

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
AGENDA FOR THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING

October 23, 2024

3:00-4:15 p.m.

<https://gmu.zoom.us/j/91461402425>

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- I. Call to order
- II. Approval of the Minutes: September 25, 2024
- III. Opening Remarks & Announcements from the Senate President
- IV. Special Orders
 - A. Election of members to Faculty Standing Committees
 - B. Election of members to University Standing Committees
 - C. Election of Faculty Representatives to Committees
 - D. Debate on the adoption of the Kalven Committee Report
- V. Committee Reports
 - A. Executive Committee
 - B. Academic Policies
 - C. Budget and Resources
 - D. Faculty Matters
 - E. Nominations
 - F. Organization and Operations
- VI. New Business
- VII. Remarks for the Good of the General Faculty
- VIII. Adjournment

* Note: For security purposes, all attendees must login using any valid Zoom account to join the meeting. Having trouble joining the meeting with the link above?

1. If using GMU Zoom Account (required for all Faculty Senators)
 - a. Go to <https://gmu.zoom.us>
 - b. Click on [Sign into Your Account]
 - c. Use GMU login credentials to login. (May require 2FA authentication)
 - d. Once logged in – click on “JOIN A MEETING”
 - e. Enter the Meeting ID (see highlighted above) and click JOIN
2. Joining Senate Meeting using an account other than GMU Zoom Account

- a. Go to <https://zoom.us>
- b. Click on [SIGN IN]
- c. Use credentials for your existing zoom account
- d. Once logged in – click on “JOIN A MEETING”
- e. Enter the Meeting ID (see highlighted above) and click JOIN
- f. If asked for Passcode: enter the Passcode (highlighted above)

APPENDIX A

Kalven Committee: Report on the University's Role in Political and Social Action

Report of a faculty committee, under the chairmanship of Harry Kalven, Jr. Committee appointed by President George W. Beadle. Report published in the Record, Vol. I, No. 1, November 11, 1967.

The Committee was appointed in February 1967 by President George W. Beadle and requested to prepare "a statement on the University's role in political and social action." The Committee conceives its function as principally that of providing a point of departure for discussion in the University community of this important question.

The Committee has reviewed the experience of the University in such matters as its participation in neighborhood redevelopment, its defense of academic freedom in the Broyles Bill inquiry of the 1940s and again in the Jenner Committee hearings of the early 1950s, its opposition to the Disclaimer Affidavit in the National Defense Education Act of 1958, its reappraisal of the criteria by which it rents the off-campus housing it owns, and its position on furnishing the rank of male students to Selective Service. In its own discussions, the Committee has found a deep consensus on the appropriate role of the university in political and social action. It senses some popular misconceptions about that role and wishes, therefore, simply to reaffirm a few old truths and a cherished tradition.

A university has a great and unique role to play in fostering the development of social and political values in a society. The role is defined by the distinctive mission of the university and defined too by the distinctive characteristics of the university as a community. It is a role for the long term.

The mission of the university is the discovery, improvement, and dissemination of knowledge. Its domain of inquiry and scrutiny includes all aspects and all values of society. A university faithful to its mission will provide enduring challenges to social values, policies, practices, and institutions. By design and by effect, it is the institution which creates discontent with the existing social arrangements and proposes new ones. In brief, a good university, like Socrates, will be upsetting.

The instrument of dissent and criticism is the individual faculty member or the individual student. The university is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic. It is, to go back once again to the classic phrase, a community of scholars. To perform its mission in the society, a university must sustain an extraordinary environment of freedom of inquiry and maintain an independence from political fashions, passions, and pressures. A university, if it is to be true to its faith in intellectual inquiry, must embrace, be hospitable to, and encourage the widest diversity of views within its own community. It is a community but only for the limited, albeit great, purposes of teaching and research. It is not a club, it is not a trade association, it is not a lobby.

Since the university is a community only for these limited and distinctive purposes, it is a community which cannot take collective action on the issues of the day without endangering the conditions for its existence and effectiveness. There is no mechanism by which it can reach a collective position without inhibiting that full freedom of dissent on which it thrives. It cannot insist that all of its members favor a given view of social policy;

if it takes collective action, therefore, it does so at the price of censuring any minority who do not agree with the view adopted. In brief, it is a community which cannot resort to majority vote to reach positions on public issues.

The neutrality of the university as an institution arises then not from a lack of courage nor out of indifference and insensitivity. It arises out of respect for free inquiry and the obligation to cherish a diversity of viewpoints. And this neutrality as an institution has its complement in the fullest freedom for its faculty and students as individuals to participate in political action and social protest. It finds its complement, too, in the obligation of the university to provide a forum for the most searching and candid discussion of public issues.

Moreover, the sources of power of a great university should not be misconceived. Its prestige and influence are based on integrity and intellectual competence; they are not based on the circumstance that it may be wealthy, may have political contacts, and may have influential friends.

From time to time instances will arise in which the society, or segments of it, threaten the very mission of the university and its values of free inquiry. In such a crisis, it becomes the obligation of the university as an institution to oppose such measures and actively to defend its interests and its values. There is another context in which questions as to the appropriate role of the university may possibly arise, situations involving university ownership of property, its receipt of funds, its awarding of honors, its membership in other organizations. Here, of necessity, the university, however it acts, must act as an institution in its corporate capacity. In the exceptional instance, these corporate activities of the university may appear so incompatible with paramount social values as to require careful assessment of the consequences.

These extraordinary instances apart, there emerges, as we see it, a heavy presumption against the university taking collective action or expressing opinions on the political and social issues of the day, or modifying its corporate activities to foster social or political values, however compelling and appealing they may be.

These are admittedly matters of large principle, and the application of principle to an individual case will not be easy.

It must always be appropriate, therefore, for faculty or students or administration to question, through existing channels such as the Committee of the Council or the Council, whether in light of these principles the University in particular circumstances is playing its proper role.

Our basic conviction is that a great university can perform greatly for the betterment of society. It should not, therefore, permit itself to be diverted from its mission into playing the role of a second-rate political force or influence.

Harry Kalven, Jr., *Chairman*

John Hope Franklin

Gwin J. Kolb

George Stigler

Jacob Getzels

Julian Goldsmith

Gilbert F. White

Special Comment by Mr. Stigler:

I agree with the report as drafted, except for the statements in the fifth paragraph

from the end as to the role of the university when it is acting in its corporate capacity. As to this matter, I would prefer the statement in the following form:

The university when it acts in its corporate capacity as employer and property owner should, of course, conduct its affairs with honor. The university should not use these corporate activities to foster any moral or political values because such use of its facilities will impair its integrity as the home of intellectual freedom.

APPENDIX B

Letter from President Simmons



President Gregory Washington

Office of the President George Mason University 4400 University Drive Fairfax, VA 22030
United States

October 2, 2024

Dear President Washington:

At the Board of Visitors meeting on September 26th 2024, we discussed the issue of adopting the principles of the 1967 Kalven Committee of the University of Chicago. There were a number of questions raised about what the adoption would mean for the university and the faculty were specifically invited to share our views on the matter.

The Executive Committee of Faculty Senate met on October 2 to discuss the issue and decided to initiate a process to develop what we would call “the Mason Way” to approach the issue of institutional neutrality. We are in agreement that a document produced over fifty years ago and under very different circumstances should be examined carefully before being adopted. We also plan to hold a formal debate on the issue in our October Faculty Senate meeting.

In preparation for the Senate debate on the issue, we request that you share your view on what adoption of the Kalven Committee principles would mean for the university.

Sincerely,



Solon Simmons
President of the Faculty Senate
George Mason University

APPENDIX C

Letter from President Washington



GREGORY WASHINGTON, Ph.D.
President
4400 University Drive, MS 3A1, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Phone: 703-993-8700; Email: president@gmu.edu

October 8, 2024

Professor Solon Simmons
President of the Faculty Senate
George Mason University

Dear Professor Simmons:

This is a direct response to your request for me to provide formal feedback on the concept of **Institutional Neutrality**. Towards that end, I will outline the arguments for and against our university adopting such an endeavor. I will also offer a final assessment of the direction we should consider as we move forward.

The definition:

It is important to define what we mean by "institutional neutrality," as each word in the phrase can be misconstrued:

"Institutional" – In question is not whether faculty or students should be free to speak out, but rather university leadership.

"Neutrality" – This word is being equated with silence, but the meaning – and I believe the true benefit of neutrality – is to refrain from taking sides on events outside of university business. Neutrality does not mean silence. In fact, in times of urgency or distress, university leadership must be able to speak to the impact of outside events that affect significant university populations or operations, while remaining neutral, in order to effectively lead what equates to a small city of students, faculty, staff, contractors, and campus visitors.

Arguments for institutional neutrality:

1. *Greater University Focus:* The chance of the university being distracted by external political pressures will be reduced. This provides the institution with more time to focus on the pursuit of knowledge. Students from 114 countries attend George Mason University. If the leadership spends a significant amount of time addressing the challenges of just a fraction, it can be a huge distraction.
2. *Simpler Management Environment:* The world in which we live is incredibly polarized from a political standpoint and as such any stance the institution takes, whether neutral or

not, will be upsetting to some group complicating the management environment of the leadership team.

3. *Support of Individual Freedom and Responsibility:* Neutrality encourages students, faculty and staff to exercise their freedoms independent of university influence. This encourages personal responsibility for one's actions.

Arguments against institutional neutrality:

1. *Limitations on addressing institutional values:* While the original version of the Kalven report expressly allows for an institution to engage when its core institutional values or academic freedom is threatened, adaptations of the report remove or underemphasize this exception. Should an institution be silent even when its core tenets, ideals and values are threatened?
2. *The current process is occurring within a politically polarized moment:* Institutional neutrality since its inception has been politically divisive. Early adoption of neutrality by many institutions followed pressure from faculty, staff and students at those institutions to officially support the Civil Rights movement or not support the Vietnam War. Most institutions who have adopted neutrality over the last few years have done so via pressure or outright requirements from state leaders who have politicized the issue. Any acceptance of a process that is itself political for the express purpose of avoiding politics should invoke a heavy amount of skepticism.
3. *Perceived Indifference:* When institutional neutrality becomes silence on issues of social or political import, it can make the university project indifference to those in need of its help, support, and sense of belonging in an environment they find suddenly threatening. This projection of indifference, whether perceived or actual, can be perceived as a lack of support to the students, faculty, and staff who are affected by them. For those from marginalized groups this can lead to feelings of institutional abandonment, or even hostility, which in turn can do lasting damage to employee and student recruitment and retention, alumni engagement, and private donor support.
4. *Missed Opportunities for Responsibility and Leadership:* In today's environment, institutions are expected to have significant social and cultural influence, and many argue that they have the responsibility to take a leadership role in addressing societal challenges in times of moral urgency.

My Assessment:

The original Kalven Committee report's principle of neutrality was developed for a specific type of institution at a specific time in our nation's development. George Mason University is simply a different institution. For example, private institutions don't have to abide by the First Amendment and some other parts of the Constitution in the way public universities must. Thus, they may need an additional set of principles that protect their faculty and students relative to free inquiry and expression. Private Institutions are often beholden to their trustees and benefactors. Large Public Institutions are beholden to the citizens of the states that support them

and that's a broader more complex responsibility. I can't imagine this institution with its focus on upward mobility and inclusivity not addressing the institutional impact of atrocities surrounding the Israel-Gaza war or the death of George Floyd. Both had profound effects on campus life and operations. Students sought out our support services. They sought out guidance on how they can express themselves within the guardrails of laws and university policies. They sought out a greater understanding of what is unfolding, and a stronger support system than what was available to them when they left home to join our community. As an educational family, we have collectively accepted and embraced these responsibilities not from a platform of indoctrination, but from a platform of neutrality and its paying huge dividends for our students.

Thus, my assessment is that we should adhere to – *and have adhered to* – neutrality for social and political issues that affect our campus without being silent about their impacts on university life. Our core values describe a standard that can be utilized to determine when university leadership should speak and when it should not. I also agree with the original assertion of the Kalven Committee that an institution can't be silent when our core institutional values or academic freedom are threatened. Towards that end, we need a modified philosophy that incorporates who we are: A large, diverse and inclusive institution dedicated to both free inquiry and inclusivity. We thus need a set of "Mason Principles" as you have so eloquently described it. I believe that we (the faculty, staff, students, administration and the board of visitors) can develop such a framework and that it can be a model for similar institutions nationally.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory Washington", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Gregory Washington GW/sg