



March 24, 2021

Dear Students,

I am writing to update you on two important issues currently progressing on our campus – Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) student support initiatives, and updated information on the Black Student Coalition's (BSC) "Protect Our Web" movement.

As students in the law school, you may feel removed from the happenings of the larger University. However, we are all part of the University community and therefore these issues are relevant to you. My goals are to share the background and trajectory of these movements and initiatives, as well as provide those students who want to engage with and provide support to the BSC and AAPI population within our community with the information they need to do so.

While some communications have been made on Law School listservs and social media accounts, I wanted to make sure you were all abreast of communications and activities promoted through other university channels as well. I have summarized events below.

#### **AAPI Student Support Initiatives**

On March 18, AVP of Student Development Tina Cade and Dean of International Education Martha Merritt sent a message to all students in support of the AAPI community, attached here. The Chaplaincy held a non-religious "Sacred Pause" session on Friday, March 19 centered on anti-Asian violence.

On March 19, a [statement in support of the AAPI community](#) was spearheaded by Professor [Samuel Abrash](#). The statement includes links to helpful resources, and it currently has hundreds of signatures.

#### **Update on the BSC's "Protect Our Web" Movement**

The Black Student Coalition (BSC) released their initial Statement on Black Student Welfare on Thursday, March 4. I emailed you all on Monday, March 15 with a summary of the "Protect Our Web" movement. However, significant developments have taken place since that time.

Earlier, on March 9, Dr. Peter LeViness, Director of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), reached out to the BSC leadership to discuss their demands for support of Black students' mental health.

On March 15, a [letter of support](#) for the BSC, spearheaded by Professors [Kathleen Skerrett](#) and [Jane Berry](#) and signed by hundreds of University of Richmond faculty and staff, was sent to President Crutcher and the Faculty Senate, as well as other university leaders.

On Wednesday March 17, President Crutcher released a campus-wide message, attached here, which declined the BSC's demand (and the demand of the faculty and staff supporting the BSC movement) to rename Ryland and (now) Mitchell-Freeman Halls. The president's message included [a linked statement from the Board of Trustees](#). In this statement, the Board stated that their naming decision was consistent with the university's educational mission.

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On Thursday March 18, the [BSC released a statement that in response to the Board's statement](#) stating that the Board's decision is a "non-starter," and the BSC announced that members will begin to disaffiliate from their extracurricular contributions to University life as of March 25, ahead of their initial timeline of April 1. The BSC continues to provide information and resources on their [Instagram](#) and [Linktree](#).

On Friday, March 19, the Faculty Senate moved to revise and reconsider the credit/non-credit option for undergraduate students this Spring. The faculty senate voted 16-1 to approve. Although the Senate's decision does not apply to the Law School, I would note that the Law School has been following a similar approach for years. Under the Law School's [pass option policy](#), students can change up to one grade per year to a "Pass" in any elective course. Additionally, I encourage any student feeling overwhelmed and seeking academic assistance to please contact me to discuss options.

The Faculty Senate also adopted a resolution concerning recognition of and relief for the mental suffering of our students. Further, University Faculty Senate President Thad Williamson read a resolution demanding the renaming of the buildings. The Senate approved the resolution unanimously.

[The Richmond Times Dispatch published an article yesterday on the university's naming decisions](#) that summarizes many of these events and provides some additional context on the topic of university building renaming in Virginia.

The Board of Trustees will be on campus this Friday, March 26 to meet with stakeholders – including BSC leaders, members of the University Staff Advisory Council (USAC), and members of the Faculty Senate.

I hope this summary provides you a better understanding of some of these important events taking place throughout our University community. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with questions, or discuss any of these matters further.

Sincerely,

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