



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Abigail Spanberger
Governor-elect

November 12, 2025

Board of Visitors
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA 22901

Dear Rector Sheridan and Vice Rector Wilkinson:

As both a proud alumna and the Governor-elect of the Commonwealth of Virginia, I am deeply concerned by recent developments at the University of Virginia and how these challenges may impact the legitimacy of the current search for the University's next president.

Over the past six months, the actions of the Board of Visitors have severely undermined the public's and the University community's confidence in the Board's ability to govern productively, transparently, and in the best interests of the University. This loss of confidence is reflected in the numerous votes of no confidence from both the faculty senate and the student council – constituencies essential to the University's success and those directly affected by the critical decisions before the Board. In addition, as five Board appointees have failed to achieve confirmation by the General Assembly, the Board is not fully constituted and its composition is now in violation of statutory requirements in crucial respects, further calling into question the legitimacy of the Board and its actions.

In the wake of the departure of President Jim Ryan as a result of federal overreach – unchallenged by the Board – the University now faces the serious task of selecting its tenth president. The next University president will not only lead the University of Virginia but will also serve as an example of leadership across the Commonwealth's public institutions of higher education at a time of unprecedented challenges. The search for a university president is the most consequential action a university board can undertake, and in all cases, such a search must be conducted through a legitimate and transparent process. That requirement is especially critical for the University of Virginia at this moment, and that legitimate and transparent process must be led by a Board that is fully constituted and commands the trust of the University community and the confidence of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Accordingly, I urge you to refrain from rushing this search process and from selecting the finalists for the presidency or a president until the Board is at full complement and in statutory compliance, meaning that I have appointed and the General Assembly has confirmed new Board members. As it will be a priority of my administration to stabilize and normalize the leadership of our public colleges and universities, I will make appointments soon after my inauguration.



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The benefits of selecting a new president with a full, duly-constituted Board are clear and include: (1) providing credibility to the search process and the selection decision; (2) ensuring that the individual chosen to lead the University benefits from having been chosen in a credible and transparent process; and (3) removing any concern that the Board's actions are illegitimate due to a lack of authority.

Given our shared commitment to the success of the University, the aforementioned concerns, and my commitment to making Board appointments quickly upon my swearing in, I again urge the Board to refrain from making any selections of finalists or ultimately a president until the Board is fully constituted and statutorily compliant.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Abigail Spanberger".

Abigail Spanberger
Governor-Elect of the Commonwealth of Virginia