**Longwood University Closes Music Department**

*Huge uproar among faculty and students*

On April 27 at 11:05 a.m., Longwood University’s spokesperson Brennan Huff held a press conference in Room 202 of Longwood’s Center for Communication Studies & Theatre regarding the discontinuation of Longwood’s music program. Huff goes into depth about the university’s decision, “This is a regrettable decision that has been forced upon us. After working diligently over the past month to find an immediate and practical way to meet proposed budget cuts, we believe this is our most prudent form of action. With an 11 percent cut already on the table for 2012, we need to focus on making difficult, but necessary decisions.”

At 1:15 p.m., after the faculty and students had been notified about the department closing through e-mail, campus police responded to several complaints located on Brock Commons. When the officers arrived on the scene, they found a protesting crowd composed of around 100 people, which have been determined as the music department staff, music majors, and other Longwood students. Longwood University Campus Police Chief, Jay Hitchens, said “Our officers arrived at Brock Commons to find Mr. Matusczek, Mrs. Watson, Mr. Currlyn and Mr. Early leading dozens of people in song.” After the police encountered the protesters on Brock Commons singing popular protest songs and explaining to the crowd what they were protesting for, the situation took a turn for the worst. Paul Black, Associate Professor in Music Department, said, “I thought things were winding down when the Longwood police came up from the Dorrill staircase right at the entrance to Brock Commons. They didn’t ask any questions, the officers walked up to Professor Matusczek and told him to stop drumming. When he refused, we were all caught up in the moment and the next thing I know, one of the officers is trying to take the drum away from him. One of the students yelled at the officer to let him go and accidentally struck him with her flute. I started yelling for my students to stand back and the officers took Kyle, Megan, Bill and William back down the steps.” All four Longwood music department professors who were lead the protest, were arrested and charged with disturbing the peace and resisting arrest.

Later that day a press release from Longwood was released to the public. Huff speaks for the university, “We are absolutely disappointed and appalled by the actions of these rogue faculty members. Their activities do not reflect the values of strong citizen leadership that this university stands for. They have all been suspended without pay until the legal process is complete. Any students participating in this shameful protest also face potential judicial board hearings.” Many Longwood students stand by their professors and their right to protest the music department cut. An anonymous Longwood student said, “All I know is that the university is closing us down and we are not going to stand for it. I’ll protest every day if I have to!”

Longwood has been facing tremendous academic cuts; 25% cuts in 2008 state funds toward the university and expectations of additionally cuts are coming. According to Huff, “the music department was first on the administration’s chopping block” due to the music major not growing at the same pace the faculty was growing. Huff explains the student to professor ratio in the music department as 24 employees for 120 students. Longwood had to make sweeping change to eliminate the faculty positions. Huff goes on to explain other cuts the university is discussing, “As of right now, this is the administrations only cut to academic departments.”

The university has been working to ensure the six-year plan outcome is well on its way. The six-year plan, which is a budget planning process for the institution and reformation to their infrastructure, has no intention of bringing the music department back to Longwood anytime in the near future. The only way the department will be able to come back after the 2017-2018 academic year, six years, will be if student enrollment and funds increase.

Huff said, “Their actions have in no way affected our decision to close the Music Department after the 2011-2012 academic calendar year.” Faculty and students are still in disbelief from all the occurrences of April 27. Kyle Matusczek, Longwood music professor and lead protestor, says, “This is the day the music died.” The music department will still be closing at the end of the 2011- 2012 academic calendar year.

**WORD COUNT: 746**