

This is my perspective on the issue of having one mascot at VSDB instead of two.

The VSDB Board of Visitors met on March 8, 2023 and there were some members of VSDAA and some former teachers in attendance to express their views about the mascot issue.

First of all the Board of Visitors is to be commended for allowing the alumni an opportunity to express their views and I can say they do cherish their alma mater.

Of all what I have gathered about reasons for removing both mascots and creating a new one there is one reason, apparently the main reason, that is the general feeling of inequality and inferior complex among the blind. I must admit I was very surprised. During my tenure at VSDB I had a privilege of working with Elizabeth Lewis who was the Principal of the Department for the Blind. Every year we worked together developing Title 1 funding proposals and we often shared our "shop talks" such as different issues on education, mainstreaming, etc. The issue of two mascots was never brought up. We did have some deaf students participating in the Blind's wrestling team and vice versa. Also, some students from the Dept. for the Blind participated in our football and basketball teams.

Did we have "crisis" or problematic issue about this inter-departmental sports activities in relations to two mascots? None.

Yes there have been a lot of changes at VSDB since my retirement in 1995 - construction of a new educational building and dormitories, renovation of existing buildings like Main Hall, Stuart Hall, Watts Hall, & Infirmary, staffing changes, addition of program offerings to meet the need of the current students, increase in promotion, etc. I must say that has been truly challenging for the current staff.

However, since 1839 there have been two primary identities at VSDB. Currently there are still two primary identities at VSDB and there will always be two primary identities at VSDB. The two identities are the Deaf and the Blind. It does not matter where the classrooms are located, where they socialize, where they play, the presence of two identities is still there. Furthermore these two identities do exist on the state and national levels in the area of service providers, organizations and advocacy.

Pertaining to the feeling of inequality I believe it is due to current visibility of the Cardinal logo on the campus like one on the wall of Strader Hall and in the gymnasium. This has been an indication of only one identity. It should have been two. A work order can be easily made to display both logos.

I do believe that two mascots can co-exist on the "unified" campus without losing identities.

Race Drake

March 10, 2023