



Kamron M. Spivey, '24

Parents and Teachers Clash as School Board Addresses “Sexually Explicit” Material

Lexington School Board discusses new guidelines at monthly meeting following the controversial removal of two books from Lylburn Downing Middle School last month



(Over 100 Rockbridge County residents crowd a middle school cafeteria during a controversial meeting of the Lexington City School Board, Oct. 3, 2023. Photo-The Spectator)

Finding seats where they could, parents, teachers, camera crews, and reporters gathered Tuesday evening at Lylburn Downing Middle School (LDMS), eager to learn whether the Lexington City School Board condoned what many are labeling a children’s “book ban.”

Calls to attend the October 3, 2023 board meeting grew after educators removed

two books — *Kiss Number 8* by Colleen Venable and *It’s Perfectly Normal* by Robie Harris — from that same school last month.

The first book, a graphic novel which a local fourth-grade teacher had urged the board to remove due to content she deemed sexually explicit and anti-Christian, prompted waves of both praise and condemnation from the Rockbridge County community.

Despite the impassioned views of Tuesday’s attendees, School Board Chair Tim Diette clarified during the board meeting that “no action will be taking place today” regarding the policies discussed. “That means if you did not get the chance to comment today,” Diette continued, “you can provide a comment over the next month...about what actions you’re hoping we take in November.”

While further action is pending board approval, Superintendent Rebecca Walters presented an extensive draft of proposed reforms to the Lexington City Schools (LCS) book-selection and -maintenance process. Following the board’s discussion of this proposal, they opened to public comment, which 33 attendees had signed up for.

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Scan this to read *The Spectator’s* original coverage of the controversy!

Alex Kagan, '27

Hundreds Attend Campus Matt Walsh Event

Speech wraps up saga including protests, death threats, and a cancellation.

Matt Walsh, the prominent and controversial conservative commentator, author, and filmmaker, spoke on campus to a full crowd in Lee Chapel, National Historic Landmark, on Monday, September 18.

Walsh’s appearance marks the end of a seven-month saga, which began in March with his original invitation by *The Spectator* and W&L College Republicans. What followed was an outcry from many in the W&L community, headlined by a petition which accumulated over 600 signatures — including those of over 80 faculty members — calling on Washington and Lee University President William Dudley to “prevent Matt Walsh from speaking[,]” of which President Dudley refused.

The speech, which was initially reserved for March 30, was rescheduled by Walsh the day before his anticipated appearance, due to what Walsh said were “threats against my family and other serious security concerns.”



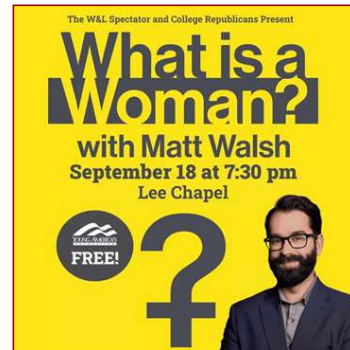
(Line forms outside chapel for talk. Photo-YAF)

Because of how close his cancellation was to the date of his speech, groups on campus opposed to Walsh’s view had already prepared various methods of protest, including placing hundreds of LGBTQ pride flags around the Colonnade. This time, a row of transgender pride flags lined the walkway in front of Lee Chapel.

Walsh’s speech, entitled *What is a Woman?*,

is a reference to Walsh’s 2022 film of the same name, in which he asks several people, from politicians to transgender healthcare experts to members of the Maasai Tribe in Kenya, the film’s eponymous question: what is a woman?

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Freshmen Participate in O-Week

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Students and Lexington Community Gather to Remember September 11th Attacks

Third annual memorial service places thousands of flags and spotlights passed alumni

The Washington and Lee community recently came together to honor and remember the lives that were lost in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The event was sponsored by Students for Historical Preservation (SHP), College Democrats, and College Republicans.

Students gathered on Cannan Green on Sunday, September 10 around 5:30 PM to plant the 2,977 individual American flags – each flag representing a life lost in the attacks. Dozens of faculty members and students stopped throughout the placing to lend a helping hand.



(Students place flags for 9/11 memorial. Photos – Jess Kishbaugh, '24)

“I was glad to be a part of it and reflect on what this tragedy means to us as Americans and members of this W&L community.” expressed Ben Hulsey, '26, a Virginia native.

Students also placed a row of 79 international flags – each flag dedicated to a country that lost at least one citizen to that day. The list of nations was posted next to the display on a yard sign produced by SHP.

Two additional signs memorialized alumni Robert A. Schlegel, '85, and James “Jamie” Gadiel, '00, who perished in the attacks on the Pentagon and North Tower, respectively.

The next day, over 60 students, professors, and community members gathered at the memorial service. Student religious life leader Lily Bishop, '26, offered a prayer and moment of silence after a brief introduction by SHP President Kamron Spivey, '24.

Following the moment of silence, Connor McNamara, '24, president of College Democrats, delivered a speech highlighting why it is essential to remember 9/11.

“Here, in this memorial and countless others like it being held across the nation,” said McNamara, “we remember the victims of September 11. We refuse to forget them.”

Next to McNamara stood College Republicans president Henry Haden, '25.

“We can take freedom for granted each

day,” Haden said. “Living a life with freedom is easy. Attaining a life of freedom is not.” Haden continued by stating, “Let us not forget the great sacrifices made to defend our freedom and the eternal, worthy struggle to promote the merits of a free society elsewhere.”

Next to speak was Margaret Alexander, '24, vice president of SHP.

“Today marks the twenty-second anniversary of that unforgettable day: September 11, 2001. The tragedy itself is not something to celebrate, but nevertheless it is good that we are here together right now to remember it.”

“Never Forget is the phrase we hear this time of year,” Alexander continued, “but what we should be asking is how should we remember 9/11?”

“[M]y hope today is that each of the three memorials can be a source of reflection for how one in the W&L community might remember 9/11,” Alexander said, describing the American flags, international flags, and alumni signage placed the day before.

Alexander concluded her remarks by reading brief biographies of Schlegel and Gadiel.

University musicians closed the ceremony by performing *Abendstern* by Lauren Bernofsky.

“The purpose is to come together,” stated University President William Dudley following the ceremony, “for those of you who were too young to try and appreciate the significance of what happened, even though you weren't there yourselves to observe it.”

W&L was not the only Lexington college that gathered on September 11 to remember



(Photos - Kamron Spivey, '24)



the lives lost. The Virginia Military Institute Corps of Cadets completed a stair climb in the barracks to remember the sacrifices the first responders made that day in the World Trade Center.

Before climbing the stairs, said W&L ROTC student, Robert Mish, '25, “we did a prayer that was led by a chaplain that was really nice.”

“We did 37 laps around the barracks which ended up being 111 flights of stairs. There were guys in their volunteer firefighter outfits and people had weighted vests[.]” Mish said.

One Rockbridge County resident who attended W&L's service suggested that next year the two colleges should collaborate together.

This is the third year that SHP has conducted a 9/11 flag memorial and service, though the international flags and alumni signage was introduced for the first time this September.



Dominic Vogelbacher, '27

Class of 2027 Participates in Orientation-Week

Events include trips across the east coast and sexual assault prevention training



(Photo by Kevin Remington)

Before beginning classes on September 7, all freshmen attended *Voices of W&L*, an Orientation Week (O-Week) multi-skit performance led by upperclassmen with the goal of training students to handle difficult and uncomfortable situations that might occur on campus.

The skits ranged from topics like sexual abuse and rape to alcohol overuse and drunk driving. While there were some specific moments that students thought could've been handled better, the overall impression was positive.

Mac Malambri, '27, told *The Spectator* that, "it's not stuff you'd want to talk about, but it had to happen and it was the best way it could've been done."

Isaac James, '27, said that "The common theme of peer pressure was prevalent... it made me rethink my approach to party culture."

Hudson Pitchford, '27, especially liked one skit about a student who took care of their friend that "blacked out" the night before. The friend in the skit was frustrated with her friend's behavior, and tells her: "I've been taking care of your sorry ass all night".

Hudson told *The Spectator* that this skit "demonstrated both what a friend should do and the attitude that they should have in doing that. It showed that it's appropriate to be unhappy with your friend who got too drunk and did something unsafe."

In a skit that discussed rape, two female friends were sitting together in a dorm room, one of whom (within the plot of the skit) was raped the night before. They discussed what happened and showed what steps might be taken to help a victim, without ever explicitly using the word *rape*.

One student, who asked to remain anonymous, told *The Spectator* that "I didn't like that they never said the word [rape]. I don't know what the intent was, but... it was disingenuous. They were kind of trying to avoid the problem, even at the event where we were trying to face the problem."

In one of the skits, a drunk male student is making unwanted sexual advances towards a female student. A friend of that female student came and pulled the girl away, saving her from possible sexual assault.

Two weeks after *Voices of W&L* took place, a freshman told *The Spectator* that this skit had helped him navigate a similar scenario:

"Last night at a party there was a drunk guy trying to make out with a girl, and I'm not sure I would have responded correctly if I hadn't seen that skit. It really scared me," he said.

The students also took part in active bystander training, a program designed to prepare them to take action in various scenarios of sexual assault and rape. They were taught four possible approaches in a

scenario of potential sexual assault: Direct, Delay, Delegate, and Distract.

When asked if he felt prepared to help in a difficult situation, Hudson Pitchford, '27, said that he was "shown that there's lots of ways to help people out in bad situations and there's always something that [I] would be comfortable doing."

Calla Andrews, '27, told *The Spectator* that she was very thankful for the program: "I'm glad we don't pretend to live in a vacuum where nothing happens, they're being realistic and giving people ways to deal with these things."

One graphic shown on the slideshow depicted a tree with sexual assault and rape as leaves at the top of the tree, and "colonialism" and "ableism" at the roots of the tree.

Alex Kagan, '27, told *The Spectator*, "At a school with a large party culture, it's important to train people on sexual awareness. That being said, having terms like colonialism and ableism at the roots of such awful behavior is not only preposterous but only serves to distract from the actual problems we were discussing."

O-Week activities included several other events, including Honor Convocation — where they discussed the policies of the White Book in Lee Chapel, National Historic Landmark — and Casino Night, in which students played with game money to earn prizes.

The entire freshman class also attended a presentation with Lexington Chief of Police and W&L Public Safety.

Officers discussed local laws pertaining to alcohol usage, noise complaints, and littering. They reminded W&L students that they are not just a member of the campus community, but also the broader Rockbridge County community....

(continued Page vi)

Andrew Thompson, '25

(originally published July 2, 2023)

Dudley Addresses SCOTUS Affirmative Action Ruling

W&L president says the university will comply while continuing to build a diverse student body

President William Dudley published a statement addressing the landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Students for Fair Admissions V. Harvard*. He said that Washington and Lee University will adjust admission policies to comply with the ruling and will continue building a more diverse community.

"Striving to fulfill our mission to the very best of our ability, we will continue working to attract and support the success of an increasingly diverse community at W&L," Dudley said. "Diversity of life experiences and perspectives makes us a better university, and we will continue using all legally permissible means to attract and support an increasingly diverse campus community in the pursuit of educational excellence."

Dudley also discussed how the opinion of Justice Lewis Powell ('29U, '31L) in *The University of California Regents vs. Bakke* (1978) laid the groundwork for the affirmative action policies formerly used by W&L and other institutions. Dudley went on to note that Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsberg, writing for *Gutter v. Bollinger* (2003), both thought affirmative action could be reevaluated in a future case.

W&L's admissions policies for the previous academic year are described in the 2022-2023 University Catalog.

The catalog says that "the Committee on Admissions considers each candidate's secondary school record, course selection, standardized test scores, and record of extracurricular involvement. Recommenda-

tion letters from secondary school officials, teachers and other sources addressing the applicant's character, intellectual curiosity, seriousness of purpose, and range of interests also play a significant role in the committee's decisions. Students' demonstrated interest in the University may also be taken into consideration."

The Spectator did not find "race" mentioned in admission policies published online.

According to university enrollment statistics, 28% of the student body was non-white during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Another statement was released by the Student Association for Black Unity (SABU). In an Instagram post, SABU's executive board said that "we are ...*(continued Page vi)*

Hundreds Attend Matt Walsh in Lee Chapel (continued)

A line of several hundred ticketholders had already assembled when the chapel's doors opened at 6:30 PM: a mixture of W&L students, VMI cadets, and people from Rockbridge County and beyond. A notable security presence surrounded the event as well: at least 8 private security officials and 16 W&L Public Safety Officers stood on duty, while multiple Lexington Police Officers patrolled the area.

After a brief introduction by Henry Haden, '25, president of W&L College Republicans and treasurer of *The Spectator*, and Hayley Andrews, '24, Vice President of W&L College Republicans, Walsh entered the stage, welcomed with heavy applause.

After a few brief jokes, Walsh immediately jumped into the crux of his argument, opening that he had been, "speaking out against the suicide cult known as transgenderism for years now."

Walsh then denied allegations that he contributes to the death of transgender people, stating that, "anybody who opposes trans ideology," is treated this way.

He then attempted to summarize the position of those opposed to him, stating that they believed by, "failing to affirm transgenderism... we [conservatives] are engaging in a form of mass murder."

Walsh then dissected what he believed was the root of these accusations. He stated that this genocide could not refer to a physical threat, using statistics from the FBI that two transgender Americans were killed in gender-related hate crimes in the United States during 2021, later arguing that a white transgender individual is slightly more likely to be killed in a racially motivated hate crime than one based on their transgender identity.

Walsh instead posited that the genocide is psychological. He argued that we live in an age of what he calls the "psychological man", someone who defines themselves as, "an amalgamation of his beliefs, his perceptions, his feelings, his desires."

He later reiterated this claim by stating that transgender activists believe that "my inner self-perception determines myself... I bring my physical self into alignment with my self-perception." Connecting this to the accusations of his violence, he stated that by merely questioning someone's identity, he was, "in effect killing," them, in the eyes of his critics. "When you call those feelings [a person's transgender identity] into question," he stated, you are killing their self-perception, which is, so he claimed, the most important part of them, even more so than their physical body.

Walsh conceded that transgender individuals do face physical threats, yet he stated that, "the threat comes from themselves," instead of an outside force. To prove this, he provided statistics that describe the abnormally high suicide rates within the transgender community, higher than any demographic group in the United States.

He then stated that much of the transgender community uses, "the most grotesque form of emotional blackmail," against their opponents with the threat of their suicide, lest they oppose the policy preferences of transgender people. Summarizing his view on the philosophy of his critics, he started, "If you

hurt my feelings, I will kill myself, and it will be your fault." Walsh rejected this idea, arguing that everyone is responsible for their own actions and lives.

Walsh then postulated that, under an enlarged definition of genocide, transgender ideology itself must be included, "due to what it does to those brainwashed into it." Walsh then rejected the scientific consensus that the high suicide rate among the transgender community is largely due to lack of societal acceptance.

First, he argued that if the suicide rate is truly linked to acceptance, the rate of suicidality should go down as society becomes more inclusive to transgender individuals, a drop-off he claims has not occurred.



(Walsh speaks in Lee Chapel. Photo- YAF)

Second, he argued that under this framework there should be a plethora of transgender suicides throughout history due to a historic lack of social acceptance.

Finally, Walsh discussed groups that he considered "actually oppressed," including enslaved people and Jews during the Holocaust. None of these groups, he argued, had nearly as high a rate of suicide as transgender people do in the modern United States.

Denying that transgender individuals are oppressed, he claimed that, "Trans people in modern America are among the most privileged human beings who have ever walked the Earth," due to the support they receive from major corporations and the media.

Walsh then stated that the transgender need for affirmation is tied to something inherently wrong with transgender ideology, not societal bigotry against transgender individuals. The reason for this distinction, he claims, is because, "Trans ideology is self-destructive at its core... it is in effect a suicide cult, it breeds despair and hopelessness." Walsh later doubled down on this position, calling being transgender, "A war with yourself."

Subsequently, he likened transgender ideology to the suicidal People's Temple in Jonestown, Guyana: both in the sense that he views transgenderism as suicidal but also equating the forced suicide of many people in Jonestown to children, who, he believes, "fall victim to the trans cult today."

Walsh opposed minors receiving sexual reassignment surgery, which he has previously described as "child mutilation." He then used detransitioners — people who reverse the process of their social or medical transition — to argue that children should not make permanent, life-altering choices to their bodies.

He continued by claiming that transgender people themselves are the largest victims of transgender ideology and should be the most on board with its elimination from the public consciousness. Walsh stated that transgender activists are transgender peoples' greatest "enemy."

Finally, Walsh argued that it was transgender activists that started the public debate over transgenderism, due to their demand — according to him — that everyone else comply to their, "delusion so that you can make yourself feel better."

Claiming it was never about privacy or, "living your life in peace," Walsh instead argued that the transgender acceptance movement is truly about pride and ego: more about celebration than tolerance.

To wrap up, Walsh argued that transgender activists act akin to the mouse in *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*: "You wanted the cookie, and you were given the cookie...but then you wanted to eat everything else in the house too."

After applause ended, the event proceeded to a question-and-answer session, which consisted of six questions. The second question — one of two questions critical towards Walsh's viewpoints — has already received over 20,000 views on YouTube.

Walsh's talk was generally well-received by the audience, in part because campus groups ideologically opposed to Walsh held alternative programs during the event.

"I thought it was interesting how hurting someone's feelings is worse than hurting someone physically," said one Washington & Lee student. Another student thought that, "School should spend money on [bringing in opposing voices]...Just because you don't agree with him doesn't mean you should ban him."

Two seniors from Virginia Military Institute (VMI) told *The Spectator* that they were fairly impressed with Walsh's performance and were encouraged by the high VMI turnout at the event.

Another W&L student who was critical of Walsh told *The Spectator* that they were disappointed by the lack of "more challenging questions" from the audience.

Concern had arose earlier in the day among event organizers that a Q&A segment would not even be possible, given logistical restraints imposed on the Young America's Foundation (YAF) film crew while setting up.

According to YAF staff member Breana Marsh, chapel officials "did everything [they] could to make things unnecessarily difficult, including preventing our photographer from doing his job and not allowing students to freely ask questions" as normally allowed at YAF events.

While university officials assured the event organizers that safety concerns prevented participants from assembling in the aisles for Q&A — even if only two people stood in the aisle at one time — Marsh and others were quick to cite recent chapel events in which students stood in the aisle during Q&A.

Despite the hiccups, Marsh said that "The Washington & Lee student body and community came out in droves to support the students who put on the event."

Henry Haden, '25

(originally published July 14, 2023)

University Installs New Headstone, Releases Statement

University officials clarify stances and articulate plans

Following strong pushback over the relocation of several historical plaques, university officials released a *Columns* article titled "Statement Regarding the Relocation of Plaques to a New Exhibit in University Chapel."

Traveller's headstone was replaced with a new one simply reading "Traveller" followed by the horse's years of life, removing the description of Traveller as Robert E. Lee's horse. Traveller's remains are untouched, according to the university.

The statement discloses that the "other related plaques and interpretive signage at the site will also be updated." The current signage details the Traveller's history. The current signage details the history of Traveller and his remains, and was erected in the 21st century.

The university said that the second marker beside Traveller's grave will also be replaced. That bronze plaque, which was placed in 1995 by the Alumni Board and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), honors Anne Wilson, the University's first lady from 1883-1995.

It remains unclear how or why those

plaques and signage will be updated.

Officials added that the school will replace the Lee House stables plaque commemorating Traveller's last home "with a new marker at the same location in the near future that is consistent with other markers across our campus."

University officials did not tell *The Spectator* that the stables plaque would be replaced in their initial statement following its removal on Saturday, July 8.

The June 16 *Columns* post says that the two Traveller plaques as well as two other removed plaques will be featured in a permanent, upcoming exhibit titled "The Power of Memory: Remembering Robert E. Lee[.]" which will be located in Lee Chapel, National Historic Landmark.

The statement later goes on to reference the planned "Museum of Institutional History." University officials describe the museum as featuring "rotating museum exhibits, rotating gallery spaces, storage, classrooms, and an auditorium for events."

As has been noted by *The Spectator*, W&L officials removed the museum from



(University officials remove Traveller's original headstone on July 14. The Spectator) community backlash.

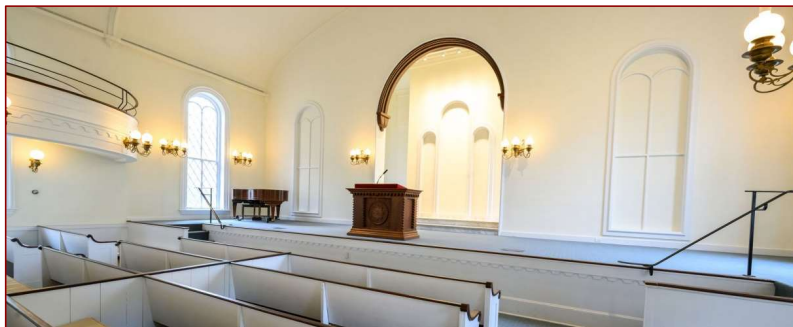
Citing messages from the Board of Trustees in June 2021 and September 2022, the university said, "W&L is an educational institution and, as such, its campus is not a museum or an appropriate repository for Confederate artifacts. In keeping with this principle, over a year ago, the Board determined that these plaques should be relocated to educational exhibitions."

Kamron M. Spivey, '24

(originally published August 31, 2023)

Chapel wall is finished, Rainville steps down

University officials announce ongoing museum developments and commitment to campus history



Following the controversial removal of four plaques this summer, including the replacement of Traveller's headstone, the W&L Board of Trustees reaffirmed their commitment to "Preserving and Teaching Washington and Lee's History" in an email last week.

Days later, President William Dudley announced that Lynn Rainville has transitioned from her role as director of Institutional History and Museums, and will remain on campus as a professor of anthropology.

In an August 25, 2023 announcement to the W&L community, Rector Mike McAlevy announced "that the construction of a partition on the stage of the chapel auditorium is complete, creating two adjoined, publicly accessible spaces."

The long-contested alterations to Lee

Chapel, National Historic Landmark, were announced over two years ago and began this summer.

A video of the newly-renovated chapel can be viewed on *The Spectator's* website.

"While University Chapel reopens this fall," McAlevy continued, "work on museum spaces, including the development and installation of new exhibitions within the Chapel Galleries, is ongoing."

Likewise, university officials have yet to replace the plaque commemorating Traveller that was removed from the Lee House stables, despite noting over a month ago that replacement would occur "in the near future."

Of the twenty plaques removed from Lee Chapel beginning in 2021, only three have been reinstalled.

It remains unclear how many of the remaining plaques will be installed in the

(LEFT: Chapel sanctuary after renovations, W&L) chapel museum, though a *Columns* post from last summer stated that the Liberty Hall Volunteers plaque will be placed adjacent to the Recumbent Statue, while a *Columns* post from this summer notes that the four plaques removed from campus this summer "are being installed along with other historically significant plaques in a new exhibit, located in University Chapel[.]"

"Most of the other plaques," the 2022 *Columns* post continued, "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."

In his announcement, McAlevy noted that a working group of trustees, faculty, and alumni had selected the firms Quinn Evans and Gallagher and Associates to assist with the new museum of institutional history.

The working group, McAlevy continued, "will solicit feedback from external historians and W&L community members beginning in early 2024. We have already received significant gift commitments to support the Museum, and we are finalizing the site selection on campus so we may begin specific plans and renderings for the building and related fundraising."

The museum was removed from W&L's master plan in Spring 2022 amid local pushback. It is now the last of eight Initiatives listed on the W&L Strategic Plan. (cont. Page vi)

The Spectator Editorial Staff

(Posted on The Spectator website in January 2023)

Statement on Lee Chapel, National Historic Landmark



(Lee Chapel, c.1885. Photo- W&L Special Collections)

Lee Chapel was built under the direction of college president Robert E. Lee in 1867. It served as a nondenominational gathering space for morning prayer services 6 days a week and quickly became what some have called “the soul of campus.”

Robert E. Lee was buried in the chapel upon his death in 1870. The university trustees made many significant decisions that week, including to erect a memorial in their late-president’s honor and to keep his basement office exactly as he left it.

The chapel has a very long and central history to the American story, which this page cannot adequately cover in depth. We recommend you read David Cox’s *Chapel at 150* for an extensive account.

In 1961, the Department of the Interior designated Lee Chapel as a National Historic Landmark, the highest rank possible for a historic site in the country. While you may read the full report on *The Spectator’s* website, we have attached the “Statement of Significance”:

Lee Chapel is the resting place of Robert E. Lee, Confederate general and southern educator. Lee commanded the Army of Northern Virginia for nearly the entire course of the American Civil War. Following the final Confederate collapse Lee became president of

what was then called Washington College in 1866; Lee Chapel is a monument to that later period. Lee’s ceaseless efforts to erase the bitter feelings engendered by the Civil War, and to provide the best education possible for the South’s young men, are memorialized here.

Since the 1990s, the historic building has averaged upwards of 40,000 visitors a year.

In 2021, the Board of Trustees of Washington and Lee University approved the following resolution:

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.

Several steps have since been taken in the chapel, including the removal of 20 plaques and 2 paintings, the covering-up of an inscription, and – as of the summer 2023 – completion of a wall. Full coverage of these actions can be found on our website.

The Spectator continues to refer to the site as Lee Chapel, National Historic Landmark – or Lee Chapel, for short – in accordance with its listing on the National Register of Historic Places. W&L officials have stated they do not intend to change the federal designation.

Chapel Wall (cont.)

“When complete,” McAlevey continued, “our museum spaces, including the Chapel Galleries, the Museum, and other spaces, will include exhibits about the contributions of George Washington and Robert E. Lee to the institution; the history, evolution and uses of campus buildings; artifacts...and many other topics, including notable contributions of alumni, students, staff, workers, administrators and benefactors all of whom have contributed to making Washington and Lee the esteemed university that it is today.”

It is unclear whether these goals will be delayed by the change in museum leadership.

According to Dudley’s email, Rainville has spent her four years as the inaugural director of institutional history building “an outstanding program based on rigorous research and community engagement.”

“She has successfully incorporated institutional history and museums into new areas of the curriculum and incorporated W&L’s history into orientation programs for new students and employees[.]” Dudley continued.

Rainville, who will now “supervis[e] student projects during the upcoming term...has mentored dozens of students, collected oral histories, developed historical resources like campus walking tours, and laid essential groundwork for the forthcoming museum of institutional history.”

“Plans regarding the search for Lynn’s successor will be announced later this year[.]” Dudley concluded.

Dudley also announced the upcoming retirement of Sidney Evans, who has spent the last 12 of her 23 years at W&L as vice president of student affairs and dean of students.

“Provost Lena Hill will chair the search for Sidney’s successor,” Dudley said.

Affirmative Action (continued)

deeply saddened by the recent Supreme Court decision overturning affirmative action policies.”

“[T]his ruling is a setback for our collective efforts towards social justice and equality,” they said.

The Generals’ Redoubt (TGR), meanwhile, commended The Court’s decision.

“A window of opportunity exists to return to what has made Washington and Lee unique: a place where students could obtain

an exceptional liberal arts education in an atmosphere of respect and trust, where individual merit and accomplishment were valued and rewarded,” said TGR President Stephen Robinson, 72U, 75L.

“President Dudley’s reaction,” Robinson continued, “is an unfortunate reaffirmation of his philosophy that has been rejected by The Court and many alumni. It fails to confront the reality that his leadership has grievously damaged our beloved University, its reputation and its future.”

Freshmen O-Week (continued)

Prior to Orientation week, every freshmen student participated in one of eleven “Leading Edge” Pre-Orientation programs.

The Pre-O trip with the most student participants was Appalachian Adventure, which sent students in small groups led by 3 upperclassmen out into the wilderness to hike a portion of the Appalachian Trail.

The program is centered around an immersive experience in nature, as students are not permitted to bring phones or even watches on the trail.

Feedback for the trip was extremely positive.

Mac Malambri, ‘27, thought that it was “Nice to have a break from the world as W&L became [my] center of focus.”

Hudson Pitchford, ‘27, stated that “Not bringing phones was definitely a good experience... it allows you to constantly be in

the moment.”

Beyond LEADership helped students discover their personality styles and apply them while working with others.

Leon told *The Spectator* that this trip gave him “the opportunity to really sit down and consider all my values, strengths, and weaknesses.” Their workshop on vulnerability showed him that “only when you’re vulnerable can you maximize your leadership skills... and overcome your weaknesses.”

Home Is Where The Art Is educated students on a wide breadth of topics within the arts. They completed projects relating to theater and dance, learned how to set up a professional interview, and attended plays and hip hop dances in Washington, DC.

Isaac James, ‘27, said that although he was “not a theater person...it was really neat to explore something that [he] wouldn’t normally participate in.”

School Board (cont.)

The “essential question” before the board, Walters declared, is “How are books and materials currently selected for our school libraries?”

Currently, the school librarian – “with input from other faculty” – selects material after “considering the interests of the readers, reviewing recommended and award-winning books, reviewing diverse authors and experiences,” and supporting the Virginia Standards of Learning.

Walters acknowledged that “not every book is read before it is added to the collection,” and that “[t]he middle school library is a bit of a ‘gray area’ where the challenge is providing books...that will meet the needs and interests of 10-14 year olds,” the age range of most LDMS students.

During the public comments session that followed, multiple speakers acknowledged that their children or grandchildren are within that age range at LDMS.

Elizabeth Braman, whose letter originally sparked the controversy, has five children currently enrolled in LCS. Questioning “the judgment and intentions of anyone” who approves of *Kiss Number 8’s* content, Braman declared on Tuesday, “These books should never have been chosen for this library in the first place.”

“My family cannot be part of any organization that would...provide a book to children that sexualizes Jesus on the cross,” Braman continued.



(Page from *Kiss Number 8*, shared in Braman’s letter)

Critics of the book’s removal, however, defended the judgment of library professionals.

Jemma Levy, a Lexington resident, said that librarians “have specialized training, advanced degrees, and must be accredited by the ALA [American Library Association]. This is why we trust them to make decisions about materials in the school library, because they have skills, knowledge, and insight that laypeople do not.”

“To deny other children’s access to that book is appalling,” Levy continued.

Parent and VMI librarian Elizabeth

Kocevav-Weidinger told the board that the LDMS library catalog is fully searchable [and] fully transparent, by anyone. Each book is justified by professionally established reading...and interest levels,” which guides “professionally trained library specialists in selecting the materials.”

Others, like Anne Russek, whose granddaughter attends LDMS, questioned the parameters being used in libraries to determine what is appropriate for the middle school age group. Russek cited inconsistent definitions of “young adult” across disciplines: the age range covers anywhere from 10-24 years within the medical and international community, while the ALA defines “Young Adult” (YA) at a narrower 12-18 years.

“The literary community has taken great liberty to redefine that term [YA]...which takes the term child away from children,” Russek said.

Definitions of terms continued to confront the school board last night.

A state law adopted by LCS in December 2022 defines “sexually explicit content” as “any description...picture, photograph, drawing...or similar visual representation depicting sexual bestiality, a lewd exhibition of nudity,...sexual conduct, or sadomasochistic abuse...coprophilia, urophilia, or fetishism.”

After reading this definition at Tuesday’s board meeting, Superintendent Walters said that she and LDMS Principal Abbott Keesee had previously “stated that it was our professional opinion that students ages 10-14 should not be exposed to sexually explicit material, as defined in this policy, through materials provided at our school.”

“As a public school library serving elementary or middle school students, I am making a recommendation that we not allow open access to explicit materials. A school library is unlike a public library in that it is not intended to provide everything to every student. Criteria for the selection of material in public school libraries is dependent on the goals and objectives of the educational institution of which the library is a part of. Students can have alternative means to access books or materials that have not been included in the school’s library collection,” Walters continued.

To this end, Walters proposed several policy revisions modeled on ALA standards, includ[ing] a recommendation prohibiting explicitly graphic, violent, vulgar, obscene, and sexually explicit content.”

Kate Shester, a member of the school board, asked Walters multiple questions about her proposal and how one might gauge whether content is “excessive” enough to be prohibited.

“What I may think is excessively violent or obscene,” may not be seen as “excessively violent” to someone else, Shester said.

Shester also asked if books with very important content or messages “may be worth” including in the collection, even if they “have some [explicit] language.”

Michael Saunders, another board member, responded to Shester’s concern by stating that such nuanced consideration would fall to the review committee’s judgment.

The process to review a specific book was also outlined in Walters’ report.

To begin, Walters proposed separating the procedure into two categories: “instructional materials” – which “are used for completion of

an assignment or as part of an academic or extracurricular program” – and “library materials.”

While the processes would be nearly identical, the initial “school-level review” following a complainant’s “Request for Reconsideration” would involve the principal and either the teacher (for instructional materials) or the librarian (for library materials).

If the two school officials agree with the complainant, the “materials can be removed without moving through the formal review committee process,” Walters explained.

If the two cannot agree, a committee composed of those two individuals and three others – “a teacher, a division employee...and a parent other than the complainant” – will convene.

The complainant can appeal the committee’s decision to the superintendent and then to the school board. Ultimately, “[t]he action taken at the highest level of review will remain in effect for a period of four (4) years,” the policy draft states.

David Toomey, a local opposed to the recent book removal, said during public comment, “I am pleased to see in this draft policy that it sounds like no longer can books be unilaterally removed.”

David Ryan, who expressed his support for *Kiss Number 8’s* removal, agreed that, “A better system of review should help going forward.”

Some community members shared a concern that the growing scrutiny over content might discourage the library from bringing new books in at all, and one speaker even called the two-person initial review process “anti-democratic.”

Others in attendance spoke about the personal ramifications that this controversy has had on individual members of the LGBTQ community.

Perhaps the most-applauded speech, Alyssa Astphan spoke about the “incredibly challenging” last few weeks for her wife – LDMS librarian Theresa Bridge – and family.

Astphan condemned the “harassing” and “homophobic” slurs levied against Bridge on social media. “The impact she has had on so many students is immeasurable,” she continued, and “it’s disheartening to read the horrible things people are saying about her when they have no idea...how deeply she cares about her students.”

Barring a couple brief interruptions from disgruntled audience members, the meeting was generally amicable.

In interviews with *The Spectator* shortly before the meeting began, both Braman and Chris Gavalier – an outspoken defender of *Kiss Number 8* – expressed their desire that everyone’s voice be heard.

“What I hope most is that there is a sharing of information,” Braman began. “I am all for debate. I am all for freedom of speech...I’m here to listen, to make sure I understand all the different pieces that people care about in this, and to make a decision on behalf of what’s best for my own children.”

“I hope everyone who wants the opportunity to speak can speak. I hope people can in an orderly, friendly way...state their opinion,” Gavalier told *The Spectator*. “I have my own preferences and opinions, but we need a verifiable, simple way to determine whether a text is appropriate for the middle school.”

John E. Lane, '74

Letter to the Editor:

An alumnus' view of Matt Walsh and civil discourse

The Matt Walsh event last night was the apex achievement of your long and arduous journey to bring this speaker to campus. Logistics and security were flawless. The outside attendance line was strongly advised that civility rules of audience conduct were to be respected. Freedom of speech was protected at the podium as much as the speaker.

Technical

Over twenty security personnel – Public Safety, Lexington City Police and Mr. Walsh's personal bodyguards – were scattered and visible. Security corrected audience video recording violations. All security and police were calm and professional. The optics said it all: possible troublemakers would be dealt with immediately.

I have been involved in several prior *Spectator* speaker events at Lee Chapel and I know even under neutral conditions, event organizer anxieties can be substantial. You calmly demonstrated terrific organization with a tightly coordinated team and engagement with Young America's Foundation (YAF) and security. I doubt there has been a more professionally managed event in Lee Chapel, aside from high government officials.

W&L's lagging air conditioning couldn't manage the crowd's heat output. Seating was packed. Windows were closed.

Freedom of Speech Was Well Protected

In the spring of this year, I wrote a letter to the *Lexington Gazette* called "Broken Windows," outlining why the university must be the adult in the room and punish Cancel Culture radicals. An excerpt from that March 29 letter explains why last night's high security was necessary:

A W&L student recently marked a new low among the Woke Wave crowd at Washington and Lee University. This student issued a death threat to all fascists who might

want to hear the Matt Walsh speech scheduled for March 30 at Lee Chapel on campus. (Note the irony here.) This student's threat included a WWII photo showing dead, upside down, hanging 'fascists'. For those interested in why this is also a serious legal matter, peruse Virginia Code § 18.2-60 (A)(3). Note the student's death threat may be a Class V Felony."

The Buckley Way-Civil Discourse

The entire University, from president down through the faculty and administration, should be required to watch how free speech was common ground before Cancel Culture.

Witness William Buckley's "Firing Line" interviews with Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton, both prominent leaders of the Black Panther Party. I watched these interviews on Sundays on public TV. I was amazed. I had read Cleaver's *Soul On Ice*. While I disagreed with them then on their politics, I admired them for their civil discourse on Buckley's TV show.

My father – a member of the John Birch Society – and I – a long-haired libertarian – were of divergent reasoning, but similar opinions on the Vietnam War. He was for either nuking them à la Curtis LeMay to eradicate communism, or to get out and stop wasting American lives; I supported just getting out, seeing no credible threat to Australia and understanding the impossibility of controlling corrupt local governments in Vietnam. We argued vigorously but respected each other's views of the facts. That was the *Buckley Way*. W&L late night bull sessions were no different. We got along as friends. So, yes, civil discourse can become our new normal, again.

In Closing

You all are really a brilliant example of how the forces of politics, public issues, and discourse, may be salvaged from the wreckage wrought by anarchists masquerading as social



(Matt Walsh speaks in chapel. Photo- YAF)

justice warriors. I offer my sincere admiration and thank you for your courage and energy.

You have answered the challenge to Cancel Culture. You have persevered. We must all continue to *persevere*, in order to *preserve* freedom of speech for democracy's future. Stamina is the heartbeat of morality. If Washington and Lee University can right its ship and jettison Cancel Culture, then there is hope yet.

Truth is the lifeblood of fairness. Let the public decide by open discussion with each side respectfully offering its facts, not emotions. Let logic guide the jury of our public peers on the outcome. Free speech – not Cancel Culture – is written into our Constitution and Bill of Rights.

The physical world – AND human events world – are not relativistic, infinitely elastic to presumption and assertion. History is humanity's newsroom proving what grand ideas succeed or fail as facts and consequences dictate.

Civilization's arc does not inevitably bend upward. Nevertheless, last night, civilization's arc bent slightly upward.

Per Ardua Ad Astra.

Anonymous alumnus

Letter to the Editors about Matt Walsh



(Walsh responds to student during Q&A. Photo- YAF)

I graduated from W&L at a time when nobody questioned their own gender. I also

graduated from W&L at a time when most alumni opposed the presence of two genders at the university. W&L definitely made the right choice then, and I often wonder if those men who opposed coeducation in the '80s ever regretted their stance.

The same can be said about the transgender movement. I am one of the old guard alumni who thinks the inclusion of transgender students on campus is silly and misplaced. I can't see a world

where it makes sense to call men women and women men, at least not seriously. But I am

also part of a generation whose views starkly contrast the modern progressive student body.

Whatever your generation of students decide, I hope it is in good faith with one another. Before women came to W&L, students, faculty, and alumni were discussing the topic rigorously. There was room for discourse. I can't say there was ever a "Matt Walsh" of co-education – at least not that I know of – but if there was, there would have been no harm in letting him speak.

Just remember that at the end of the day, you all share the same network of fellow Generals who want you to succeed in life. Be nice to each other and don't forget to put politics aside and have some fun every once in a while.

Anonymous students

Letters to the Editor about Matt Walsh

I consider myself a conservative, and I've supported Republican candidates as long as I've been able to vote. But if Matt Walsh ran for office, I can confidently say that he would not get my vote. I hope that after his visit to campus, every W&L student feels the same.

Let's be serious, Walsh will never run for office. He likes being on the sidelines, antagonizing real political leaders and feeding on a sensational political dissonance.

Yes, Walsh brings up valid concerns about the transgender movement. We should be looking into the high levels of suicide within that community and asking what the motivating factors are. We should feel comfortable questioning the concept of subjective truth, where anybody can call themselves anything without being challenged.

But what exactly does Walsh hope to achieve from his polemic speech? Does he think he will convince moderates to follow his rational logic? Does he really care about helping individuals suffering from gender dysphoria? Does he really want to protect young children from indoctrination?

If he did care, he would propose reasonable solutions and try to find a common ground. But all Walsh cares about are the views and the money. That's why his talk in Lee Chapel was a replica of his talk at every other university. He reads a script which his staff has approved, and he drones on and on about the "suicide cult" for attention. He wants there to be a dramatic show of protest because those foolish enough to challenge him by disruptive protest merely validate his point.

At the end of the day, I am glad Walsh came to speak to us. I was already critical of him before last month. But only in coming to our beloved campus and speaking such hateful things did his true colors really show.

Many W&L students have asked why conservatives won't just call transgender individuals what they want to be called. Forget gender affirming care, women's sports, and all of that. Why not just give them this simple kindness?

Well, as Walsh briefly touched on during his speech, the reason lies in a deep philosophical difference not between left and right, but between good and evil.

Adam and Eve's first sin was not that they took the fruit, but rather that they chose their own judgment regarding the fruit over God's. Instead of conforming to the natural order, they rebelled.

Sadly, so much of our contemporary culture is a part of this great rebellion of mankind.

The rebellion rears its ugly head when a family is torn apart by the selfishness of the parents in divorce. It roars with glee when a man watches pornography. It salivates at the very thought of the phrase, "be whoever you want to be," not "who you were made to be."

Even modern art and architecture are manifestations of rebellion, for man refuses to be governed even by the natural principles of beauty and goodness, and so he cultivates for himself ugly things.

Therefore, because "from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female" (Mark 10:6 KJV), we can say that transgenderism is — at its core — a rebellion against God the creator. It is the sick product of a sick culture.

So, to all the social conservatives out there who are dismayed at contemporary culture, don't do what Walsh did last month. Don't spew logic and "truth" to people who don't believe in *Truth*. Don't demonstrate a way of thinking to people who don't believe in the *Way*. And above all, don't tell people how to live when they don't believe in the *Life*.

There is only one way to change the culture: "Every knee should bow...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11 KJV).



Henry Haden, '25

The Other Side of the Gender Debate

The "era of transgender rights" prompts calls for radical change and little criticism

In the spirit of civil discourse, dissent should be heard. As iron sharpens iron, transgender activists clarify for conservatives the importance of defending the most basic of societal precepts.

Where were the protestors when Matt Walsh spoke at Washington and Lee University? That Walsh's detractors went no further than planting transgender flags outside Lee Chapel, National Historic Landmark, was telling. Walsh's opponents could explain what they supported but, if prompted, would rather stifle opposition than explain their flawed, largely emotional convictions.

While transgender activists did not confront Walsh directly, the LGBTQ Resource Center and ten other campus departments — the Pride at W&L Employee Resource Group, the Class of 1994 Office of Inclusion and Engagement (OIE), the Roger Mudd Center for Ethics, the Department of

History, the Office of the Provost, Student Activities, the School of Law, the Department of Philosophy, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Law, Justice, and Society program — took an indirect approach and hosted last week's speech by trans-activist Kylar Broadus. The event announcement describes Broadus as "a Black trans man known as a pioneer in civil and social rights for many identities," and the talk was titled, "Transgender Identity & Visibility in Today's Society & Legal Landscape."

Speaking to a crowd in Stackhouse Theater, Broadus explained navigating employment hurdles as a "trans man" and the challenging legal landscape of transgender legislation, doubtless intending to create an emotional response from the audience. However, it only took listening to Broadus's speech to understand the reason for the stiff opposition the transgender movement faces.

Addressing the elephant in the room, Matt Walsh's recent visit, Broadus insulted Walsh's intelligence without ever mentioning Walsh's name. Broadus said, "[Walsh] didn't know how to spell science."

Broadus (*below*) also mocked Walsh's best-selling children's book, *Johnny the Walrus*, which follows a boy led falsely to believe that he could become a walrus. "Kids are nothing like walruses," Broadus quipped.

Yet Broadus missed the point of Walsh's satire. As implied in *Johnny the Walrus*, transgender (cont. Page 10)



Ethan Casto, '24

America's Firearm Freedom: The Merits of the Second Amendment and the AR-15

Common misperceptions threaten to deprive Americans of a needed line of defense

The Second Amendment reads plainly, "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State; the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." Yet many gun control advocates argue that the Second Amendment only protects the right of the states to form militias, but not for individuals to privately own firearms (see "No one needs an AR-15, but America needs less gun violence," *The Ring-Tum Phi*, Opinion, March 30, 2021).

"The right of the people to keep and bear Arms" cannot mean anything other than the right of individual citizens to own firearms. As the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *DC v Heller* (2008), the Second Amendment consists of two clauses. The first is a prefatory clause announcing purpose while the second clause is the operative clause and gives the rationale.

The Founders fully intended for Americans to independently arm themselves for the purposes of protection against a tyrannical government. "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State" explains the purpose of individual gun ownership - an armed citizenry enables the populace to form a Militia, one with the ability to defend their state against the tyranny of the federal government.

The Founders empowered Americans with the means to combat executive power because of the events and fears of the late-1700s. But that does not mean the Founders wrote the Second Amendment solely with eighteenth-century technology in mind.

Within the Founders' lifetime, America saw vast industrialization including innovation in firearms technology. Within the eighteenth-century, firearms evolved from single-shot,

smoothbore muskets to early model black powder revolvers with single-action capabilities, shortened muskets with accelerated loading, and even early-stage crank-operated guns. The Founders were not so naïve that they failed to predict the continued evolution of firearm technology.

Even if the Second Amendment protects the right to own a firearm, why should anyone own an AR-15 or an AK-47 or any "assault-style," child-murdering, semiautomatic rifle? First, dismantle the language that the media uses. "Assault-style" semiautomatic weapons do not exist. There are assault weapons and there are semiautomatic weapons.

Both are distinguished by their mechanisms of action: the way the gun operates. Semiautomatic means that when you pull the trigger, the action cycles once before resetting so that one trigger pull equals one bullet fired. All modern handguns are semiautomatic.

In this way, any semiautomatic rifle is just a scaled-up handgun, which is why they are classified as *long* guns. An assault weapon, however, is capable of fully automatic fire - the gun cycles by holding the trigger down. This distinction is important: it means an AR is no more dangerous than a hunting rifle with the same action and bullet caliber.

The inability to distinguish semiautomatics from assault weapons plagues many people who lack adequate knowledge about gun ballistics. A .223 (a type of bullet caliber) fired from your granddad's hunting rifle travels with the same path, has the same velocity, and causes the same bullet damage as the .223 fired from an AR-15. (cont. Page xii)



The Other Side (continued)

ideology has irreversible, dire consequences for immature children. One need look no further than the Romero family, whose son was eventually sterilized to "become" a girl. (Visit The Spectator to view the video).

Children like Josie Romero are most vulnerable, so the transgender movement lures them with emotional appeals originating in postmodernist thought. Doing so rejects objective truth to fill the transgenderist rank-and-file activist class.

Embracing such a postmodernist framework, Broadus said that gender does not depend on "XX or XY chromosomes" but rather on a "genetic soup" that can have many "different formations." Broadus elaborated further that transgender people are born with different "hard drives," which doctors can't realize within "two seconds" of birth.

Somehow Broadus's "genetic soup" and "hard drive" changed two times in a lifetime - first from female to non-binary (neither male nor female) and again from non-binary to male. What explains these changes?

Broadus denied that transgenderism - once defined as "gender identity disorder" - is a mental illness and instead classified it as a "medical

condition" that requires affirmation as treatment.

Affirmation is necessary because the "genetic soup" that purportedly determines gender is not reflected anywhere anatomically, unlike XX and XY chromosome pairings. One can thus never discern gender from physical appearance, according to Broadus: "Once you start staring at everyone at [a shopping] mall, you're like that woman looks trans, that man looks trans, and then you start to notice that nobody conforms to a typical stereotype of what a female looks like or a male looks like."

"I don't mean to sound offensive to anybody, but my point is you cannot tell by just looking at people," Broadus concluded.

Broadus's take is absurd. When Riley Gaines saw Lia Thomas's exposed member in a swim meet locker room, Gaines knew Thomas's gender immediately. But Broadus said it is an "untruth" that there would be "a man in a dress in the [women's] washroom" and that the transgender movement is lobbying for only women to go into the women's restroom, clarifying that a "trans woman is a woman" in "every way."

This particular view is why transgenderism is so divisive - 60% of Americans oppose the core tenet of transgenderism, believing that whether

one is a man or a woman is determined by the sex assigned at birth, according to a recent Pew Research study.

Societal opposition motivated one of Broadus' final remarks: "Being trans is not a problem. The problem is that it is the other person's problem because they have the issue. It is society's problem."

But the blame should rest on Broadus and other pro-transgender activists for failing to convince a majority of the American public. A movement that relies primarily on emotional appeal to deter dissent falls flat when its dubious logic is exposed.

Still, the emotional appeal of transgenderism should not be underestimated; emotional appeal embedded transgenderism throughout America's institutions, as seen in its White House support.

Indeed, if for the sake of children like Josie Romero and nothing else, it is clear that falling for the emotional undertones of the transgender argument must be avoided. Broadus is right that transgenderism is society's problem, and compelling argumentation when exposing the "trans" ideology's core logic will help ensure that the worst effects are never realized, especially on children.

Andrew L. Thompson, '25

Bureaucratic Quashing of Free Speech

The University can deter events through vague rules, despite pro-speech statements.

Kudos to President Dudley for defending Matt Walsh's campus speech, despite substantial faculty and student blowback against the event. Doing so pushed W&L to twentieth of 248 institutions reviewed in the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) rankings for best university free speech environment.

But the battle for a campus open to different ideas is not yet over. University administrators can still use opaque rules to stymie event planners and deter discourse.

A case in point is the upcoming talk sponsored by College Republicans, College Democrats, The Generals Redoubt, and The Steamboat Institute. The University — seemingly out of thin air — invoked a rule which effectively blocked the event from being held in Lee Chapel, National Historic Landmark.

The talk will feature Carol Swain and Marc Lamont Hill, the first a conservative, the second a liberal, both black, in a discussion about diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives — which the hard left is never open to questioning.

The Steamboat Institute, a conservative outfit which is facilitating the event as part of its Campus Liberty Tour, stipulated that any discussion must be live-streamed.

According to College Republicans, an initial inquiry into hosting the event in Lee Chapel — campus's most iconic venue — was rebuffed by administrators who said that College Republicans and College Democrats are not permitted to live-stream events from the chapel. They are instead hosting the event in Stackhouse Theater. Although they can now have a live-stream, Stackhouse has a significantly lower seating capacity.

And some outside event backers, in addition to live-streaming rights, require a capacity threshold to sponsor events. For example, Young America's Foundation (YAF), the external sponsor of Matt Walsh's speech, required a venue capable of seating at least 500 people. The only campus event venue which readily fits the bill is Lee Chapel.

Had The Steamboat Institute made similar capacity stipulations, W&L students would be

benefit of an interesting, needed exchange of views and ideas.

Restrictions on University facility use thus have the potential to block the high-profile exchange of ideas central to the fundamental mission of higher education — to expand minds and foster intellectual progress.

Concerningly, my email correspondence with Robert Forsberg, a University Museums employee who regulates events in Lee Chapel, suggests that the university is not being above board with its event rules.

Forsberg told me that "only official university events (i.e. Alumni Weekend assemblies, honor society orientations and inductions, Admitted Students Days, Mock Convention, etc.) can have photography or video recordings of events in the Chapel."

Remarkably, Mock Convention — a student organization — counts as "official," whereas College Republicans and Democrats — also student organizations — do not.

The distinction, which Forsberg failed to properly make in his emails to ...*(cont. Page xii)*

Evan Cecchini, '25

The Decay of American Cities

What went wrong and how to fix it

Moving from city to city due to my rather unorthodox childhood, I have witnessed firsthand the fall from grace that is the American city living experience. Although a trend discernable for years now, the sharp decline has only recently become more apparent. Let's go down the line.

Walmart is the world's largest company by revenue and private employment. Portland, Oregon, is one of the largest cities on the West Coast. Despite these observations, there remain zero Walmart stores in Portland after the last two permanently closed this March.

For years, Portland treated shoplifting like someone leaving the toilet seat up: a mild inconvenience. It wasn't uncommon for criminals to casually walk into stores, fill up shopping carts, and leave without provocation. "For a long time we kind of let everybody get away with it, we just didn't have the resources to actually touch on it," one resident told the local media.

It was only a matter of time before businesses like Walmart fled the area. Believe it or not, operating in areas where payment is optional isn't the most effective business strategy.

As a result of the closures, around 600 people will lose their jobs, and thousands of residents in the nearby neighborhoods will feel the repercussions of a growing food desert.

In April 2023, big-box stores in Denver, Colorado, began to secure aluminum foil in locked cases. A security guard at one store describes a typical day prior to the cases being installed, witnessing junkies swipe aluminum foil straight from the shelves and proceed to use it to heat their blue pills before smoking fentanyl in the middle of the store. "I had to go home because I just got too f****g high," the guard said, describing one day when he encountered a cloud of smoke from an addict in the store.

The Denver lockbox experience is not limited to junkie-proofing the aluminum foil. During the same month, at a CVS on the corner of the same street, the drink coolers and food freezers were also equipped with locks. To purchase an Arizona Iced Tea, priced at a whopping 99 cents, you now need to press a button for a manager to assist you.

Despite increased measures retailers took to curb theft, most of the effort remains futile. Target released a statement in September 2023 stating that it plans to close nine stores in four locations: San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, and New York City.

These closures are exceptionally notable due to the sheer amount Target has already invested in theft prevention. More security, third-party guard services, employee training, and lock boxes were thought to be enough to reduce retail crime. The results were insufficient; Target cited "fundamental challenges" to safely operate the stores, with violent incidents against workers increasing 120% in the first half of 2023 compared to last year.

When I visited my extended family in San Francisco last Thanksgiving, I found it rather worrying that almost every car I saw on the street had its windows cracked and seats folded down; many attached notes pleading for their vehicles to be spared, and others left their trunk wide open. I quickly discovered why this was the case: shattered glass lined the curbs like fresh Christmas snow.

Make no mistake, this can't be chalked up to being anecdotal evidence. The San Francisco Police Department has reported a nearly 50% increase in car thefts and a 32% increase in car break-ins since 2019.

In the past, it was common for our grandparents to leave their car doors unlocked — not to show thieves that there were no



(Note in car window, San Francisco. Reddit) valuables present — but out of pure trust in the community. Sixty years later, urbanites do the same, knowing that if their windows are shattered, there will be no chance of help from law enforcement.

For the culprit of this decline, we should point to increased poverty and social unrest relentlessly fueled by the progressives that run these cities.

First, skyrocketing tax rates take money out of the pockets of hardworking Americans with no results from local governments to show for it. To solve their public defecation problem, the local San Francisco government decided to put their foot down and build more toilets. The price tag they arrived on, \$1.7 million per 150-square-foot public restroom. Thankfully, the cost of a new trash can is not nearly as steep at \$20,000.

Second, strict zoning regulations prevent the construction of affordable housing and the establishment and expansion of businesses. Contrary to the claim that greedy, Scrooge McDuck-esque capitalists are the ones to blame for rising homelessness rates, there is a simpler explanation: nobody is building new homes.

Zoning regulations, which assign plots of land to a specific purpose, allow local governments to exercise complete control over what is built and where. Because of these regulations, apartments are ...*(cont. Page xii)*

American Cities (continued)

banned in over 70% of residential areas in major U.S. cities. At its core, it is a supply and demand problem. As cities became larger, housing became more expensive. Yet, instead of building new apartments to follow the demand, government overreach priced impoverished families out of their homes and into the streets.

The same zoning laws that cause rampant homelessness are also terrible for businesses and entrepreneurship. Draconian permitting regimes operate to artificially restrict the available property market and drive the development price up for developers, hindering small businesses from coming to fruition and forcing stores to pass on the costs to consumers.

Last, the absence of repercussions for the majority of committed crimes fails to deter potential criminals, and fuels repeat offenders. Because of progressive prosecutors in San Francisco, residents are free to steal from any store without risk of arrest, as long as what's in their cart adds up to less than \$950. Even if a criminal is locked up, chances are they'll be able to walk free; in cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, bail has been eliminated for most crimes.

It's no secret that Americans are leaving cities in droves for conservative-run states such as Texas and Florida. These people are not seeking out the ideological fervor of men like Ron DeSantis and Ted Cruz. Instead, they crave the polar opposite of their urban nightmare: green grass, more money in the bank, booming business, and safe neighborhoods.

Of course, wealthy, champagne socialist Democrats don't care about these issues. They instead focus on funding trendy progressive policies such as infeasible green energy sources

and replacing police officers with social workers. Their income allows them to move to a nicer subdivision, avoid public transportation, and repair that shattered car window every two weeks. Yet, they will continue to fuel the politicians at the root of the problem.

The solution to saving American cities is simple: trust the markets.

An unfettered free market economy builds apartments when people need them. A free market doesn't waste millions on overengineered toilets and trash cans; they're purchased at a fair value. With no homeless and a healthy economy, few see fit to rob a Walmart or Target.

That's not to say unregulated capitalism would eradicate crime in its entirety. There will always be deviants in a society who will look to seek havoc. One day, the crime-mitigating benefits of a free-market economy might be so great that Democrats can fulfill their wish to defund the police without a dramatic uptick in homicides. But for now, it's just a pipe dream.

Having lived in small-town Pennsylvania since the onset of the pandemic, it almost feels as if rural and urban life in the United States have become two separate worlds.

While my family reaps the benefits of clear skies, cheap groceries, and the feeling of safety in our own community, those who have chosen to remain in what is left of our once-great cities continue to suffer a worse quality of life for a higher price tag—whether they realize it or not.

However, it doesn't have to be this way. One way or another, the American city can persevere. Whether it will be through common sense free-market reform or via a mass exodus that requires us to rebuild from the ashes is yet to be seen. But the former seems a lot easier.

Merits of the Second Amendment (cont.)

If both guns are semiautomatic (many, if not most, modern hunting rifles are semiautomatic), then both are capable of the same rate of fire and accuracy. Also, it is worth noting that the AR-15 is not a military rifle and is not implemented by our armed forces. It is a civilian gun chambered in a caliber used as a hunting round since 1964.

Why would anyone need a semiautomatic rifle, specifically an AR-15, for hunting? Probably because people have used .223, .308, .243, and .30 (common rounds used by AR owners) for over a century and have used semiautomatics for even longer. The notion that specific guns should be banned because they are inherently more dangerous is not based in fact, but solely on aesthetics which does not affect gun ballistics.

Although the AR-15 looks like a gun you could use on Call of Duty, it is a civilian gun implemented for civilian purposes with no more capacity for damage than other modern semiautomatic rifles. In fact, the AR-15 is commonly chambered in .223, which is considered weaker than other hunting rounds. Many states, including my home state of Maryland, require hunters to only use specialized versions of .223 to ensure a humane kill, depending on the animal.

What makes the AR-15 popular is not its looks or capacity for damage, but its versatility. It is a weapon with an evidence-based design and over 60 years of innovation behind it. The

AR uses cheap and widely available ammunition and can be changed to accommodate a variety of calibers.

So why would someone use an AR for self-defense? Some say that citizens wishing to defend themselves should just buy a can of pepper spray. But I believe that human beings have a natural right to defend their lives.

As most gun crime involves handguns, the man breaking into your home or mugging you on the street is likely going to use one. You have a right to defend yourself with not only a weapon of equal standing, but one that gives you an advantage.

There are numerous police-involved shootings in which perpetrators are shot upwards of 20 times, including in the head, by police service weapons and yet still attack. This is due to the influence of drugs and the ammunition limitations of handguns. Many officers, such as Sgt. Timothy Gramins, carry large quantities of ammo because these instances are so common.

Rifles offer the capability of higher caliber rounds that have an increased likelihood of stopping a would-be-killer in their tracks. They are equalizers in combat offering more power than a handgun but less than many other firearms. Their ease of use enables women, the elderly, and the disabled to protect themselves against the 300-pound goliath looking to deprive them of life, liberty, and property.

Free Speech (cont.)

me, is between "Major Events" and those excluded from that definition

According to the University Chapel Use Guidelines, only non-Major events can use outside equipment (presumably including a camera) in the chapel.

Oddly enough, the most important events held in the chapel are somehow not "Major Events": Honor System Orientation, Honor Society Inductions, and Student Body Hearings, among others, are excluded from the definition of a "Major Event," based on the University Facilities Use Policy.



Events organized by student organizations can be excluded from the definition of a "Major Event" — and therefore allowed to use recording equipment — if the event is held "for the primary benefit of the University community," if it is "held in a timely manner," and if it receives the blessing of either the Dean of Students (Sidney Evans) or the Provost (Lena Hill).

It is absurd that student organizations must request permission from the upper levels of university administration in order to simply use a camera at an event.

And the vague, subjective criteria used to approve exceptions — that the event must be held "in a timely manner" and "for the primary benefit of the University community" — leaves room for discrimination between favored and unfavored events and organizations.

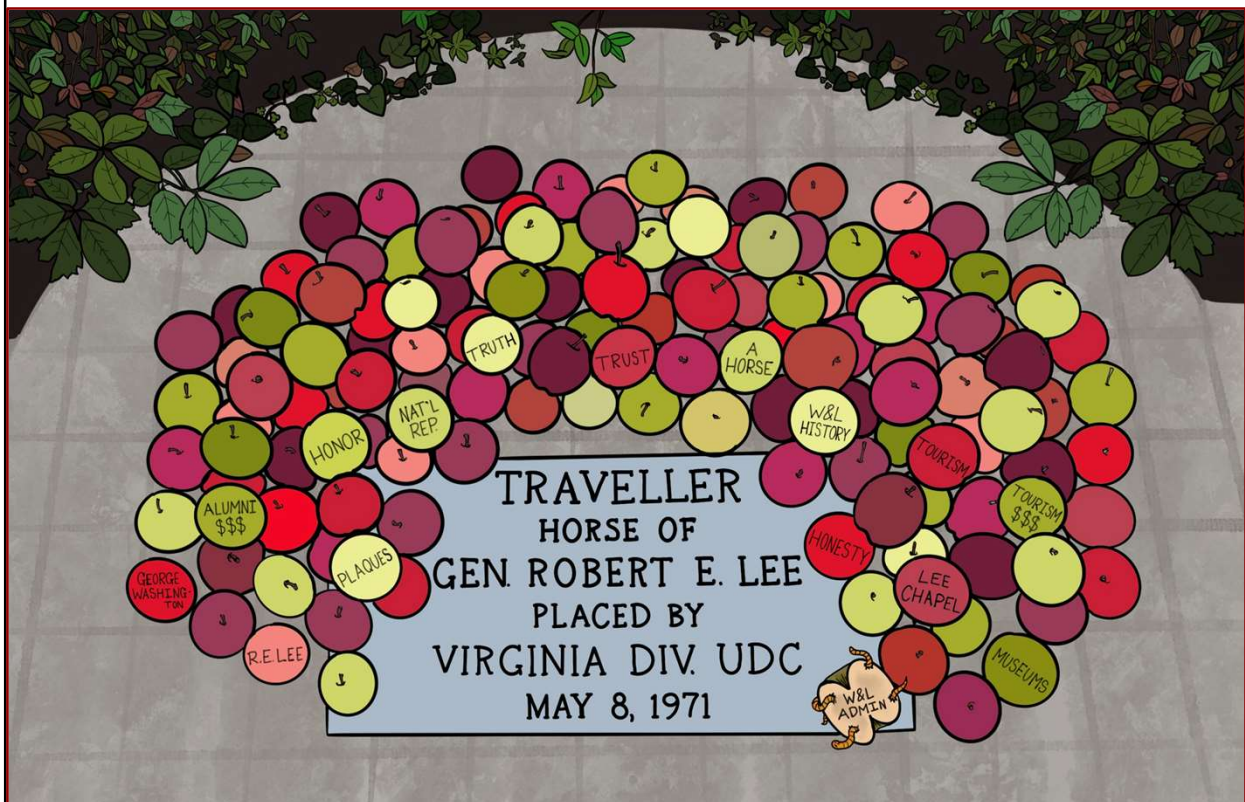
I am unsure whether College Republicans or College Democrats requested authorization from Provost Hill or Dean Evans. But Forsberg was misleading when he told me that "only official university events... can have photography or video recordings of events in the Chapel," especially as the University event policies contain no explicit references to videography, recording, live-streaming, or "official" and "unofficial" events.

I like to think that University staff and administrators perform their jobs without partiality, and I should note that Forsberg's correspondence with me was prompt and professional. Yet Forsberg's misleading statements, the vagueness of the online policies, and the timing of their initial implementation (the most restrictive rules were added just as College Republicans began working to host Matt Walsh) could suggest that ulterior motives are at work.

I do not want to jump to conclusions. But at the very least, the University should clarify and streamline its rules. Events should not be subject to the opaque whims of staff and administrators, and planners should be able to quickly determine event viability from the published policies.

It should be easy for student organizations to plan and execute high-profile events in conjunction with outside sponsors, who often provide needed funding. None should endure the arduous negotiations and rule changes dealt with by College Republicans and The Spectator while planning Walsh's visit.

President Dudley and other administrators ought to dedicate themselves to making the campus as accessible as possible to speeches, debates, and discussions. Anything less would be a slight against the sacred duties of the University.



One Bad Apple Spoils the Bunch



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THE W&L SPECTATOR

A MAGAZINE OF STUDENT THOUGHT & CIVIL DISCOURSE
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James Eustis, '27

How Should We Teach Politics? An Interview with Professor Lynn Uzzell

Visiting politics professor from UVA offers her perspective on how to counter modern political polarization

Before the first class of each semester, Visiting Assistant Professor of Politics, Lynn Uzzell, asks her students a question: "What do you think is the most pressing political problem in America today?" Since about 2016, she has received one answer far more than any other: polarization. In fact, 50% to 75% of students from any of Uzzell's given classes have stated this as the most pressing issue.

"There aren't too many avenues out of that problem as far as I can see unless there is a change in the way that we are instructing ourselves through [discussing] politics," said Uzzell — who holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in politics from the University of Dallas — in a recent interview with *The Spectator*.



(Lynn Uzzell teaches a class on the Constitution while dressed up as George Washington during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Columns, 2021)

"For the first time ever in my teaching career," Uzzell continued, "I have introduced formal debates into my classes here at Washington and Lee...The reason I've done that is because I want to get students here comfortable talking about their disagreements in a way that is civil and respectful."

In her American National Government class (POL-100), Uzzell places students into formal debates where they argue their points in a respectful setting. By encouraging this sort of debate, Uzzell equips her students to be reasonable and civil members of political society. This teaching style has also had the benefit of helping many students discover a previously hidden passion for politics.

According to Uzzell, the class serves as a "gateway drug" to the subject of American politics, as many who join the class have no previous academic experience in politics. Her goal is to "get to know [her] students individually but also to introduce them to a subject that [she] thinks is important for everybody." Uzzell has noticed how this strategy of "active engagement" causes the class to always go in different directions depending on the composition of the student body.

Uzzell will teach another section of American National Government next term.

Uzzell's innovative teaching methods do not stop after the entry level class. In one of her higher level courses, Creating the U.S. Constitution (POL-295), students grasp the complexities of the Constitutional Convention by adopting the role of one of the Founding Fathers in a mock convention.

This process begins in the first half of the semester when the class does a deep dive into the original records of the Convention; students then reenact the Convention in the second half of the course. Students take on the role of one of the framers of the Constitution and advocate for their interests. The activity helps students to truly understand

the historical dynamics at play within the convention.

Lilly Gillespie, '22, portrayed Benjamin Franklin when she took the class in the winter of 2021. "The immersive elements were so unique and made this class one of my most treasured and formative experiences at Washington and Lee," Gillespie told *The Spectator*.

"Learning about the Constitution[,] "

she continued, "equipped me to have comprehensive conversations and defend the work of our founders from attacks that transcend partisan affiliations."

The ability to teach in this creative style is part of what drew Uzzell to come to W&L; the university administration gives professors more agency than most in choosing the subjects of their classes.

Uzzell has used this flexibility to create a class around one of her principal academic interests: Slavery and the Constitution (POL-370). In this course, students examine the way that the institution of slavery affected the formation of the Constitution and vice versa. Students read a variety of sources regarding the Constitutional Convention before progressing through the national debate over slavery, analyzing the works and speeches of leaders like Thomas Jefferson, John C. Calhoun, Fredrick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln.

Having studied this issue for over twenty years, Uzzell finds the contrast between the harsh realities of the nation's original sin and our founding principles of individual liberty a fascinating and important topic to explore. The tension between the ideals of the



founders and their practice deserves a "profound and focused study," Uzzell noted. By the end of the course, Uzzell observes, students are writing more nuanced and balanced papers than many published essays she sees on the subject.

"While her courses are difficult, she rewards hard work, critical thinking, and visible effort in assignments[.]" said Jordan Kach, '27, who took four classes with Uzzell as a freshman. "I loved her traditional teaching style and class topics so incredibly much."

"Professor Uzzell, from her dedication, wisdom, and enthusiasm for the subjects she teaches, fostered the same passion in me for American Politics and the Constitution," Kach told *The Spectator*.

This spring, Uzzell will be teaching a course related to a passion that she found in her undergraduate years: speech and communications. In Rhetoric in the Structure of American Politics (POL-295), students will study rhetorical theory and learn to apply and recognize it in the American political sphere, reading texts by authors such as Aristotle and speeches by key figures in American political history.

"This is a class that both enables students to understand the political speeches that they hear better but also can help hone their own skills if they are interested in persuasion in the future," Uzzell said. Understanding rhetorical strategies will help students in all areas of their life, as argument is truly a timeless and universally applied skill.

Politics is no simple subject to teach. Much of it is highly subjective, which can make for a tenser educational environment than other, non-partisan disciplines. I, for one, find Uzzell's approach of encouraging debate and critical thinking to be the most effective way to constructively teach politics: even if a student disagrees with the professor's point of view, one can't help but admire her effort to not dominate the discussion. Her approach helps to create citizens that are well versed not only in the reasons behind their own views but also that of differing perspectives. Ultimately, that understanding is what we will need in the next generation of political leaders graduating from W&L.

Want a feature interview?
Contact us at
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Historical Highlight: The Centennial of the Reaper, September 25, 1931

[The following highlight features a bulletin published by the university on August 15, 1931. Titled "Cyrus Hall McCormick and Washington and Lee University," this pamphlet briefly biographizes the famed inventor and benefactor. It also advertised the Centennial of the Reaper Celebration, which drew nearly 7000 attendees to campus and the county on September 25, 1931. All sources can be accessed in Special Collections and Archives. Contact SHIP with questions.]

McCormick and Virginia

Cyrus Hall McCormick was born at Walnut Grove Farm in Rockbridge County, Virginia, about eighteen miles from Lexington. He came of the Scotch-Irish stock which formed the principal element of the first settlers of the Valley, which encouraged churches and schools, which established the institution later to be known as Washington and Lee University. The family of Cyrus McCormick was identified with the agricultural and the religious, and subsequently the industrial, life of the section.

In Rockbridge County in the summer of 1831 McCormick invented the reaper, destined to change the course of agricultural history; here it received its first trials; here for a while its manufacture was carried on in the blacksmith shop at Walnut Grove.

In 1847, Mr. McCormick, visualizing the West as the grain region of the future, moved to Chicago. Undaunted by obstacles and inevitable struggles, he slowly developed an enterprise that by 1860 was selling 4,000 reapers a year. He triumphed over competition and won success of the first order, not only in America but in all the world. McCormick was more than inventor and more than manufacturer; he devised effective business procedure, including advertising, modes of distribution, processes of sales; much of his work in this field was epoch-making. He was deeply interested in the public questions of his day, and he was active in manifold movements looking toward general welfare.

Throughout these later years, Mr. McCormick remembered Virginia with great affection. He lent his influence to restoring good feeling between the sections. He did much in a personal way to relieve the suffering of his people in the unhappy days that followed the Civil War. Seeking to rebuild the civilization of his own state, he befriended educational institutions including several besides Washington and Lee, notably the Union Theological Seminary, now at Richmond.

His Service to Washington and Lee

Among the very first of the group of generous friends who responded to needs of the University under the leadership of General Lee, was Cyrus H. McCormick. In



January, 1866, early in the first session of the new administration, he wrote an encouraging letter and enclosed a check for \$10,000. This sum of money meant vastly more than it would under our own conditions. The supporters of the institution were heartened; and in deep gratitude the Board of Trustees named in McCormick's honor a department of the University, now the chair of Physics.

During his life, Mr. McCormick increased his donation to more than \$20,000, and he provided another \$20,000 for the University out of his estate. At the time of his death, his wife made an additional gift of \$10,000. Within comparatively recent years, his children gave \$200,000 to an endowment campaign undertaken by the University. Mr. McCormick and his immediate family have thus taken a place among the foremost benefactors of Washington and Lee.

His interest in the University was expressed in many ways. In 1869 he was elected a member of the Board of Trustees. He accepted the duty and continued in the relationship for the remaining fifteen years of his life. At the time of General Lee's death in 1870, Mr. McCormick became chairman of a committee in New York that sought to promote a special memorial in honor of Lee. The attachment which Mr. McCormick felt for the University never faltered and it was in itself a source of perpetual inspiration.

A Recognition

On the 25th of September of this year, the centennial year of the invention of the reaper, Washington and Lee will hold a celebration honoring Cyrus Hall McCormick, the man and the benefactor. Associated with the University is a group of leading Virginians as sponsoring committee; the celebration thus

becomes more than local in significance.

The chief feature of the program will be the unveiling of a statue of Mr. McCormick, the gift of his children.

The unveiling of the statue will constitute the exercise of the morning. This will be followed by a luncheon to special guests and a general dinner on the grounds for the crowd that will gather. In the afternoon the scene of the activities will be shifted to the environs of Mr. McCormick's youth. A brief service will be held at Mt. Carmel Church, of which Mr. McCormick was charter member, and a pageant at Walnut Grove will close the day's program.

The addresses of the day will be delivered by competent speakers. A large gathering from Virginia and from many other states will be present and the occasion will be one of the distinguished features of the recent University history.

The sons of the University and all of its friends are cordially invited to attend this celebration.



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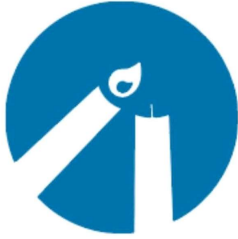
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~Robert E. Lee, President
Washington College
August 4, 1866

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