



October 27, 2025

The Honorable Katrina Callsen
The Honorable R. Creigh Deeds
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DELKCALLSEN@HOUSE.VIRGINIA.GOV

Dear Delegate Callsen and Senator Deeds:

Thank you for your letter dated October 23. While we recognize that it was written out of concern for the University, we believe it represents a misunderstanding of UVA's agreement with the United States, the process that led to it, and its connection to the University's longstanding relationship with, and responsibilities to, the federal government.

We take very seriously our obligation to serve the University of Virginia and advance its best interests, as do all the men and women who serve on the UVA Board of Visitors. The Commonwealth entrusts us with many responsibilities, but few, if any, more important than safeguarding the University's institutional independence and academic freedom. Our commitment to those ideals guides everything we do and was at the heart of our response to the seven federal investigations that are the focus of your letter.

We respectfully disagree with your assessment of the agreement. As you know, it is the culmination of months of engagement with the Department of Justice (DOJ) and other federal agencies to respond to multiple investigations involving claims that the University violated our nation's civil rights laws.

The agreement suspends those investigations and commits the government to not open new investigations or impose sanctions as long as UVA works to comply with civil rights laws, as we have been doing. We will follow the law, and the agreement makes clear that interpretations by the courts take precedence over DOJ guidance. So, for example, the DOJ guidance includes provisions relating to sexual identity and intimate facilities and athletics competition. This guidance is inconsistent with decisions of the U.S. Court of Appeals in the Fourth Circuit, which governs Virginia, and we have and will continue to follow judicial interpretations with respect to these matters.

The agreement further avoids the significant financial settlements other institutions have paid to resolve similar claims against them, protecting institutional resources that can, and should, be used for the good of UVA and the Commonwealth we serve.

It also maintains our ability to chart our own course and certify our own compliance with civil rights laws. As you know, other institutions have agreed to intrusive external monitoring arrangements. Rather than "unprecedented federal control," as you state, having the University administration report on our compliance with the law is typical in federal relations. Requirements that we certify compliance are routine in many areas of the law and in many agreements we and other universities have reached with federal agencies over the years. We also certify compliance with civil rights laws in connection with federal research grants.

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The October 22 agreement is essentially a truce. We agree to continue making our best efforts to comply with civil rights laws. We will respect DOJ's July 29 interpretation of those laws when consistent with applicable judicial precedents—a condition we have vetted carefully and believe is consistent with our existing policies. The Justice Department has agreed to forbear, for now, from exercising statutory authorities that it already has so long as they believe we are making progress in good faith. In practice, then, our primary obligation is to implement fully the policies we have adopted since the Supreme Court's decision in the *Students for Fair Admissions* case.

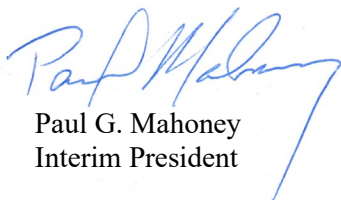
If the government concludes we are not making progress or if we encounter an irreconcilable disagreement about what our legal obligations are, then it will terminate the agreement, and we will be in essentially the same position we were in on October 21.

This aspect of the agreement differs from the Columbia and Brown agreements. Because those agreements impose lengthy lists of specific obligations on the universities, they also contemplate that the agreements will remain in force while the parties resolve disputes over whether the universities are in compliance. Our agreement is different—if the United States believes we are not in compliance, its only remedy is to terminate the agreement. We have not given up any administrative, statutory, or Constitutional protections against subsequent agency action.

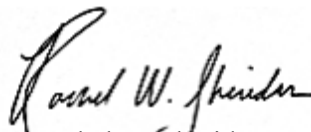
While the government can force a return to the status quo in the future, so can the University by the simple expedient of refusing a request from DOJ to change a particular policy or procedure. That approach seems obviously preferable to immediate enforcement actions or litigation that would be an expensive distraction from our educational mission and may well be unnecessary. And as I'm sure you are aware, similar investigations have resulted in multi-million-dollar fines, cuts in federal research funding, denials of student visas, and other drastic penalties at other universities. Of the choices we faced, in a situation we certainly did not ask for, it was the best option for advancing the University's mission in the current environment.

We are a leading public university, and our compliance with the law ensures public trust and the responsible use of taxpayer dollars. It also enables us to remain focused on the pursuit of truth, the education of our students, life-saving research, and exceptional patient care. We respect the concerns you have expressed, and we expect we all would prefer the University not to have faced these investigations. Because that was not our reality, our task has been to work diligently and thoughtfully to protect the University we love and to stand up for the values at the core of who we are. We believe we have done that in this case and look forward to continued dialogue with you about how we can continue that work moving forward.

Sincerely,



Paul G. Mahoney
Interim President



Rachel W. Sheridan
Rector

P.S. Enclosed are editorials written by the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*, both making the case that the agreement we reached is a positive outcome for the University and should be a model for other institutions. To quote the *Journal*, "The deal appears to strike a balance that will ensure the university obeys the law without coercive overreach. It looks like a welcome step back from the Administration's "compact" offer to universities that included far more school governance directives." Enclosed also is an FAQ page that the University prepared in connection with the agreement.