

Concerned Alumni of Virginia Tech

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Updated and Sent via Electronic Transmission

Dear Governor Youngkin and President Sands,

We write to you as alumni of Virginia Tech. We are all aware of the Dear Colleague letter you received from the Department of Education requiring you to cease programs and activities related to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging (DEIAB) or risk losing federal funds. We are disappointed and concerned about this extortionist tactic to undermine the commitment of higher education to broadening the minds and the world views of all students who attend. We implore you not to be hasty in your actions and to really think through the importance of creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive places of learning where each and every student has a place regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or disability.

Virginia Tech's motto is "Ut Prosim," Latin for "That I May Serve." As an institution committed to service, acting precipitously to eliminate any or all effective DEIAB programming is not in service to the school's mission, its current students, alumni, faculty or staff. At Virginia Tech, DEIAB are essential to fostering a welcoming and enriching environment for all students. These principles ensure that every student—regardless of background, identity, or ability—has access to opportunities, resources, and a supportive community that affirms their experiences and contributions. Rather than using the acronym "DEI" as a divisive or weaponized term, it is important to unpack what these values truly mean—creating a campus where fairness, opportunity, and respect are extended to everyone.

Diversity brings together individuals from different cultures, perspectives, and experiences, creating a vibrant learning environment that prepares students for the global workforce. Equity ensures that all students have the necessary support to succeed, addressing systemic barriers that may hinder access to education and opportunities. Inclusion fosters a sense of belonging by valuing each student's unique contributions and encouraging full participation in campus life. Accessibility guarantees that students of all abilities can engage in academics, extracurricular activities, and social events without barriers. Belonging is the result of these efforts, ensuring that every student feels valued, respected, and empowered to thrive.

When all students have access to an affirming and inclusive environment, the entire Virginia Tech community benefits. Collaborative learning is enhanced, innovation thrives through diverse perspectives, and students develop cultural competence, empathy, and leadership skills. A campus that embraces these principles cultivates a sense of unity and shared responsibility, preparing students to be effective leaders in a diverse and interconnected world. By prioritizing access, affirmation, and inclusion, Virginia Tech creates a campus where all Hokies can succeed and contribute meaningfully to society.

Each of us came to Virginia Tech for a different reason, but we left the school with a strong sense of pride in our education, connection to the University, and a commitment to live the motto of the school in our lives. We are doctors, lawyers, faith leaders, corporate leaders, judges, athletes, educators, government employees, public servants and more. We have encouraged our children and other youth to attend our alma mater. We have served as ambassadors of the school, and many of us are donors. We know what this school has meant to us and our lives, and we want to ensure future generations can attend Virginia Tech, feel pride in their school, and have a sense that they are welcomed, and they belong.

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Over time, the school heeded Civil Rights Laws and became a more diverse school. As Virginia Tech became more diverse, it also grew in prominence, achieving R1 status in 1987. By then, the nearly 25,000 students and faculty included women and people of color- an unimaginable outcome in the school's early years. If the school remained an exclusionary institution, we wonder how long it would have been for Virginia Tech to reach this prestigious status. DEIAB efforts are NOT illegal. They form the foundation for ensuring that institutions that once did not welcome diversity evolve and show a commitment to creating inclusive spaces. Virginia Tech's role as a land grant institution established its commitment to address economic, agricultural, and technical issues on the local, state, national, and global levels; its commitment to enhancing social well-being reaches far beyond its academic excellence. DEIAB initiatives also helped Virginia Tech become a dominant athletic force through recruitment efforts that attracted some of the best talent across Virginia to the University. Without a strong commitment to DEIAB, where would the financial influx tied to athletic success be?

As alumni, spanning many decades, years, generations, and contributions to the University, the state, and the world, we implore you to be careful in the decisions you make about eliminating valuable and important programs that serve the diverse student body and alumni of Virginia Tech. President Sands, we simultaneously request the University hold a town hall, with in-person and virtual options, so that alumni have an opportunity to understand your approach and leadership on this matter.

Signed,

Concerned Alumni of Virginia Tech

Cc:

Virginia Board of Visitors

Virginia Tech Alumni Association

Virginia Tech Faculty Senate President