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Statement from President Timothy J. Sullivan Regarding Affirmative-Action Protest

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William and Mary is strongly committed to freedom of expression under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. For that reason, the College has approved the request of a student group calling itself the Sons of Liberty to conduct a protest against affirmative action in the University Center. A similar event, held last semester, did not meet the administrative requirements we routinely impose on such activities. The application for Tuesdays event did.

The right to freedom of expression belongs to every member of this community, including the President. I am exercising that right by writing this letter. Members of the Sons of Liberty have announced their views on the subject of affirmative action, which I do not share. They are entitled to their opinion, however mistaken I believe it to be.

What I find personally offensive is the manner in which they have chosen to express their views. The "bake sale" with racially differentiated prices that they hold today is inexcusably hurtful to members of this community whose presence here is welcome and critically important to the quality of our life together. Those who have chosen this abusive method of self-expression will have not a few occasions in later life to look back with regret on what they have done.

The wealth of skills, talents, backgrounds, races and interests our students bring to campus is itself an important element in our learning environment. Every student admitted to the College of William and Mary is qualified to be here. Our students record of success demonstrates that conclusively.

As a university community, we take the actions of the Sons of Liberty in the spirit of Jeffersons comment about freedom of thought: Here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error, as long as reason is left free to combat it.

Timothy J. Sullivan
President



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