



# WILLIAM & MARY

CHARTERED 1693

## OFFICE OF STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### Statement on Date Auctions

Treating others with dignity and respect is one of the core values integral to the William & Mary experience. As such, the Office of Student Leadership Development, as a unit within the Division of Student Affairs, has developed this statement regarding fundraising activities that focus on the “auctioning” of individuals. This statement intends to address specific concerns regarding activity that involves the “auctioning” of individuals (commonly referred to as: member auctions, date auctions or pledge/new member auctions, etc.) For the purposes of this document, any event auctioning individuals will be referred to as a “member auction.” As you make decisions regarding your organizations fundraising activities and practices, please be aware of these concerns:

1. **Racial Insensitivity:** Member auctions are similar in structure to slave auctions, a tragic part of the history of the United States. Slave auctions devalued the dignity of human beings to the level of merchandise, and similarly involve one person "bidding" for the services of another and a comparison of the relative "value" of each person being auctioned. On a campus where equality and sensitivity are highly valued, any activity that suggests the auctioning of one human being's services to another bears an inappropriate resemblance to the slave auctions of the past.
2. **Personal Safety:** An organization sponsoring an auction has no way of knowing the motivations of the person(s) bidding on others. A member auction may become a convenient means by which a person has the opportunity to "buy" some time with the person to whom they are attracted. Additionally, a general auction of an individual may not clearly define what they may be asked to do during that "bought" time. Though these possibilities may seem remote, the implications for the sponsoring organization are severe and worthy of careful consideration. A dangerous attitude that continues to exist between people is a concept of entitlement based on whoever pays; indeed, sexual misconduct can result from an assumption on the part of one person that whoever pays for the "member" is entitled to more than the other may assume. Member auctions may create an environment where such expectations could be used to the disadvantage of one or both participants.

Member auctions as fundraisers are usually sponsored by organizations with good intentions and to raise funds for good causes. However, the concerns listed above expose the potential for persons to be physically and/or emotionally harmed, therefore auctions may be an ill-conceived manner to raise money. ***As an alternative, we suggest auctioning items (tickets, items, etc.) rather than individuals. Please consider selecting a positive alternative to auctions of individuals for raising your funds.***

*Adapted, with permission, from Texas A&M University, Department of Student Activities.*