



THE RECTOR AND VISITORS OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

December 17, 2021

Ms. Lily E. West
President and Chief Executive Officer
The University of Virginia
Alumni Association
P.O. Box 400314
Charlottesville, Virginia 22904

Mr. Tom Mangas
Chair, Alumni Association
Board of Managers
The University of Virginia
Alumni Association
P.O. Box 400314
Charlottesville, Virginia 22904

Dear Lily and Tom:

As you know, the Honor System has been a topic of discussion among students and alumni alike this semester, and, on behalf of the administration leadership and the Board of Visitors, we are writing with an idea that we think might be a great project for the Alumni Association to lead.

The Honor System – and its importance to the University experience – comes up frequently in conversation with our alumni at events across the country. Alumni speak with reverence and gratitude about the role Honor played in their time at the University, and the ways in which the core values it promotes have shaped their lives for many years beyond graduation. Many cite the Honor System as the defining feature of their UVA experience, bar none.

In these conversations, some alumni cite worries about the role the Honor System plays in today's student experience, expressing concern that it is not as central as it once was and sharing their perception that students and faculty do not take the concept of Honor as seriously as they did in the past. With that said, in many conversations with students over the course of the semester, we've made a point to ask about their perceptions of Honor and have been pleased to hear that students across the board continue to see Honor as foundational to the University's culture. They may not speak about the Honor System with the same reverence we hear from our older alums in particular, but – to a person – they recognize that the community of trust the Honor System enables is relevant and critical to our institutional culture and to the experience it enables them to have as UVA students.

Which brings us to the idea: we see an opportunity for current students and alumni across generations to learn from one another about Honor, what it means to the University, and how its values set UVA graduates apart. Given your unique, longstanding relationship with our alumni base and your administration of the Honor endowment, we'd like to have

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your help in figuring out how to make the most of this opportunity. This project could take several forms – a call for alumni and students to submit written reflections or video clips about how they view Honor, or an updated educational video, using student experiences, explaining the role Honor and the Honor System play at the University, for example. But no matter what form this project takes, the idea is simple: to help students and alumni learn from one another and to underscore the central role the Honor System continues to play at the University.

While we will defer to you on the length of time such a project could take, it is our hope that a finished product would be ready to share and disseminate by this coming mid-July for new and returning students and faculty.

We have discussed this initiative with the current chair of the Honor Committee, Andy Chambers, who fully supports this initiative.

If this is something you'd be willing to take on, we'd be most appreciative. We of course stand ready to assist in any way we can, as does Andy Chambers.

Thank you for considering, and we look forward to continuing the conversation.

Sincerely yours,



James E. Ryan
President



Whittington W. Clement
Rector

WWC/JER:dr
cc: Mr. Andrew Chambers



January 5, 2022

Mr. James E. Ryan
President
The University of Virginia
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Mr. Whittington W. Clement
Rector, Board of Visitors
The University of Virginia
Rotunda, P.O. Box 400222
Charlottesville, VA 22904-4222

Dear Jim and Whitt:

It would be an honor. Thank you for reaching out, especially on a topic close to the hearts of alumni and so vital to the University.

The Alumni Association is uniquely positioned to assist, and we are here to help in any way we can. We are eager to explore the possibilities, which might include, among others, leading the effort to create an Honor video – or series of videos – for the current generation of students. We may need to enlist the administration’s assistance in ensuring that all students are provided an opportunity to watch the video.

This might also present opportunities for alumni, faculty, and student engagement events on the topic. We can envision convening a series of frank, balanced, and constructive dialogues about Honor and the Honor System. We actually have an event along those lines in the works for the spring semester, a follow-up to our Vox Alumni initiative. As you know, our Vox Alumni survey results surfaced the concerns and perceptions you describe and suggested a similar way forward – reframing the Honor discussion around shared ideals.

Beyond programmatic contributions, we are committed to supporting the Honor System through the resources of the Honor Endowment, which the Alumni Association proudly stewards and continues to grow.

Thank you again for the opportunity. We look forward to working with you and the Honor Committee in the months ahead to develop these ideas and potentially others.

Very truly yours,

Lily West
President & CEO
University of Virginia Alumni Association

Tom Mangas
Chair, Board of Managers
University of Virginia Alumni Association

cc: Andrew Chambers