



Andrew L. Thompson, '25

## Students, Community Members Mark 9/11 Anniversary

*Despite rain, two events honored and recalled those lost, including W&L alumni*



The W&L community remembered those who perished in the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, in two events over the past weekend. Both events were directed by Kamron Spivey, '24, and Margaret Alexander, '24.

On Saturday September 10th, students gathered on Cannan Green to plant 2977 American flags, each one representing a person killed in the attacks. The flags served as a backdrop for the second event, held the following day, during which student leaders commemorated the fallen through prayer, speeches, and song.

After a quartet composed of W&L students finished playing "Amazing Grace," Spivey invited attendees to pay their respects by gathering around the flags for a moment of reflection.

The events were sponsored by seven organizations: Students for Historical Preservation, College Democrats, College Republicans, The W&L Spectator, W&L Habitat for Humanity, Young America's Foundation, and Hillel.

Rainy conditions on Saturday had caused the flag-planting to be relocated to a tent on Canaan Green.

Students gathered to begin placing flags at around 5:00 p.m. W&L alumnus and army

veteran Dr. Ralph Caldrony, '72, stopped by to explain the importance of honoring the fallen, adding that such moments also remind us of the prospects for future conflict.

After he concluded, students walked to the tent and Spivey measured a plot to guide flag placement. As rain fell, the participants placed a perimeter of flags along the tent edges before filling the interior with a series of rows. Each flag was placed four inches from the last.

Two students who helped—Luke, '25 and Sophie, '23—are from New York City and expressed gratitude that Americans around the country continue commemorating those killed.

"9/11 has affected my family in a pretty tremendous way," said Luke, adding that he had cousins in the New York City Fire Department. "It really makes me happy to see people showing respect all the way down in Virginia."

Sophie told The Spectator that two family friends were killed in the attacks. "It's just very emotional," she said.

Later, Sophie expressed concern that commemoration of 9/11 has become less important, even in New York City.

The following day, students congregated again on Canaan Green for a formal ceremony,

joined this time by members of the wider community.

Kamron Spivey served as master of ceremonies and introduced Mack Rukaniec, '23. Rukaniec led the audience in an interfaith prayer of remembrance. He then asked participants to join him in a moment of silence.

College Democrats president Connor McNamara spoke next. Connor explained how honoring the fallen is important for those who were not alive at the time. Although 9/11 may be "a piece of history to us," he said, "we remember them" at events like these.

He went on to tie the loss experienced on 9/11 to the grief many experienced over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, saying it is "unacceptable to forget" both tragedies.

Connor was followed by Elizabeth Hertzberg, '23, president of the College Republicans. After noting those lost, Hertzberg said that those who were too young to remember the attacks or who were born afterwards still have a duty to remember.

"The class of 2023 is the last year filled with people who were alive during the attacks, even if we don't remember. That means it's all the more up to us—and to you all—to ensure that the involuntary sacrifice those 2977 made that day is not forgotten," she went on to say.

"So, I challenge you, whether you can recall where you were that morning or not, to embody the spirit of 9/12, to look to your left and to look to your right and see first a fellow American before you see partisanship."

Kamron Spivey spoke next, focusing on the alumni W&L lost twenty-one years ago on 9/11.

According to Spivey, Cmd. Robert Schlegel, who graduated in 1985 and was a member of the Chi Psi fraternity, was killed while working  
*(continued Page iv)*

### A letter from the editorial staff (Fall 2022)

*The W&L Spectator*

Page ii

### Students participate in annual first-year orientation

Roger Hart, '26

Page iii

### Student loan forgiveness and the essence of datapoints

Tom Rideout, '63

Page viii

## A Letter from the Editorial Staff

September 16, 2022

The Fall 2022 semester kicked off with numerous changes on campus: masks are optional, worn only by the wary few; parties are back in full swing, professors have ramped up their workload; and university officials keep trying to convince the Washington and Lee Community that everything is fine—despite the obvious pushback from alumni.

One more change has occurred this term which will ensure that everyone in the Washington and Lee Community stays up-to-date on campus happenings: The W&L Spectator has returned, better than ever!



Student activities really suffered during the last couple years. Draconian COVID-19 policies and heavy administrative oversight discouraged and impeded events while an increasingly hostile political environment dissuaded conservative students from commenting on campus and national affairs. The temperature has since simmered and a resilient group of conservative students have come forward to take up the torch left by the recently-graduated Spectator team, whose efforts we greatly appreciate.

We are also very thankful for the faithful donors who left the publication in strong financial standing. A new year gives us new opportunities to extend The Spectator's

reach, and we have made several changes, expressed below:

We reconfigured our leadership to optimize the Spectator's growth: Publisher Patrick France handles the presentation and uploading of new editions not just on the website, but on our numerous social media platforms. We are a student magazine, and students are best accessible on social media. Make sure to follow us there, as we also use our influence to promote other conservative events or ideas circulating campus. Treasurer Henry Haden handles our finances. He not only pays the bills and collects donations, but also oversees the production of new Spectator merchandise. Branding goes a long way to ensure our presence on campus and in the greater Washington and Lee Community. Co-editors Kamron Spivey and Drew Thompson share the responsibility of running and editing the paper. Aside from being frequent contributors in both The Spectator and other publications, they work in the campus Writing Center, providing advice to fellow students. Lending their expertise to The Spectator as co-editors, Kamron and Drew will improve the quality of each article and hone the students' writing skill. All four officers also bring with them a network of connections which will allow The Spectator to flourish in the coming term.

We have decided to publish new editions in print, as well as online, moving forward. While this will increase our expenditures, it will also widen our audience and presence.

New editions will come out every eight weeks. This allows more contributors to write and guarantees scrupulous updates on campus life. We recognize, however, that bi-monthly publications delay coverage of potentially high-profile events and news. We want our readers to stay as up-to-date as possible and will therefore publish the occasional stand-alone article in between editions. Those articles will be found on our website and social media pages.

We are also opening our magazine to the entire Washington and Lee Community, which we believe (even if the W&L administration does not) includes alumni and parents. Each edition will feature a couple opinions written by alumni and/or parents. We feel this not only grants them the voice they deserve as the financial lifeline of the university, but also widens the perspectives available in our magazine.

We also made some technical changes to our website and magazine. We decided to replace the word "opinion" in our motto with the phrase "civil discourse." We are "A magazine of student thought and civil discourse" because that is exactly what Washington and Lee University needs more of; too often were potential civil discussions in the last couple of years destroyed when some individuals refused to acknowledge anything beyond their own opinion. The W&L Spectator remains a magazine of conservative thought, but that is not to say that all conservatives think alike. We want to reflect that in a magazine that equally voices students who might call themselves more or less conservative. Our goal is to spark conversation in the Spectator.

Another reason for removing "opinion" from The Spectator motto is because we do not want to host exclusively opinion-based writing. New editions, like this one, will include both news and opinion. We still welcome student opinion, but we also encourage contributors to pursue other journalistic mediums.

As a reminder, we invite you to check out the archived editions on our website. Please contact us with any questions or ideas you may have, and please share this new edition with others.

Conservatively,

Co-editor: Kamron M. Spivey  
Co-editor: Andrew L. Thompson  
Publisher: Patrick R. France  
Treasurer: W. Henry Haden

Kamron M. Spivey, '24

## University officials have not publicly acknowledged "life-safety" concerns in chapel

*Despite City of Lexington officials' denial of plans to alter chapel, university announces construction will continue as planned this fall.*

On June 4, 2021, the Washington and Lee University Board of Trustees announced in a publicly broadcasted email titled "The Future of Washington and Lee University" that, "Lee Chapel will be renamed 'University Chapel,' in keeping with its original 19th-century name of 'College Chapel.' The board will oversee and approve interior changes to restore its unadorned design and physically separate the

auditorium from the Lee family crypt and Lee memorial sculpture."

The Board of Trustees did not publicly address this plan again until over a year later. In a September 9, 2022, emailed titled "Fall 2022 Update," the Board wrote several paragraphs reaffirming their commitment to that June 4th decision a year before.

"One of our decisions about which we continue to receive questions is University Chapel and the changes we are making there," the Board acknowledged.

After summarizing the first-third of the chapel's over 150-year history in four sentences, the Board stated their intended goal in changing the chapel, "The Board's

*(continued Page iii)*

Roger Hart, '26

## Students participate in annual first-year orientation

*Several students anonymously express concern with the ideals conveyed*

As part of their orientation, W&L first-years participated in a homeroom discussion on diversity, equity, and inclusion and later watched the "Voices of W&L" skit series, which serves as a launching point to discuss various aspects of student life. Both sessions, held on Sunday, September 4th, were some of the first community activities attended by new students.

The events were organized under the umbrella of First Year Experience (FYE), the name encapsulating the variety of activities and sessions freshmen attend during their first week and throughout their first term at W&L. FYE is managed by Jason Rodocker, Associate Dean of Students and Dean for First-Year Experience.

Held amongst hallmates, the DEI meetings were titled "Diversity, Inclusion, and Community" and featured conversations on identity and personal experiences.

When asked about the DEI session, Chris Simon, '26 from Wilmington, Delaware said, "I wouldn't say that anything was useless, but there was a lot of stuff that was boring to sit through, just because it seemed obvious. However, I do understand why we sat through the things we had to sit through."

Julian Defour, '26 commented that the session was "nice to learn about for the people that need those resources, and it was interesting just to know what they are because I probably wouldn't have known about a lot of them if it hadn't been for that session."

The resources Defour alluded to include the Angel Fund, which offers financial assistance to students who lose parental support, and the LGBTQ Resource Center, among others.

Of the upper-classmen running the session, Defour said, "All of the facilitators were super nice, but felt rushed with the amount of groups going around campus that day."

However, one student — who chose to remain anonymous — felt the university might have overdone things. "There was a point where they were forcing different viewpoints on us not because they believed in them but because they wanted to force certain ideals onto our class," the student said.

After dinner, first-years reconvened in Keller Theater to watch the "Voices of W&L" performance.

Written and performed by upper-class students, "Voices" examines high-risk behaviors, sexual assault, and DEI issues.



Afterwards, students spent an hour discussing the performance and how to ensure a safe university.

In previous years, "Voices of W&L" featured a skit about a dangerously drunk student. His friends and onlookers debate what course of action to take, and the skit ends several ways to demonstrate the consequences of the choices made.

That skit was omitted this year.

Past performances, just as this year, took on classism by depicting a student from a low socio-economic background feeling excluded by the dress, manners, and activities of wealthy peers.

One first-year felt the session helped her hall bond. "I really like spending time with people in my hall and having discussions with them

and my RA after certain events like the "Voices of W&L" performance because I feel like my group is a lot closer," said Amelia Macholz of Richmond, Virginia.

"I thought that the discussion after the performance was a good way of everyone voicing their opinion on the topics, especially considering how diverse of a group we are," she explained.

Another student, who chose to remain anonymous, questioned the value of subjecting first-years to tacky, stereotypical skits.

"My hall enjoyed the performances but didn't take the topics seriously and were making jokes about it, which offended some of my hallmates. So, for the future I would say to make the skits less cheesy and just know that you can't force someone to accept someone else or their values."

## "life-safety" concerns in chapel (cont.)



plan restores the building to its original name and recreates two separate, publicly accessible spaces: one for university events and the other for the study of history."

Critics of this plan have noted the long-term existence of partition gates and doors which already, literally, separate the two spaces: sanctuary and statue chamber. These iron gates and fire-resistant doors are routinely closed during every event held in the chapel and have been for several years.

The Board continued, "A more visible, physical separation between the chapel and the annex [which includes a stage leading to both the statue chamber and basement stairs] helps signify this distinction."

Before touching more upon this "visible, physical separation" — a wall — one must understand the other changes that have occurred in the chapel since June 4, 2021.

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In keeping with the promise to "restore the chapel to its unadorned design," over twenty plaques and paintings were removed from the auditorium within less than a year. More controversial artifacts—like those related to the Confederacy—were removed first.

There exists no such list of everything taken down, despite vocal student and community pushback.

*(continued Page iv)*



**“life-safety” concerns  
(continued)**

Not until mid-summer did Washington and Lee University update their website with the first reference to where some of the stated plaques will be moved (since taken down, the plaques have been “in temporary storage” on campus).

A July 21, 2022, Columns post titled “Update on University Chapel Renovations” offered plans for four plaques related to American veterans—including the Liberty Hall Volunteers Memorial.

“The Liberty Hall Volunteers plaque will be contextualized as part of the new exhibit currently being planned for the gallery on the upper level of the annex, adjacent to the Lee statue,” The Columns said.

No further timeline has since been provided for this plan.

The Columns continued, “Three plaques, two honoring World War I veterans and one honoring a Vietnam War veteran, will be moved to the Memorial Gate at the Jefferson Street entrance to campus to be displayed with other plaques honoring U.S. veterans.”

When I further inquired this summer into the timeline for these three veteran plaques, Director of Institutional History and Museums, Lynn Rainville, said, “The University is planning an event to mark the move of the veteran plaques to the Memorial Gate during the next academic year.”

No further timeline has since been provided for this plan.

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As per the other sixteen plaques, the Columns post states “Most of the other plaques will be moved to the galleries in the building or to the new institutional history museum, where they can be displayed with more historical context.”

No further timeline has since been provided for this plan, but the Board’s “Fall 2022 Update” reiterates, “We also approved a plan to construct a new museum on campus where the university’s history may be told in its fullness.”

Washington and Lee University officials frequently reference this “new museum of institutional history” when addressing the removal of artifacts from the chapel.

The alleged museum has become the proposed home of innumerable campus artifacts and “all of W&L’s important stories,” according to a FAQ responding to a 2018 report delivered by the Commission on Institutional History and Community.

This new museum of institutional history has made no notable progress since 2018.

Beginning in early 2022, the Washington and Lee University master plan (which included, of ten new proposals, the museum of institutional history on Lee Avenue) received backlash from Lexington residents attending a Planning Commission that would determine the master plan’s approval or rejection.

The community members that vocally disapproved of the proposed museum and parking deck on Lee Avenue did so for several reasons: some worried that the site plan, which was no more than a rectangular plot on a map, was too vague.

Others felt that the museum’s location on Lee Avenue would congest an already-crowded downtown or that Washington and Lee University has encroached too much on downtown businesses.

Whatever the reason for opposition, the rezoning proposal for a Lee Avenue museum was repeatedly rejected in the Lexington Planning Commission meetings.

As the minutes from those meetings show, Washington and Lee University eventually amended their master plan to exclude the Lee Avenue museum from their zoning request in June.

That means there is no foreseeable construction of a new institutional history museum at Washington and Lee University.

The Spectator emailed Rainville twelve questions for this article on August 23, 2022. She refused to answer any questions herself and instead directed us to Drewry Sackett, Executive Director of Communications and Public Affairs.

In response to the question, “Has the Washington and Lee University Administration or Museums Department made any public statement acknowledging the rejection of this [institutional museum] plan, or its removal from the W&L Master Plan?” Sackett responded, “The city approved the Campus Master Plan on June 16. Plans for the museum of institutional history will be developed separately.”

Dodging the question, Sackett continued, “While Lee Avenue remains our preferred location for the museum, we are also considering alternative locations and will continue to work with city officials to explore options that are agreeable to both parties.”

The Board, in their “Fall 2022 Update,” offered a simpler response, “The administration continues to work with its architects and the City of Lexington to implement the Board’s plans.”

When The Spectator asked what will happen to the plaques that were to be housed in the institutional history museum, Sackett replied, “We remain committed to building a museum of institutional history, which will

**9/11 Anniv. (cont.)**

in the Pentagon. He had served for fourteen years in the navy. The Schlegel Scholarship for International Studies, awarded to W&L students pursuing global affairs, was established in his memory.

James “Jamie” Gadiel, who graduated in 2000 and was a member of Sigma Nu, died while at his office in the North Tower of the World Trade Center. He worked for Cantor Fitzgerald, a brokerage firm.

At the end of the speech, Spivey asked that attendees continue their remembrance.

“Please do what you can to remember those people not as numbers from a historical event, but as individuals with unique stories and lives. Look at these flags behind me and try to see each person in those flags.”

house a number of our historic plaques and artifacts.”

She provided no timeline for this plan.

No discussions of the museum have occurred in Planning Commission meetings since the Lee Avenue proposal was removed from the university master plan.

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Meanwhile, the university has just one more change to accomplish in the chapel

Aside from an inconsistency with the chapel’s original look—a chapel which was originally (and for nearly one-hundred years) stone gray, not white—the Board’s plan to “restore the chapel to its unadorned design” faces another major obstacle: the feasibility of a proposed wall that both appears as it did in 1868 while also meeting modern building code requirements.

On July 11, 2022, I submitted a Freedom of Information Act request on all documents pertaining to the chapel between Washington and Lee University and the City of Lexington from June 2021 onward.

The resulting documents, hundreds of pages worth, included various email communications between university and city officials, notably the Building Inspector, Fire Marshall, and Chief of Police between November 2, 2021, and June 24, 2022.

The final outcome after months of deliberation with these city officials (primarily the Building Inspector, Steve Paulk) was this: university’s attempts to build a wall separating the auditorium from the antechamber were rejected for safety concerns.

In a May 23, 2022, email, the Lexington Fire Marshall Trent Roberts indicated that the Building Inspector could not approve the proposed wall because it would allow the “installation of a barrier, which reduces the

(continued Page v)

## “life-safety” concerns in chapel (continued)

life-safety configuration of the building. The wall will eliminate access to the rear stair, which although is not a posted exit leading from the sanctuary, upon the occurrence of an emergency, that stair is currently accessible as a building discharge.”

The inspector additionally “disapproves of the occupancy number for the Chapel Sanctuary” if a wall were built, noting that there would only be “one exit and discharge.”

Since Lee Chapel underwent substantial renovation in the 1960s, construction had to abide by the now-outdated Virginia Public Building Safety Regulations (VPBSR). According to Article 4-Section 402-2(b), “Every room, gallery, balcony, tier or other space having a capacity of more than 200 persons shall have access to at least two Exitways[.]”

The present (2018) Virginia Construction Code “designates a limit of 49 occupants with one exit,” according to the Inspector Paulk.

The Fire Marshall and Building Inspector note that, in the event of a fire or other “life-safety” risk, the current maximum capacity of the chapel (525 people) would greatly exceed the number of people who could safely exit the single egress at the front of the chapel.

Chief of Police Angela Greene expressed concern about potential mass shooter events.

In a summer City Council meeting, Chief Greene “spoke of doing a training on mass shooting with all Public Schools and Universities.”

City officials thought it would be fitting to include her in chapel discussions, though, as the inspector noted, “She is not familiar with the building’s egress or occupancy gatherings.”

Following their unrecorded meeting on June 16, 2022, Chief Greene wrote, “I hope they understand the seriousness of the safety issue.”

The Chief of Police’s input recognizes the danger of limiting the emergency exits in a large auditorium to one discharge.

The architectural firm working for the university to build the wall, Quinn Evans, wrote several lengthy emails trying to justify their proposals.

On May 25, 2022, Principal Charles Piper insisted that city officials “have never considered the anteroom stair as a second means of egress from the auditorium.” He continued, “The stair is not signed for egress,” and “the extremely narrow and steep configuration of the stairway make it impractical and inadvisable to consider it a compliant second means of egress for the auditorium.”



Piper claimed, “The auditorium has operated as an assembly space with one means of egress (the front door) for 150 years.”

This claim conflicts with chapel archival files.

“The 1929 file shows a means of egress stairway located in the area behind the pulpit stage area.” Inspector Paulk continues, “The Building Official’s review of the 1929 plan interprets the stairway as a dedicated means of egress from the main chapel and lower floor.”

Similarly, “The Building Official’s review of the 1962 plan [which had to ascribe to the aforementioned VPBSR codebook] interprets the new stairway and (sic) as a dedicated means of egress from the main chapel and lower floor.”

After relaying this information on June 2, 2022, Inspector Paulk reiterated, “Restricting the means of egress as proposed is not approved.”

Piper’s claim that the assembly space has just one means of egress also contradicts the information given at the start of every university event held in the chapel, such as this one.

“Speakers have been instructed to call attention to the emergency exit in the antechamber behind the podium at the beginning of an event,” Sackett stated.

The architectural firm proposed to “provide a three-foot by seven-foot access door from the Chapel to the Anteroom, accessible to emergency personnel via a control button from an adjacent Knox Box that releases a magnetic lock.”

Fire Marshall Roberts advised against a Knox switch on May 19, 2022, which would limit door access to only those with an appropriate key.

Piper continued, “[T]he historic character of the space would argue against a visible exit sign” above a door on the south wall.

However, as Piper previously noted, “No original doors were provided at the south end of the building where the addition was constructed.”

The original south wall of the building had glass windows in lieu of a white, magnetic, and discreet emergency door.

The mock presented by Quinn Evans, intends to “restore” the chapel to how it looked from 1868 to 1883.

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The most recent meeting between City of Lexington officials and the university for the chapel project occurred on June 24th.

Despite the three-time rejection of plans for the wall, Washington and Lee University officials still endorse the project.

Paulk noted “we do not know when they will have a formal building permit submitted” again.

The July 21st Columns post opens, “The renovation of W&L’s University Chapel...is scheduled to begin in late fall 2022.”

“W&L continues to work with our contractor and City of Lexington officials on planning and permitting related to the construction,” the post continues.

The Spectator asked Rainville, “Has the Washington and Lee University Administration or Museums Department made any public statement acknowledging the rejection of their Chapel building proposal(s)?”

Sackett answered, “On July 21, 2022, we provided an update on the timing of Chapel renovations, communicating that we are continuing to work with city officials on the renovation plan.”

She linked the same Columns post cited above, which does not acknowledge any rejection of the renovation plans.

The Spectator then referenced the “life-safety hazards” and the city officials, who “have cited the increased danger of fires and mass shootings in the Chapel auditorium if the proposed building plans were approved.”

“Has the W&L Administration or Museum Department considered these concerns and discussed alternative avenues to house students in a safer, more spacious structure on campus?” The Spectator asked.

Sackett responded, “The chapel has been used as an active university space in compliance with applicable regulations for over 150 years. The renovations are intended

(continued Page vi)

Sponsored by Students for Historical Preservation (SHP)

## Historical Highlight:

*A century of convocation*



President Henry Louis Smith (1912-1929) opened the 174th year of Washington and Lee University in Lee Chapel on Thursday, September 14, 1922. He delivered a speech titled "Putting First Things First," which was summarized by the Ring-tum Phi the following week. That summary is included below:

"In his speech President Smith emphasized first the fact that the present age is an age of mind and that mind rules the world today. The day of brute muscle has gone by and the mind does the work of the world for which it reaps the rewards of the world. This is the age of the expert, the specialist, and the engineer.

"Second, that a young man's dominant business and his deepest obligation during his college course is to bring his individual mind abreast of the times. The man who invests his precious time and energies in becoming an expert dancer and professional lady-killer is stuffing a fool's gold. Campus activities are subsidiary and his dominant business is to bring his untrained, ignorant mind abreast of this amazing age.

"The third lesson is that of all possible college occupations and activities[,] concentrated and persistent study is at once the most difficult and by far the wisest. Athletes on the gridiron know that a few weeks of steady training will make their bodies smooth running machines ready for the supreme effort, and the same rule holds true on the intellectual gridiron.

"The fourth momentous fact is incontestably true and proven by a score of dependent and impartial investigations. It is this: The higher a man's scholastic average during his college course, the better his chance for reaching a distinguished place among his fellow men.

"In conclusion Dr. Smith proposed these four great truths to stiffen the backbone and nerve the purpose of each student to become a veritable star of the intellectual gridiron, ready to achieve leadership and win success in this age of mind."

One hundred years later, Provost Lena Hill 2021- 0 opened the 274th year of Washington and Lee University in Hokekamp Gymnasium on Wednesday, September 7, 2022. Sections of her speech, titled "The Paths We Choose," are included below:

"As we prepare for a new term of classes at the ninth oldest university in the United States, I want to contemplate two Virginians who very intentionally chose paths in relation to higher education that dramatically influence our nation and the world. In focusing on these leaders, I am interested in their dedication to education in the US South.

"The South has a particular history in this county, and I would argue that we at W&L are uniquely positioned to lead the nation and the world in studying it...

"With this in mind let us explore what we might call a tale of two Washingtons from Virginia by considering two journeys, one taken by George Washington and the other traveled by Booker T. Washington and to study these to bring into focus decisions about the paths we will all choose at W&L this year...

"So why, you might be thinking, should we at W&L at this moment ponder the journeys of these two Virginia Washingtons and examine their impact on education in this county. Neither were perfect men; their lives don't live up to the mythic ideals others have woven around them, but their aspiration were admirable and went far beyond themselves.

"The path George Washington followed on his Southern tour led him to believe in the importance of expanding higher education in the US and make his 1796 gift of stock to Liberty College unsurprising. Washington believed deeply in the work colleges contributed to the nation and W&L is a direct beneficiary.

"Booker T. Washington never forgot his difficult journey to Hampton and he worked

tirelessly to ensure Tuskegee and other schools would answer the call to educate diverse students. He understood that our nation's greatness depended on expanded access and a will to support excellence no matter the race, gender, or identity of the student. His early efforts are connected directly to our current mission at W&L.

"These Washingtons represent our inheritance."

[Special Collections and Archives, Washington and Lee University Record Group #47, University Publications, *Ring-tum Phi*, Volume 26, Number 1, "University opens for 174th time," September 20, 1922, <http://hdl.handle.net/11021/28779>.]

[For the full 2022 Convocation, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqccsmvnxig>]

## "life-safety" concerns (continued)

to allow us to continue to use the building for university gatherings."

"The safety and well-being of our students is of utmost importance and factors into all of our decisions," she concluded.

The Board of Trustees noted their "desire for clarity about all we stand for" in the "Fall 2022 Update."

A 2018 FAQ still on the university website states, "The Board and President Dudley have repeatedly affirmed that the university will not change its name. Washington Hall, Lee Chapel, and Lee House will retain their names and remain among the most prominent spaces on campus."

"Robert E. Lee remains prominently memorialized in the names of the University, Lee Chapel, and Lee House," the FAQ declares.

Alumnus Tom Rideout, '63, president of The Generals Redoubt, feels that "the university has rapidly abandoned their values and commitments."

"University officials," he continued, "care more about 'Cancel Culture' and making Lee Chapel a 'safe-space' than they do about actually making Lee Chapel safe for the students in it."

[See this digital article on *The Spectator* website for hyperlinks to related content]



Patrick France, '25

## Thoughts of a young conservative

*Our nation faces a decline in religion, both in the spiritual and civil sense*

In 1937, 73% of Americans were members of a church or house of worship. This percentage did not fall below 70% for nearly 60 years. When measured again in 2020, 47% of adults associated themselves with a church, mosque or other place of worship, according to a Gallup poll.

Around the turn of the twenty-first century church membership drastically declined and has continued to diminish each year. A growing group exhibits no preference for religious affiliation whatsoever.

As a Christian raised in the Bible Belt, I have become accustomed to religion and basic moral principles playing an integral role in my social sphere. While I am clearly not perfect by any standard, I firmly believe that a societal decrease in affiliation with guiding, religious, moral principles are contributing to the development of a moral vacuum. The values of contemporary culture — both political and social — pour into the empty space created and corrupt it.

I first noticed the alarming reality of this thought while studying the writings of German philosopher Martin Buber (1878-1965). In his book, "I and Thou," Buber separates interactions in the world into three categories: man to man, man to nature, and man to the divine. He notes that all self-centered interactions are either I-It or I-Thou. The former demonstrates a shallow and transactional view of another human being or the viewer's surroundings whereas the latter allows the viewer to experience the other

person or entity in a form that is complex and truly complete.

Progressivism and secularism beckon us to partake in I-It relationships, both politically as well as socially. The emphasis on identity being propagated by contemporary culture has, in my eyes, allowed our fellow citizens to lose sight of who they really are by encouraging an over-analysis

of our imperfect human qualities and experiences. This laser focus on individualism and diversity has created a political and social sphere where many Americans feel more guilty and estranged than ever, further deepening hurt and division instead of working to rectify our differences in a constructive, civil manner.

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While the United States is becoming less and less interested in divine religion, I suggest that it is also becoming less interested in the patriotic sort of religion that has defined us as a nation since our beginning.

Though each American has unique political views, I say that we must at minimum partake in a sort of patriotic civil religion. A strong civil religion would push each and every American to uphold our republic, not to tear it down. We ought to trust the integrity of our elections and acknowledge that domestic political extremism of all stripes severely threatens the sacred laws of our great nation.

Americans are tough. We have most assuredly been in more trying times than these and are a nation that invariably answers



the call above and beyond what is needed. I am confident that we will endeavor to persevere.

I hope as the midterm elections approach that we will view our candidates in the light of patriotism and allegiance to the true ideals of this nation instead of allegiance to one subset of the Republican Party.

While shifts in political parties are inevitable as time passes, we must continue to think of how we can build trust in our nation's institutions and not allow politicians on either side of the aisle to destroy that trust. Although President Trump achieved notable accomplishments during his term, I believe it is time for us to move on from the individual and reorient ourselves to determine the truly salient tenets of the conservative movement.

To reinforce the importance of protecting our liberty from the threats of the current era, I leave you with a quote from President Reagan:

"Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free."

Joe Bell, '25

## An over-infatuated wedge issue improperly treated: the US-Mexico border "crisis"

*How politicians ignore the real problems to perpetually mine votes*

I grew up in Harlingen, Texas, one of many border towns in the region of Texas known as the Rio Grande Valley. The bellowing gunshots and rampant criminals crawling the streets are a consistent reminder that a national crisis sits in your backyard—just kidding.

Inflammatory media has blown the border issue out of proportion with preposterous reports of people fearing for their lives. Contrary to what the media feeds you, on a hot Sunday afternoon I can drive to the border, walk across to Mexico, and enjoy some authentic Mexican food in the town of Nuevo Progreso before walking back unharmed.

The border is a multifaceted issue that has been thoroughly simplified. Beyond illegal immigration, the problems include a lack of infrastructure such as a robust processing system and detention facilities. Politicians and the media focus on illegal

immigration, but sending more border patrol agents or building a wall will never stop the influx of illegal immigrants into the U.S.

With large immigration spikes such as that of 2019, the infrastructure currently used to detain illegal immigrants is inept. This led to the sprouting of "tent cities" that are used as temporary holding and processing facilities for immigrants.

One such encampment was placed right next to my grandparents' house. I was surprised by the massive scale of these facilities and the countless buses that flowed in and out of the facility.

The logistics of this 45-acre site are complex. Even so, the camp cannot maintain the number of immigrants entering the U.S. daily.

For example, the facility struggles to cope with the amount of laundry. Since some people stay for a couple nights, laundry must be done. Dirty clothes are sent to external laundromats. Personal acquaintances who owned a contracted laundromat shared how the amount of laundry received was overwhelming.

The laundromat dilemma epitomizes the wider issues that lead to either expansion of an existing facility or the creation of a new makeshift facility. Erecting another tent is viable for the present problems, but the comfort that lies with this addition is merely a stopgap solution.

The facilities are built and serviced by outside contractors. The father of my high school friend was employed to construct the depot. He spoke of the difficulty and extensive work required to sufficiently complete the job. (continued Page ix)



Henry Haden, '25

## A Message for midterms

*Universities' political positions harms student growth and threatens democracy*

November 8th is fast approaching. For Republicans, this moment represents a chance to take back control of Congress and thwart the Biden agenda of the past two years. If they succeed, it could set the course for a successful 2024. Alternatively, the Democrats may continue controlling Congress with a majority in both chambers.

It is difficult to accurately predict what political events will occur over the next two months. However, what Americans can expect is for the academic administrative complex to continue kneeling to a frustrated left in the event of a major Republican victory.

Back in November 2016 when Donald Trump won the election, there was great civil unrest throughout major metropolitan areas. Many participants in demonstrations both peaceful and violent were college students. At the University of Pittsburgh, hundreds of students took to the streets shouting, "Not my president!" At the University of Texas Austin, hundreds of students walked out of class. At UCLA, a crowd of more than 1,500 students tore up a Trump piñata and tried to flip over a car. The question begs to be asked: What led these students to protest the election of Donald Trump? There are myriad explanations.

One less common but important factor was the partisan acts of college administrators in forming novel election response protocols, making safe spaces, and publishing political statements on behalf of entire universities. This led students to believe that something was wrong.

Surely, this was the exception. Not so. In response to the 2016 election, universities immediately implemented programs indicating a state of crisis.

According to The Wall Street Journal, at the University of Michigan, the Play-Doh was quickly deployed. On November 9th, a "steady flow" of undergraduate students could

be seen playing with the modeling compound popular with toddlers in the office of multi-ethnic affairs. Coloring books were also available.

Alan Peel, an astronomy lecturer at the University of Maryland did his part by canceling his class for the day. Peel understood the "monumental effort necessary to accept what must be a personally threatening election result."

Cornell University, an Ivy League institution with a mission "to discover, preserve and disseminate knowledge" and "to educate the next generation of global citizens," hosted a "cry-in" with school staff providing "tissues and hot chocolate." Banding together, some students from the University of California, Davis shouted intellectual phrases such as "WE are America!" and "F— Donald Trump!" according to a Washington Post article from the time.

More recently, The Chronicle of Higher Education published a timely article titled "Trump's 2016 Victory Sparked Unrest on College Campuses. What Might 2020 Bring?" just before the election that year. According to editor Sarah Brown, the 2016 election caught college campuses "off-guard," but in 2020 college administrators wanted "to be prepared."

At the not-too-distant George Washington University, "campus officials emailed students... telling them to stock up on food and other essentials, in case of prolonged election-related unrest in Washington, D.C." The email said: "We suggest preparing for the Election Day period as you would for a hurricane or a snowstorm that would prevent you from going outside for several days to grab food or order takeout."

At American University, classes on Election Day were canceled, and the university administrators also took the initiative by creating an "Election Stress Survival Kit."

Universities began formulating these plans as far back as the summer of 2020.

While many such initiatives are humorous, they reflect a problem that is more of a "threat to democracy" than any recent presidential outcome. All these plans were contingent on the possibility of one election result, a Republican victory. By adopting these protocols, college administrators were saying that there would be something wrong if a Republican won an election.

What might politically unsavvy students conclude if university officials—paid employees of a school—are telling them that classes are canceled the day after an election or that, in light of the election, students will need to undergo "counseling" and "therapy" or even lock their doors? They would feel compelled to do something, but what exactly?

At a minimum, they would presumably become very worried. According to Susan Svruga of The Washington Post, 2016 was most college students' "first presidential election. And for many, the response to the results was visceral."

After the 2016 election, Susan Svruga summarized UCLA student government president Danny Siegel's remarks. She writes that Mr. Siegel observed that UCLA was a school where there were some Trump supporters but "no organized group and a very strong anti-Trump leaning for the campus as a whole. The results were such a shock, he said, people didn't know how to react. He said some students were shaken in their faith in democracy, when their first presidential election produced a result so contrary to their fundamental beliefs, and some were personally devastated, worried about the election's implications for themselves and their families."

In a campus bubble where blatant favoritism is shown toward one side, chaos will ensue whenever Republicans win an election.

*(continued Page ix)*

Tom Rideout, '63 (alumnus)

## Student loan forgiveness & the essence of datapoints

*Soaring federal debt from recent policies bodes ill for future*

The recent announcement of an executive order forgiving \$300-500 billion in student loan debt will have many impacts. Among these are financial relief for millions of students/family guarantors, disappointing and unexpected costs for millions of others with no connection to or benefit from the loans, and heated arguments about its constitutionality.

Most important will be its potential role in the likely unraveling of a once well-ordered

society. Will the United States fail to control its long-held belief in paying its way or, if necessary, responsibly finance critical needs?

I studied history at Washington and Lee and supplemented it with a heavy load of economics and political science. I learned from books and was taught by others about the foundational economic and political basics of American Exceptionalism.

Upon graduation, I was lured into the world

of banking, joining the management training program at the Wachovia Bank in North Carolina at the recommendation of Professor John Gunn. At arguably known as the best bank in the South, I was recruited to become the bank's national municipal bond salesman.

By the age of 30, I was responsible for overseeing a total bank balance sheet in today's terms of approximately \$30 billion, this including a securities portfolio of about

*(continued Page x)*



## US-Mexico border “crisis” (continued)

Creating the infrastructure needed to support immigration waves would fix the problem, yet this solution has been overlooked by policymakers.

Instead, the border problem has become a tool for politicians to gain a competitive advantage over their adversaries. Issues such as illegal immigration and eradicating the cartel's influence are placed on politicians chopping blocks, yet these coined “crises” rest uncut at the end of the day, exacerbating the frustration of informed voters.

Presidents Obama and Trump both controlled the U.S. House and Senate during their tenures, and they both preached that they would fix the “border crisis.” Obama opted to send more border patrol agents while Trump insisted on building a wall. These attempts were both noticeably meager and ineffective.

The main driving force of their actions seemed to not be their conviction that the US-Mexico border needs fixing. Rather, their ploy roused more voters to support their campaign, gaining political collateral that helped them win the presidency. Why did they choose not to hammer down on the so-called crisis and put the nail in the coffin once and for all?

The border controversy is convenient for politicians. Candidates gain support because the border dispute elicits strong emotions amongst voters. Thus, when election cycles come around, a strong statement about fixing the border can rally voters to your side's ticket.

Now, statements such as those by President Bush in May of 2006 advocating “fair and effective immigration laws” are all but empty words.

The fix for the current infrastructure issue would be a government capital injection, ideally targeted toward a processing system that is thorough but expedites the time it takes for immigrants to be processed. Also, expanding brick and mortar detention centers would eradicate the need for temporary housing.

This fix requires tax-payer dollars. The tax-payer dollars already in use have gone to waste by putting up temporary sites. If the government instead concentrated our money on a rebuild, once completed, the tax money that currently flows towards a government convenience would be refocused to pressing new issues.

But political ploys always rest on real voter grievances. Thus, voter misconceptions about immigrants lie at the base of the problem. Defeating politicians’ “promoted ignorance” requires voters to face a paradigm shift in perception to understand the intricacies of immigration.

In his introduction to “Americas: an Anthology,” author Mike Rosenberg states, “Our hemisphere would be well served by a greater degree of knowledge and understanding among its people.” Understanding the role that migrants and illegal immigrants play in our society is important when deciding how to deal with the border issue.

Migrant workers enter the U.S. yearly to work on farms and make a living before returning home. They are important contributors to our agricultural system yet go largely unrecognized by the general public. Many people in the Rio Grande Valley work on green cards and commute across the border daily.

The quality of work produced by immigrants both legal and illegal is high. Comparatively, the government-funded welfare program has led to an increasingly dependent society that enters the welfare trap.

When you drive around the Rio Grande Valley during the day you will see four to five cars parked outside residences and you wonder why - the welfare system has promoted a lazy lifestyle that many low-income families find more enticing than work. This leads to the welfare trap that many households face difficulties escaping.

Illegal immigrants to the U.S. frequently work jobs that no one else will choose. Unfortunately, these immigrants are stereotyped as killer criminals and refused the opportunity to make a name for themselves. They have no right to be in the U.S., but their labor is necessary and beneficial to the national economy. The low-paying jobs they work are influential in the perspective people should take toward them compared with welfare recipients.

Legal immigrants are often quite disgruntled over the ease at which illegal immigrants can enter and work in the U.S. That shift in attitude, added to politicians’ use of illegal immigration as a political football, has caused many former Democratic strongholds along the border to turn toward a more conservative outlook.

The government's inability to handle the border situation brings into question its ability to effectively handle “crisis” level problems. If politicians promote the citizens general welfare, they should put aside their interest in power for the needs of the citizens. The roles of power are seemingly tilting to the citizens serving the politicians.

This non-democratic way of thinking is realized due to wedge issues such as the border. Instead, our representatives need to be focused on building necessary infrastructure to support the waves of immigrants that flood our borders yearly and on promoting a well educated and informed country.

## Midterms (cont.)

Without this administrative bias, the campus political environment would presumably feel more balanced.

Where were the Play-doh sessions after the 2020 election? Of course, at that time “the spread” had to be stopped, but maybe the real reason was that university administrators saw a Democratic victory as the desirable outcome. Hence, no Play-Doh or therapy dogs.

~~~~~  
University administrators are doing their students a major disservice by allowing political views to influence school policy. In effect, they are failing their proclaimed mission statements.

To make this situation more relevant for Washington and Lee students, take the school mission statement: “Washington and Lee University provides a liberal arts education that develops students' capacity to think freely, critically, and humanely and to conduct themselves with honor, integrity, and civility. Graduates will be prepared for lifelong learning, personal achievement, responsible leadership, service to others, and engaged citizenship in a global and diverse society.”

During the Trump administration, W&L administrators released politically charged “messages to the community” critiquing Republican policies. It is, of course, acceptable for administrators to personally hold these views, but allowing one-directional messaging in the absence of critiquing fallible Democratic policies is not beneficial.

In this case, W&L is failing its mission statement by telling students what to think. With top-down partisan messaging, students are hindered from “thinking freely” if the very academic institution claiming to foster such diverse thinking becomes political.

In effect, the best mode of action for college administrators is for them to stay out of the political arena officially. It is hardly constructive for a group of like-minded people to craft partisan school policy behind closed doors. Transparency should be embraced in the decision-making process, and statements and school policies should either be balanced or stay as apolitical as possible. Openly political discussions are best with dialogue in a classroom.

If classes will be canceled after a Republican victory, they should be canceled after a Democratic victory. Preferably, classes shouldn't be canceled at all.

The 2022 midterms will serve as a litmus test to determine if universities like Washington and Lee are capable of changing course and equipping students with the tools to be productive and engaged citizens. Regardless of election outcomes, students should be able to forge ahead, and universities should avoid the true “threat to democracy” that is politics communicated in absolute, partisan terms



Evan Cecchini, '25

## Where Barstool Conservatism belongs in the Republican Party

*A new center-right group portends challenge for the GOP*

The Republican Party has a problem: its voters are getting older. While there is research that supports the belief that Americans become more conservative as they age, the data is not conclusive and there is contradictory evidence.

Regardless, it is not a trend that should be relied on for future success. With more Millennials registering as Democrats than past generations and Generation Z looking to follow suit, how should the GOP shift the tides?

Barstool Conservatism is a term that has increased in frequency within right-wing political spheres. Coined by Matthew Walther of *The Week*, the label references the increasing popularity and influence of Barstool Sports and its CEO, Dave Portnoy.

Barstool and Portnoy are known for pioneering the niche of politically incorrect, Greek life-loving content in media. Those who subscribe to this brand of conservatism within the GOP typically care less about some of the more complex social issues that have dominated political debate for decades (abortion, gay marriage) and more about the culture war, combatting tampons in the men's bathroom, and censorship on social media.

It is common knowledge that the Democratic Party continues to move farther and farther left, and it was only a matter of time until a substantial number of young, moderate-leaning Americans felt that Democrats had become too radical and decided to pick a side.

The rise of Barstool Conservatism could also be considered a side effect of the domination of Trumpism within the Republican Party. While older generations sympathized and latched onto the populist and nationalist components of the Trump Administration,

younger generations saw a man who was not afraid to publicly humiliate his opponents on Twitter, act as a symbol of patriotism, and lead the fight against the perceived "woke mob."

In an essay for the *New York Times*, National Review fellow Nate Hochman describes the potential of this new brand of conservatism: "The upshot is that this new politics has the capacity to dramatically expand the Republican tent. It appeals to a wide range of Americans, many of whom had been put off by the old conservatism's explicitly religious sheen and don't quite see themselves as Republicans yet."

Hochman notes that the past reputation of the GOP was as a rather close-minded party. Employing purity tests that determine whether a fellow party member is a true conservative or a RINO has not benefited membership numbers.

However, as opposed to the purity tests that the Christian right would often employ, embracing Barstool Conservatism does the exact opposite. Expanding the GOP's tent to cover a less serious, more moderate group may be the key to winning consistently at the state and federal levels for years to come.

How should this development of a new potential voting bloc be treated by the other factions within the Republican Party? Hochman writes that, despite the promises of green pastures which a new Republican majority may provide, a coalition formed between Barstool Conservatives and the religious right is bound by a rather uneasy partnership.

Although both may share the same goal of defeating the left on the frontiers of the culture war, neither have much in common otherwise, both expressing radically different visions for the future of the nation. While Christian conservatives may use a majority government to prioritize abortion bans and

legislation that bans pornography, the average Barstool Conservative has little thought or opinion of either of those issues.

Therefore, assuming the growth of Barstool Conservatism continues, three predictions can be made. In the short-term, Republicans gain control of legislatures at both the state and federal levels, killing the radical social justice initiatives Democrats have pushed for decades. In the medium-term, moderate conservatives and the religious right face difficulty passing legislation and creating a cohesive party identity, coupled with frequent infighting. Last, in the long-term, the GOP becomes more moderate, continuing the decline of the religious right.

Hochman describes that this phenomenon is already occurring, stating, "Fewer than half of Republicans said 'being Christian' was an important part of being American in 2020, according to Pew — a 15 percentage point drop from 2016." The focus placed on Barstool Conservatism would accelerate this trend, sacrificing religious values in the name of emphasizing a larger tent.

Now, with a picture of the potential future established, is embracing Barstool Conservatism worth it for the Republican Party? It is undeniable that the political climate of the United States continues to become more polarized, and an increasing number of young voters are looking to break that trend. In addition, independent, swing voters will always be the determinant of the most significant elections.

For the GOP, the decision depends on how willing its current members will be to compromise some of their values to defeat the left. To win more elections and quell the Democratic Party's agenda, more votes are necessary, and more votes require a more moderate platform that Barstool Conservatives and others like-minded can support. Victory requires sacrifice, yet it remains uncertain how Republicans will act.

### Student loan (continued)

\$7.5 billion that I personally managed. I also served as the bank's chief economic spokesman.

Managing institutional money requires mastery of capital markets: its language, its protocols, and its practices. Making decisions about asset allocation, durations, yield curve shapes and pricing requires access to a broad array of information.

Highly important is understanding federal government spending and financing plans and Federal Reserve System operations. Having a keen sense of likely monetary policy prescriptions and Fed operations in the government bond market are critical.

(continued Page xii)



Iain MacLeod, '22 (alumnus)

## A Tocquevillian Defense of Christian Morality

While Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* is widely recognized as one of the master works on American government, his vigorous defense of religion's role both in the American Founding and society at large garners less attention. To understand his position, it is essential to sketch Tocqueville's conception of the meaning of freedom. By freedom, I do not mean the right to act according to one's whims. That is thoroughly impracticable as a universal definition for freedom since variability of perceptions is intrinsic to humanity, and the only way to avoid anarchy is to organize society around some set of ideological conventions. Therefore, I will postulate, as did Tocqueville, that true freedom requires a moderative element as well as a self-interested one.

Tocqueville's understanding of freedom was founded in his view of human nature, which was based on two principles. First, self-interest is intrinsic to humanity. Second, people's greatest conscious interest will be "in the development of his most human powers, those which depend upon a taste for what is elevated, great, or sublime." This conscious pursuit of self-betterment extended to existential questions such as how to come to terms with the brevity of life and hopes and fears about the afterlife.

The second principle moderates the first, and at the societal level this existential bent of humanity is expressed through the "mores," or shared fundamental beliefs, of societies. Tocqueville considered religion the natural means by which humans organize their mores and come to terms with existential questions. Therefore, for individuals, true freedom comes from balancing self-interest with self-government based on religion, which is projected to the societal level as a balance between the democratic will and social mores. This layered equilibrium between self-interest and the need for moral and social structure allows freedom to remain in balance between anarchy and tyranny.

Tocqueville believed that human society is inevitably progressing towards equality but expected that the desirability of the form that equality would take depended upon how individuals and societies would use their freedom. He argued that when societies maintain mores, then societal equality would lead to political freedom. However, if individuals abdicate their responsibility to self-government in favor of pure self-interest, the result will be tyranny. In the absence of self-government, political authoritarianism in some form would be the only way to maintain social order. Tocqueville feared this could occur even in America if citizens, heeding the siren song of self-aggrandizement, ceded their liberty to government for security and self-interest without the responsibility of self-government.

Tocqueville considered the acceptance of a certain set of beliefs not only beneficial but essential for society, arguing that without a strong moral fiber to compliment political freedom, a democratic society would be unable to function. In the case of America, the

prosperity and freedom that had attended Christianity's moral rule convinced Tocqueville that it could serve as the anchor for society. As he put it: "Nothing shows better how useful and natural to man it [Christianity] is in our day, since the country in which it exercises the greatest empire is at the same time the most enlightened and most free."



*The Foundations of American Democracy in Puritan New England*

One of Tocqueville's recurring themes in *Democracy in America* is the division of society into public and private spheres. Under this framework, the public sphere encapsulates societal issues such as the nature and structure of government, while individual concerns like morality, religion, and self-government are part of the private sphere. Despite their coexistence, the two spheres can never completely fuse in a democracy without sacrificing individual liberty to democratic majorities. Much of *Democracy in America* is spent considering whether American government succeeds in balancing these two spheres to effectively preserve liberty.

Tocqueville considered the Puritan pilgrims of 17th century New England to be the exemplars of a balanced fusion of the public and private spheres. His positive impression of the Puritans will seem bewildering to some modern audiences since the Puritans are routinely typecast as stolid fundamentalists who squelched individual freedom. This assessment, however, only holds true when freedom is defined according to pure self-interest. In the context of freedom through self-government as espoused by Tocqueville, it is easy to understand why he viewed the Puritans as the "Point of Departure" for American democracy. The Puritans believed that individual liberty and self-government should be the starting point for building a society, not positive law. This idea parallels Tocqueville's belief that mores, within the private sphere, supersede laws, which inhabit the public sphere, as true pivot on which societies turn.

The government that the Puritans established was almost purely democratic and egalitarian, with everyone's votes counting the same and no distinctions in societal position being made. Tocqueville was astounded that there was almost no innate influence based on status. The Puritans were light years ahead of contemporary societies in this conception of political equality, and Tocqueville knew better than to write this

off as an aberrant blip in 17th century history. He recognized that this idea of freedom as the original basis of politics is the defining element of American democracy, and that the Puritan settlers were this concept's original source.

Tocqueville provided several contributing explanations for this novel political structure, but considered the Puritans' faith its primary basis. They believed, as the Bible says, that all men are equal before God, given the free will to choose to either follow him or not. Believing that mankind's status was equality before God, they utilized the same principle in their politics by viewing all individuals as equal before the law.

Like Tocqueville, the Puritans had two definitions of liberty.

One denied all authority and acted only in self-interest, but there was another, "a civil, a moral, a federal liberty," which was consistent with authority and governed itself in the interests of its own preservation and the preservation of the liberty of others. The Puritans believed the Bible when it said that true freedom was freedom from sin and submission to God's authority, not freedom from any authority whatsoever. This conception of freedom was consistent with, though not identical to, Tocqueville's conception of true freedom with its self-interested and moderative elements.

The clearest evidence of the Puritans' intent to unite their freedom with their faith is the Mayflower Compact, which the original settlers of the Plymouth colony drafted before debarking from the Mayflower. Their intention cannot be misplaced, as they undertook "...For the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith... a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts...". The main purpose for the compact was to "...Covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politick, for our better ordering and preservation... and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony...".

One critical aspect of the document is the use of the word "covenant" to describe the settlers' commitment to each other. In the Bible a covenant was an unbreakable oath, and the Puritans' use of this word underscored their commitment to creating an effective government. Additionally, the authority to which they appealed was God himself (as demonstrated by references to "the glory of God" and to acting "in the presence of God")...

*[This article is a streamlined version of a final paper for a Washington & Lee Class, Politics, 396, focused on Tocqueville's Democracy in America. For the full publication, visit the W&L Spectator website]*



### Student loan (cont.)

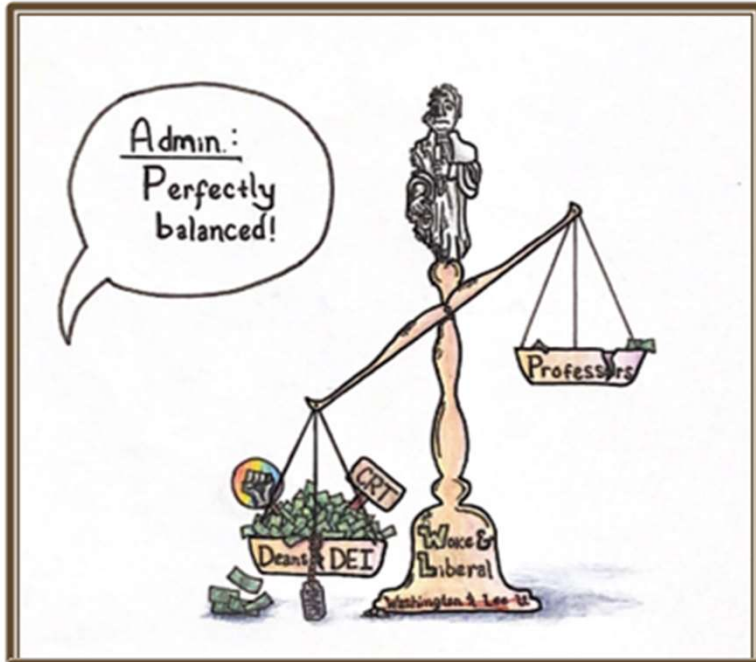
All these activities affect the value of the dollar, whose worth in turn impacts imports, exports and the nation's gross domestic product.

I paid close attention to a key ratio: government debt to gross domestic product (debt/GDP). Statistics have been kept since 1929. The conventional wisdom was a ratio above about 75% would lead to slower economic growth. During World War II, the ratio grew from 44% in 1941 to 114% at the war's end in 1945. When I was actively managing money during a period of stable economic growth, the ratio stayed in the mid-35% range.

In the late 1980's through the middle of the first decade of the 2000's it grew from the 50% to 60+% range, before bumping up sharply to around 100% in ensuing years beginning with the 2007 banking crisis. As of the end of 2021, with Covid Relief spending soaring, it stood at about 125%, a staggering number retrospectively.

With \$30+ trillion in national debt and more coming, in part from student loan forgiveness, you should conclude there is much work to be done. Perhaps the most important longer-term threat is whether there is a deterioration of the dollar as the world's reserve currency and the potential risk of default on government debt, which would be cataclysmic. So, as you read the financial press, occasionally checking the debt/GDP ratio is something you may wish to do.

Brief bio: Tom Rideout is a 1963 alumnus of Washington and Lee and now retired from a life spent in banking, bank technology consulting, and higher education. He was elected president of the American Bankers Association during the Savings and Loan crisis of the late 1980's. He closed out his formal working career as Executive Director for Corporate and Alumni Affairs at the Mason School of Business at William in Mary in 2011. He also served as a volunteer Executive Partner at the Mason School for 15 years, where he specialized in leadership and career coaching. As an alumnus he was tapped into the Alpha Circle of ODK in 1990, and he was named an Honorary Alumnus of The College William & Mary in 2015. He currently serves as the volunteer president of The Generals Redoubt and volunteer Co-Chair of the Alumni Free Speech Alliance.



"Weighing our Priorities" by anonymous

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