

Black History 1970s A Detailed Timeline

1970

In spring, the Black Students Organization forms with Warren Buck as its first president. Student **Kermit Dance** and later president specifies that they want to maintain control over the group to make sure that they have an identity and fully “represent the black voice on campus.” Buck has a much more radical “Black Power” approach while Dance and other members are more proactive and focus on recruiting more black students on campus. In the fall, they are given a house that is equipped with a study room and lounge with books by black authors and records by black artists. (Bloom 31)



In February, the Board of Visitors tries to turn the Richard Bland College, a 2-year school operating under W&M 4 miles from the predominantly black, 4-year Virginia State University (formerly, Virginia State College), into a 4-year-university. There had already been plans to merge the schools to aid desegregation, and the switching of Richard Bland to a 4-year-university is seen as a way to prevent the merger, especially because having two 4-year-universities so close together would limit the supply of quality teachers in the area, leaving Virginia State University with less quality faculty. A lawsuit from the families of Virginia State students is filed. (Bloom 41)

Students ask for more donations for the Martin Luther King Scholarship Fund. Meanwhile, President Paschall’s own senior class of 1932 donates \$30,000... to enhance the entrance to Crim Dell. Students take to *The Flat Hat* to voice their complaints that the fund to help include minority students, the much more pressing matter, is solely funded only by students and faculty. (Bloom 17)



In May, a series of essays from Black students comes out in *The Flat Hat*, explaining that they have had horrible experiences of prejudice at W&M. Professor of Sociology Vernon Edmonds responds to these letters, stating that the writers are too demanding and that the school should stop the “infusion” of Black students who are clearly not at the level of a W&M student. 2 years later, Edmonds comes under fire for purposefully failing Black students. He is again exposed in 1980 by *Flat Hat* writer, James Comey, for not wanting minority students. And later, in the ‘90s, his racist behavior is covered by the *New York Times*. (Bloom 27)

In July, William & Mary is notified that they are not adhering to the Civil Rights Act and they have 30 days to create proposals for action or risk funding. Paschall responds with saying that the school is in compliance with Title VI and brags about the first integration of Native Americans. This whole incident goes viral, with people siding with W&M, claiming HEW is blackmailing the College. The students, in turn, are embarrassed by Paschall's behavior and write to him, saying that they were embarrassed by his behavior and established them as a racist institution that they were trying not to be associated with. The faculty also feels that Paschall's behavior goes against their stance of wanting to provide equal education. The BSO also writes in *The Flat Hat*, critiquing Paschall's actions.

In the Fall of 1970, **Lillian Poe**, a PhD candidate in the History Department, is appointed as Assistant to the Dean of Admissions for high school recruiting, for ten hours a week. Additionally, W&M updates the admissions brochure to show integration in their advertisements for the school. (Bloom 35)

At the student Association meeting on October 20, a resolution calling for President Paschall to resign is defeated.

In the midst of the turmoil of racial integration at W&M, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare inquiry, the Richard Bland College lawsuit, President Paschall announces his resignation on November 7. He claims it has to do with his health.

In November, there is a statewide conference on "Civil Rights and the Status of Higher Education in Virginia" at Virginia Union University in Richmond. W&M does not send any representative, which students find embarrassing. It communicates the idea that W&M does not care about ending racism. Without any representation, Governor Linwood Holton submits his plan for desegregating schools in December, which includes keeping Richard Bland a 2-year-university.

1971

Juanita Wallace, the first full-time black administrator at the college, starts in 1971. A new campus publication, the weekly *William and Mary News*, is introduced to inform the community on official matters and activities of general interest, with a black editor, **Eleanor Anderson**.

Publicity materials are reorganized to show more black students on campus, and “All black students in Virginia who made reasonably acceptable scores on the National Achievement Test for Negro Students or on the National Test for Minorities” were sent a letter with an application for admission, the recruiting brochure, and publications from the Black Student Organization.” (Bloom 38)

In Spring, BSO invites Georgia legislator, Julian Bond, to speak. Kermit Dance implores white students to come to the talk, since a low attendance would mean financial ruin from the club and this would be a great opportunity to “cleanse [their] mind[s] of the white supremacy trash which has hindered the free thinking of both blacks and whites for too many generations. 600 people are in attendance. (Bloom 58)

Nancy McGhee, the Chair of the English Department at Hampton Institute and a PhD graduate of the University of Chicago, is hired to teach a senior seminar in 20th century American Ethnic Poetry in the Spring 1971 semester. Many see her appointment as the first step in faculty integration. There are also reports that Nancy McGhee had taught the first course in Black Literature at the College of William & Mary the year before, in 1969-1970. (Bloom 59)

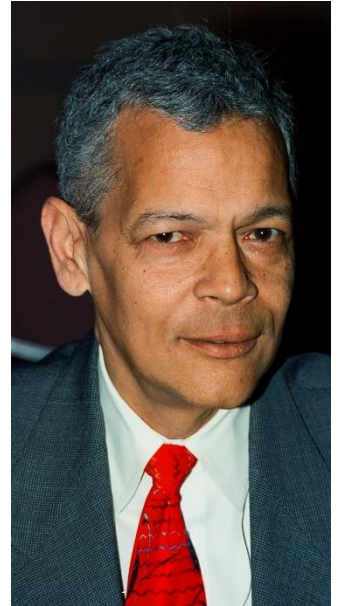
President Paschall refuses to listen to the graduating class who wants Charles Evers, the Civil Rights activist, to speak at their commencement ceremony. Evers was finally able to speak but at a separate event, after the senior class officers invite him anyway. Paschall almost makes them sit out at Matoaka, but finally gives them an inside location. (Bloom)

The Black Student Organization (BSO) opposes the 80-year tradition of Kappa Alpha’s “Southern Ball and Weekend.” This is a tradition where members of KA would dress in Confederate uniforms, parade around, sing “Dixie,” etc. BSO has a counter march. The tradition seems to end in the ‘80s. (Bloom)

The lawsuit about Richard Bland goes to court and the judge rules that extending Bland to a 4-year-university would hamper Virginia State’s attempt at desegregation. W&M appeals to the Supreme Court, who again, rules that Bland cannot be a 4-year-university.

1972

The Bright House is renamed the Alumni House. This area was





bought by the Bright family from the 1840s to 1944. They paid the school for the ability to live on this property. It was either on this area or surrounding farms that the Bright family profited off of enslaved workers with at least 12 enslaved people living on one of their Williamsburg properties in 1850. (William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research)

The “first [full time] black faculty member in the College’s history” is **Prof. Louis J. Noisin**, appointed as Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Government, after having taught at The Hampton Institute for three years. (Bloom 60)

President Graves invites the distinguished black author, Ralph Ellison, to be the 1972 Commencement speaker and to receive an honorary degree, in obvious and pointed contrast to President Paschall’s refusal to consider the students’ choice for the 1971 speaker, Charles Evers. (Bloom 58)

A “Black Experience Colloquium” is offered in Spring 1972, co-taught by two white professors and drawing in both black and white students. The course involves readings by black writers, like Eldridge Cleaver and W.E.B. Dubois and attendance to four plays at the Hampton Institute. (Bloom 61)

1973

In Spring 1973, the English Department announces two new courses to be offered in the 1973-1974 year in Black Literature and Black Fiction. Both courses are taught by **Trudier Harris**, a specialist in Black American literature and folklore with a PhD from Ohio State University. (Bloom 61)

An “interdisciplinary major in Black Studies” is recommended in Spring 1973 by the Board of Student Affairs on the basis of a report by Kermit Dance, BSA Senior Class Representative. It is not added until 1997. (Bloom 62)

Viola Baskerville, as a senior, is the first Black student to win a Fulbright Scholarship. She spends the year following her graduation in Bonn, Germany, studying post-World War II female German writers.

At the close of 1973, 70 black students are enrolled among the approximately 4,000 undergraduates at William and Mary. (Bloom 65)



1974

“The Office of Minority Affairs is established.”

All black faculty candidates reject the school’s offers, except for Jeroyd X. Greene, a controversial Black Muslim who offended the conservative sensibilities of many white Virginians. Greene was given a binding job offer, but “State Senator George Willey threatened to slash the school’s state funding if it gave Greene the job. When the William and Mary Board of Visitors met, they voted not to offer Greene a contract, citing improper professional conduct. The Board’s decision drew media attention, and many students and faculty members issued official statements condemning it. The controversy reinforced the College’s reputation as an institution that did little to encourage diversification... President Graves’s promise to create the position of Affirmative Action Coordinator came within a month of the uproar over Greene’s rejection” (Hahamovitch 132)

The AAAC threatens to disband, since they don’t have an Affirmative Action Office to implement their plans. President Graves meets with them and promises to create the position of Affirmative Action Coordinator. **Wesley Wilson** is hired. It is found that many black employees are offered awards and compliments, rather than more pay. (Hahamovitch 127)

1975

The “Full Time Permanent Employees as of January, 1975” report comes out, which shows only two black personnel were in “Executive/Managerial/Administrative” positions, with 93% of minority applicants in “Non-Professional” jobs. No minority full-time permanent employees were promoted, while 48 white employees were. (Bloom 137)

The Kappi Pi chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. is chartered.

W&M keeps recruiting minority students with one report stating that 139 prospective minority students applied with 90 accepted and 32 chose to enroll. These numbers were slowly getting better. (Hahamovitch 97)

A June report from the Affirmative Action Committee is submitted to President Graves that showed that African American students were not happy on campus. Of the 47 black students who completed the questionnaire, 34% felt unwanted,

47% felt that most faculty members were not interested in students as people, 58% felt that administrators were insensitive to their needs, 61% felt that faculty was unfair in grading practices, and 74% stated that if they had to make the choice again, they would not attend W&M. (Hahamovitch 97-98)

600 William & Mary employees come together to form the William & Mary Staff Association to argue against unfair working conditions.

As a result of the Civil Rights/Anti-Vietnam War movement among students and professors, the CIA begins investigating W&M, thinking that the movement at the College is a threat, so they launch their own operation to retaliate, called Project Resistance. The report estimates that approximately “ten professors and less than 200 students” make up a dangerous radical population. The CIA informant may have been an Assistant Dean or Dean. Some students suspect their phones were tapped and their mail was opened. (Hahamovitch 118)



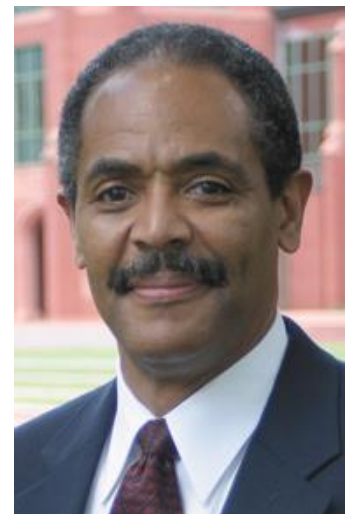
Sharon Coles-Stewart becomes the first Black woman to graduate from the W&M Law School.

Marvin Hedgepeth becomes the first Black student to graduate from the School of Marine Science at VIMS. He specifically studied enzymes in clams and oysters.

1976
Mu Upsilon Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. is chartered.

1978
The first African American member of the Board of Visitors is alumnus **Henry T. Tucker, Jr.** in 1978.

Dr. Brian Blount, class of 1978, is the first African-American member of Phi Beta Kappa at the College of William and Mary.



Sources:

The Lemon Project (<https://www.wm.edu/sites/lemonproject/>)

The Lemon Project Historical Timeline

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Thank you so much to the Lemon Project for doing this important research!