



U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division

Employment Litigation Section – JCON
950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington DC 20530
www.justice.gov/crt/emp

July 17, 2025

Via Electronic Mail

Rector Charles “Cully” Stimson
The Board of Visitors
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Fairfax, Virginia

c/o Mike Fragoso
TORRIDON LAW
Washington, D.C.
mfragoso@torridonlaw.com

Re: Investigation of the Employment Practices of George Mason University Pursuant to Section 707 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as Amended

Dear Rector Stimson:

The Department of Justice (Department) is opening an investigation to determine whether George Mason University (GMU) is engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination based on race and sex in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e, *et seq.* (Title VII). It is the responsibility of the Attorney General of the United States to enforce the provisions of Title VII with respect to state and local government employers. The Attorney General has delegated the authority to investigate compliance with these provisions to the Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division.

Title VII prohibits an employer from discriminating against an individual on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2. When the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that a state or local government employer is engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination in violation of Title VII, it is the Attorney General’s responsibility to take appropriate action to eliminate that violation, including presenting the matter to the appropriate court for civil proceedings. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-6(a).

Our investigation is based on information that GMU may be engaged in employment practices that discriminate against employees, job applicants, and training program participants based on race and sex in violation of Title VII. Specifically, we have reason to believe that during Gregory Washington’s tenure as president of GMU, race and sex have been motivating factors in

faculty hiring decisions to achieve “diversity” goals. The Department is in possession of internal emails Mr. Washington sent to the GMU faculty in which he openly advocated for race- and sex-based hiring processes at GMU.

- In a July 23, 2020, email to a GMU faculty list-serv, Mr. Washington stated that he intended to “develop” a “renewal, promotion, and tenure process” to benefit “faculty of color and women in their professional work.”
- In that same email, Mr. Washington stated that he will “develop specific mechanisms in the promotion and tenure process that recognize the invisible and uncredited emotional labor that people of color expend to learn, teach, discover, and work on campus.”
- Additionally, internal documents provided to the Department indicate GMU has a policy of listing the race of each member on faculty hiring panels to ensure greater non-white participation in the hiring process.
- In a November 2020 recorded discussion with other GMU administrators and faculty who serve(d) on Mr. Washington’s Task Force on Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence, he stated that he will advance an agenda of “anti-racism” as president of GMU. Mr. Washington then described “anti-racism” as a “verb” that means “conscious efforts and actions to provide equitable opportunities” at a “systematic level.”¹ In this recording, he also touted his history of hiring “record numbers of diverse faculty” based on race and sex characteristics at another public institution.
- And in a June 2022 post on X.com (then Twitter), Mr. Washington celebrated the work of a GMU employee who “helped incorporate DE&I in curriculum, the hiring process & more,” an accomplishment that appears to be in furtherance of Mr. Washington’s efforts to diversify GMU’s faculty.²

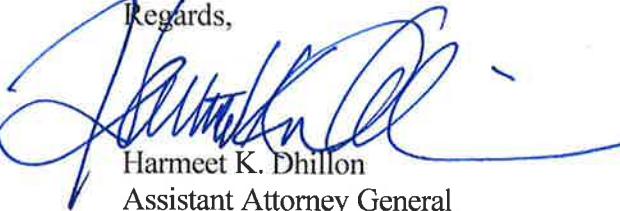
Accordingly, I have authorized a full investigation to determine whether GMU is engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination as set forth above. We have not reached any conclusions about the subject matter of the investigation. We intend to consider all relevant information, and we welcome your assistance in helping to identify what that might be. We would appreciate your cooperation in our investigation.

I have assigned Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Eric Sell to this investigation. Mr. Sell will be in contact with you shortly to set up a mutually agreeable date and time to discuss the parameters of this investigation, including the scope of information that we will be seeking from you. He may be reached by email at Eric.Sell@usdoj.gov.

¹ Freedom and Learning Forum, George Mason University (Nov. 17, 2020), <https://vimeo.com/480327804>.

² Dr. Gregory Washington on X: <https://x.com/gmupres/status/1541505839625805829?s=46>.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Regards,

Harmeet K. Dhillon
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division

cc:

Eric A. Sell
Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General
United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
Eric.Sell@usdoj.gov

Dennis Barghaan
Civil Chief
Office of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia
Dennis.Barghaan@usdoj.gov

The Honorable Jason S. Miyares
Attorney General of Virginia
c/o Thomas J. Sanford
Deputy Attorney General
TSanford@oag.state.va.us

Andrea R. Lucas
Acting Chair
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Andrea.Lucas@eeoc.gov

Craig Trainor
Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
United States Department of Education
Craig.Trainor@ed.gov

