



# Virginia School for the Deaf Alumni Association (VSDAA)



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March 23, 2023

Board of Visitors

Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind

Staunton, VA 24401

Dear Senator John J. Bell, Senator Ghazala Hashmi, and Delegate Sally Hudson

On behalf of VSDAA members and VSDB alumni, I would like to have a follow up status on the five resolutions and statement since I made a presentation with a VSDAA letter at the VSDB Board of Visitors meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, 2023. You already have received the copy of the VSDAA letter right after my presentation.

Here are 5 resolutions stated on the VSDAA letter:

1. urges the Board of Visitors to reassess the Unified School plan's current timeline and compare it to the earlier timeline;
2. urges the Board of Visitors to ensure that neutrality and transparency is displayed throughout the whole campus which includes the teachers, staff, and students as well as the stakeholders which include the alumni and parents;
3. urges the Board of Visitors to instruct the VSDB Foundation to remove the current consultants and search for and appoint consultants that specialize in Deaf, Deafblind and Blind education;
4. urges the Board of Visitors to allow the Blind Department to choose their own mascot fully and freely as it is their rights to do so;
5. urges the Board of Visitors to undertake these resolutions.

In addition to the five resolutions, we, the Virginia School for the Deaf Alumni Association, express a vote of no confidence in the leadership of our current superintendent.

On the behalf of VSDAA members and VSDB alumni, I would like to present one more resolution to the current five resolutions above which is **no reprisals against VSDB employees and students for their rights to express their opinions and/or participate in saving the Cardinal Mascot activity.**

Since there is a new situation unfolding at VSDB campus. In recent student work group meetings, the current students had (and still have) trouble following and understanding what a mascot means. At the conclusion of the meetings, they asked a few VSDB employees (teachers and dormitory staff members) for more explanations and clarifications due to the fact that they had trouble getting the information from the consultant, the superintendent, and the art teacher about the mascot process. The current students now understand after getting the answers to their questions from the employees. They are now upset about this change. Some of them were forced to draw nonCardinal pictures against their wishes. There are ongoing issues with instructions provided, use of force, oppression, transparency, and communication.

However Sup't Trice instructed the VSDB employees not to share the information with the students after two meetings (one in around September and one in February, 2023) related to the Unified VSDB Plan (formerly known as One School Plan). Few VSDB employees stopped sharing the information with a few students after last fall's meeting at Sup't's Trice's request in terms of neutrality. Then at the February 23 employee informational meeting with two consultants and two blind representatives from the Unified VSDB Plan advisory group present, the blind alumni president spoke her opinion not wanting the Cardinals as the mascot. She was not neutral and her opinion should be used in an alumni stakeholder meeting. The employees experienced a double standard during the meeting. At the conclusion of the February 23rd meeting, Sup't Trice with her unprofessional conduct, scolded the VSDB employees about encouraging the current students to keep the Cardinals as the mascot.

The reason for me to write this letter is because the VSDB alumni, current and former VSDB employees, and the Deaf Community are anxious to know what's the result of this letter. They are counting on you all to take action.

Respectfully Yours,

Michele VanBoxlaere

VSDAA President