



# WILLIAM & MARY

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## REPORT OF THE W&M FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE NOVEMBER 2023

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W&M BOARD OF VISITORS, FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE

The recent tragic news from the Middle East weighs heavily on many faculty, as it does on the broader W&M community. Reports that some W&M students have believed themselves to be subject to harassment or verbal assaults on campus are distressing, as is the news of an incident of vandalism apparently tied to this issue. Tensions are high for many on campus, and there have been calls from outside the university for the administration to restrict or control the speech of members of our community. Vice President Ambler recently sent an excellent message to the students (shared with the faculty) discussing the boundaries between First Amendment protected speech and the limited forms of speech which are not protected and/or which violate W&M's values of belonging and respect.

As faculty members, we can help by modelling to our students ways to discuss difficult issues. A defining ideal of the Academy is to be able to tackle issues for which people may have opposing perspectives, passionately and profoundly held, while maintaining respect for differences and ensuring that speech does not devolve into the unprofessional or hateful.

Forefront on the minds of many faculty is the proposed "New School", to be comprised of the present Departments of Computer Science, Applied Science, and Physics, and the Data Science Program. The faculty have had numerous opportunities to weigh in with questions and concerns about the School. The advent of a new School clearly presents many opportunities by focusing on areas of burgeoning student interest and demand for degrees. Concerns about the new School, as I have heard them, center mainly around questions of whether significant resources would be drawn away from other departments and programs in Arts & Sciences, and whether the new structure would "silo" faculty in the new School away from their colleagues in Arts & Sciences in ways that might inhibit rather than improve collaboration in research and teaching.

The Constitution of the Faculty Assembly states that "*The Assembly shall assess the impact of proposed programs and proposed changes of existing programs that affect more than one faculty or significantly affect the university's resource allocation or educational mission. The Assembly will evaluate the impact of university plans on education policy, student affairs, personnel policy, and resource allocation within the university.*" The creation of a new School seems to be a clear case for such an assessment. However, the Faculty Assembly has not yet been provided with sufficient information on the proposed new School to make an informed assessment. Under the assumption that the Board endorses the creation of the School, the Assembly has requested that they be invited to nominate some of the membership of the Implementation Committee which presumably will be formed to flesh out the subsequent proposal to SCHEV, the structure of the new School, and its relationship to the rest of the university.

On a different topic, the Board has charged the President with overseeing a rewriting of the Faculty Handbook. The Handbook defines much of the shared governance structure of William & Mary, the rights and responsibilities of the faculty (and other members of the W&M community), and many of the critical policies and procedures related to faculty hiring, evaluation, promotion, termination, and other aspects of our employment. The Handbook was last rewritten in a comprehensive manner in 2006-2008, with approval of that version by the BOV in their February 2008 meeting. While some amendments have been made to the Handbook since then, it does seem timely to review it once again *in toto*. The Assembly will work closely with President Rowe and with the working group which she has formed to expedite this review and revision process, while following all the procedures for such modifications defined in the existing Handbook.