

## **Resolution of No Confidence in the Leadership of President E. Gordon Gee West Virginia University, University Assembly**

**WHEREAS** the University Assembly affirms the need for a fiscally responsible and visionary leader who understands the importance of a comprehensive liberal arts education and the responsibility of the university to WVU students as well as to the residents, taxpayers, and youth of the state of West Virginia;

**WHEREAS** the University Assembly affirms the university values of respect, transparency, inclusivity, and accountability; the WVU vision of being “purposeful in our studies and our work so that we can partner with our communities—both near and far—to bring needed and valued solutions to real-life problems within the pillars of education, healthcare and prosperity”; as well as the university mission to create “a diverse and inclusive culture that advances education, healthcare and prosperity for all by providing access and opportunity; by advancing high-impact research; and by leading transformation in West Virginia and the world through local, state and global engagement”;

**WHEREAS** the University Assembly affirms the need to put the best interests of students first in our institutional decision-making;

**WHEREAS** President E. Gordon Gee has mismanaged the university’s finances—while also refusing to accept responsibility for the current financial situation of the university—in the following ways:

- Falsely and irresponsibly claiming in 2014 and again in 2016 that he would grow WVU's enrollment to at least 40,000 by 2020<sup>1</sup> to justify expansion and spending hundreds of millions of dollars on projects that would increase WVU's debt load by 55%<sup>2</sup>; yet during his presidency, student enrollments have steadily decreased:
- Gee's presidency has corresponded with an upward redistribution of resources where, as student tuition has risen and the majority of employee salaries have remained below market-competitive rates,<sup>3</sup> the university debt has increased, senior administrative positions have increased,<sup>4 5 6</sup> and senior administrators have been awarded hefty pay raises<sup>7</sup> with little, if any, accountability for their performance;

**WHEREAS** President Gee has failed to provide honest and transparent communication with the university community including students, parents, faculty, and staff in the following ways:

- Failure to fully and honestly disclose the source of the budget shortfall of \$45 million in one year and \$75 million by FY2028, purporting that it was largely a result of student population decline—which the administration could have predicted based on birth rate data—but leaving out that significant contributors included poor planning, faulty decision making, and financial

<sup>1</sup> [“The WVU Budget Crisis.”](#) (2023, May 24).

<sup>2</sup> Seybold, M. (2023, Aug 13). [“Gordon Gee's Draw Check Scheme.”](#) *The American Vandal*.

<sup>3</sup> [“Faculty and administrative pay.”](#) AAUP, West Virginia University Chapter.

<sup>4</sup> Corrigan, L.M. (2023, Aug 16). [“The Evisceration of a Public University.”](#) *The Nation*.

<sup>5</sup> [“West Virginia University Office of the Provost Organizational Chart.”](#) (2014). *Wayback Machine*.

<sup>6</sup> [“Organizational Chart.”](#) (2022, May 19). Office of the Provost, West Virginia University.

<sup>7</sup> [“West Virginia University \(WVU\) Highest Paid Employees.”](#) OpenPayrolls.com.

mismanagement on the administration's own part in addition to reduced State funding<sup>8</sup>;

- Failure to clearly communicate how recommended cuts correspond with the larger goals of Academic Transformation, as he supported cuts to competitive, revenue-generating programs and units that bring millions of dollars to the university effectively subsidizing other units with no changes to units that operate at a deficit, and as his administration stated that the goal of Academic Transformation is to align academic programs “with student demand, career opportunities and market trends that also serve our land-grant and research missions,” while they refused to accept student testimonials and feedback as part of their formal decision-making process, provided recommendations that seem disconnected from “market trends,” and recommended cuts to programs that are instrumental to our land-grant mission;
- Failure to fully and honestly disclose the impacts of these cuts and the broader Academic Transformation project on students and faculty, claiming that:
  - The measures are efforts to put students first and that they will impact only 2% of students, when many more will be affected by reduced course availability, lack of access to a full and meaningful liberal arts education, negative perceptions about the value of a degree from this university, limited access to support as a result of the remaining faculty and staff being overworked and overextended, larger class sizes and a higher student-to-faculty ratio, lack of access to study abroad opportunities, lack of access to printed materials, dejected campus climate, limited access to preparation for post-graduate opportunities, and more;
  - The proposed RIFs will impact only 7% of faculty, when the percentage of full-time teaching faculty who are being laid off during this phase is closer to 16%, with many more to be affected by having to take up the workload of both faculty and staff who have been cut, low morale, and the knowledge that we are disempowered as we continue to work at the whims of senior leadership;
  - The proposed cuts will benefit West Virginians and will keep young people here, when they are far more likely to lead to increased state departures as they limit young people's access to a comprehensive education,<sup>9</sup> quality language education, global perspectives, and the option to further their education in much-needed areas in-state;<sup>10</sup>

**WHEREAS** despite claims to the contrary, the Gee administration has refused to carry out a transparent Academic Transformation that: (1) clearly communicates the future vision of the university, the efficient allocations of resources therein, the precise budgetary goals for each unit to “increase efficiencies,” and why programs that are eliminated are of especially limited value; (2) provides stable and transparent criteria for cuts to programs and personnel; (3) respects professional norms and sufficiently considers the expertise of the faculty, chairs, and directors; (4) references the full scope of disciplines and practices associated with other flagship R1 universities; and (5) respects employee time and effort spent on mandated tasks; and

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<sup>8</sup> [“Erosion of State Funding for Higher Education Explains Most of WVU's Budget Crisis.”](#) (2023, Jun 7). West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy.

<sup>9</sup> Bass, A. (19 Jun 2023). [“West Virginia state funding cuts are hurting its youth's educational prospects.”](#)

<sup>10</sup> Ferrell Knisely, A. (20 Jul 2023). [“WVU faculty, students organizing amid looping cuts to programs and jobs.”](#) *West Virginia Watch*.

**WHEREAS** the Gee administration required all employees to sign new appointment letters stipulating that we “avoid conduct that reflects adversely on the image of the University” in order to retain our employment at WVU, thus “threatening our academic freedom and First Amendment right to speak on matters of public concern”<sup>11</sup>, coercing our silence as they rushed through significant processes that will impact numerous people’s lives in addition to the reputation of WVU, the university’s commitment to provide a high quality education for students, WVU’s commitment to the state and community as a flagship land grant university, and the university campus climate;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the University Assembly of West Virginia University has no confidence in President E. Gordon Gee’s ability to responsibly, honestly, and effectively lead, facilitate, and participate in decision-making related to any institutional transformation or restructuring at this university; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the University Assembly of West Virginia University has no confidence in President E. Gordon Gee to continue to serve as leader of West Virginia University.

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<sup>11</sup> [FIRE Letter to President Gee](#). (27 July 2023). Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression.