

September 25, 2006

Zoning Commission
441 Fourth Street, NW, Rm. 210
Washington, DC 20001

RE: *GWU's Twenty-Year Campus Plan*

Cases 6-11, 6-12

Testimony of Robert Lee Thomas

My name is Robert Lee Thomas, and I am a resident of St. Mary's Court, an apartment-living complex for retirees that is located on the GW Campus. My address is 725 25th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037, Apartment 812. I have lived there about two years, and plan to make my permanent home there.

In my experience of living at St. Mary's Court on the GW Campus I have found the Campus and the students to be excellent neighbors. My comments are first about the GW Students, second about my experience with the GW Administration, and third, some general comments.

First, the GW Students. My experience with the GW students is that they are almost always quiet, that they are generally clean and do not litter the area, and that they are the best of neighbors to our retirees, holding dances for them, cleaning their apartments, visiting them to provide company to those who have no visitors, and buying their groceries every week. In reference to litter on the streets, I have checked this out and collected this litter personally, and I have found what I have collected to be often quite aged and often litter that would come from some homeless person, such as obviously used newspapers.

In this regard, the students have announced a Hold the Door campaign where they show respect for the welfare of other students and their neighbors in the Foggy Bottom community (see attached). This student activity includes also garbage collection, picking randomly tossed papers and cans, etc., and keeping the streets and dorms clean. Actually, under the time and space constraints of this testimony and writing, it is quite impossible to individually list all of the many advantages I and my fellow retirees personally enjoy from the students or GW, so let me summarize by saying that they are truly excellent neighbors.

Second, with the GW Administration and not relating this to past history but to present reality, my experience with the Administration has been very positive. As it concerns this Campus Plan that is now under consideration, I have seen it in one forum or another as explained by this Administration with a request for my input numerous times. I have seen it explained with requests for public input at a luncheon in St. Mary's Court itself. It has been presented numerous times at an organization called "Friends"—meaning friends of the Foggy Bottom and West End Community—a resident-initiated group in which GW participates actively. Evidently, the past public relations practices of this University have turned this "Friends" entity that has the task of

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befriending the local residents with the University into what has required a major effort on both sides. My impression is that after several years of attempting to work together jointly, some residents in Foggy Bottom appear to refuse to recognize that this organization and its active GW efforts at reform even exist.

Again, especially for GW reform efforts, it does exist, and under the able leadership of Bernard Demczuk and Michael Akin, virtually every effort has been made to include the input of the residents in this Campus Plan. While it is true that universities and all of us can make mistakes, it is equally true that we can experience an enlightenment of conversion and do what is right. What is under consideration today is not the past errors that are in the past, but a new reality that is manifested by an effort to do what is right. In our American tradition, that reform should be recognized and given its own fair consideration.

Third, and generally, I understand it is said or implied that the University, as it was doing, is now continuing to expand in all directions from its present boundaries. The reality is that the University is now committed to limiting all future expansion to within its present boundaries. Included within these boundaries is part of the subject of consideration for this Campus Plan, or the development of the University owned former hospital site.

Also, I understand that it is equally said or implied that the University has embraced an effort to raise its student numbers without any specific limit to those numbers. The reality is that there is indeed a cap on those numbers, and that cap is the present student population of approximately 20,000.

Also, as I have already addressed, there are testimonies and accusations that the GW students are inhospitably noisy neighbors who clutter areas that were once clean with garbage so that the neighborhood is now unsightly. Again, my experience and observations are quite the opposite of this.

Finally, this Campus Plan includes the expenditure of \$12.5 million to build new dorms for the Students Without Walls. This educational facility that takes inner city children and turns them into young scholars has a remarkable record of achievement. The existence and achievements by this exemplary educational facility have in no small part been aided by the University and its faculty and even administrative members. This proposed GW funding to build new dorms for these students is a model of exemplary citizenship by a university organization. It is an example that demonstrates one of the many financially unquantifiable values or external economic benefits that are derived from a university presence. Universities can provide economic benefits such as this in much the same manner as the original space technology spawned new technologies and industries. An example of this economic benefit that does not show up directly in the tax rolls is included in the Campus Plan for Schools Without Walls, and deserves the full support of this

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Board.

Respectfully submitted,

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 8/29/06



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The Student Association announces *Hold the Door*, a civility campaign for The George Washington University community

FOGGY BOTTOM/WASHINGTON, DC – The Student Association is pleased to introduce *Hold the Door*, a civility campaign dedicated to inspiring acts of kindness, courtesy, and good citizenship on campus. The aim of *Hold the Door* is to encourage all members of the University community to show respect for the welfare of fellow students, faculty, staff, administrators, and neighbors in the Foggy Bottom/West End community.

Hold the Door is a grassroots movement that will be implemented entirely by volunteers who choose to engage in polite and considerate behavior on campus such as holding the door for the next person passing through, picking up pieces of trash on the sidewalk, or providing directions to someone looking at a campus map. Civilized behavior is not limited to polite actions directed toward strangers; *Hold the Door* encourages people to wait for a response after asking someone how he or she is doing, provide a compliment to a longtime friend, or summarize a conversation for someone who's just joining the discussion.

As we begin a new academic year, we encourage you to support *Hold the Door* and welcome the newest members of the University community. Buff and blue *Hold the Door* pins will be given out to people who are committed to the goals of the program.

For questions or for information on partnering with the Student Association on *Hold the Door*, please see the above contact information. Thank you for being considerate and taking the time to read this press release.

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“Every action done in company ought to be done with some sign of respect to those that are present.”

- George Washington

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New SA program emphasizes community

Posted Wednesday, August 30 2006 03:24:20 am

By Emily Metz
 Executive Editor

In his first large-scale initiative as Student Association executive vice president, Josh Lasky '07 has chosen to focus on GW students' civility and kindness, highlighting a new theme for this year's SA.

His campaign entitled, "Hold the Door," is set to launch this weekend during move-in. Students connected to the SA and the office of the executive vice president will be seen wearing lapel pins, bearing the campaign slogan "Hold the Door," around campus all weekend in order to advertise Lasky's new initiative.

"We're trying to promote a kinder, gentler, more polite campus," said Lasky. "That's what really defines our campus."

A kinder, gentler campus as Lasky defines it would include students picking up garbage around campus, giving directions to confused freshmen, and saying 'good morning' to people and waiting for the response.

Students who exhibit these "polite" qualities or those who literally, "hold the door" for others, will receive the campaign pin to wear around campus, thus encouraging other students to follow their example.

"It's about people seeing a small spark and being inspired by it," said Lasky.

Lasky feels such a reform of the average GW student's conduct around campus is of the utmost importance. By dedicating his first public initiative to the campaign, Lasky is highlighting a new tone for this year's SA, with a stronger focus building a community rather than legislating and opining on student issues.

Rather, the new SA appears to be working toward reforming the typical GW mindset of cynicism and apathy toward the University and channeling into greater school spirit and community bonding.

"It's easy to say we're not giving enough, we're not. GW students are unique in the sense that we're highly motivated, busy people," said Lasky. "But, this initiative urges students to slow down, take a moment and notice others."

Many GW students feel that the lesson in civility should first be taught to SA senators. After a year plagued by petty in-fighting and bad press, many students find the Senate pointless. Lasky says he plans to spend time encouraging senators to respect each other, but that the general student body at GW can also benefit from this lesson.

"I have little patience for senators wasting my time, and in turn the students' time," said Lasky. "This year, senators won't be allowed to waste the Senate's time carrying out personal vendettas, and trying to steal the political spotlight."

Lasky plans to emphasize this point when Senator Training begins tomorrow.

"The training is set up to increase accountability in the Senate this year," said Lasky. "We want the senators to really get to know each other."

Lasky also intends to unveil his "Hold the Door" campaign at the Senate training, and he hopes to get many senators on board with the program. Lasky says many have already showed interest.

Said Lasky, "'Hold the Door' hopes to further distinguish the identity of our campus, not by physical boundaries, but by the acts of a civilly engaged, welcoming community."



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 would have
 worked.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hold the door

How can student life at GW be improved? Though broad and sweeping student-driven initiatives often produce worthwhile results, I feel that lofty, long-term goals look past some of the simplest and easiest solutions. One of the best answers I can provide for improving student life is to hold the door. Though it doesn't seem like much, holding the door for others is an act that greatly reflects who we are as individuals and what we value as a university community.

Door-holding etiquette is something that tends to be generally overlooked throughout society. As you approach the point of entry or exit, take a quick glance over your shoulder or listen to see if there are footsteps behind you. In my humble opinion, if an individual is within 20 feet of you and headed for the same door, it is only appropriate that you hold the door for them. In my personal observations, it has become evident that the greater the length of time I spend holding the door for a specific individual, the greater the satisfaction that the individual derives from my assistance.

On the other end, it is important that the recipient of the door holder's generosity must express some measure of gratitude. Whether it is a "thank you," a smile, or a pleasant combination of both, the effortless recognition required to support the work of door-holders everywhere is greatly appreciated. Eye contact during this exchange is thoroughly recommended. For me, the ultimate satisfaction is realized when the person I have just helped decides to assist the next person passing through.

Anyone can be a door holder. All it takes is a small degree of awareness that someone else might need to pass through the door you are using. Regardless of how busy you are, a few seconds spent doing this good deed for someone else will be genuinely rewarding.

I offer this challenge to GW because I believe it will effect a small but noticeable difference. I have faith in every member of the campus community to shape the University to be a better place to live and learn. Each of us has the responsibility to make GW a place for all to feel at home, and we can start small by holding the door.

-Josh Lasky
junior