September 27, 2024

Dear SGA Members,

Good morning. I am writing to announce my resignation from SGA, effective immediately. This decision vacates the positions of Disability Caucus Senator & Chair, Vice President of the Senate, and SGA Representative to the Cross-institutional Student Advisory Committee (CSAC).

Serving the student body has been one of my brightest experiences at Hopkins. I have enjoyed deliberating, motioning, meeting, presenting, and even protesting, when necessary, alongside all of you for the past four years.

I would like to share with you a piece of advice for the remainder of the semester. For the next month-and-a-half, you can expect to see a continuous stream of programming around the importance of democracy and civic engagement in the U.S. I ask you to consider an additional element: during my time in student leadership, I have become concerned that Johns Hopkins University *is not reflecting democratic principles in its own decision-making process and is actively backsliding*.

Student and faculty input is increasingly advisory, rather than considered as an equal, credited voting share. Our past Executive Branch & Senate leadership's recommendations to the Board of Trustees, President, and Provost; and staff departments such as Government, Community, and Economic Partnerships (GCE), the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and Student Affairs, were neither implemented nor received follow-up feedback despite our best efforts. This mirrors a larger trend in higher education where decisions are made by administrators — not the faculty and students that compose the school, mirroring a departure from democracy for administrative bureaucracy. Despite my upmost respect for the staff and administrators at JHU, this is an untenable trend.

Democracy is hard. The result you get isn't always the one you want— an experience everyone in SGA is familiar with. It is understandable that Hopkins, like other colleges, is wary of giving students and faculty a vocal platform in an uncertain time for higher education and would rather decisions be made by trusted administrators.

However, this is not a sufficient reason to shy away from giving students the freedom to directly or by elected proxy define the values and practices of Johns Hopkins University. Spring Fair, Lighting of the Quads, and New Student Orientation, three of the biggest traditions/practices at JHU are largely planned by staff with some student input, which differs from other leading universities where similar large traditions are planned in partnership with or mostly by students. The *Ten for One* strategic plan, despite being a product of feedback from students, faculty, and staff, has lacked specific metrics, leaving it largely to the administration to define what a "success" is. We were rebuffed when we asked the Board of Trustees to outline specifics.

The long-term planning of the University should be made by administrators in fair and transparent partnership with students and faculty. Only then will schools be able to raise

independent thinkers who will advocate for the freedom of academic institutions and earn back the lost public trust in higher education — and that movement can start at JHU.

What universities owe first and foremost to democracy is to embody its best aspects in their own operation. Only then do our actions with respect to democracy, voter education, and civic engagement hold water.

Thank you again for your support and trust in electing me your Vice President of the Senate.

-Jackson Morris