



October 8, 2025

Dear Senators,

Thank you for your letter of October 7, 2025, expressing your concerns about the document entitled “Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education.”

Prior to your letter yesterday afternoon, we issued a statement to the University community about the Compact. We agree with you that, as our Statement notes, the document “raises questions of profound importance to the University of Virginia and more broadly to all institutions of higher education in the United States.”

We reiterate here what we said there: “[O]ur response will be guided by the same principles of academic freedom and free inquiry that Thomas Jefferson placed at the center of the University’s mission more than 200 years ago, and to which the University has remained faithful ever since.”

Your letter rightly observes that the federal government’s request for comment on the Compact follows an extraordinarily tumultuous time for the University, one in which our leaders have been forced to contend with unprecedented challenges.

Those challenges include intense pressure from the Department of Justice that the University has sought to navigate and that, as you note, resulted in President Ryan’s decision to resign this summer, months ahead of his planned departure at the end of the 2025-2026 academic year. President Ryan was a successful leader of UVa. As you know, the Board of Visitors worked closely and collaboratively with him not only through great accomplishments but also through difficult issues.

Since President Ryan’s departure, the University’s leaders – both the administration and the Board – have worked to address the continuing challenges in a manner consistent with the institution’s principles and proud traditions.

When Thomas Jefferson founded the University in 1819, he dedicated it to the promotion of a simple but profound mission: self-governance through the unhindered pursuit of truth. At the University of Virginia, Mr. Jefferson explained, “we are not

afraid to follow the truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error, so long as reason is left to combat it.”

For the past two centuries, through all manner of crises and controversies, the University has steadfastly maintained its founding commitment. As the current stewards of that legacy, we have no intention of abandoning the University’s principles. Your letter makes clear that you share the same devotion to this University that motivates our service, so we appreciate you conveying your views and we look forward to working together with the Commonwealth’s leaders to promote and protect the University of Virginia.

Sincerely,

Rachel Sheridan
Rector

Porter Wilkinson
Vice-Rector

Paul Mahoney
Interim President