The Student Government Association continues to push for the importance of Divestment as both a moral imperative for an institution which prides itself on producing “engaged citizens” and as a practical way to increase awareness of Mary Washington inside and out of the Commonwealth of Virginia. We were disappointed that the report of the Divestment Subcommittee of the President’s Council on Sustainability has not been released, but stand ready to examine its findings whenever it is released. We believe that a determination on whether the University and its foundation will pursue divestment should be made before the end of this academic year. We have already requested that the Rector and the Visitors hold a vote on divestment during their February meeting.

As previously stated the Student Government Association, as the premier advocate for the student body, stands opposed to unnecessary tuition and fee increases. The 3.3 percent increase in tuition and fees proposed by the administration this year, while not outrageous has some concerning elements. Nearly a third of the increase is driven solely by debt service on the Battlegrounds Athletic Complex and the new University Center. Taking on ever higher rates of leverage does not seem the safest way to ensure the continuity of Mary Washington’s reputation as a “Best Buy” school.

Of even greater concern to members of the Student Senate and the Executive Cabinet is the inability of the administration to even define who is an administrator, rendering any attempt to even understand the balance between administrative and academic cost impossible. As growing administrative costs are frequently cited as a key component in rising tuition costs, students have a right to understand just how much of their tuition is being spent to educate them, and how much is spent pushing stacks of paper around. While this may not be deliberate obfuscation, at the very least it is an enormous oversight.

We see these two struggles as fundamentally connected. By pursuing divestment we stand to avoid the falling profitability and volatility ever-present within fossil fuel investments. By pursuing divestment we stand to heighten the profile of our school, while cementing our brand as a forward thinking liberal arts institution. By increasing the strength of our brand, not through cheap sloganeering but through propaganda-of-the-deed, we could reverse the ten year decline in out of state enrollment that is squeezing our finances. We have an opportunity to do well while doing good, we should seize it.

Alex Obolensky, Vice President
Student Government Association
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