Dear Constituents,

We appreciate the questions and concern surrounding the composition of the Presidential Search Committee. As USAC representatives, we aim to listen and uplift your questions and concerns, and recommend appropriate resolution. Since the search committee was announced on October 14, 2020, we have received several messages from constituents across the University, as well as eight web submissions. These web submissions can be found on the USAC website.
Specifically, the web submissions and feedback from constituents address the lack of staff representation and from non-managerial positions on the search committee. A list of the search committee members is also enclosed.

**Regarding the role of USAC and the Presidential Search Committee**
The USAC Chair was contacted by the Vice President and Secretary to the Board of Trustees to provide a list of staff nominees for the search committee. USAC representatives were then contacted for a slate of nominees and subsequently presented the names of 54 staff members to the Board. Of the staff members who were selected to serve on the search committee only one was put forth by USAC. Comparatively, Faculty Senate provided the names of the three faculty on the search committee.

USAC shared these concerns with the Board of Trustees. In these communications, USAC asked the board for an additional staff member to be added to the search committee. This request was denied. A formal response from Paul Queally (Rector, Board of Trustees) is enclosed.

**A note from the USAC Executive Committee**
Your trust in our leadership is important to us. If our role in the selection of the Presidential Search Committee has faltered that trust, we sincerely apologize. We have learned a lot throughout this process and have recommendations and suggestions for future USAC members going through the presidential search process. We also acknowledge the larger landscape: one where staff members often feel like an unequal stakeholder at the University. We commit to continue advocating for a more equitable and inclusive community for all staff members.

Sincerely,

**USAC Executive Committee**
Mark Stanton, Chair
Jessica Washington, Vice Chair
Jennifer O’Donnell, Secretary/Treasurer
October 26, 2020

Mr. Mark Stanton
Chair
University Staff Advisory Council

Dear Mark:

Thank you for your recent message on behalf of USAC about the Presidential Search Committee, and the accompanying messages reflecting the perspectives of individual staff members.

I discussed this topic with the Board at our meeting on Friday. We are grateful for the staff’s strong interest in additional representation on the search committee. However, the Board established the composition with great care and attention to a variety of considerations, and we are all in agreement that the current composition is the most appropriate composition.

We are grateful to USAC for assembling the impressive slate of nominees, and the Board was pleased to select AVP and Dean of Admission Gil Villanueva from that list of nominees to serve on the committee. It was our assumption (as I believe Ann Lloyd Breeden conveyed in discussing the Board’s invitation to USAC to provide a slate of nominees) that all nominees on USAC’s slate would be colleagues that USAC viewed as excellent representatives of the staff as a whole, rather than as representatives of a specific area or category of staff. Indeed, in charging the search committee, I stressed that it was the responsibility of all members to approach our important work as University citizens representing the interests of the University as a whole.

As you know, selecting the University’s President is the Board’s single greatest responsibility. In its history to date, the University has only had ten presidents. At the time a committee is needed, the Board must form the committee according to its best judgment and in response to particular circumstances. In this most important responsibility, the Board must always have such latitude. Accordingly, the composition of a past search committee—particularly with respect to the number or allocation of seats—should not be considered a precedent for future search committees.

The committee’s success in fulfilling its charge, of course, also depends on the active and candid involvement of members of the University community in defining the qualities, skills, and experience the University’s next President will require and the challenges and opportunities the next President will face. We are grateful that USAC will meet directly with the Spencer Stuart team to provide your perspective on these important questions. We also look forward to the perspective of the staff more broadly through both the virtual town hall meetings that will be offered and the survey that will soon be distributed to the University community. The committee very much welcomes and appreciates this input to guide their work.

The Board is pleased to collaborate with the exceptionally strong and diverse committee that has been appointed, and which we are confident will do an outstanding job representing the interests of the University community in recruiting and assessing candidates and ultimately recommending finalists to the
Board. With you, we look forward to recruiting an outstanding new leader for the University of Richmond, to build on the University’s strong foundation of excellence and to achieve our shared aspirations for the institution.

I also wish to convey the Board’s deep appreciation to all members of the University’s staff for your exceptional dedication to the University and its students. We recognize the creativity, resiliency, determination, and exceptional professionalism that have been required of the staff in order to resume and sustain, amidst the challenges of the pandemic, the residential educational experience that is the hallmark of a Richmond education. We are deeply grateful.

Sincerely,

Paul B. Queally
Rector
Board of Trustees