



Statement from Anne Neal, president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, on the reappointment of Helen Dragas, rector of the University of Virginia Board of Visitors

January 29, 2013

Bravo, legislature, governor and trustees! The confirmation process in Virginia shows that trustees are accountable to the people. The slate of nominations, including the reappointment of Helen Dragas, has been thoroughly reviewed and duly confirmed.

Most importantly, the General Assembly's vote means the principle of board governance remains strong.

If students are to receive a quality and affordable education in Virginia, it is the trustees who are going to have to press for, measure, and demand results. The governing board is not a booster club. It must stand above the fray of competing interests and make the hard decisions—even unpopular ones.

The saga at UVA has shown that boards, while solely responsible for their institution, need to be transparent and inclusive in major decisions. But it has also underscored the pushback trustees must be prepared to face when they ask tough questions and demand change.

An important lesson is the urgent need for the public, policymakers, students and alumni to recognize the courageous work of trustees who are willing to question the status quo in the best interest of students and taxpayers.

Over the last few months, many engaged in a passionate discussion about governance and what is best for UVA's future. It's time for faculty, alumni and all those who love UVA to use that same energy to ensure the flagship institution's future is as exemplary as its storied past. There are major challenges ahead to safeguard UVA's academic excellence, cost effectiveness, and continued service to Virginia and the nation. Thomas Jefferson's university can set a standard for engaged and informed stewardship.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni is an independent, nonprofit organization committed to empowering trustees on behalf of academic freedom, academic excellence and accountability.