

SENATE OF VIRGINIA

R. CREIGH DEEDS

11TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT
ALL OF ALBEMARLE, AMHERST, AND
NELSON COUNTIES;
ALL OF THE CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE;
AND PART OF LOUISA COUNTY
POST OFFICE BOX 5462
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22905-5462



COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
COMMERCE AND LABOR, CHAIR
COURTS OF JUSTICE
FINANCE AND APPROPRIATIONS
PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS
RULES

September 29, 2025

Ms. Rachel Sheridan, Rector
Board of Visitors
University of Virginia
Madison Hall
1827 University Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Dear Ms. Sheridan,

The General Assembly has a constitutional and statutory interest in the governance and operations of the Commonwealth's public institutions of higher education, including the University of Virginia. In furtherance of the General Assembly's oversight responsibilities, on August 1, 2025, I sent you a list of forty-six questions regarding the circumstances surrounding the forced resignation of President James E. Ryan. Those questions sought to clarify the sequence of events leading to President Ryan's resignation, the role played by members of the Board of Visitors, and the nature of communications among the Board, the Office of the Governor, and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).

Despite repeated attempts to obtain answers, the Board of Visitors has declined to answer most of those questions on advice of counsel. Because the Board has not provided information necessary to enable legislative oversight, I sought information from other individuals who may have some knowledge of these events. These individuals showed respect for the General Assembly's oversight role and treated my inquiries with the seriousness they warrant.

What I have learned to date is deeply troubling, particularly in light of Interim President Paul Mahoney's announcement at the September 12, 2025 Board of Visitors meeting that two DOJ investigations – the investigation into admissions policies at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy and the McIntire School of Commerce, and the investigation into the University's response to allegations of antisemitic discrimination – have been closed. Because my inquiry remains ongoing and the response to my September 18 letter only yielded copies of the DOJ letters to UVA opening and closing the two investigations, I write today following up with additional questions related to that announcement.

It is my understanding that neither McGuireWoods nor you notified the full Board of Visitors of any alleged request or demand by the DOJ for President Ryan's resignation. (Attorney Harmeet Dhillon has publicly asserted that the DOJ made no such request or demand.) If the

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DOJ **did** call for President Ryan's resignation, a failure to convey that information to the full Board is deeply concerning. If, on the other hand, the DOJ did **not** call for his resignation, a decision to propose to DOJ officials that President Ryan would resign is equally troubling.

It is my further understanding that during negotiations in a meeting that McGuireWoods and you held with DOJ officials shortly before President Ryan announced his resignation the following occurred:

To resolve seven DOJ investigations, McGuireWoods and you proposed that UVA would provide responses to the DOJ inquiries and that President Ryan was willing to resign but wanted to continue to serve through the 2025-2026 academic year. This would provide stability in leadership while the Board began a search for a new President, would allow the University the deserved opportunity to celebrate President Ryan's tenure as President, would allow the conclusion of the capital campaign, and would allow for President Ryan to complete the final tenets of his strategic plan.

UVA and McGuireWoods were informed by the DOJ that President Ryan must resign immediately and leave office as soon as possible. In exchange, UVA would receive "blanket immunity." This would include all current and possible future DOJ investigations being suspended or terminated, DOJ would ensure that no other federal agencies would launch investigations against UVA, UVA would be allowed to write the agreement codifying these terms which would be signed by the DOJ and UVA, all federal funding across all areas of the University would remain protected by DOJ from being rescinded as has been done at other universities, neither the DOJ nor the federal government would demand monetary payments to escape additional federal funding cuts as has occurred at many other Universities, and the Board and UVA would be allowed to manage the University and make decisions regarding future senior leadership without any interference from DOJ or the federal government.

My understanding is that, under this verbal agreement reached, all seven DOJ investigations were to be suspended upon President Ryan's submission of his resignation. Three months later, Interim President Mahoney announced that two investigations have been closed. If the terms McGuireWoods and you reportedly agreed on with the DOJ required permanent suspension of all seven investigations upon submission of President Ryan's resignation, why does it seem that only two have been closed? What is the status of the other five?

Accordingly, I ask that you answer the following:

1. On June 26, 2025, why didn't McGuireWoods and you ensure that UVA had the terms of the agreement in writing before conveying to the DOJ that President Ryan would submit his resignation immediately?
2. Why did the Board of Visitors accept President Ryan's resignation without first obtaining DOJ's signature on a written agreement codifying the negotiated terms?

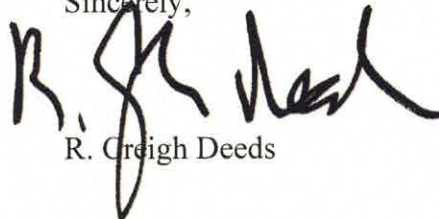
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3. What, if anything, did you get in exchange for President Ryan's resignation?
4. For each of the two DOJ investigations that were recently closed, what "appropriate remedial action" was taken to close them?

It seems probable that President Ryan would not have resigned, nor would the Board leadership involved in this process have accepted his resignation without the above agreement being proposed and ironclad. President Ryan was quoted in his announcement as saying "I cannot make a unilateral decision to fight the federal government in order to save my own job. To do so would not only be quixotic but appear selfish and self-centered to the hundreds of employees who would lose their jobs, the researchers who would lose their funding, and the hundreds of students who could lose financial aid or have their visas withheld...."

Pursuant to § 23.1-1301(A) of the Code of Virginia, which provides that "boards of visitors of public institutions of higher education shall at all times be under the control of the General Assembly," the General Assembly has clear authority to conduct oversight of the actions and decisions of the UVA Board of Visitors. Accordingly, please send your written answers to my questions to senatordeeds@senate.virginia.gov no later than October 24, 2025.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Creigh Deeds". The signature is stylized with a large "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

R. Creigh Deeds

cc: The Honorable L. Louise Lucas
President pro tempore, Senate of Virginia
Chair, Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations

The Honorable Don Scott
The Speaker of the House of Delegates

The Honorable Scott A. Surovell
Majority Leader, Senate of Virginia

The Honorable Ghazala Hashmi
Chair, Senate Committee on Education & Health

Scott Ballenger
Secretary to the Board of Visitors