**Recommendations of the President’s Commission on Slavery and the University – Status Report**

**August 2019**

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|  | **Recommendation**  (pp. 77-81 of [PCSU’s Report to President Sullivan](https://vpdiversity.virginia.edu/sites/vpdiversity.virginia.edu/files/PCSU%20Report%20FINAL_July%202018.pdf), July 2018) | **Priority** | **Status** | **Notes** |
| **1** | **Construction of the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers.** Approved by the Board of Visitors in June 2017, the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers will honor the suffering of the enslaved people who built and maintained the University of Virginia during its early decades while also educating students, faculty, staff, and guests about this significant part of the institution’s history. The memorial will serve as a gathering space for classes, performances, and events such as the annual Freedom and Liberation Day. The concept of the memorial serving as a gathering space echoes the African American tradition of meeting in clearings. The circular shape of the memorial references both the “ring shout,” a tradition in some enslaved communities, and broken shackles, signifying freedom. The Memorial Design Team, led by architecture firm Howeler + Yoon, engaged with community members and University stakeholders to inform the design of the memorial. After receiving community feedback regarding the need for the memorial to express the horror of slavery, the design team commissioned artist Eto Otitigbe to compose and implement evocative elements on the exterior wall. The memorial will be situated in a prominent location within the UNESCO World Heritage Site on the “triangle of grass” near the Rotunda. Construction is expected to begin in September 2018 and end by early March 2019. Currently, University representatives are seeking philanthropic support for the Memorial. | High | In progress | The timeline for the completion of the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers shifted and lengthened after input from contractors during the project bidding process. The Memorial construction began in October 2018 and is on track to wrap up in late-2019/early-2020. A Dedication ceremony will take place in April 2020. |
| **2** | **Renovation of McGuffey Cottage.** This renovation would convert McGuffey Cottage into an interpretive center highlighting the memorial’s design features, providing historical context, and displaying relevant artifacts. The commission recommends designating McGuffey Cottage as an interpretive center because it is one of the few extant dwellings in which the enslaved worked and/or lived and is situated within the UNESCO World Heritage Site. As an exhibition space McGuffey Cottage would feature artifacts, documents, and interpretive panels about the  history of enslaved labor at the University of Virginia. When ongoing research reveals relevant artifacts and historical documents, these would be incorporated into the revolving displays. The commission recommends the University designate McGuffey Cottage for this purpose and identify funds necessary to renovate it into a space suitable for exhibitions and use by the public. | High | Not Started | There is a critical need for a museum/educational space related to the history of slavery at the University, as an accompaniment to the Memorial. A Historic Structure Report on McGuffey Cottage was completed by John G. Waite Associates in 2018. There were several significant issues identified that would likely prevent the use of McGuffey Cottage as a museum. Most notably, the entrance would have to be widened for the building to be ADA code-compliant for wheelchair accessibility. This change would be considered an adverse impact on the historic fabric of the structure by the Dept. of Historic Resources. Brooks Hall has been suggested as an alternative location. |
| **3** | **Conversion of a cellar room on the east side of the Lawn.** A converted cellar room on the east side of the Lawn would serve as an educational exhibit about the history of enslaved labor at the University. The room would feature a glass viewing panel in place of a door, similar to the Poe Room on the west side of the Lawn. | Medium | Not Started | There have been two rooms identified as possible spaces for this project, both on the East Range. One of the rooms contains an original fireplace, and one contains a historic cistern. There has been some construction recently on the cistern room as part of the East Range storm water project, and the walkway leading to the room is now accessible. Some stabilization of the cistern has been completed. |
| **4** | **Design and construction of distributed elements reminiscent of the memorial design.** This concept was proposed by the Memorial Design Team and would feature stone benches around UVA and Charlottesville composed of the same materials as the memorial to Enslaved Laborers and designed to illustrate the broken elements of the design’s ring shape, suggesting the scattered and displaced experience of enslaved families. | Low | Not Started | This element of the design process was abandoned due to the need to control the cost of the project. The focus has shifted to developing an app/map accessible by smartphones that would act as a guided tour for visitors. |
| **5** | **Research endowments.** Much of the early history of the University remains unknown. An endowment will be needed to support research projects and emerging archeological techniques. Newly designed interpretive displays will be needed as the institution’s understanding of its history advances. The commission recommends establishing an endowment in order to provide funding in support of UVA’s evolving understanding of its early history. | Medium | Not Started | No progress has been made here. |
| **6** | **Climate-controlled storage space.** As more research is conducted, and as more research is conducted, the need for storage space increases. Currently, space is limited and historical artifacts are stored in a shared area on Millmont Drive with The Fralin Museum of Art, the UVA Bookstore, and the Surplus Department. More climate-controlled space is needed to store archeological resources. The commission recommends the University identify funding to construct space for artifacts, essential not only to understanding the institution’s history, but also to teaching students about the process of conservation, archeology, history, and more. This space will need room for teaching and a lab for conservation work. | Medium | Not Started | Progress had not been made on this front. There is some discussion about the transfer of the Decorative Arts collection (which includes the archaeological collection) to the Library, which may increase the availability of resources to storage. |
| **7** | **Installation of interpretive panels at significant sites.** Additional signage is needed at sites significant to the history of the enslaved at the University; for example, the commission supports the installation of a panel at the site of the Anatomical Theatre, commemorating the lives of the enslaved, free blacks, and others whose bodies were used posthumously without consent for the education of medical students. | Medium | Not Started | The installation of a panel at the site of the Anatomical Theatre would be relatively simple to accomplish. A small committee could be formed to draft language and establish a budget. Several of these interpretive panels exist around Grounds (African American Cemetery, Gibbons Hall, Gooch Dillard Grave Site) so precedent exists. |
| **8** | **Universities Studying Slavery.** In 2015, the President’s Commission on Slavery and the University created Universities Studying Slavery (USS), a consortium dedicated to maintaining multi-institutional collaboration as part of an effort to facilitate mutual support in the pursuit of common goals around the core theme of schools confronting past entanglement in human bondage and racism. USS additionally allows participating institutions to work together as they address both historical and contemporary issues dealing with race and inequality in higher education and in university communities as well as the complicated legacies of slavery in modern American society. Under UVA’s leadership, this group has grown to 37 member institutions in four countries, with schools continuing to join. The group continues to meet semi-annually to discuss strategies, collaborate on research, and learn from one another. In 2018, it has become a movement that continues to grow thanks to UVA PCSU leadership. To keep the movement going and make it a signature UVA creation, we recommend that the consortium be housed institutionally at UVA permanently. Creating staff, office space, and a budget for the organization, housed here at UVA, will ensure that the movement can continue to grow, develop programming, and display international intellectual leadership consonant with UVA’s pursuit of excellence. This is doubly important as UVA prepares to launch a second commission that will investigate the complicated post-1865 history as it relates to race, racism, and segregation. | High | In Progress | As of August 2019, the Academic Program Officer for UVA’s President’s Commission on the University in the Age of Segregation is providing staffing support for USS. However, funding for this position will go away when that commission ends. |
| **9** | **Cornerstone Summer Institute.** The Cornerstone Summer Institute provides rising high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors with the opportunity to engage in historical investigation, archaeological excavation, and community engagement in order to learn and develop thinking skills that will prepare them for success in college and beyond. Designed by members of PCSU, the institute encourages critical thinking while students learn about both the University’s past and the modern-day legacies of slavery. Students explore the early history of the University by getting hands-on experience with archival records, by rolling up their sleeves on an archaeological dig where enslaved people lived and worked, and by learning—through community engagement— how the UVA story had an impact on the surrounding area. Students, in addition to collegiate skillbuilding, get the full UVA experience: living in dorms, eating in dining halls, meeting new friends, and exploring the Jefferson-designed school. This camp is exceptional and will need permanent staffing to ensure its continued success. We recommend that CSI be staffed and funded (it will need a director, administrative support, and funds to offer scholarships to students with demonstrated need) as an ongoing summer education and outreach program. | Medium | In Progress | The Cornerstone Summer Institute is currently staffed by the co-chair and the Academic Program Officer for the PCUAS. |
| **10** | **African American scholarship programs.** It is vitally important to think creatively about how the University can promote diversity, attract more African American students, and expand its commitment to an already robust need-based program. Although the Ridley Scholarship Fund and its associated scholarship funds (Hoel-Perkins, Holland-Blackburn, et al.) are privately funded and housed in the Alumni Association, the leadership team and staff managing those programs are paid by the University. We advocate for expanding staffing for the Ridley, Hoel- Perkins team as part of a concerted effort to greatly amplify fundraising for those funds, to offer more annual scholarship slots for African American students, and to increase the yield rate. Although the University is currently barred by a 4th Circuit Court decision from using race as a factor in admissions, UVA should still make a visible commitment to increasing the number of African American students who enroll. In addition, the commission recommends further investigation of the establishment of a scholarship fund, similar to the Hoel-Perkins Scholarship which is need-based, designated for descendants of the enslaved community, and administered by the Ridley Scholarship Fund. | High | In Progress | A new Director of Development for the Ridley Scholarship Fund has been hired as of August 2019 with the goal of fundraising in order for the fund to be able to provide more full scholarships to African American students at UVA. |
| **11** | **Continue the Community Relations Task Force.** Create and/or continue a version of this task force as part of the President’s Commission on the University in the Age of Segregation (PCUAS). There should be some carryover in membership in order to maintain the trust that has been built in the community. | High | Complete | The PCUAS has established a Community Relations Task Force with carryover from the PCSU’s similar task force. Co-chairs are Tierney Fairchild and Maurice Walker. |
| **12** | **Continue communications.** Ensure that the local community continues to learn about the PCSU and the upcoming work of the PCUAS, and also has a means of giving feedback and staying involved. | High | In Progress | A Memorial to Enslaved Laborers newsletter has been established by the MEL Community Engagement Committee and is sent to many local community members. |
| **13** | **Provide appropriate community relations personnel** at the institutional level to maintain community engagement and ensure an ongoing, robust feedback loop. Continue to regularly engage a set of Community Ambassadors and Community Forums with facilitated dialogue on topics of import to UVA and the local community. | Medium | In Progress | As part of its [2030 Plan](https://strategicplan.virginia.edu/), the University plans to establish a community engagement office in an easily accessible location in town. |
| **14** | **Support the establishment of an Oral History Initiative at the University.**  This project would include a “Getting Word”-type element (based on Monticello’s model) to gather the stories from descendants from slaves in and around UVA. This Oral History Initiative would also be relevant for the PCUAS and the Community Relations Task Force should help in the identification of individuals with powerful stories. This effort would build upon the recent work of UVA’s Bicentennial Commission, which has included grants to WTJU and Virginia Humanities, with support from the UVA IDEA Fund, the Alumni Association, and other related stakeholders. | Medium | In Progress | The Oral History Project has been rebranded/renamed as Reflections: Oral Histories at UVA. The group is in the process of developing a website and has 3 student interns for 2019-2020. The project will submit a Jefferson Trust grant application with hopes for receiving funding in spring 2020. |
| **15** | **Hold an annual Founder’s Day (April 13th) event for UVA staff.** The event would serve as a form of appreciation, and would also continue to recognize UVA’s early history. There could be a rotating focus each year and/or a different department could be invited each year. | Low | Not Started | The PCUAS could be tasked with planning these annual events for staff during its tenure. |
| **16** | **Reunions.** Include the Enslaved African Americans at UVA Walking Tour Map and U-Guides Tours as part of all Reunions. Create a standard Alumni Association package that includes the maps and offers tours, both at Class Reunions and at Black Alumni Weekend. This should be part of the programming that the Alumni Association provides each year. | Medium | In Progress | The Memorial to Enslaved Laborers Community Engagement Committee planned an event in 2019 as part of Black Alumni Weekend. The BAW planning team is aware that this tradition should be continued in 2021. |
| **17** | **Offer community scholarship opportunities.** Identify a set of School of Continuing and Professional Studies and Alumni Engagement learning experiences that can be offered free for community members. Establish a community scholarship fund for community members to access for fee-based programming, including executive education, professional development, and continuing education. Partner with the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center and other community locations for delivery and outreach. | Medium | Not Started | SCPS and Lifetime Learning could be consulted. The PCUAS could be the right group to follow up. |
| **18** | **Create a University-level staff position** dedicated to outreach to and engagement with descendants of those enslaved at the University of Virginia. UVA and the PCSU have already initiated such efforts, connecting with descendants of William and Isabella Gibbons in 2015 and of Peyton Skipwith in 2017, but there is much more work to be done. Creating such a position is in keeping with the work of historic sites nationally over the past few decades, including our important local partners Monticello, Montpelier, and Highland, as well as fellow university studying slavery Georgetown University. | High | In Progress / Complete | In July 2019, a six-month descendant outreach coordinator position was created, reporting to the co-chair of the President’s Commission on the University in the Age of Segregation and funded by the President’s Office. |
| **xx** | **Permanent funding for the Enslaved African Americans Walking Tour Map** The Walking Tour Map was a key initiative of the PCSU and is made available in the Rotunda to visitors, as well as being utilized as part of various programming. Replenishing the supply of these very popular maps as well as making necessary updates (for example, in spring 2020 when the Memorial is completed) is an important educational initiative. Ongoing funding should be identified for an annual reprint of the maps. | High | In Progress | Thus far, Meghan Faulkner has worked with the Rotunda staff and with ODEI to fund reprints of the map; however, ongoing and permanent funding is needed. The cost (based on quote from Mid Valley Press is projected to be $4,000 per year for 12,000 maps. This includes a small amount of funding for the graphic designer to make updates periodically as needed. |