



November 21, 2025

Faculty Senate
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia 22904

To the members of the Faculty Senate:

Isaacson, Miller is honored to support the Special Committee in UVA's presidential search.

The Special Committee, by design, includes students, faculty, staff, alumni, current trustees and former trustees from prior administrations. It is considerably larger than most presidential search committees, also by design. Over the last few decades, we have only seen one or two that are larger.

When committees launch presidential searches, they almost always reach out broadly to their university constituencies. At UVA, in this demanding time, the Special Committee created over 40 different listening sessions, engaging every constituency in the UVA community. That is consistent with classical search practice, though rarely at this scale. The number of listening sessions exceeded most presidential selection processes. As part of our collective learning, we, at the firm, with the Committee's guidance, created a survey sent broadly to UVA faculty, staff, students, and alumni, seeking advice and nominations. We received over 1300 responses, which produced clear themes to guide the Special Committee and a helpful list of nominations. The Special Committee's collective effort to listen and learn led directly to the position profile, which is a careful statement of UVA's virtues and of the hard work a new president should undertake on behalf of the University.

As is the norm for a presidential search for a major research university, Isaacson, Miller did foundational research to create a prospective candidate list of talented leaders, particularly those in higher education, focusing on those with the administrative experiences to lead an institution of UVA's scale and prestige. This included leading presidents, provosts, and deans, with special attention to identifying those with a connection, in their service or their education, to UVA wherever possible. The Special Committee was keen to identify candidates who demonstrate a deep appreciation for the University's founding mission, longstanding values, and continued excellence. It has been a meticulous effort that sought out talent broadly across the country.

This is a critical moment in higher education. At the start of the search, we were unsure how candidates would respond to the opportunity. We were pleased to learn that the University's sterling reputation, outstanding quality of education and research activities, and national leadership position at an important time in higher education made the position very appealing in spite of challenges facing the sector at large. Candidate outreach yielded an extremely strong pool of highly qualified candidates.

UVA has done exceptionally well. It has been well led. It has created an extraordinary student experience, which is widely recognized. It attracts top students across its outstanding undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. It has increasingly invested in its research and scholarly mission and attracted eminent scholars at the forefronts of their fields. The institution's finances have been carefully managed, placing UVA in a stronger position than most to invest in its future. The medical center is also thriving and excellently positioned for additional opportunities in research, education, and clinical care delivery. The candidates have responded to the existing strengths and aspirations for UVA's future: to cement its place as one of the absolute best universities in the world. Candidates have recognized this potential, and we have received a much stronger response than we might have anticipated.

The Special Committee has done its work on a classic search timeline, in line with most university presidential searches, including the prior two UVA presidential searches. The members of the Special Committee have many different perspectives, but they have listened carefully to the community, have acquired a unified vision of the work ahead, and have engaged seriously and diligently with evaluating potential candidate profiles, and then with the candidates themselves. Over the last three months, the Committee has engaged in a meticulous and comprehensive effort to recruit, screen, and vet hundreds of potential candidates. The evaluation has been rigorous and thorough, in accordance with best search practices and guided by the priorities expressed by their colleagues in the UVA community. The seriousness of purpose and investment of time and energy have been intense. They have embraced their duties and have worked hard, collectively, to weigh the experience and talent of a group of impressive academic leaders. We are grateful to serve them.

The work continues. The Special Committee, with our help, has been careful to take the appropriate time necessary to evaluate and vet an exceptional group of candidates who could advance the best interests of the University of Virginia. Selection of the right leader is a crucial decision, and the Committee is prudently continuing its due diligence.

We offer our thanks to the Committee for the privilege of joining them in this search. The University of Virginia is an inspiration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Isaacson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

John Isaacson | Chair
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