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| **To: The W&L Community****From: The Board of Trustees****Date: June 4, 2021****Re: The Future of Washington and Lee University** |
| As explained below, Washington and Lee University will continue under its current name following a 22-6 decision by the Board of Trustees. The board also decided to expand diversity and inclusion initiatives and make changes to campus buildings, practices, and governance. |
| \*\*\*\*\* |
| Last summer, in the midst of the nationwide protests and search for racial justice, the Board of Trustees received requests from students, faculty and alumni calling for changes in the university, including renaming the institution itself and altering the design of its diploma. |
| Over the past year, we have engaged in deliberations over these requests and other important issues relating to diversity and inclusion on campus. We have been guided by our responsibility to ensure the university's future success in a complex and changing world. |
| We approached this process with open minds and a commitment to thoroughness. More than 15,000 students, faculty, staff, alumni and parents shared their perspectives in surveys, letters, and listening sessions. We have listened carefully and are grateful for the thoughtful manner in which you have shared your views and experiences with us. |
| The feedback and insights we have received confirm what Washington and Lee stands for and what unites our community: |
| * We are committed to free and critical inquiry, civil discourse, developing students with honor and integrity, and preparing graduates for responsible leadership, engaged citizenship, and service to others.
* We recognize that our graduates must be prepared to contribute to an increasingly diverse society, and that respect for others, no matter their differences, is a moral imperative.
* We are encouraged by our progress toward becoming a more inclusive community, but also aware that much work remains.
* We take pride in our school, in the faculty and staff who educate our students, and in the alumni who support us and represent us in the world.
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| We commit to advancing these values and goals. And at the same time, we must be equally clear about what we repudiate and regret: |
| * We repudiate racism, racial injustice, and the denial of fundamental dignity to any individual in our society.
* We regret the university's past veneration of the Confederacy and its role in perpetuating "The Lost Cause" myths that sustained racism.
* We regret the fact that the university itself owned human beings and benefited from their forced labor and sale.
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| While we heard broad support for advancing our commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion on campus, we found no consensus about whether changing the name of our university is consistent with our shared values. Nor is there consensus on whether changing the name will position the university to be the most successful it can be in the future. Sharp disagreements among people who love the university demonstrate the difficulty of the issue before the board. |
| In approaching the name issue, it is important to understand when and why the university acquired its name. Our association with George Washington and Robert E. Lee is specific: those names were chosen to acknowledge direct actions by each of them for the benefit of the school. In 1796, George Washington made a gift to Liberty Hall Academy that ensured its survival, in recognition of which the trustees named the school Washington Academy. In 1870, immediately following his death in office as President of Washington College, the trustees added Lee's name in recognition of his leadership in saving and transforming the school after the devastation of the Civil War. |
| Our community holds passionate and divergent opinions about our name. The association with our namesakes can be painful to those who continue to experience racism, especially to African Americans, and is seen by some as an impediment to our efforts to attract and support a diverse community. For others, our name is an appropriate recognition of the specific and significant contributions each man made directly to our institution. |
| Although our name recognizes the connections of our namesakes to the institution, it also has broader significance, representing common experiences and values that are independent of the personal histories of the two men. The university today is not a memorial to our namesakes, but a place that provides an exceptional liberal arts and legal education and fosters relationships that bind generations of students, faculty, staff, and alumni to each other. |
| Washington and Lee is one of the most highly regarded universities in America, with a national reputation for academic excellence, for our honor system, and for the character and success of our graduates. Our school increasingly [attracts diverse students](https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcolonnadeconnections.wlu.edu%2Fpage.redir%3Ftarget%3Dhttps%253a%252f%252fwww.wlu.edu%252fthe-w-l-story%252fdiversity-equity-and-inclusion%252fstudent-recruiting%252f%26srcid%3D223056%26srctid%3D1%26erid%3D14917737%26trid%3D4c7e2219-3728-4439-9ed1-1346b4840a7a&data=04%7C01%7C%7Caa8076c916c24475991708d927a061d8%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637584392052577597%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=ywcsJPnwldUzLGDgiL6Lf6%2FmnNobZJaC3B0qePYlVIE%3D&reserved=0), [faculty and staff](https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcolonnadeconnections.wlu.edu%2Fpage.redir%3Ftarget%3Dhttps%253a%252f%252fwww.wlu.edu%252fthe-w-l-story%252fdiversity-equity-and-inclusion%252femployee-hiring-and-retention%252f%26srcid%3D223056%26srctid%3D1%26erid%3D14917737%26trid%3D4c7e2219-3728-4439-9ed1-1346b4840a7a&data=04%7C01%7C%7Caa8076c916c24475991708d927a061d8%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637584392052577597%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=JT8eq5vN3pBLapy9mmKkRoqbzz3dqoThA1NSGLKgUe8%3D&reserved=0) and enjoys the devotion of our alumni. The name we have had for 151 years, and upon which our reputation is built, provides strength and resources critical to advancing our mission and ensuring that we can do good work long into the future. Therefore, we will continue as Washington and Lee University, building on our success and focusing on the actions that have the greatest potential to help all students, faculty, and staff feel welcome, included, and able to thrive. |
| We have been moved by listening to members of our community recount painful experiences at Washington and Lee. You have made a difference. Your stories have deepened our appreciation of the urgency of taking meaningful, substantive action. |
| \*\*\*\*\* |
| As we focus on the future, our goal is to build a more diverse community, enhance inclusion for everyone at W&L, and support the professional success of our students and employees. We have reviewed campus symbols, names and practices, and we are making changes to remove doubt about our separation from the Confederacy and the Lost Cause. |
| **$225 Million for Strategic Plan priorities: Scholarships, Curriculum, and Student Support** |
| * We will raise $160 million to achieve need-blind admissions, giving us the resources to admit the strongest applicants, regardless of family financial circumstances. We have already raised $30 million, which has enabled significant increases in our financial aid budget.
* We will raise $25 million to guarantee funding for an internship or equivalent experience for every W&L student.
* We will dedicate the earnings on $40 million of our endowment over the next five years to accelerate enhancements to the curriculum and enrichment of the experience for all students at W&L. This funding will provide summer opportunities and make pre-orientation trips and the popular first-year experience course available to all students, in order to foster early and deep engagement on the part of all students in the life of the university. It will also support a new academic center for the study of Southern race relations, culture, and politics.
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| **Changes to Campus Symbols, Buildings and Practices** |
| * We will adopt a new design for the university diploma without images.
* 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.
* Founders Day, traditionally held on the birthday of Robert E. Lee, will be discontinued.
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| **Strengthen the Board's work on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** |
| * We will continue to expand board representation of women and people of color.
* We will form a Board committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, which will bring additional perspective to our work and help us oversee, direct and support the administration's initiatives.
* We will lead an examination of campus residential and social institutions to increase accessibility, inclusivity, and choice for all students.
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| These actions are in addition to [significant steps already taken by the University](https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcolonnadeconnections.wlu.edu%2Fpage.redir%3Ftarget%3Dhttps%253a%252f%252fwww.wlu.edu%252fthe-w-l-story%252fdiversity-equity-and-inclusion%252f%26srcid%3D223056%26srctid%3D1%26erid%3D14917737%26trid%3D4c7e2219-3728-4439-9ed1-1346b4840a7a&data=04%7C01%7C%7Caa8076c916c24475991708d927a061d8%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637584392052587546%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=n4f%2FE93XHfVUOrq3BAGuMMUTv6CiLnW8Z6cQSdQ8Uz4%3D&reserved=0) to improve the on-campus experience of our students, faculty and staff. |
| \*\*\*\*\* |
| At W&L we enthusiastically embrace our future of diversity, equity and inclusion. We do this not in spite of the complexity of our history and our namesakes but precisely because of that complexity. We will continue to conduct rigorous and nuanced explorations of our history, with the humility and honesty to acknowledge both our successes and those moments when the university failed to live up to its ideals. Once completed, the modern campus museum, which is part of our Strategic Plan, will help us preserve and present our history comprehensively and accurately. |
| The events of the last year have divided our community. The global pandemic and the national reckoning on issues of racism and social justice, combined with our own consideration of critical matters at W&L have challenged us all. These divides will take time to heal, and we ask everyone to respect the opinions and perspectives of others. We are confident that W&L will emerge stronger as a result of our active engagement on these issues, the work we have done together, and the actions and commitments we are taking. We look forward to continuing to engage our community on these critical issues as we execute on our Strategic Plan in support of our mission. |

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| [About W&L](https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcolonnadeconnections.wlu.edu%2Fpage.redir%3Ftarget%3Dhttps%253a%252f%252fwww.wlu.edu%26srcid%3D223056%26srctid%3D1%26erid%3D14917737%26trid%3D4c7e2219-3728-4439-9ed1-1346b4840a7a&data=04%7C01%7C%7Caa8076c916c24475991708d927a061d8%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637584392052587546%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=qpjozWJuZOXNEUUWws9v5bNX8kQaCmAzUX6D9x0lgQ0%3D&reserved=0) | [Support W&L](https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcolonnadeconnections.wlu.edu%2Fpage.redir%3Ftarget%3Dhttps%253a%252f%252fwww.wlu.edu%252fgive%26srcid%3D223056%26srctid%3D1%26erid%3D14917737%26trid%3D4c7e2219-3728-4439-9ed1-1346b4840a7a&data=04%7C01%7C%7Caa8076c916c24475991708d927a061d8%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637584392052587546%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=DdcqC%2BvpFSvxspI93%2FUu2kPu07QWprV4KB4%2B3Wh5%2Fp8%3D&reserved=0) |

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| Washington and Lee University204 W. Washington St.Lexington, Virginia 24450540-458-8400 |
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