

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 401

Commending the Brafferton Indian School.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 22, 2023
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 23, 2023

WHEREAS, since the founding in 1693 of The College of William and Mary in Virginia, colonial officials encouraged Native American tribes that signed treaty agreements with the English to send young men to be educated in reading and writing, the arts and sciences, and Christian theology; and

WHEREAS, for more than 65 years between 1723 and 1790, the Brafferton Building at The College of William and Mary served as the primary residential and instructional building for Native American students; and

WHEREAS, most tribes were hesitant to send students to the institution, and it was not until Lt. Governor Alexander Spotswood began to remit annual tribute payments for tribes that maintained a student or two in residence that the number of students attending the school increased; and

WHEREAS, by 1712, The College of William and Mary hosted 24 students from multiple tribes, and during the following decades, Native American students consistently made up a substantial percentage of the total student population; and

WHEREAS, between 1705 and 1716, when the main college building, now known as the Sir Christopher Wren Building, was being reconstructed due to a fire, all students were taught and housed in auxiliary facilities in Williamsburg; when the Wren Building reopened in 1716, there may have been separate residential quarters for Native and non-Native students, but evidence indicates that the dining hall and classrooms in the Wren Building were spaces shared by all students; and

WHEREAS, to better accommodate the growing population of Indigenous students, the Brafferton Building was constructed in 1723; the first floor was divided into a large classroom area and an apartment for the Indian School instructor and student dormitories were located on the second floor; and

WHEREAS, the Brafferton Building took its name from the Brafferton Estate, an agricultural manor in Yorkshire, England, that supported the construction and ongoing funding of the Indian School at The College of William and Mary and similar schools in the colonies; and

WHEREAS, in 1732, the Brafferton Building underwent renovations, and half the second floor was outfitted as a library for use by all students and faculty; students' dormitories for the Indian School were relocated to the third floor of the building; and

WHEREAS, Brafferton Indian School alumni were emissaries and interpreters for Virginia governors and military officers, most notably George Washington, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Jefferson; and

WHEREAS, Brafferton Indian School alumni made significant contributions to Virginia society, the Seven Years War, the American Revolution, and United States history, acting as warriors, guides, translators, and liaisons; and

WHEREAS, during the Revolutionary War, funding from the Brafferton Estate was withheld and the Indian School, along with the entire college, closed temporarily; and

WHEREAS, after the conclusion of the war, The College of William and Mary took legal action in England to reinstate the Brafferton Estate's funding for the Indian School; however, in 1790 the lawsuit was unsuccessful, and the school closed permanently; and

WHEREAS, the Brafferton Building was subsequently repurposed as a dining hall, faculty residence, dormitory, and classroom building; in the 1950s and 1960s, the Brafferton housed offices for what is now the William & Mary Alumni Association, and it currently serves as the office building for the president and provost; and

WHEREAS, over the course of its history, the Brafferton Indian School at The College of William and Mary hosted students from Virginia's Powhatan Chiefdom, such as the Pamunkey, Chickahominy, and Nansemond; and those of the Six Nations (Haudenosaunee) Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca, and Tuscarora; as well as others from the Catawba, Cherokee, Delaware, Meherrin, Nottoway, Occaneechi, Saponi, Tutelo, and Wyandot; The College of William and Mary has worked with representatives of multiple tribes to honor the legacy of the Brafferton Indian School; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, The College of William and Mary will commemorate the 300th anniversary of the Brafferton Building's legacy by engaging with the heritage of the Indian School and the role it played in early American history through cross-disciplinary scholarship and applied research and further strengthening ties with the tribal community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend The College of William and Mary in Virginia on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the construction of the Brafferton Indian School on its campus; and, be it

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RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to The College of William and Mary in Virginia as an expression of the General Assembly's appreciation for the important historical legacy of the Brafferton Indian School and the institution's ongoing work to contextualize its early history and strengthen relationships with Native communities.