read it here. I understand this is not the response that many have called for. The Board, University leadership, and I remain committed to ensuring that the history of our campus is thoroughly understood, enlivened, and expanded to reflect the rich diversity of our campus. Though it will be challenging at times, I urge students and members of the community to continue to participate in this work to inform and advance our community toward a better and more inclusive future.

As our students have reminded us, support for mental health is critical to ensuring they can thrive on this campus. This need is especially acute among Black students and students of color, who may regularly experience exclusion, isolation, and/or a lack of belonging at a predominantly white institution. Counseling and Psychological Services has assured me that our counselors have the capacity to actively and effectively support all our students and have worked with a special sense of urgency to respond to this need over the past 18 months.

The ongoing pandemic has compounded mental health challenges and made academic work more challenging for students. Responsive to the continuing concerns raised by our students, the Faculty Senate intends to reconsider a proposal on the credit/no credit policy during its monthly meeting on
In addition, we remain committed to continuing our work on the following initiatives, which are consistent with the University’s inclusive excellence goals and actions, and our work with student leaders prior to the pandemic:

**Multicultural Center and Student Support:** In February 2020, I pledged to find a permanent location for a multicultural space on campus and to integrate the offices and services of Multicultural Affairs and Common Ground. Building upon the work and creativity of students involved in the Multicultural Student Space Pilot, we will provide additional space in Whitehurst as we work toward establishing an excellent multicultural center. In addition to enhancing the existing multicultural space in Whitehurst, this center will also house an expanded LGBTQ lounge, office space for staff and student workers of the recently re-configured Office of Multicultural Affairs and Common Ground, and student office space for the Race and Racism Project.

This summer, we will also develop vibrant outdoor space adjoining Whitehurst to create more opportunities for gathering, programming, and events. The location of this multi-purpose space among primarily first-year and sophomore residences, and in close proximity to the Well-Being Center, University Recreation, and International Education, places it at the core of student life on campus. We aim to reopen Whitehurst with these changes at the start of fall 2021.

**Understanding our Complex History and Shared Values:** To help students understand our complex institutional history and the values we share today, this fall we plan to launch *Well 100*, a 13-week extended orientation class for all new undergraduates. This reconfiguration of the wellness graduation requirement will include a two-week module built upon the diversity, equity, and inclusion education that begins during Orientation and emphasizes our values and institutional history. Positioned among other sessions designed to connect new students to resources and opportunities at Richmond, this course will ensure all new students learn about these essential elements of our intellectual community. We are also working to ensure that newly hired faculty and staff learn about our institutional history and shared values as part of their New Faculty/Staff Orientation.

Support will continue for faculty and students to engage in research, scholarship, and creative work related to our institutional history via the [Institutional History Learning Cohort](#) and the University of Richmond Race and Racism project.

**New Options for Social Gatherings:** Beginning in fall 2021, in partnership with the Center for Student Involvement, student organizations will be able to reserve an open lodge for social gatherings and programming in the University’s lodge area. Students initiated this project last year, but implementation was stalled by the pandemic’s limitations on social gatherings. We are also encouraging the use of the Greek Theatre and the Web for formal and informal social gatherings.

**University Mentoring:** Dr. Betty Neal Crutcher and I have long believed in the value and importance of mentorship in cultivating a sense of belonging among our students, including students of color. So, I am especially pleased to share the University will begin work in summer 2021 to establish a pilot for a University-wide mentoring program, which will provide training, support, and funding to cultivate a network of mentors for students as they transition into our community.

The actions I have outlined above build upon and extend our existing work to advance our shared goals and will ensure a more permanent foundation for many important projects and initiatives we have piloted with students for future generations of Spiders. And while the work required to provide a residential education during the COVID-19 pandemic, by necessity, slowed us down, we will continue...
to make progress toward our shared goals.

When I challenged our community in my 2015 inaugural address to use our rich diversity to improve the culture of the University so that everyone — regardless of their identities, backgrounds, ideologies, or experiences — could thrive, I knew this transformation could not be achieved in five years, or even ten years. Our efforts to make excellence inclusive at Richmond are, and will be, a continuous work in progress.

In my time here, we have had both incredible successes and setbacks. But I remain confident that if we press forward together, our progress will continue. We will keep pushing, keep trying, and keep advancing the essential work of fostering a truly welcoming, inclusive community for all of us.

Sincerely,

Ronald A. Crutcher
President
Web Submissions
Received by USAC
Concerning Ryland and Freeman Halls
March 17 – March 26, 2021
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements in Support of Renaming Ryland and Freeman (now Mitchell-Freeman) Halls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I could not be more appalled or disappointed by the BOT’s response to the naming of Ryland and Freeman. To say that removing building names is inconsistent with the pursuit of our educational mission, which informs all our actions, is preposterous. Our mission should be the very thing DRIVING the name change powerfully articulated by students and supported by faculty and staff alike. How can students learn when they are so disregarded by 1) the way decisions are made (with utter disregard for their input) and 2) decisions to keep the names of Freeman and Ryland on buildings where they must learn and live. It is such a SIMPLE fix to change the names and such a huge shortsighted mistake to double down on the original decision. To resist changing the names of these two building is to render all diversity talk just that, talk. UR's commitment to diversity rings hollow in light of the actions of the BOT. It’s not too late to do the right thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Please rename Freeman and Ryland after honorable people, not after unrepentant slave owners. As an alum, staff member, and parent of a current student, I have been encouraged to see the progress with regard to diversity as well as the open discussions afforded in various campus forums about racism and other &quot;isms&quot; that plague our community. As a student from 1981-1985, UR was a very white campus; however, as a white person, I was ignorant of what that meant or how it came to be. Through a lot of hard work and tremendous growth, UR is a different and better institution now - filled with hope, vision and honor. The names of unrepentant slave owners on these buildings is not &quot;inconsistent with the pursuit of our educational mission&quot;. In fact, it’s the other way around. Showing our students, staff, and faculty that we value and honor slave owners is detrimental to the good of this institution and all who are affiliated with UR. No one expects that only the names of perfect people will grace our buildings; we have other buildings where the honorees have had challenged backgrounds as well. But we now have a welcome opportunity to remove these clearly inappropriate names, break with that legacy, and bestow the names of honorable people. If this means that donations to the University will be adversely impacted, then do we really want money from people who hold a higher regard for slave owners than they do for our own students, faculty and staff? Please accept this in consideration of renaming Ryland and Freeman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. As a staff and faculty member, I am very grateful that they are opening up conversation with USAC &amp; Faculty Senate to discuss this ongoing challenge. This is an opportunity for the university to grow as a community. It is also a pivotal movement for the University community to be able to demonstrate that it is no longer an organization that is unwilling to recognize or embrace the rich diversity of local, regional, national, and international communities that we serve. The people of our community have worked very hard to continue to grow our diversity and inclusivity even amid the current pandemic. We have plenty of work to do. However, if we are willing to honor some of the basic needs of our Black and Brown students who are being courageous in standing up at this time, then we will demonstrate that we have begun to grow in ways that will signal to our past, present, and future students and alumni that the University of Richmond is a welcoming community, committed to its students and the very best educational experience we can offer them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I understand you are meeting with the Board of Trustees to discuss the renaming of Ryland and Freeman Halls. I would like you to know that, as new faculty here, I was shocked by the board’s decision. Our Black students told them how much those names hurt their sense of belonging. Rejecting their concerns hurt us all. My idea is to remove all names on buildings commemorating people and instead replace them with less fraught names of, say, spider species or local bodies of water or some theme they find inspiring.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A blanket renaming would give the board an opportunity to make history by declaring that most humans are flawed and with legacies that are complex. Renaming buildings based on other criteria—Richmond area flora and fauna, for example—would eliminate the renaming problem altogether. And the board could leave their mark with something meaningful and lasting.

5. My thoughts are: listen to the students. The requests/demands in the “Statement on Black Student Welfare” did not seem to be heard or considered by the BOT (not only on the names of the building but also the request for increased mental health resources and wellness days were seemingly ignored as well, and we’ll see how the Faculty Senate votes on the credit/no credit option today, but I’ll stay focused on the issue at hand). Naming the courtyard after those enslaved by Ryland whose backs this University was built on communicates an afterthought and maintains white supremacy. I support the proposed renaming of Ryland Hall after Maggie Walker (although there could be additional options considered here, too) and removing Freeman’s name from Mitchell-Freeman Hall.

The decision to continue to memorialize these people on our campus is not only detrimental to our Black students, staff, and faculty but to our University as a whole. The consequences of this decision are the disaffiliation of key student leaders across the University. For instance, I just received word that the “Not So Slight” program is postponed, and I’ve heard from student organizations that they are ceasing programming and engagement with the University until demands are met. The students are also asking faculty and staff to consider ways to disaffiliate in solidarity. It is unfortunate that these drastic steps must be taken in attempts for the students’ needs to be heard, however I applaud the students’ courageous strategies.

What is the benefit of keeping these names on the buildings? Who does this decision benefit? Do these benefits outweigh the welfare of some of our most marginalized students? I wonder how those in power have grappled with these questions. These are my initial thoughts in this moment, and I’ll let you know if I have additional insights to share on behalf of myself or my colleagues. Thanks for elevating the voices of staff in this important conversation.

6. I truly believe we need to be thinking of the current student and faculty/staff experience when we determine next steps for names we so “proudly” memorialize on buildings—students, faculty/staff who have to walk this campus daily, pass these halls, and be reminded of the wrong-doings of these individuals and UR’s inability to let go of its tarnished past. We have the chance as a university to take a stand and support our CURRENT students’, faculty and staff’s mental well-being. I do not claim to know all that goes into these decisions but as an outsider looking in, hearing from my students (BIPOC and white students) and the shared experience of my colleagues, I fully support these building names be changed to reflect a more current and honorable history of our campus.

What once was considered honorable and worth celebrating has drastically changed over time and we need to approach and address issues in line with growth and progress and not just history and tradition.

I hear from students, especially marginalized students, how unwelcome they have always felt on this campus, how UR recruits a diverse pool of students, and then does not do its due diligence to support and enhance their belongingness on this campus. Here is an opportunity to do so. Put a plaque up in these buildings to recognize the history and the change of name of the building, but let’s move forward from the past and celebrate and welcome new names and recognition for our campus that all of us can be proud to be a part of.
7. Remove the names of Ryland and Freeman from campus buildings. Regarding the decision to keep the names Ryland and Freeman on campus buildings: I find this deeply sickening. After all the work to reveal the legacies of slavery, segregation, and racism on our campus- this does not promote a path to healing. Naming buildings is intended to celebrate the memory of those who are worthy of the honor. Honoring the names of Freeman and Ryland is counter to the values that our university supposedly upholds. There is an argument that removing the names will erase history. Teaching the histories of segregation and the lost cause belongs in classroom where it can be critiqued and contextualized. It does not belong on our campus buildings where students live and work.

8. I truly feel it is in the best interest of the University of Richmond to honor the Black students and their allies and remove from our campus these names which uphold white supremacy. Other universities have heeded similar calls and renamed buildings. We would be foolish to act as though we are any different; we are all part of our nation's story and it is a story built on racism. UR has done so much work in recent years to confront, challenge, and learn from our history. We now have the option of joining this moment or being left behind. This is a time more crucial than ever to honor our Black students' voices and to respond in a moral and ethical way to their experience -- which they have so generously expressed -- and to the larger cultural climate in which we're all living. We need to do the right thing in order to set the University on the right path, and to be sure we are a safe space for Black students (and Black staff and faculty). Enrollment of Black students is at stake, and with that, UR's already fragile reputation.

9. Dear University of Richmond Board of Trustees -- The decision to keep Ryland and Freeman’s names on buildings has been damaging to relationships on campus. This decision brought to a head the tensions between those who are working to make the campus more inclusive and those who wish to have things remain as they have been. By keeping Ryland and Freeman’s names on the buildings, the message was clearly communicated that UR does not truly want students of color to be comfortable and included as individuals of equal value. The negative impact of this decision cannot be overstated. As Board members, you have the opportunity to demonstrate the values informing decisions made at the highest levels of the University. We appeal to you all to reconsider the removal of these names from buildings at the University of Richmond. Thank you. Concerned Faculty and Staff at the University of Richmond

10. I am directly opposed to the decision not to rename Mitchell-Freeman and Ryland Halls. I feel that through the Teach-In and other forms of activism we have seen from students and their sharing of their narratives, it has become abundantly clear that the decision to keep these names is deeply painful and erases the humanity of our Black students on this campus. Removing the names of white supremacists from our campus is an incredibly easy action to demonstrate to all of our students, especially our students of color, that we will no longer glorify the beliefs and actions of racism by our founders. Having your name on a building is a place of honor. We cannot call ourselves a community that values inclusion while we simultaneously honor white supremacists. We must make a choice and there is only one right answer. As a staff member who works directly with our residential communities, I call on the Board to reconsider their decision and remove the names of Freeman and Ryland from our community permanently.

11. The Board of Trustees’ statement included “We believe, however, that removing building names is inconsistent with the pursuit of our educational mission, which informs all of our actions.” Could
they please elaborate on how it is inconsistent? What part of the educational mission does retaining Ryland's name on the building serve?

"The mission of the University of Richmond is to educate in an academically challenging, intellectually vibrant, and collaborative community dedicated to the holistic development of students and the production of scholarly and creative work." It feels to a great many in the Spider community that the preservation of a sense of reverence inferred by bestowing Ryland's name on a building on our campus is inconsistent with developing a collaborative and holistic environment. We aspire to educating future leaders--there is an entire "leadership" school. We should demonstrate leadership that is able to evolve and correct past wrongs. While Ryland's actions may have laid a foundation that made the UR that we have today possible, that contribution can and has been recognized... Naming something after a person is a way to honor them. Ryland's views should not be venerated at this institution, by imbuing a memorial with his namesake. He is a part of our history--we are not suggesting that he be erased from it, but his contributions belong in an educational context--in a history book, on a plaque, maybe. Not on a building. I think about how the research project uncovered that unmarked graves of enslaved peoples were on our campus and unceremoniously removed and disposed of. It feels like an insult and further disenfranchisement to their memory to add that a monument emblazoned with an oppressor's name stands enshrined on the same campus.

12. I'm writing to express my deep support for and solidarity with the student demands to remove Robert Ryland and Douglas Southall Freeman's names from the buildings named after them. "God has given this country to the white people. They are the law-makers--the masters--the superiors. The people of color are the subjects--the servants--and even when not in bondage, the inferiors." -Robert Ryland "the Anglo Saxons of the world with blood as pure as that which flowered at Agincourt" -Douglas Southall Freeman. The University has an opportunity at this moment and, in my opinion, a moral obligation to send a clear message to its students, alumni, faculty, staff, and other constituents: we are not a place that upholds or honors white supremacy. Removing Douglas Southall Freeman and Robert Ryland's names is a clear and simple measure that would signal that these men (while instrumental in the creation of the University, yes) do not represent the values of our community. They were white supremacists, and the decision to keep their names in a place of public high honor is one that deeply saddens me, and shakes my faith in the University's claim to value inclusivity. To remove Douglas Southall Freeman and Robert Ryland's names, in my opinion, would not be an erasure of history. We can, and should, still reckon with Richmond's history and the moral failings of its founders. Removing their names does not have to mean looking away from our past. I implore you to reconsider the naming of these buildings. "We believe, however, that removing building names is inconsistent with the pursuit of our educational mission, which informs all of our actions." Part of our mission is to uphold our values of inclusivity and equity: the University of Richmond values the dignity, worth, and contributions of all individuals. If this is true, then we should not ask our community members of color to learn, live, and work in buildings that are emblazoned with the names of figures who did not believe in their inherit worth or humanity.

13. I started at the University of Richmond in June of 2020. I have heard from other staff members and University announcements about the University's history of racism, and I have experienced students of color having to handle racists acts on this campus. I applaud the University's dive into the history of Ryland and Freeman. This country is grappling with our racist history and not everyone wants to take a closer look at what has happened, and continues to happen every single day, to people of color in the US. As a University we had an opportunity to say "We understand that Ryland and
Freeman have contributed greatly to the University of Richmond, but they held racist beliefs and actively suppressed Black human beings so we can no longer honor their legacy here.” Instead, by not dropping Ryland or Freeman from the names we have told our students, the University of Richmond community, the Richmond community, and the world “We understand that Ryland and Freeman held racist beliefs and actively suppressed Black human beings, but their contributions outweigh their actions and we will continue to honor what they stood for.” Change is not easy, and it will take generations to grow as a University but we need to make change a priority every day. We had an opportunity to take tiny baby steps forward to addressing the racism on this campus, but instead we made a choice to do what is easy. Please make the choice to do what is right, and remove Ryland and Freeman from the names.

14. For the board, I wish to make clear that any action less than supporting the student demands and removing the names of Freeman and Ryland from honor of hanging over buildings is unacceptable. Putting the burden on students to educate is not a sustainable solution and the rational of keeping their names in such a place of honor because taking them down “does not align with our educational mission” is insufficient. There are other ways to commemorate and acknowledge the impact Ryland and Freeman had on the University without holding them up and honoring them by naming buildings for them. Just as a plaque inside a building can be used to educate or commemorate the enslaved, so to can it be used to acknowledge Freeman and Ryland.

This is a critical moment that will shape the direction of the University of Richmond. I urge you to LISTEN TO YOUR STUDENTS and create the necessary change for us to continue to be a high caliber institution. As an alumna and current staff member, I want to be proud of UR and if students are not listened to and the names remain up, I am afraid I will never again be proud to call myself a Spider.

15. Re-Name Ryland and Freeman Halls. It’s the ONLY option. As an alumni employee of this university, I am incredibly disappointed and disheartened by the lackluster response by my alma mater to the demands of Black Student Coalition on the behalf of the entire student body. In this moment, the only Spider Pride I feel is directed towards the brave, intelligent, eloquent, thoughtful students who are speaking out. Towards the responses and position of this university, I feel only spider shame. As a group of predominantly white members, the Board of Trustees should not be adopting a "we know best, we can't just ignore history" attitude that reeks of white privilege, and instead should listening to the voices of out BIPOC students who are speaking from personal experience. No one wants to ignore history, our students are asking for changes that will correct some of awful injustices of our history. Do more. Do better.

16. Generally- I didn’t think we needed to keep the names of the buildings that are named after confederate heroes.

Our history can be told in a multitude of ways. A plaque inside each building explaining the change, and giving some history of the family/person is sufficient. We can extol the good things and the bad things about people, and also allow ourselves to move forward. Context is important, but not at the expense of minorities. Hurt feelings over history and legacy should not prevent us from moving forward. History is a constantly moving timeline.

People of color deserve to be listened to, honored and included in this place. President Crutcher has done so much for our campus, and our community. I understand his emails, and read them fully. We are allowed to disagree. I am not a historian of this campus by any means. But our duty to our
students to care for them. Our black students showed a lot of difficult self-advocacy and presented thoughtful insight. We should listen. It should not be up to our black students to educate us, because it is our job to support, listen and advocate for them.

“Whenever the need for some pretense of communication arises, those who profit from our oppression call upon us to share our knowledge with them. In other words, it is the responsibility of the oppressed to teach the oppressors their mistakes. I am responsible for educating teachers who dismiss my children’s culture in school. Black and Third World people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity. Women are expected to educate men. Lesbians and gay men are expected to educate the heterosexual world. The oppressors maintain their position and evade responsibility for their own actions. There is a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future.” – Audre Lord

17. Remove the names of Ryland and Freeman from University buildings. The Board of Trustees decision to continue honoring Robert Ryland and Douglas Southall Freeman by keeping their names on buildings is antithetical to the values outlined in the University Strategic Plan. How can we continue to say we are an inclusive institution if we do not meet the needs of all of our students? How will it be advantageous to the University if our Black students disaffiliate? For the sake of our students’ welfare, I ask the Board of Trustees to reconsider their decision to remove the names of Ryland and Freeman from the buildings. It would be better to share their contributions to history without continuing to having their names honored and memorialized on buildings.

18. For as long as I have been at the University of Richmond, I have been proud to consider myself a Spider - until recently, that is. I am appalled at the Board's refusal to remove the names of Ryland and Freeman from the two buildings in question (and to be clear, from all buildings which honor offensive people from UR's history... including Queally Hall and the Queally Center). I am not in a position to speak out publicly about this (for fear of losing my job, as I am not a tenured member of the UR community). However, I will whole-heartedly support the students - and indeed all People of Color on campus - in their endeavor to rename these buildings. I understand a number of them are planning to disaffiliate from UR, and to encourage those in their communities to NOT come to UR because of how poorly they were treated... and I hope they do. The BoT was plain wrong in their decision.

19. To the Board of Trustees of the University of Richmond: As a UR staff member, I write to express my deep concern and frustration with your response to the Black Students Coalition for renaming our buildings. My first issue with your decision is the way you’ve chosen to deny the lived experiences of our students. They are telling us, as a community, what happens when they enter these spaces each and every day. By saying “no” to their very thoughtful call for renaming, you’re directly stating that you do not believe their lived experiences. While it is within your rights to disagree with our students, it is simply unacceptable to refuse to acknowledge, and in turn, actively deny, their lived experiences. This is an important life lesson for all of us as we move about this earth as kind, thoughtful humans. My second issue is your statement which shares that you believe renaming is inconsistent with the pursuit of our educational mission.? What I find to be incongruent with our educational mission is to create a university at which Black people are not welcome. I could quote a myriad of statistics stating how important diversity is to improving our communities, our workplaces, etc- but as it is nearly impossible to miss the thousands of news articles and studies which state the practical benefits of diversity, I will save my breath. I’m sure you’ve seen the data. By refusing to
rename the buildings, you are blatantly vocalizing (dare I say screaming from the rooftops?) what our Black students and employees have felt through numerous micro-aggressions during their time on our campus—“this place is not for you”? Why would a person of color choose to bring their body, their talents, and their tuition to our university, enriching it with all they have to offer, when we’re blatantly advertising that they are unwelcome? Is creating a university where there is no diversity of thought beneficial to our educational mission? That is what we are looking forward to if we continue down this path. If you’re not willing to acknowledge the emotional pleas of our students, can we at least acknowledge the purely quantitative evidence which supports the value in creating a culture that welcomes diversity? More diversity = higher creativity, efficiency, innovation. Less diversity = stifles creativity and innovation. So, shouldn’t our actions work to increase diversity on our campus to make the university, which I know you all care deeply about and passionately for, better? Lastly, if we want to talk about “dialogue across differences“ and offering up educational opportunities? how impactful would it be for a group of young adults, ages 18-22, to see a group of influential adults, when faced with new info and experiences, admit they messed up and change their decision? Is that not what you’re saying this whole decision is meant to do—encourage learning and dialogue? Then why are you not willing to set such a powerful and tangible example for our community? We all have egos—how many times have I been told I’m wrong, or learned that the way I was doing something was having a negative effect on someone else, and doubled down because I felt ashamed or embarrassed? We all do it—why not recognize it and do better? Would this not in turn inspire our students to do the same as they navigate difficult decisions and discussions throughout their lives? That seems much more in line with educating and molding young minds that telling them? We do not believe our decision causes harm, and in fact think it will encourage learning, even when you’ve told us otherwise. Why not rise to the occasion and tell our students, sometimes you will make the wrong call—what matters is how you make it right?

20. Remove the names of Ryland and Freeman halls. I am an alum (RC ’85). I lived in Freeman and took many classes in Ryland. I am staff (1988-present). I am a parent (WC ’21). I cannot see any benefit to the institution’s educational mission by honoring those who owned slaves or who fought to suppress Black people. Perhaps we have a relationship with either family. That may make it difficult, but still the right thing to do is to change the names of the two buildings.

21. Dear trustees, I am a staff member who has spent the last several weeks, since the disaffiliation statement by the Black Student Alliance came out, ashamed to work at the University of Richmond. I urge you to reflect on your role at the university. You are trustees. You hold the institution in trust on behalf of many, many others. This is fundamentally different than the responsibility of running a company, as so many of you do. It calls on you to listen to the many people telling you that there are much more productive ways to generate deep learning about our history than by continuing to make us walk into buildings named for people whose values we wholeheartedly reject today. Many people are rightfully drawing attention to your lack of diversity and inclusion as a body. Much of this criticism has focused on the lack of racial diversity, which is obvious. Just as much of it should focus on the lack of economic and generational diversity among you. More than half of UR undergraduates graduated after the mid-90s. One third graduated after the mid-2000s. As far as I can tell, their voices are absent from the board, which is stacked with people who graduated in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, eras when the university was nearly or actually all-white. You are also far, far wealthier than most people. Your lived experience may be shared by people in your social circles, but it is shared by only a tiny minority of people overall. This is not to say that older or wealthy people have no role to play on the board, merely that they should be some voices among many, not every voice on the board. The tensions of the moment arise in part from this disparity between you and the rest of us, and they reveal the shamefulness of the gap. This is not a criticism of any one of you, but you as a
collective body as you dig in your heels on a decision that hurts the university today and will continue to hurt it in the future. I urge you to listen to the many constituencies of this institution—one you do not own but merely hold in trust on behalf of others. And I urge you to begin the process of making the board itself truly representative of the entire UR community to give it the credibility the institution deserves. Sadly, I write with little actual hope. You are who you are, and I expect to continue to be ashamed next week and next month and next semester. And talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds will take their scholarships but love the university less than they should. And alumni will say, "Oh well, that's just Richmond. What did you expect?" But know that change will come, just as it did despite the earlier efforts of UR boards to resist progress, some of which you have apologized for in recent weeks. The only open question at this point is whether change happens because of you, or despite you.

22. The Black Student Coalition and their supporters’ demands are not excessive or overreaching. Leadership starts at the top and what is trickling down from the Board is that Black students? and students? of color voices do not matter. The faculty took action on the students request to receive a credit/no credit grade. CAPS responded to the students need for better counseling support. The Board fell short and missed an opportunity to live out diversity, equity, and inclusion by including the entire campus community in the decision and renaming process. It is students who learn and live on campus along with the faculty and staff who work here; it would have been the most inclusive action to allow everyone to participate in the process. Furthermore, the decision and rationale landed as disingenuous and tone deaf? unless that was the intent. I truly hope not. The Board’s recent decision to not remove the names of Freeman and Ryland from University buildings in light of their oppressive and racist behaviors indicates the University’s positive embrace of a racist past. This is contradictory to the University’s purported mission of creating a thriving and inclusive community. If there is a portion of the student body declaring they do not feel included and are not thriving, then it would seem that leadership would listen and take steps to improve the environment not double down on the injury. This past few years have forced many universities and colleges to confront their histories and role in the furtherance of white supremacy in today’s society. One would think there is no longer room for that in a modern society, but this is America. I expected University of Richmond to have done better. I hope University of Richmond will do better for the students and the institution.

23. I write in support of the Black Student Coalition, Protect Our Web, and the University of Richmond that I know is possible.

Over the last couple of weeks, I have spent each work day talking with students and colleagues about what it feels like to be a part of our campus community right now. These are the emotions that come up in each of those conversations. This community is one that I have worked to cultivate and support for almost 14 years. It is a community that has welcomed my family, been a source of social and professional support, and made impact on the Richmond region and the world. It is a community where I learn from students every day: about their academic path and interests, their insights about the world, their lived experiences.

I believe that a community is built on trust and transparency. These basic tenets have been broken at the University of Richmond. When the Board of Trustees did not listen to the community but instead made its own decisions about process and outcomes, they ignored the voices of those who live, work, and study on-campus every day. In one conversation this week, I heard these words:
People who don’t know me or my experiences have defined what it feels like to be a part of this campus.

The process and decisions do not align with our stated values of a community because they were made outside of community. In order for us to move forward as a thriving campus community, students, staff, and faculty need to be a part of decisions that shape the way it feels to be on-campus. I stand with my UR community to urge President Crutcher and the Board of Trustees to reconsider their decision around the naming of Ryland and Freeman Hall and to engage the community in a process to rename buildings on our campus. This is the only way forward to building our community together and yet it is just the beginning.

24. I would like to suggest that we look at student/staff/faculty representation or communication with BOT so that they have a better understanding hopefully of some of the experiences and pain some of our community members are experiencing and also so that decisions made and resources granted are made with intentionally with these voices being heard. I also think it would be helpful to have required staff wide training on these issues as well as considering a course on the "real" Richmond like RPS is doing for high school students. Making time and space for this in the work day is important -some folks who work intensively cannot find this space during the school year so summer is a good time for folks like me.

To make our community more inclusive and equitable I think more voices need to be at the table and that there should be a policy so that folks know that a promotion or continuation of employee won't be negatively impacted by the stance they take on issues like the ones we are now facing with disaffiliation, etc. We are employees at will so we can be fired for any cause. That is clearly stated on the HR web page here [https://hr.richmond.edu/policies/index.html](https://hr.richmond.edu/policies/index.html)

25. Like most people, I am very disappointed in the Board’s actions and cannot fathom how they can claim to understand the disappointment and hurt associated with their decision when they so clearly do not. Furthermore, their belief that “removing building names is inconsistent with the pursuit of our educational mission” leaves me completely baffled and is certainly not an adequate explanation. Just what do they think is their educational mission? Our web site states that “The mission of the University of Richmond is to educate in an academically challenging, intellectually vibrant, and collaborative community dedicated to the holistic development of students and the production of scholarly and creative work. A Richmond education prepares students for lives of purpose, thoughtful inquiry, and responsible leadership in a diverse world.” How does making a group of people feel ignored, disrespected and alienated contribute to this mission? We cannot espouse to be “an inclusive community in which all members can engage meaningfully in institutional life and contribute to a community where all thrive” while simultaneously perpetuating a campus environment that has the opposite effect.

26. I was very disheartened by the Board’s response. “As Black students at the University of Richmond, we have felt the cold face of disregard time and time again.” The Board read that and decided to continue making our Black students feel unwelcome, unheard, and unvalued. Stating that “removing building names is inconsistent with the pursuit of our educational mission,” sounds an awful lot like the argument to keep Confederate monuments – preserving history lest we forget. The Board of Trustees’ actions indicate that they value the names of buildings over the welfare and education of Black students. And that they value the names of buildings over the continued affiliation of Black students with the University.
The dual name Mitchell-Freeman reeks of Lee-Jackson-King Day. Growing up in Virginia, it made no sense to me to celebrate Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, at all, but certainly not alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 2000, the General Assembly saw fit to separate the incongruous holidays. 21 years later, University of Richmond’s Board of Trustees sees combining two conflicting figures as a solution.

When the University unveils the $25 million renovation of Ryland Hall, this moment will be at the forefront. Black students asked for the removal of Ryland’s name and the Trustees appear to have taken a look at the renovation plans and said, there’s a little terrace we can give them instead.

This garbage publication (that encourages readers to join the conversation on Rumble, Parlor, and Gab) gleefully reported that, “University trustees refuse to cave.” So there’s that. Not really helpful information for the discussion. It just irritates me.

27. It is time that our university begins addressing its racist history in clear and meaningful ways. One of the SIMPLEST steps in this process is to rename Ryland Hall and Mitchell-Freeman Residence Hall. Naming a building after an individual reflects respect and honor for that person. As a university we should not be honoring a slave-owner and proponent of eugenics. Our students have reached out numerous times with concerns regarding the naming of campus buildings and have not been heard. Our students feel silenced and ignored. Our students do not feel safe or at home on our campus. So much so that are disaffiliating. Refusing to rename Ryland & Mitchell-Freeman Halls essentially says to our students "We do not care about you. We do not respect you." To the Board of Trustees, as a staff member at UR, I make it clear that I fully support all of the demands listed in the Protect Our Web statement, and I call on you to take action. Specifically, I implore you to remove the names of Ryland and Freeman from our campus buildings. It is time to acknowledge our white fragility, address our white supremacy, and make intentional decisions that make the University of Richmond a truly safe and inclusive campus for our black and brown students.

28. I am profoundly disappointed and saddened by the University of Richmond Board of Trustees' decision not to rename Freeman and Ryland halls. Hundreds of faculty, staff, students, and alumni share these feelings. With plenty of other ways to add context to and remember our campus history, I do not understand why the Board felt it necessary to keep the names of an enslaver and a eugenicist on buildings where students of color live and learn. I am part of a number of community conversations that convene people from across the university—students, faculty, and staff—and the same themes continue to emerge from these conversations: 1) that the board has offered a vague explanation of their choices regarding the naming of the buildings, 2) that renaming the buildings is not only what our campus wants, but also aligns with what institutions of higher learning are doing across the country; and 3) that this is a tipping point for the University of Richmond. Students, faculty, and staff see this as a moment in which we have to decide who we really are: a predominantly White institution that celebrates White supremacy and has token representation from minorities who do not feel like they belong, or a truly inclusive community that seeks to attract and retain the most talented students, faculty, and staff, regardless of what they look like.

29. Thanks for reaching out about the group of BoT members coming to campus on Friday. I think the things I would want them to know should I still be on the Exec Team, include: * The renaming decision is widely believed to be a poor decision and one that is inconsistent with our mission and values. * There is broad support by faculty, staff, and non-Black students for the BSC’s demands.
*There is much talk of next steps and long-term strategy to fight this decision in the press, by affecting fund-raising, and more. * I expect a vote of no confidence in the BoT before too long. * Those of us tasked to do DEI work are angry that the BoT can undo so much good work done over many years by this selfish and tone deaf decision. Thanks, USAC for asking for our opinion. Many are concerned for Dr. Crutcher's reputation being tied up in this debacle. He is not blameless but we know where this really came from and we do not want to let them bring down the reputation of this place that we have all been working hard to build by letting this decision make us look out of touch with racial justice.

30. All of us at the University of Richmond want our students to feel the University of Richmond is home. The pride students feel while they are here is a pride we hope they will carry with them and come back to the university to celebrate their time here. Special memories are made in college and we want them to carry that Spider Pride with them for lifetime. Will this generation feel UR was their home—a place where they felt welcome and part of a caring community? Will they graduate thinking the university failed to acknowledge that it could be a leader in embracing change? To move forward, we do need to tell the whole history of UR, but there has to a better compromise to acknowledging our past while looking to our future than the current recommendation which fails to acknowledge the story in a way that does not feel like continued suppression. Change is hard and words have power and right now the decisions as they stand are powerfully telling part of our community that they do not matter.

31. 1. The rationale for the names of buildings on campus is the same as the Richmond monuments. Every day, students of color will walk by buildings marked with the names of men who saw them as impure or as property. This alone is unacceptable even with the context provided. 2. If the names of buildings were a part of bequests to the University and outlined in some time of agreement related to a bequest, we need to be transparent. Are the families of either man still engaged with the University? Have they provided input? 3. Our Board of Trustees is full of mostly homogenous men (a problem in and of itself) with buildings and rooms named after them. How are they an objective body able to determine if the building names should remain for fear this will create a precedent? 4. If the Board truly wants to condemn the racist past of the University and represent what we've become as a University, we can no longer allow alums from the 70s-90s (primarily) to engage in false or racist rhetoric on the alumni page. I know the page isn't University-owned, but there is no repercussion for alums that claim racism or sexism didn't exist or to shame our current student body for their efforts. We ignore it as a University and we need to work harder in that area to disseminate a corrected recount of the University's history.

32. I wondered if it might be useful to mention other racists and episodes from the history of the university in terms of making a statement. I mean going beyond Freeman and Ryland to mention that there are other (now open) secrets of the university. What I am about to say is not new at all, and you may already know it.

There was quite an active branch of "Anglo-Saxon Club of America" on UR campus in the 1920s. It was established by a notorious racist (and a musician) and promoted and supported by a History Dept faculty, Dr. Samuel Chiles Mitchell. I am sure you that "the Anglo-Saxon Club of America" was described at the time as the "gentleman's KKK." There are short references to these things in the "race and racism project," but it is more important and insidious than that, I think. Thus, it is not only Freeman and Ryland (and slave graves on which the university was built), but the university and the students openly promoted racism.
33. The library staff have been quite vocal in their support of both the Black Student Coalition and the Protect Our Web group throughout this. We are currently working internally to see what we can do to help support them, and I know there have been multiple discussions within small groups of staff about the call for disaffiliation and how that can be applied to library staff.

Multiple staff have expressed to me and in general that they feel joining the names of Freeman and Mitchell does not send the message the board and president seem to think it will, and that allowing these names to continue does not help us preserve both sides of this history but instead continues to enforce a historical narrative focused on the perspective of white supremacy. A number of staff have suggested that a small exhibit about Ryland and Freeman with both buildings renamed for enslaved folks or other people of color from the university’s history would be more appropriate, decentering white supremacists while maintaining their history in a public way.

I personally feel that both figures (but Freeman especially) are historically significant figures who are unlikely to be forgotten just because their names are removed from a building; if either of them needs their name on a building to be remembered, than they hardly deserve to be remembered at all.

Overall, I would say the majority of library staff are agreed that this decision is a failure on the part of the board to support students of color and lays bare the hypocrisy behind their calls for “inclusive excellence” at the university.

34. As a Black woman who works at the University and an alumna of the School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I am enraged at the decision to keep the name of Ryland Hall, an enslaver, and to add Mitchell (a prominent Black journalist and activist) to Freeman Hall, a notorious segregationist and eugenicist. As a University, and therefore a business, we would not exist without students. As a nonprofit business with an educational mission, why do we choose to ignore students (i.e., the very reason we exist)? Students have demanded, by way of student governments and now through the advocacy of the UR Black Student Coalition, that the names of these buildings be changed. How does the Board and President Crutcher respond to their calls? With a condescending “pat on the head” type of solution, that’s how.

I wish I could say I was surprised, but I am not. This is but the most recent example (made by those who have expressed power) to uphold white supremacy and invalidate the lived experiences of Black students at UR. As a staff member who directly supports the students whose humanity you deny, I am tired of saying, “I’m sorry. This is not okay. It should not be like this.” These are the same Black students that UR Communications plasters all over banners and admissions brochures; the same Black students who serve on the ICC, President’s Student Cabinet, and student governments; the same Black students who earn prestigious scholarships and fellowships and contribute to our high rankings in The Princeton Review. These students labor (uncompensated) to the benefit of a University that cannot even honor a simple request to rename buildings. This decision is an affront to the very presence of Black students, faculty, and staff.

This is the same decision-making body that has essentially defunded the Race & Racism Project because racism was too harsh of a word (and the history it illuminated was too damning). Let’s be crystal clear, the University was built on the backs of the enslaved, literally sits on an enslaved burial ground, and now refuses to change the names of buildings that honor racists and white supremacists. These idols contribute to a campus environment that is hostile, unwelcoming, and harmful to Black students.
This was a reprehensible and disgusting decision. In the year that is 2021, this decision may have been deemed appropriate or bravado in the 1990’s, but we (society) now know better. Not to mention, this announcement has come on the tails of President Crutcher’s departure (a partial scapegoat, I’m sure), and was shared during Black History Month (the audacity!). The current landscape of higher education is one filled with acknowledgement and reconciliation of its racists and harmful pasts — this has led to naming changes at VCU and JMU, to name a few of the schools doing the right thing. When you reflect on your legacy and service to the University, what will you say about this moment? **That I (enter Board member name), chose to buckle down and made a decision that caused irreversible damage to UR or I listened to Black students and other members of the University community, and decided to do the right thing, for once.**

Moreover, the lack of transparency nor call for community input does not fall short of most members of our community. With an espoused commitment to free expression and civil discourse, why was this insidious decision made with no input from the very community whose wellbeing is under attack?

In closing, Change the Names. Listen to Black Students. Do Better. Be Better.

35. **Feedback for the BOT re: renaming buildings**
   I was appalled when I read the letter from the Board that they were unwilling to reconsider a building name change because it would go against our educational mission. To me, it seemed that the BOT didn't value Black lives. It makes me consider whether I'm valued as an employee.

36. **University of Richmond Board of Trustees,**
   I ask that you to turn your attention again to the demands made by our students in ‘Protect Our Web: A Statement on Black Student Welfare’. The denial to change the names outlined in their statement goes beyond an issue of removing words on a sign or adding a tribute to historical context instead. You have perpetuated the fact that our campus is not a safe place for all of our students and that the institution will continue to allow white supremacist and racist ideals to come ahead of the needs of our students. Your inaction to rename these spaces and to move on meeting the additional demands outlined, show that you will choose racist ideals over the health and safety of our Black students.

   As a staff that cares deeply for the wellbeing of our campus.
   In regards to this statement, I believe our students. You should be ashamed, because it seems clear that you all do not believe our students. I believe our Black students in their Statement on Student Welfare when it’s stated that “Black students continue to struggle to bear the heavy load of pursuing higher education while simultaneously managing social isolation and the lasting bitter taste of prejudiced peers, professors, and policies.” With your inaction and refusal to change the names of Ryland Hall and Mitchell-Freeman Hall, you have handed another bitter taste and I stand beside our students in calling for their demands to be met. I have included them in this correspondence, should you need to read them again.

37. **I support the removal of names of Robert Ryland and Douglas S. Freeman from university buildings.** This step would be in the right direction for creating a more inclusive environment for faculty, staff, and especially our students.
38. I think the BOT needs to hear that its decisions regarding naming and the communications surrounding those decisions demonstrate a lack of respect for University staff. We were not consulted prior to the decision being made, and have been offered only vague information about the rationale behind these decisions since their announcement. I do not see a way to interpret this behavior as anything other than a blatant disregard for those who will be most affected by this decision – students and employees.

I hope the BOT understands that acknowledging that they have made a mistake and changing their decision is not a display of weakness, but rather a display of strength.

39. I would like the names Ryland and Freeman to be removed from buildings on campus. I would suggest a "museum/education/information" room in the renovated building formerly known as Ryland to house information about Ryland and Freeman's contributions to the University that includes their flawed behavior and belief systems. I would also include information on Freeman's daughter who was apparently a Civil Rights activist (Mary Tyler Freeman).

40. Is USAC planning on issuing a statement re: the decision to not rename the two buildings on campus? Is there way for Staff (outside of signing the various letters/petitions saying we support the Black Student groups) we don't support the Board's decision on this? UR Staff should have a way to show they don't support the legacy of White Supremacy in their workplace.
**Statements in Support of the Naming of Ryland and Freeman (now Mitchell-Freeman) Halls**

| 1. | I support Dr. Crutchers decision. Dr. Ryland was like the rest of us, not a perfect person. He was a product of his time. He was a visionary and adamite supporter in education. Yes he owned slaves as was part our imperfect American fabric. I am sure many employees of the University have family members from their very distance past that also owned slaves or did things not acceptable in modern culture. I believe in my heart, if Dr. Ryland were alive today, president of the University of Richmond he would stand shoulder to shoulder in support of BLM. I believe shining a light on his mistakes and including honest dialogue about his entire life is beneficial for the future. We have had board members who have said and done things that they regret. Lets give Dr. Ryland a light and not hide who or what he did. Do not cancel him from the fabric of the University. |
| 2. | I DO NOT SUPPORT the removal of the names from the University buildings. |
| 3. | My opinion for this situation is to leave the names as they are, with Mitchell added to Freeman, and tell the whole story. The whole stories of Ryland, Mitchell, and Freeman. Not just the parts that are liked, or that works to a few people’s benefit. The past cannot be changed, but from it we can learn valuable lessons of how all people should be treated with dignity and respect. It is time to stop naming buildings after people. Whether they are being remembered as a wonderful person who made a great contribution to the University of Richmond or someone who donated funds to a cause they believe in on campus, it puts those being recognized on a pedestal to uphold a perfection that doesn’t exist. People who have long since passed cannot answer for their imperfections and wrong doings. Even some of the best people we know have flaws. |

4. I hope that the naming process will have some secret ballot voting component to it, or another way to make sure the whole campus community has a chance to provide input, even individuals who are uncomfortable voicing their opinions openly. Not all staff (including myself) are comfortable voicing their opinion on this divisive issue for many potential reasons. Their colleagues could have expressed great disdain for those holding the opposite view, their views are the opposite of their school/department’s stated position (either by making a statement or remaining silent), or they are apprehensive about being publicly branded as one of the many hurtful labels that have been thrown around recently in debates about racial justice, in addition to other reasons I have overlooked. I do not believe these sorts of pressures are unique to staff, and are likely at play for both faculty and students. If you rely solely on what people say publicly, you might not get an accurate picture of how the community really views this issue.
Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students,

On behalf of myself, the President’s Cabinet, and our school deans, I want to address this very difficult and painful moment we are all experiencing as a campus community. I accept that we haven’t handled either the process or the decision of the building naming matter as well as we should have. Our intent was to be thoughtful, thorough, and respectful, but the response proves we have further to go to meet our objectives. We understand the hurt, dismay, and anger, and we are resolved to forging a path forward that demonstrates our collective commitment to UR’s shared values of equity, inclusivity, diversity, and ethical engagement.

Those values have not been on display recently, including during the meetings held last week with faculty, staff, and students. The experience of those in attendance, especially one of our staff colleagues, was inconsistent with our stated values and expectations for our community. For that, I am truly sorry.

At this moment, we are in active conversation across the University and with the Board of Trustees, and we all share a desire to find a way forward, specifically with respect to the process of naming of all buildings, and to continue to prioritize the well-being of our students, staff, and faculty. Our discussions are ongoing and complex, and in the next couple of weeks we will be engaging members of the community to generate specific ideas on how best to move forward constructively. We humbly ask for your patience and your participation as we develop our plans and continue to work with the Board.

We also know the weariness our community feels as a result of the pandemic and the exceptional efforts of so many that have allowed us to meet that challenge. My hope — indeed, belief — is that we will again come together, united by the values that we all share as Spiders, and find grace with one another as we pursue our steadfast and unwavering commitment to ensuring a welcoming and inclusive community for all.

Sincerely,

Ronald A. Crutcher
President
Board of Trustees
Statement to Reconsider Building Names
April 5, 2021
Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students:

We wanted to share with you the message we sent earlier today to the Faculty Senate.

The Board of Trustees

*****

The Faculty Senate:

We have received your Motion to Censure and would like to add our perspective to the record.

At the heart of the motion is clear disappointment and frustration over the building naming decision by the board. As this was a unanimous board decision, your frustration rests with all of us, not just the Rector. We accept that this is a divisive and difficult decision, and strong differences of opinion are understood and welcomed.

Our interest all along has been to chart a path that was honest about our history and respectful of the varying views in our community. We respect the deep convictions about these issues among faculty, staff, students, and alumni, and we accept that our process and the proposed decision have not achieved our objectives.

Accordingly, the board has decided to suspend the recent naming decision. The board is reviewing options for a broader, more inclusive process to determine how decisions are made about questions of renaming, and we expect to communicate our plans shortly.

The meetings referenced in the motion were intended to advance the understanding of all parties on these complex issues. The Trustees in attendance at those meetings strongly disagree with the characterization of Rector Paul Queally’s words, tone, and intent. The conversations were candid and passionate but in the spirit of mutual respect. We are saddened, but hear clearly, that some parties interpreted certain comments as disrespectful. As we work through these issues in the future, we are committed to a frank dialogue in a mutually respectful manner.

We have learned from this experience and remain confident that together we can develop a comprehensive approach that will serve the best interests of our community.

The Board of Trustees
USAC Response to Web Submissions
Ryland and Freeman Halls
April 9, 2021
Dear University of Richmond Staff Members,

Over the past several weeks, the University Staff Advisory Council (USAC) has received over fifty (50) web submissions and emails containing feedback related to the decisions surrounding the renaming of Ryland and Freeman Halls. A significant majority of these submissions supported removing the names from both buildings.

On March 26, 2021, USAC’s Executive Committee was invited to a meeting with several members of the University of Richmond Board of Trustees, along with Faculty Senate leadership, to share staff perspectives on the renaming decisions.

To best represent the feedback received from staff about the building names, the Executive Committee members presented the meeting attendees with a packet containing all web submissions received on the topic. During the meeting, Executive Committee members verbally summarized the staff responses and, since the vast majority of the feedback was overwhelmingly in favor of removing the names from the buildings, asked the Board of Trustees to listen to the campus community and reconsider their decision.

The meeting did not go as planned, became contentious, and as stated by President Crutcher in his letter to the campus community on April 2, 2021, “was inconsistent with our stated values and expectations for our community.” We do not condone the tone set by the board in the meeting and look forward to engaging in open, respectful dialogue as conversations continue. We support our former USAC colleague and our campus community members who are in pain due to the events that transpired during and since the meeting. The council has voted to continue working to convey staff feedback and perspective moving forward.

On April 5, 2021, in a letter to the Faculty Senate, the Board of Trustees stated it has, “decided to suspend the renaming decision [and]… is reviewing options for a broader, more inclusive process to determine how decisions are made about questions of renaming.”

While there is much to be done to further the University’s commitment to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community, this announcement is a step in the right direction. USAC looks forward to working collaboratively to ensure staff voices are represented as the renaming process is reviewed and final decisions are made about the names of Ryland and Freeman Halls.

We want to thank our staff colleagues for expressing their deeply held opinions and ideas about the building names. We encourage continued staff input as the University of Richmond community moves forward in pursuit of our shared commitment to fostering a collaborative community dedicated to the holistic development of all members.

Sincerely,

University Staff Advisory Council

*University Staff Advisory Council* (USAC) represents the needs of staff to senior administration and advocates for fair and equitable policies. Our positions are considered staff positions. USAC does not represent the faculty as they have a similar representative body, the Faculty Senate. Furthermore, USAC statements and web submission responses are generated by a council comprised of 22 staff members from across all divisions of the university, and are approved by a simple majority vote.
Board of Trustees
Declaration of Commission
To Work on Building Names
April 12, 2021
Dear Members of the University Community,

As we indicated last week, the Board of Trustees has suspended the recent naming decision and, with President Crutcher, is committed to ensuring a broader, more inclusive process to determine how decisions are made about questions of renaming going forward. We write today with an update.

Many members of the University community have recommended that we undertake a deliberate process to establish specific principles to guide decisions about renaming. This is a practice that numerous other institutions have successfully adopted. We fully agree that this is an essential next step for the University of Richmond.

Accordingly, the Board will create a commission to establish principles on renaming to begin work as soon as possible. The work of this commission will be inclusive and will ensure a fresh start with respect to considering renaming decisions at the University of Richmond. We anticipate that the commission will include both members of the University community and external, independent members with relevant experience and expertise.

In order to ensure thorough and thoughtful preparation for the commission and its work, the Board has asked Trustees Georgia Nugent (President of Illinois Wesleyan University and former President of Kenyon College) and John Roush (President Emeritus of Centre College) to lead planning for the commission, working in consultation with President Crutcher and senior leadership to formulate a recommendation to the Board regarding the commission process and membership. University of Richmond President Emeritus Ed Ayers and Associate Professor of Leadership Studies Julian Hayter have agreed to serve as advisors in the planning work.

This planning stage will consider all community input on this issue that has been, or will be, received by the Board, President Crutcher, and the planning group. In formulating their recommendations to the Board, the planning group will carefully consider the approaches taken by other institutions. The planning work will be conducted expeditiously. If you would like to offer further thoughts for consideration as the details of the commission are finalized, you may do so here.

We look forward to working with the commission and the University community to ensure a clear framework that reflects a broad range of valuable input. The commission will be charged to engage the campus community in substantive and inclusive conversations in the course of its work and to provide a range of opportunities for faculty, staff, students, and alumni to share their views.

We are grateful for the thoughtful suggestions so many members of the community have made, and we
look forward to continued collaboration.

The Board of Trustees

Privacy Policy