

An Open Letter to President Reveley and the Board of Visitors

Please make any changes in the comment section and do not change wording in actual document without writers' permission.

April 7, 2015

To President Reveley and the Board of Visitors:

We are a group of disheartened and frustrated students, faculty, and staff disappointed by the lack of care and attention devoted to the issue of sexual violence on our campus.

William & Mary, like many colleges and universities across the nation, places too much emphasis on public perception and steady finances. It cherishes respectability and stability rather than the health, wellness, and basic rights of its community members. In projecting its image, William & Mary draws from a troubled history and a shameful tradition rather than an inspired vision of the future.

These distorted values directly result in sexual violence on our campus.

In order to adequately address our community needs, we demand that you, President Reveley, acknowledge and support sexual assault prevention and survivors of sexual violence with positive language. You must validate survivor experiences. We need strong narratives beginning with you, President Reveley, that reach out into the community and acknowledge sexual violence as a pervasive problem on our campus and lead actions remedying this problem.

We are tired of press releases, damage control, and other forms of evasion.

We want transparency, honesty, and vulnerability.

President Reveley, do not deny the power you hold. Student activists are devoting countless hours of their time to meetings and small movements like this letter. Alumni remain an untapped resource, whose donations and support determine the future of the College. Despite this, the immense burden of forcing change still lies upon the shoulders of students. An email composed in ten minutes, punctuated by your signature, and sent out to the alumni network could instantly direct important donations toward efforts to end sexual violence. After a screening of *The Hunting Ground*, you said, "Heaven knows money is not standing in our way." Why are you not allocating alumni donations to ending sexual violence on campus? What is standing in our way?

When you stated in your December *Message to the Campus Community* that William & Mary will "continue to learn and lead" on this issue, what exactly did you mean? Are we learning when we uphold The Haven as the ultimate remedy for addressing campus sexual violence while ignoring other educational initiatives to prevent assault in the first place? Is administration leading by withholding accurate statistics about sexual violence on campus?

To lead on this issue, you must instruct the Dean of Students Office to place the statistics relating to sexual violence at William & Mary on our website. We want full access to the number of individuals that have reported an assault, how many of those people asked for the adjudication process, how many of those cases found the assaulter responsible, and how many responsible parties were expelled. Complete transparency is necessary to facilitate an honest culture of prevention and healing on campus. Additionally, the Dean of Students Office must strive to accurately describe and expedite the adjudication process so that survivors can more easily bring justice and closure into their lives. Survivors must be aided by the administration in their healing processes rather than be met with obstacles and a seemingly impossible process to navigate.

President Reveley, you were quoted in the Flat Hat as saying that The College is “doing as good a job as anybody,” when it comes to addressing sexual violence on campus. Let us be clear: that is absolutely true. We are completely average, and average in this situation is failure--failure to respect the needs of your students. Average means students are being harassed and assaulted under your leadership, with your knowledge, while you choose to ignore, minimize, or deny it.

For William & Mary to be truly excellent in leading on this issue, we demand that the administration publicly identify the locations on and off campus where sexual assault has been reported so that students are informed of unsafe spaces. This would demonstrate to the community that the administration does not veil or defend perpetrators and that William & Mary supports the wellness of its students.

Finally, the Board of Visitors must change William & Mary’s mission statement to reflect our community’s dedication to promoting students’ health and well-being, rather than just highlighting academic success. Such an addition would represent the College’s dedication toward health and wellness that the President and Board should support.

If you consider releasing a statement in response to this letter, we ask that you do not take the time to deny anything. Don’t tell us what you are doing. Don’t even tell us what you will do if it is not in line with the strong and meaningful actions we have outlined here. President Reveley and The Board, we need you to act on these things not as an appeal to the public or to check off a Title IX requirement, but because they are right.

Do right by your students and your community. Act.

Regards,

[Insert organizations/individuals that sign off here]