

Project Gabriel- President's Special Commission on Slavery and Justice

Minutes

June 15, 2023

Duration: 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Platform: Zoom

Attendees: Dr. Peay, Sheryl Garland, Dr. Leonard Edloe, Rhonda Keyes Pleasants, Faye Belgrave, Dr. Yvonne Brandon, Matt Conrad

Charge: Based on the findings of the December 17, 2022 report on *Slavery and the Medical College of Virginia*, this Commission is charged with recommending to the Administration and Board of Visitors of VCU specific ways in which the institution should:

- (i) memorialize all enslaved individuals who labored on MCV grounds and property; and*
- (ii) provide a tangible benefit such as a college scholarship or community-based economic development program for individuals or specific communities with a demonstrated historic connection to slavery.*

Discussion/Updates

- **Approval of [May 25 meeting minutes](#)** (Co-chairs) (2 min.)
- Can Development team attend?
 - (Garland)
- **Community forum update** (Matt, Jonsette) (5 min.)
 - Logistics
 - Engagement strategy
 - Discussion around registration
 - *(Dr. Peay) Are we satisfied with the format?*
 - The cafe mode was discussed; however, due to space and time constraints, we decided to have guests choose the subject area that best speaks to them
 - *(Dr. Peay) Is there a gift we can provide?*
 - A plaque
 - Have churches listed as a sponsor
 - (Dr. Edloe) Include churches in promotion
 - (M. Conrad) Could invite pastor, custodial to a VCU Basketball game
 - Members liked this idea
 - Acknowledge participants at halftime
 - (Garland) Can ask if a pastor or someone from the ministerial team wants to open up with prayer

- (R. Keyes Pleasants) Will donate the plaques; but, loves the basketball tickets
 - Commission agreed to a plaque
 - (V. Cobbs) The UVA team shared that engaging the faith community decreased barriers that existed as people initially had hesitancy with coming to campus; they could engage faith leaders and built trust; they could also gather stories regarding enslaved laborers.
 - **Reviewed proposed operational plan document** (S. Garland)
 - EMSWP has a memorialization and internment committee with similar alignment
 - (Dr. Edloe) When talking about establishing something at FABC, will that run through MCV or another foundation?
 - (S. Garland) One of the things to add to the charge of that committee—walk through options of FABC ownership/operation
 - (Dr. Brandon) Have we explored opportunities for the Library of VA to take on?
 - (S. Garland) Opportunity for this group to help determine; Gregg Kimball is very interested in brainstorming how to move recommendation forward
 - (Dr. Peay) *Can we have him as a speaker; create dialogue with him?*
 - (Dr. Brandon) *Are we going to include what we feel we need, i.e. support from one office/organization?*
 - (S. Garland) Op plan needs to identify responsible parties within the university, community. In the process, engage those partners in conversation to make sure they are willing to take this on
 - Will need to make sure staff from the university can provide support
 - *Would Commission be willing to serve?*
 - (Dr. Belgrave) Would we need to engage members from organizations and then reach out to set meetings, etc. Having to ask people outside of this workgroup to convene at least two to three meetings between now and August 15.
 - (S. Garland) It's a heavy lift. We want to be inclusive and ensure the input aligns with the community. Your feedback on if it's realistic is important.
 - (Dr. Belgrave) Expressed concerns around availability of people in the summer and knowing who the various contacts are to assist with certain information, like renovation costs, etc.
 - (S. Garland) VCU's Facilities Management is a group. The good news is a couple of studies have been done already with baseline estimates that can be shared. Facilities team shared they are more than willing to help develop any estimates, ideas around structure.
 - (Dr. Brandon) *Is the chair of our previous workgroup to remain the chair of workgroup?*

- (S. Garland) Goal is to identify folks who would like to lead committees.
- (Dr. Peay) Sheryl and I would come in and out of all committees
- (Dr. Belgrave) The invite would be better if it came from you and Dr. Peay.
 - (Garland) Happy to draft.

Action

- Invite participating pastors to a VCU Basketball game (M. Conrad)
- Move forward with plaques at forum (R. Keyes Pleasants, J. Calloway)

Next steps

- Commission members to review the operational plan
- Include Jonsette and Sheryl on Doodle Poll
- Jonsette to send out operational plan and members to make edits/review by next Wed.
- Sheryl to draft invitation letter for workgroup chairs
- Staff to work on names for workgroups
- Need co-chairs for economic development, individual programs group