U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

June 16, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

Rector Rachel W. Sheridan
BOARD OF VISITORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
The Rotunda
Charlottesville, Virginia

c/o Farnaz F. Thompson
MCGUIREWOODS
888 16th Street – Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20006

RE: Racial Discrimination at The University of Virginia

Dear Rector Sheridan:

As you know, the United States Department of Justice has commenced compliance reviews of the University of Virginia ("UVa") regarding allegations of racial discrimination, particularly the use or consideration (to any degree) of race in admissions, treatment of students, and the award of student benefits. At present, these inquiries have been directed to the University's undergraduate, law, and medical schools. The Department's notices and requests for information were transmitted on April 11, 2025 (undergraduate schools), April 18, 2025 (law school), and May 22, 2025 (medical school).

Additionally, on April 28, 2025, the Department corresponded with UVa President James E. Ryan regarding reports that his administration was refusing to comply with *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harvard College*, 600 U.S. 181, 231 (2023), the Executive Orders of the President of the United States regarding the dismantling of "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" or "DEI" apparatuses and instruments of discrimination based on race, skin color, ethnicity, national origin, and other impermissible, immutable characteristics, and your Board of Visitors' unanimous directive to dissolve "DEI" at the University of Virginia.

Since those letters were transmitted, the Department has received complaints that President Ryan, his administration, and certain faculty members have been actively engaged in attempts to defy and evade federal anti-discrimination laws and the directives of your Board. Indeed, evidence supplied to the Department would suggest that President Ryan and his proxies are making little attempt to disguise their contempt and intent to defy these fundamental civil rights and governing laws.

We need not remind you that compliance with federal anti-discrimination laws and the United States Constitution is not optional. Moreover, you will certainly recall Attorney General of Virginia Jason Miyares' admonition that the UVa Board of Visitors and the President of the University are public officials of the Commonwealth of Virginia who owe fiduciary duties and duties of loyalty first and foremost to the Commonwealth, not the interests or ideologies of university administrators or faculty members. The penultimate duty of any fiduciary and any public official, including members of the Board of Visitors, is strict adherence to the laws of our nation. To be sure, your Board cannot sit idly by while important federal laws are broken, and fundamental civil rights are impaired.

Please accept this letter as formal notice that the existing compliance reviews are hereby expanded and augmented to include UVa's School of Nursing (graduate and undergraduate), the Darden School of Business, the School of Education (graduate and undergraduate), the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy (graduate and undergraduate), and the McIntire School of Commerce (graduate and undergraduate). In other words, the prior requests now include the schools and components identified in this letter, and the same expectations and deadlines will apply. Please also ensure that the University's certifications and responses include boards, associations, and foundations, such as the Alumni Association and the Jefferson Scholars Foundation, as well as organizations such as the Law Review, the Honor Committee, the University Judiciary Committee, and the University Guide Service, to name but a few. Finally, the Department's prior communications and requests regarding allegations of antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Israeli (or American-Israeli) discrimination, harassment, and retaliation should also be viewed as being part of the overall inquiry and review under Title VI and other applicable laws.

We also write to make you aware that the Department has received complaints regarding employment issues at the University of Virginia, particularly acts, errors, and omissions that could, if true, constitute patterns and practices of illegal racial discrimination, harassment, and retaliation under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Please note that while the Department has not yet opened a formal investigation into those matters and issues, it is reviewing and examining the complaints.

The Department has reached no conclusions regarding the University of Virginia's liability regarding any of these issues. The Department expects UVa to comply with all federal anti-discrimination laws and the United States Constitution. The Department also expects the University to respond fully and unconditionally to the requests for all schools, components, affiliated associations, and foundations, including those mentioned above, by the previously extended deadline of June 23, 2025.

If necessary, the Department is prepared to take formal action to secure UVa's compliance with federal law, which could include suspending, terminating, or refusing to grant or continue UVa's federal financial assistance, as well as commencing a civil action or series of actions.

We expect to hear from you promptly and remain,

Sincerely,

HARMEET K. DHILLON
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

GREGORY W. BROWN
Deputy Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE