



THE FAIRFAX COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

8115 Gatehouse Road, Suite 5400, Falls Church, VA 22042

Fairfax County
Public Schools

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November 12, 2013

Dr. George Keith Martin, Rector
University of Virginia Board of Visitors
The Rotunda
P.O. Box 400222
Charlottesville, VA 22904

Dear Dr. Martin,

As members of the Fairfax County School Board, we are writing to express concern about how the elimination of the AccessUVa no-loan policy will affect our growing population of socio-economically disadvantaged students after they graduate from high school.

Over the past five years, the number of students in Fairfax County who receive free or reduced-priced meals has grown from 22 to 27 percent, while our student population has grown by 15,000 students. These trends will only continue, and we expect that more and more of your applicants will come from families with great financial need. Since 2005, U.Va. has enrolled 4,291 Fairfax County graduates, many of whom have benefited from the no-loan policy. The elimination of this policy could make it significantly more difficult for our high-achieving, low-income students to study at Virginia's flagship university.

Like our public schools, public universities are supposed to put education within reach of all of our citizens, no matter their wealth. The very reason that Thomas Jefferson sought to establish a public education system in Virginia was to ensure that all citizens—not merely those who could afford a private education—would be able to contribute to society and the democratic process. The AccessUVa program has served this purpose admirably.

We are aware that your institution faces financial difficulties. Like U. Va., FCPS' state aid has waned in recent years as we've been asked to educate more students with less per-pupil funding. Despite these financial challenges, we share a mutual obligation to pursue equity for our neediest students, such as the approximately 350 students a year who benefit from AccessUVa. Recruiting from an increasingly diverse student population is already a great challenge for U. Va., and we fear that cuts to AccessUVa will only exacerbate that challenge.

In Fairfax, we invest heavily in the success of our neediest students with costly but effective strategies such as needs-based staffing. When these students work hard to succeed and are ready to advance to the next level in their education, we hope they will find their state colleges and universities matching that investment.

The end of the no-loan program could have wide-ranging impacts both on individuals and the Commonwealth. With the elimination of the program, talented, low-income FCPS graduates may feel their only choice is to forego college altogether. Those needy students who may still decide to attend U. Va. will be under greater pressure to work longer hours to limit their debt load, which could remove them from the University community and put more obstacles between them and graduation day. As Virginians, we must all do our part to help all students achieve their full potential, which will ultimately have a positive impact on the state's economic future.


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November 12, 2013
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For all of these reasons, we respectfully ask you to reconsider the elimination of the AccessUVA no-loan policy.

Sincerely,




Ilryong Moon
Chairman
At-Large




Tamara Derenak Kaufax
Vice Chairman
Lee District



Sandy Evan
Mason District




Pat Hynes
Hunter Mill District



Ryan McElveen
At-Large



Dan Storck
Mount Vernon District



Jane K. Strauss
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