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APPENDIX C

MARCH 17 RESPONSE TO BSC STATEMENT EMAIL FROM PRESIDENT CRUTCHER

Dear Members of the University Community,

Even in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the past several weeks have been especially challenging for our Spider community. As the Black Student Coalition poignantly wrote in their letter to me, Black students on our campus continue to experience deeply the pains of racism, exclusion, and most distressing to me, their perception that we do not see, hear, or value them as full members of our community.

Today, I write to address the core concerns raised in their recent letter, which has understandably gained support and recognition from others on campus and elsewhere, and to unequivocally restate, as I did when I met with Black student leaders yesterday afternoon, our continuing commitment to creating a campus climate and culture where all students can find a sense of belonging and fully participate.

The release of the Rev. Robert Ryland and Douglas Southall Freeman reports, which advanced our understanding of the University's deep ties to enslavement and segregation, was difficult for many students and members of the University of Richmond community. As a descendant of enslaved persons, I recognize how painful these histories are — and I understand that my and the Board's decisions regarding campus building names have disappointed and hurt members of our community.

The Board of Trustees has determined it will not remove names from campus buildings. The Board has provided a statement to accompany my letter, and you can read it here. I understand this is not the response that many have called for. The Board, University leadership, and I remain committed to ensuring that the history of our campus is thoroughly understood, enlivened, and expanded to reflect the rich diversity of our campus. Though it will be challenging at times, I urge students and members of the community to continue to participate in this work to inform and advance our community toward a better and more inclusive future.

As our students have reminded us, support for mental health is critical to ensuring they can thrive on this campus. This need is especially acute among Black students and students of color, who may regularly experience exclusion, isolation, and/or a lack of belonging at a predominantly white institution. Counseling and Psychological Services has assured me that our counselors have the capacity to actively and effectively support all our students and have worked with a special sense of urgency to respond to this need over the past 18 months.

The ongoing pandemic has compounded mental health challenges and made academic work more challenging for students. Responsive to the

continuing concerns raised by our students, the Faculty Senate intends to reconsider a proposal on the credit/no credit policy during its monthly meeting on March 19.

In addition, we remain committed to continuing our work on the following initiatives, which are consistent with the University's inclusive excellence goals and actions, and our work with student leaders prior to the pandemic:

Multicultural Center and Student Support: In February 2020, I pledged to find a permanent location for a multicultural space on campus and to integrate the offices and services of Multicultural Affairs and Common Ground. Building upon the work and creativity of students involved in the Multicultural Student Space Pilot, we will provide additional space in Whitehurst as we work toward establishing an excellent multicultural center. In addition to enhancing the existing multicultural space in Whitehurst, this center will also house an expanded LGBTQ lounge, office space for staff and student workers of the recently re-configured Office of Multicultural Affairs and Common Ground, and student office space for the Race and Racism Project.

This summer, we will also develop vibrant outdoor space adjoining Whitehurst to create more opportunities for gathering, programming, and events. The location of this multi-purpose space among primarily first-year and sophomore residences, and in close proximity to the Well-Being Center, University Recreation, and International Education, places it at the core of student life on campus. We aim to reopen Whitehurst with these changes at the start of fall 2021.

Understanding our Complex History and Shared Values: To help students understand our complex institutional history and the values we share today, this fall we plan to launch *Well 100*, a 13-week extended orientation class for all new undergraduates. This reconfiguration of the wellness graduation requirement will include a two-week module built upon the diversity, equity, and inclusion education that begins during Orientation and emphasizes our values and institutional history. Positioned among other sessions designed to connect new students to resources and opportunities at Richmond, this course will ensure all new students learn about these essential elements of our intellectual community. We are also working to ensure that newly hired faculty and staff learn about our institutional history and shared values as part of their New Faculty/Staff Orientation.

Support will continue for faculty and students to engage in research, scholarship, and creative work related to our institutional history via the Institutional History Learning Cohort and the University of Richmond Race and Racism project.

New Options for Social Gatherings: Beginning in fall 2021, in partnership with the Center for Student Involvement, student organizations will be able to reserve an open lodge for social gatherings and programming in the University’s lodge area. Students initiated this project last year, but implementation was stalled by the pandemic’s limitations on social gatherings. We are also encouraging the use of the Greek Theatre and the Web for formal and informal social gatherings.

University Mentoring: Dr. Betty Neal Crutcher and I have long believed in the value and importance of mentorship in cultivating a sense of belonging among our students, including students of color. So, I am especially pleased to share the University will begin work in summer 2021 to establish a pilot for a University-wide mentoring program, which will provide training, support, and funding to cultivate a network of mentors for students as they transition into our community.

The actions I have outlined above build upon and extend our existing work to advance our shared goals and will ensure a more permanent foundation for many important projects and initiatives we have piloted with students for future generations of Spiders. And while the work required to provide a residential education during the COVID- 19 pandemic, by necessity, slowed us down, we will continue to make progress toward our shared goals.

When I challenged our community in my 2015 inaugural address to use our rich diversity to improve the culture of the University so that everyone — regardless of their identities, backgrounds, ideologies, or experiences — could thrive, I knew this transformation could not be achieved in five years, or even ten years. Our efforts to make excellence inclusive at Richmond are, and will be, a continuous work in progress.

Sincerely,



Ronald A. Crutcher President