



August 19, 2025

University of Virginia Presidential Search Committee Members
c/o Catherine Lindqvist
Executive Director, UVA Executive Search Group

Dear Members of the University of Virginia Presidential Search Committee:

We are writing to you as concerned alumni of the University of Virginia and as leaders of Wahoos4UVA, a non-partisan coalition of more than 14,000 UVA alumni, students, parents, faculty, staff, and friends committed to protecting UVA from political interference. We love UVA and believe that it thrived under Jim Ryan's presidency. As such, we are deeply concerned and disturbed by his forced resignation. We know that you are also committed to UVA, and we thank you for your service. Undertaking a search for the next president of the University of Virginia is an arduous and challenging task, and we trust that you will do your best to continue the tradition of exceptional leadership here at UVA. Nevertheless, we urge you, as newly appointed members of the Presidential Search Committee, to consider whether this search is appropriately timed and has any chance of culminating in a result that would lead to the long-term success of the University.

First, the governance bodies at UVA no longer trust this Board of Visitors (BOV). The Faculty Senate, General Faculty Council, and Student Council have all expressed "no confidence" in the BOV. The Rector and Vice Rector have failed to answer questions about the response of the BOV to the letters from the Department of Justice (DOJ), the circumstances of President Ryan's forced resignation, the potential terms of, or rationale for entering into, a "voluntary resolution agreement" with the DOJ, or the need to rush to hire a permanent replacement.

Second, the BOV itself is under a court order disallowing at least one nominated candidate to sit; new nominees, some of whom sit on the Search Committee, have not been confirmed by the General Assembly and their membership is uncertain.

Third, the leaders of Virginia's General Assembly have warned the Rector and Vice Rector that they should not move forward with a search for the next president until the BOV answers questions about its actions and until conflicts over BOV representation are resolved. An election this November will result in new statewide officials in Richmond. Ignoring the directives of members of the General Assembly is likely to aggravate tensions among the BOV, University leadership, and elected officials.

Finally, many in the UVA community are concerned about the constitution of the Search Committee. Only one dean of a UVA school is on the committee and there are no faculty representing the humanities at all. The College of Arts and Sciences, the University's largest school, is barely represented. In addition, only one undergraduate student has been appointed.

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Under these circumstances, this presidential search will face significant headwinds. At the outset, UVA will fail to attract the best candidates from across the nation. President Ryan's resignation has been the subject of numerous national news stories, many of which have raised critical questions about the actions of the Board of Visitors. Few, if any, qualified candidates will apply for a position working for the same Board of Visitors that failed to support and protect President Ryan.

Even if the search ends with a plausible candidate, we fear that he or she will be unable to govern the University effectively. A search process is intended not only to find the best person for the presidency, but also to be conducted in such a manner that the person selected has the greatest chance of success. This process is so tainted that we fear that no one selected will have credibility with the faculty, staff, students, and alumni, or with the General Assembly and the next governor. We do not question the integrity of the Search Committee's members; we trust that you will serve with distinction and to the best of your ability. But even a conscientious member of the committee cannot avoid and overcome the structural deficiencies of this current search and the circumstances that led to it, many of which have been subject to a cloud of secrecy and lack of transparency.

Respectfully, we urge you to use your voice to insist that UVA pause the presidential search and reconstitute the committee once the status of the BOV has been resolved, and trust and confidence of the University community has been restored. We hope you will also urge the Rector and Vice Rector to begin to rebuild that trust by answering the questions posed to them by the Faculty Senate, Student Council, Wahoos4UVA, and members of the General Assembly. UVA cannot embark on a search for our 10th president until the Board of Visitors has honestly and transparently explained what happened to the 9th one.

We are available to you and eager to share our views, if you would be receptive to a conversation. We can be reached at Ann.Brown@Wahoos4UVA.com and Chris.Ford@Wahoos4UVA.com.

All the best,

Ann Brown (College '74, Law '77) and Chris Ford (Engineering '87)
Co-Chairs, Wahoos4UVA

cc:

Jeri Seidman, Faculty Senate Chair jks7v@virginia.edu

Paul Mahoney, Interim President pmahoney@law.virginia.edu

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About Wahoos4UVA

Wahoos4UVA is a nonpartisan coalition of alumni, students, parents, faculty, staff, and friends of UVA who are committed to protecting the University of Virginia from political interference. Founded in May 2025 by two University of Virginia faculty members concerned about the threat posed by political interference to the ability of the University to fulfill its mission, Wahoos4UVA quickly grew into an alumni-led grassroots movement with more than 14,000 supporters. Wahoos4UVA empowers its members with concrete ways to make their voices heard. Through weekly action alerts, media engagement, letter-writing campaigns, and legislative outreach, Wahoos4UVA advocates for meaningful structural reforms to protect the University from political interference and uphold the shared values that define the University of Virginia.

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