

18 October 2022

Dear Members of The Board of Trustees:

We want to thank you for your service to our University.

As you know, the renaming of Lee Chapel and the proposed interior construction plans have received significant attention from alumni of all persuasions. These are momentous and emotional issues, ones that have aroused decades of alumni.

The Board's decision last year appears to have been premised on the theory that Lee Chapel is "A Shrine to The Confederacy." There does not appear to be any significant factual support for this conclusion in over 150 years of writings about Lee Chapel, its origin, or its use. There is no evidence it has been widely regarded as such. Indeed, David Cox, in his study of Lee Chapel, concludes "Lee took the presidency of the college to promote unity in his day. The Chapel stands as an outward and visible sign of his commitment, a sign which has served throughout its history as a place to bring people together: to be a *place* of unity as well as a sign." (p.241)

It is undisputed that Lee worshipped there daily, and that Lee saw it as a symbol of reconciliation, reunification and faith, concepts that are as important today as they were in Lee's time. It is also the most significant tourist attraction in Lexington, bringing more than 40,000 visitors a year, with the attendant economic benefit to The City of Lexington and Rockbridge County.

For over 150 years, Lee Chapel, which has been characterized as "the heart of the University" by former President Ken Ruscio (as well as many other University officials through the years), has been the focal point of student gatherings. Lee Chapel was where freshmen were introduced to The Honor System, parents learned about "The State of the University" from the University

President and the President of The Student Body, alumni and student leaders were inducted into Omicron Delta Kappa (founded at Washington and Lee over 100 years ago), and new graduates were commissioned as Second Lieutenants in The United States Army, among many other celebratory events.

For years, Lee Chapel has been too small to hold even a majority of the student body. The Administration and the Board has stated that Lee Chapel, its name, and Valentine's recumbent statue of Lee, offended some students while others felt uncomfortable being required to attend events there. For those reasons, and perhaps others, the Administration and Board removed Lee's name from the Chapel, announced plans to build a permanent wall between the podium and the *Recumbent Lee*, and sought permission to construct a new center for institutional history and parking garage on Lee Avenue.

The University's plans for these buildings have been rejected by The City of Lexington, as has the plan for a permanent wall behind the podium in Lee Chapel. Construction of an interior wall in Lee Chapel has been set aside for fire code, safety and other reasons. The University's plans for Lee Avenue have also attracted strong City and resident opposition and are also unlikely to come to fruition. Perhaps these barriers were not reasonably anticipated, but they are now a cause to reevaluate prior decisions.

The name change, removal of the historical plaques, and proposed interior wall have greatly upset a significant number of alumni, including several of the University's largest donors, former members of the Board of Trustees and Class Agents, as well as thousands of generous and devoted alums. Furthermore, these decisions have failed to address the glaring issue of a meeting location large enough to accommodate significant portions, if not the entire student body, as well as a place where all can feel comfortable.

A small group of alumni have recommended a proposal to resolve all of these issues. This proposal includes a commitment to raise between \$75 and \$80 million

dollars for Washington and Lee; which, when combined with the budgeted amount of \$20 million for an Institutional History Museum, would envision building a world class convocation center and museum space on the West Campus near Liberty Hall accommodating 800 persons. Such a space would allow a return of Lee Chapel in both name and role and reaffirm to public opinion its status as a National Historic Landmark.

This group has proposed an architectural firm to begin work on the same. This type of project would allow all alumni and the BOT to work together in unison on a practical and traditions focused restoration project. The compelling reason for restoring Lee Chapel to its historic role is to broadcast a powerful signal of national reconciliation and unity. Its further aim will be to reaffirm recognition of the sometimes-bumpy pathway America has followed on its collective pursuit of becoming a successful constitutional republic. This latter goal, which will always be before us, will inspire and direct our University to provide a proper education to allow its graduates to play a significant role in achieving this end through its family, community and professional activities.

We understand that this proposal has been rejected out of hand by President Dudley and Rector McAlevey. We do not know if this opportunity was discussed with the Board of Trustees, and we wanted to ensure you are aware of it so you can evaluate these significant changes to the landscape since the original decision of renaming and repurposing Lee Chapel was announced in June, 2021.

We urge the Board to discuss this proposal and seriously consider it at your October 2022 meeting. As one very successful business alum has noted to President Dudley: "I learned from an early age that failing to correct a known mistake has worse consequences than the mistake itself". It is now time to exercise wisdom and rebuild the prior unity of our alumni and work together to build a world class museum and auditorium facility and, in so doing, return the heart and soul of Washington and Lee to the community, alumni and the nation.

We are happy to provide any additional information you need; to discuss these matters at your convenience; as well as make a formal presentation to the Board of Trustees later this month.

Thomas P. Rideout '63 & P'91

Tom Rideout

For the Executive Committee

The Generals Redoubt

Preserving our Legacy, Assuring the Future

26 Oct 2022

Dear Tom and Rex,

Thank you for your email. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I write to acknowledge receipt of your message and to let you know that the Board remains committed to its stated course of action regarding University Chapel.

Sincerely,

Jessica Willett

Jessica L. Willett '95
Secretary of the University
Washington and Lee University

