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On and off campus, pressure mounts to rename several buildings at JMU

By Bridget Manley, Publisher
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Jackson Hall, as seen on June 17, is under construction. (Photo by Tristan Lowe)

In a public ceremony in the fall of 1917, six buildings on Bluestone Hill — the center of campus for what was then the State Normal and Industrial School for Women — were renamed. And for the last 103 years, four of the six have borne the monikers of men who were slaveowners or defenders of slavery.

Three of them — Matthew Fontaine Maury, Turner Ashby and Stonewall Jackson — took up arms against the United States government to fight for the chief architect of the United States Constitution that we have buildings on campus that are honoring those who fought to commit treason against it."

Student leaders aren't the only group petitioning the university to pull the names. The JMU Political Science Department last week sent a letter demanding the removal of the names. All but one member of the department, a faculty member with a conflict of interest, signed it.

Crafty activists last week taped over two of the names on signs — Jackson and Ashby — and temporarily renamed them "Not Turner Hall" and "Harriet Tubman Hall," along with reasons why the buildings should be renamed. And at a protest last Friday on the JMU campus, students called for the immediate removal of the names.

Caitlyn Reed, University Spokesperson for JMU, said the renaming of university buildings is the responsibility of the University's Board of Visitors. Reed confirmed that board's next meeting is in September.

"We know there's a sense of urgency in the community on this issue. We also know that it's incredibly sensitive, and it's incredibly important," Reed said. "And frankly, there are members of our community on all sides of this issue. And so we are taking a very deliberative process driven approach to any sort of a decision. So, it's also really important to know that the Board of Visitors which is the University of Governing body has the ultimate decision-making authority in this sort of matter. Our administration is not in power to, nor would they ever act on their own on this. They would never act unilaterally. It's the board's responsibility."

Reed confirmed that donors also have been included in discussions about name changes.

"There are alumni, there are donors, there are employees, there are students who are on all sides of this issue. We are hearing all sorts of feedback, all sorts of input, and I will say that this survey mechanism that we set up — this opportunity for input that was sent to faculty, students and staff — that is not the only avenue for input," Reed said. "Our administrators — I would say our abnormally accessible administrators — are receiving volumes of emails and phone calls and petitions and we see the social media activity. So, we know that there are alumni in their donors that are making their voices heard. The administration is aggregating all of that."

Maury Hall was named after Matthew Maury, who led the confederates' naval forces during the Civil War. (Photo by Bridget Manley)

The university also received criticism this week for language contained in a survey seeking input about the buildings. Faculty and students called out some of the wording as romanticizing the three confederate leaders, including describing Maury as being "celebrated."

Reed defended the document, saying that one of the goals was to provide context.

"The intent of the document was twofold; first, there was information on the confederate leaders for whom the buildings were named, and that piece was provided to encourage reflection," she said. "The second piece of it was the open-ended questions which were meant to offer JMU faculty, staff, and students the avenue to provide input on this really important issue."

She said the information was compiled by history faculty who have worked for years "to critically examine the history of JMU and the building names."

"It was their scholarship, and it provided the history of these men in the context of more than 100 years ago when these buildings were originally named," Reed said. "It was meant to encourage reflection, and what we're seeing from the early survey responses is that it achieved that goal and that a lot of people said 'I did not recognize this, I did not know that, and therefore here's what I now think.' And so it was motivating and getting people to critically reflect and in that way served its goal."

The university has been examining the history of racism on campus as part of a multi-year task force, and part of that work has been investigating the names of buildings and the people whom they were named for, said Mary Mulrooney, professor of history and associate vice provost for university programs.

Mulrooney has been working on the Campus History Committee and said the group has been engaged in two projects as part of unearthing the history surrounding the names of the buildings on campus.

They've been mapping every name on campus as part of a "commemorative landscape," and Mulrooney said there has been a growing awareness on campus that the university does not have hold the same values as those for whom the buildings were named.

And the history of the naming is just as complicated, Mulrooney said.

"Naming of buildings should be understood as a political action, right, they're not just coincidences," Mulrooney said.

John Wayland and the buildings

John Wayland was a prominent local historian in the Valley and one of the first professors at the Normal and Industrial School for Women. Hired in 1908, he grew up near Dayton, attended Bridgewater College and his doctorate Ph.D. from the University of Virginia.

Wayland was also a major proponent of the lost cause narrative. An honorary member of the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Wayland served as adviser for the Lee Literary Society (named after Robert E. Lee) at the Normal School, and his father served under Stonewall Jackson.

"And so, he has an affinity to the lost cause," Mulrooney said.

Wayland became what would now be known as the "chair" of the social studies department, where he was in charge of creating the school's curriculum.

One of the ways he taught was by taking students on field trips — to the Lincoln Homestead, the Turner Ashby monument, and into the Blue Ridge Mountains where the British royal governor and explorer Alexander Spotswood and the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe created the mountain, Mulrooney said.

Wayland also believed in naming buildings for people considered to be of historical significance.

"He's very clear in his speeches and lectures and so forth that he gave, that he considered buildings and names — basically monuments, they are monuments — another pedagogical tool," Mulrooney said.

Mulrooney said Wayland and the librarian/registrar Mary Bell came up with a list of possible names for the campus buildings together, but, undoubtedly, because of the gender hierarchies at that time, he was driving the list," Mulrooney said.

The students voted from a list of fourteen names provided by Wayland and Bell, and selected six of them, including Maury, Ashby, Jackson and Harrison. The other two were Spotswood Hall, named after the British explorer and governor, and Cleveland College, which honors Annie Cleveland, an educator at English and French at the Normal School who died in 1916. (While Cleveland College was razed, another building completed in 1939 was named Cleveland Hall for Cleveland's sister, Elizabeth, who also taught at the Normal School.)

The six buildings were officially named in the fall of 1917, which came 52 years after the South surrendered and eight years after the Normal School opened. And the four named for confederates and slaveowners have remained for 91 years after school desegregation began, 42 years after the university stopped resisting integration and fully integrated and 155 years after the confederates surrendered.

Changing the names

Mulrooney said if the university decides to change the names of the buildings, the process would have to be very long. She said the university should work with groups in the Valley who have been trying since the 1990s to find a suitable gateway road to squash — groups such as the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County NAACP, the Northeast Neighborhood Association and the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project.

"I think it's clear that the associations that those names conjure are negative, and they do not align with the contemporary JMU. At all. We are engaged in this process now," Mulrooney said. "We have been for several years."

Steven Thomas, organizer with the Northeast Neighborhood Association, said the group welcomes the opportunity to participate in discussions about renaming the buildings.

"For all of many of our lives, it has been the region's Black population and largely from the northeast community who have had to venture onto the campus for various community programs, sporting events, etc., and be dehumanized, disrespected, and insulted by the current names of those particular buildings every single time that we did," Thomas said in an email in response to questions from The Citizen.

Thomas said the Northeast Neighborhood Association is not pushing for a specific individual to include in discussions to rename the buildings but that he expects "we will be advocating on behalf of the cause to have at least one of the buildings renamed after a local African American trailblazer."

He also said JMU has yet to reach out to the Northeast Neighborhood Association.

"NENA has not been contacted by anyone at JMU thus far to allay any part whatsoever in such a truth and reconciliation process as the one we are encouraging through a campus-community dialogue on these renamings," he wrote. "While we are disappointed by this fact, we are unfortunately unsurprised by it when we consider that the JMU administration has yet to publicly acknowledge" other ongoing efforts.

Specifically, he pointed to the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County chapter of the group Coming to the Table and its work with JMU students to help attract more signatures to a Change.org petition calling for the renaming of Jackson, Ashby and Maury Halls.

Robin Lyttle, president of the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project, said she agrees that community groups like NENA and the NAACP should be included in these conversations. She said a number of influential African American teachers in the Valley could be honored with a building name.

"I would like to defer to the community. We certainly had great educators in our area," Lyttle said. "Is it a Valley question? Or are we just talking about Harrisonburg history?... Certainly Mary Fairfax was a wonderful educator. She was strict, so some people don't have such fond memories, but she was a great educator ... as was Lucy Simms, from what I understand. There's W.T. Harris, who was the principal, and Eugene Wilson and George Newman. I mean there were many people throughout the Harrisonburg area."

Meanwhile, Ritter, the JMU student senator, said the building renaming should be done but efforts shouldn't stop there. Students are calling for broader changes in how the university recruits to allow for more diversity among the students and ranks of faculty, he said.

"JMU has one of the lowest minority student rates in not only in the Commonwealth of Virginia, but also the United States," Ritter said.

Last fall, 76.4% of JMU's 19,554 undergraduate students were white. The percentage of white students was similar for graduate students at 73.6%, according to the university's enrollment figures. On average, the percentage of white undergraduate students nationwide in 2019 was 59%, according to the most recent numbers available through the National Center for Education Statistics.

"This is due to a couple of different things, funding from the General Assembly, lobbying efforts that JMU subscribes to," Ritter said. JMU tends to have a "target demographic that they go towards. Due to a lower endowment and a lack of funding for the financial assistance they stick with that target demographic in order to ensure that we maintain our student population, and that they don't have to branch out too much."

Thomas, meanwhile, said if the university's aim is to repair the historical harms, university leaders must engage in conversations with groups like NENA moving forward.

"We have observed multiple official statements from the JMU president's office which appear to make a calculated distinction between Harrisonburg's African American community and African American students at JMU by referring to the stress, pain and anger 'within our Black community,' in reference to its African American student body," Thomas said. "For far too long, this way of thinking has been fostered within the Black student body and the Black student mind at JMU in attempts to undermine city-wide African American unity. Because we have seen and experienced all of this before, we will be intentional in our outreach to prevent any further divide-and-conquer tactics in the future, as well."

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Bridget Manley, Publisher

Bridget spent most of her adult life working as a morning show producer and reporter for radio stations in Cumberland, Md., and Annapolis, Md., before moving to Harrisonburg eight years ago. When she's not reporting the news, she enjoys fun times with her husband, Jeff, and their two children, Ryan and Emma. The Citizen Center in Shenandoah, she is a freelance reporter for WMRA, and also hosts a podcast that shares parenting stories called "Birds In A Tree."

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JULY 21, 2020

Building name changes just the 'tip of the iceberg,' say some on JMU campus

By Bridget Manley, Publisher
Posted in Harrisonburg Issues

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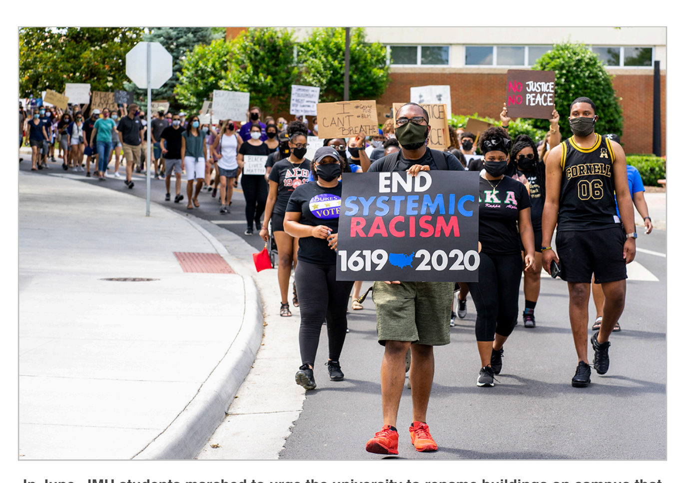


In June, JMU students marched to urge the university to rename buildings on campus that honored Confederate veterans. The university did so on July 7. File photo by Tristan Lorei.

By Bridget Manley, publisher

For many student activists at James Madison University, changing the names of three buildings once named for Confederate officers represented progress toward a more inclusive campus, after their hard work lobbying the administration for years finally paid off.

Many of them say, however, that renaming the buildings is only the tip of the iceberg of what they'd like to see happen.

Prior to the Board of Visitors' decision to change the three building names, multiple student organizations on campus issued a list of demands of the university, asking for further steps towards a truly inclusive environment and vowing to hold the university accountable for implementing them.

And since the name change, a new petition has emerged, urging the university administration to "reaffirm this commitment to an inclusive process for the renaming of all three buildings, and to dedicate any and ALL funds raised for three buildings being renamed to scholarships, hires, or other items that directly benefit Black Indigenous Latino/a/x and other People of Color."

Student activists say university leadership needs to live up to the standards that they have set for diversity and inclusion if they truly want to "be the change."

The former Maury Hall has a new temporary name, which JMU plans to replace with a permanent one after a deliberative process. File photo by Bridget Manley.

Who's in a name

Even before the three names were officially removed from the buildings, chatter began about the renaming process, what the new names might be, and who gets to decide.

JMU sophomore and Student Government Association Senator Ryan Ritter was one of many students petitioning the administration to change the names. While he was pleased that the university moved quickly to retire the old names, he hopes the school will include minority community stakeholders in the naming process.

"I would love maybe for JMU to get outside of their own bubble … and be able to talk and collaborate with the Harrisonburg community overall on which names they want to be put on the buildings," Ritter said. "The center for multicultural student services, organizations on campus, student leaders, faculty, alumni, we would all really like for everybody to be able to have a say in what they want the names to be."

The petition that began circulating last week has already garnered more than 150 signatures. It calls for inclusivity in renaming the three buildings, and using all funds raised in the process to fund scholarships for students of color.

JMU already has naming policies in place, including philanthropic investments, along with honoring extraordinary service to the university, commemorating people outside of the university, and function-based or institutionally relevant names.

Nick Langridge, vice president for university advancement, said the Campus History Committee will begin seeking input from on- and off campus about possible commemorative names, and will submit a list of possibilities later this year.

The committee is currently looking to expand its membership "to include more Black, Indigenous, and People of Color participation," and plans to host public events, such as focus groups and dialogue sessions, to gather input from "targeted groups."

"That committee wants to broaden itself," Langridge said. "They are going to work together to produce a preliminary list of potential individuals."

Langridge said that anyone can email the group with suggestions about candidates for inclusion on the Committee. The university is also accepting suggestions for new building names.

While JMU has committed to giving at least one building a commemorative name, Langridge said the committee is also taking suggestions honoring university service and leadership.

"We don't want to commit yet to doing all three commemorative historic [names], because we might do an honorific service and leadership [name]," Langridge said. "The rumor that's false – that's out on social media right now – is misinformed, is because people heard that we were only guaranteeing that one of the buildings would be for a commemorative historical purpose. It doesn't mean that we're limiting it to only one. It could be that senior leadership in the board decides all three could be for commemorative historical [naming]. But it might be that we find that there's someone who is a part of this community – university community – that is deserving of one."

The university is also considering philanthropic investments in the naming of the buildings, and hopes to dedicate any gifts related to the re-naming process to need-based scholarships for incoming students. At the same time, Langridge noted, federal law prohibits colleges and universities from creating need-based scholarships based on race, and JMU could not specifically allocate those funds for scholarships only for incoming students of color.

"The idea of adding to the need-based scholarship ability that we have to create access for future generations of students is one that's appealing," Langridge said. "No one has mentioned two buildings going for a philanthropic purpose."

Ethan Gardner, who just graduated from the university in May, was active in the Student Government Association and was a democracy fellow with the Center for Civic Engagement.

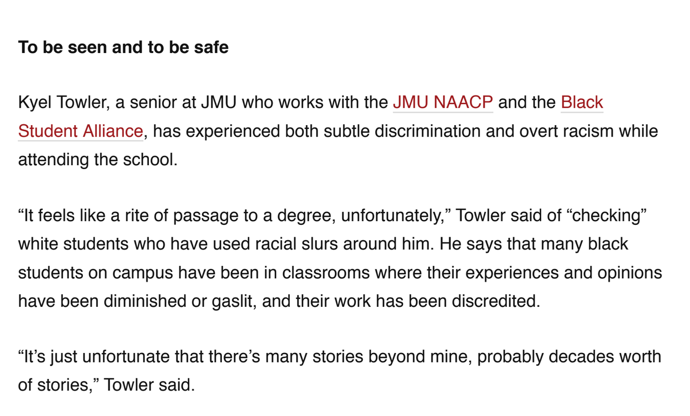
He believes the only way for the university to maintain trust is through transparency during the naming process, and inclusion of community groups, students, and faculty of color.

"I think part of the problem right now is that a lot of this is happening behind closed doors, and people don't really know, and there's not been a lot of public announcement of what this process will even look like," Gardner said. "And I think that's contributing to the situation. I think JMU needs to earn the trust of students and faculty, and to do that they need to be transparent. If donors are going to be involved, I think they need to detail exactly how they're going to be involved, and I don't think the donors should have the final decision on something like this. A decision like this, it should be truly inclusive as they promised in the universities announcement."

Meanwhile, Ritter said that when the student government was garnering signatures for the bill of opinion, they asked for name suggestions, and three came up over and over again: Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, Jr., and local educator Lucy Simms.

Additionally he believes Wilson Hall should be next on the list of name changes. The building is named for President Woodrow Wilson, a Staunton native and the 28th President of the United States. Princeton was the latest university to remove Wilson's name from a building on campus due to his segregationist policies.

"Ever since we've seen universities all across the United States recently removing any reference to Woodrow Wilson, I believe JMU should follow suit," Ritter said.



At a June protest, a spirit rock was painted black to remember the victims of police brutality. File photo by Tristan Lorei

To be seen and to be safe

Kyel Towler, a senior at JMU who works with the JMU NAACP and the Black Student Alliance, has experienced both subtle discrimination and overt racism while attending the school.

"It feels like a rite of passage to a degree, unfortunately," Towler said of "checking" white students who have used racial slurs around him. He says that many black students on campus have been in classrooms where their experiences and opinions have been diminished or gaslit, and their work has been discredited.

"It's just unfortunate that there's many stories beyond mine, probably decades worth of stories," Towler said.

Julian Denizard, a senior who is finishing his summer classes before graduating, was involved with the Center for Multicultural Student Services, the Brothers of a New Direction, and the Black Student Alliance.

Denizard said that students of color have vastly different experiences both on and off campus during their time at the university. While the names changes are a great first step, he said more needs to be done for students of color to feel as though they can call Harrisonburg a welcoming place to be.

"What I've experienced is a lot of my peers feeling a sense of not being seen, not being acknowledged properly by the university," Denizard said. "Not exactly feeling like JMU is their home in a way."

Denizard said he's felt a disconnect between the top administration and the student body, and as students pay thousands of dollars a year to attend, they should have a more direct pipeline between the administration and students for their voices to be heard.

One of the bigger demands was making the campus police and the Harrisonburg Police Department accountable for their actions, as well as no longer being "dismissive of asseverations."

"Especially in the social climate that we're facing, you have to realize that there's not gonna be exactly like, a beautiful relationship between the police force and minority – specifically black students – at the university. There's going to be that divide," Denizard said. "Holding them accountable shifts the power dynamic in a way, because no student – no person in America to begin with – should be at the mercy of law enforcement or fear them. So, with students demanding accountability on their part and kind of forcing their hand to ensure that their jobs are done properly, it makes a better environment."

Towler said any initiatives that the HPD and JMU police take need to be wholehearted and intentional in the changes they make regarding how students are treated on and off campus.

Immediately following the Board of Visitors' decision to rename the former Jackson Hall, the sign outside the building (now under renovation) was removed. File photo by Bridget Manley.

Meaningful change, not "gradualism"

Towler said the time for task forces and town halls are long past, and believes the only way for students of color to feel safe on campus is by enacting sweeping changes now.

He said the university needs to steer clear of the usual gradualism that major institutions seem to favor over rapid change or revolution.

"[Town halls and task forces] are nice, but the time for gradual change, in my opinion, is over," Towler said. "You can easily make a decision that changes so many things that betters so many people all at once. It is that easy."

"I mean, we clearly did it for coronavirus, with the university coming back, why can't we do that for systemic racism at the university?" Towler asked.

Gardner believes the school has a long way to go before they can claim true diversity on campus.

"When you look around campus, the university is about three-quarters white, and so every class I've been in, pretty much every organization I've been in, event, whatever it is, I've been part of the majority of students," Gardner said. "I've never been in the minority. That's just a fact at JMU."

While student groups should participate in discussions about improving inclusivity on campus, Towler said the administration needs to do the work of learning about systemic racism on campus rather than continually burden students of color with explaining why they should be treated equally.

"Students have had this fight for a very long time, and yes, it's definitely great that we are in the room where they are crafting these decisions, but it takes more learning on the university's part than teaching on the black students part," Towler said.

Gardner says the university wouldn't have changed the names without the persistent work of student activists and organizers, and the university should listen to students moving forward.

"We are going to continue that pressure, and I would hope that with that kind of activism, JMU will respond in kind to the interests of students, but especially and most importantly to the voices of students who are not white, who are not in the majority, and really include them in the decision making processes," Gardner said.

"I know every single one of us that have been pushing for equity truly want to see a university that we can be wholeheartedly proud of," Towler said. "We just want more people to want that future with us."

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Bridget Manley, Publisher

Bridget spent most of her adult life working as a morning show producer and reporter for radio stations in Cumberland, Md., and Annapolis, Md., before moving to Harrisonburg eight years ago. When she's not reporting the news and helping run The Citizen, she's the manager of operations for Rivercrest Farm and Event Center in Shenandoah, she is a freelance reporter for WMRA, and also hosts a podcast that shares parenting stories called "Birds In A Tree."

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OCTOBER 26, 2020

Bridgewater College's alumni, students and faculty rush to defend programs from cuts

By Bridget Manley, Publisher
Posted in Harrisonburg Issues

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By Bridget Manley, publisher

Many Bridgewater College alumni, students and faculty were surprised by the announcement this month that the college would eliminate several student organizations and some academic programs and are mobilizing to try to save some of them.

The college's decisions to move forward would mean laying off faculty — even as the college said the year-long strategic resource allocation process was transparent and included campus-wide input.

The move is part of broader changes for higher learning institutions and, to some, signals an erosion of shared decision-making between faculty and administrators as universities and colleges make decisions amid a pandemic that has disrupted campus and classroom operations. The college reports having about 1,600 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled this fall, down from 1,746 in 2019 and a high of 1,883 in 2017.

Alumni and students have been rallying around the faculty to save the affected programs — mostly in the humanities — and to save student organizations that are on the chopping block. Websites started by alumni, and petitions, such as one to withhold donations from Bridgewater College and another to save the equestrian program, have circulated on social media. Their hope is that Bridgewater's Board of Trustees might vote down the proposed plan at its meeting on Nov. 6.

As part of the strategic resource allocation process, the college's leaders recommended to the trustees the elimination of six majors in applied chemistry; French, mathematics, nutritional science, philosophy & religion, and physics. They have also recommended the phase out of five minors, 32 academic tracks and concentrations, and student organizations including the Bridgewater Equestrian, men's golf team and the dance team.

The college is not in any financial trouble, according to Abbie Parkhurst, Bridgewater's associate vice president of marketing and communications. Parkhurst said the college had to take a harder look at how to best use its resources.

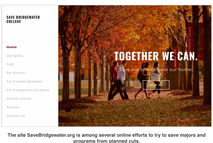
Marshall Miller, a Bridgewater College alumnus and former student body president, said the shared governance between faculty who create curriculum and the administration is being threatened and will have negative implications for the college's long-term health.

"When they discontinue certain programs, they are also allowed to sever tenured contracts with employees who are in these programs, and that action is only something that is allowed to happen in circumstances of great financial crisis," Miller said.

One professor at the college, speaking to *The Citizen* on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation and jobs at stake, said faculty have not received answers about why even programs that generate revenue are being cut.

Parkhurst said the process began before COVID-19 shut down many in-person classes around the country and affected the global economy. But she said because of the circumstances, the college's leaders wanted to reallocate resources in a strategic and proactive way now.

"Like most colleges and universities in the country, we're not in a position to be all things to all people at all times," Parkhurst said. "Higher ed. is historically very good at adding and adding, but not very good at ever taking away. We are in a position where we can't raise tuition fast enough and we can't raise enrollment fast enough to be able to benefit the programs that we want to grow and add."



The site SaveBridgewater.org is among several online efforts to try to save majors and programs from planned cuts.

The balance of shared governance

Miller said he is concerned about how the faculty are being treated and the direction the college is taking without the participation of all the university's faculty and staff.

"The administration of Bridgewater College is making a top down decision about how to allocate resources and how to discontinue academic programs that fundamentally goes against the model of shared governance," Miller said.

Professors across the state have been concerned about the erosion of shared governance during the era of COVID. Shared governance in higher education is the process by which various constituents (traditionally governing boards, senior administration, and faculty; possibly also staff, students, or others) contribute to decision making related to college or university policy and procedure.

Many professors nationwide have expressed concerns that as COVID tightens budgets and threatens the financial health of higher education institutions, their involvement in decision making processes will disintegrate.

Radford University's Board of Visitors received backlash over the decision in June to give the school's president unilateral budget cutting powers. This summer, as colleges made decisions about having students return to campus, professors at JMU collected more than 1,300 signatures on a petition asking colleges and universities for faculty input in decisions made regarding COVID-related health and safety decisions.

For Bridgewater, faculty and alumni are concerned this erosion means that administration officials are make sweeping cuts to programs without proper faculty input.

"Faculty also have significant concerns that faculty participation in the process was used to justify cuts with faculty approval, when that is not the case. Faculty have recently passed a document hoping to curtail the power of the president to eliminate programs and tenure track faculty since purview over academic programs falls to the faculty, but there is little anticipation that this will actually change anything," said the Bridgewater professor who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

That professor also said faculty on the task force that ranked programs in a report to the president have expressed dismay at the widespread cuts.

Parkhurst pushed back on the notion that faculty were not involved in the year-long process. She said the university formed two task forces: one to look at academics and one to look at administrative functions. She said both task forces included faculty and staff nominated by their peers. In addition, the leaders asked each academic director of every program to fill out a template answering questions about the programs.

"Every program on campus had the opportunity to speak for itself in this process," Parkhurst said. "And to fill out these templates, and to talk about what they bring to the college, and to talk about what they could do with more resources, and what they could do with less."

Serving the whole person

As part of its mission statement, Bridgewater College aims to "educate the whole person and recognize that the fullness of the human spirit requires an understanding of and commitment to passion, creativity, and imagination that give the world substance, vitality and depth."

"I thought the recommendations were counter to the long-term goals of the institution and they undermined the values of Bridgewater, especially in their liberal arts mission, which is to educate the whole person," Miller said.

The idea of educating the "whole person" is one adopted by many liberal arts colleges. It refers to an idea that students, while choosing a major to educate them for a career, also take classes from other areas of academia to better educate them in all aspects of life.

Parkhurst said the college is staying true to those values, adding that even though courses of study have been recommended for phase-out, Bridgewater will still be offer courses in those subjects.

"For example, philosophy and religion, which is one you have probably heard about, yes, we will be phasing out that major, we will be keeping some of the faculty members, and we will continue to offer a minor," Parkhurst said. "Students will still be getting the full breadth of the liberal arts."

Parkhurst also pointed to low student enrollment in the programs being phased out.

"These majors identified for phase-out collectively represent only 4.1% of all students declaring any major at the College over the last five years," Parkhurst said. "Academic majors determined by the board to be discontinued will include a teach-out phase. In other words, no current student will be left without a pathway to a degree in their current area of study."

Meanwhile, students in organizations who have been put on the chopping block are also organizing. The equestrian activities, which many students said was a selling point for them to come to Bridgewater in the first place, are feeling heartbroken, said Mary Monaco, a senior president of Bridgewater College Equestrian.

Monaco has been part of the program since freshman year and has donated a horse to the program. She said students were taken aback by the news that the club would be phased out. The club, which includes 65 students, competes in various programs.

"I'd be lying if I didn't say it felt a little bit like a betrayal from the college," Monaco said.

Miller said alumni feel the only way to get the administration's attention is to withhold donations if the Board of Trustees approves the administration's plan.

"We just want to make sure that the board hears us, and the board hears the faculty," Miller said. "The only way for the administration to hear our concerns is to have a petition with some teeth in it, where we threaten to withhold money from them in the future."

Miller said he has heard from professors who feel betrayed and powerless and "are hurting."

Parkhurst said the college empathizes with them and are trying to support those who might lose their jobs.

"This is a terribly hard process. We all knew that from the beginning, it is what we feel is best for the institution, but that makes it hard," Parkhurst said. "We've got colleagues and friends who are going to be losing their jobs, and that is really a hard thing, especially during a pandemic. That is understandable that people are upset. We are trying our best to support those people."

— Additional reporting by Andrew Jenner.

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Bridget spent most of her adult life working as a morning show producer and reporter for radio stations in Cumberland, Md., and Annapolis, Md., before moving to Harrisonburg eight years ago. When she's not reporting the news and helping run The Citizen, she's the manager of operations for Rivercrest Farm and Event Center in Shenandoah, she is a freelance reporter for WMRA, and also hosts a podcast that shares parenting stories called "Birds In A Tree."

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