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**From:** Anne Neal <aneal@goacta.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 14, 2012 2:44 PM  
**To:** Helen Dragas  
**Subject:** We are here to help and support you

**Importance:** High

Brava to you and our fellow board members for taking courageous action.

We need more trustees to understand that these are challenging times that require bolds and innovative leadership.

I would love to connect.

Please feel free to call me at my office or on my cell phone, 202-680-0396, or on my home phone tonight, 202-298-8109. I also left a message on your work phone.

Best, Anne

Anne D. Neal  
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**From:** Anne Neal <aneal@goacta.org>  
**Sent:** Saturday, June 16, 2012 11:39 AM  
**To:** Helen Dragas  
**Cc:** mark.kington@x10capital.com; mac.caputo@morganstanley.com; huntercraig@earthlink.net; adiamonstein@pwhd.com; cryordinardo@gmail.com; fralinh@mfa.net; marvin78@bellavistava.com; rhardie@riverg.com; glynn.key@ge.com; rj.kirk333@gmail.com; splpaindoc@aol.com; gmartin@mcguirewoods.com; vjmastracco@kaufcan.com; nau@sedbud.com; tr@bayshorellc.com; emiller@jhmi.edu; hah9ny@virginia.edu  
**Subject:** Thank you for doing your job.

Dear Rector Dragas and Members of the Board of Visitors:

As a group that supports and promotes engaged trusteeship, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni thanks all of you for your courageous service.

Regardless of what others say, YOU ARE DOING your job. Thomas Jefferson, the first Rector, was very clear on the board's role, set out in The Statute of 1819:

Visitors shall "... direct and do all matters and things which, not being inconsistent with the laws of the land, to them shall seem most expedient, for promoting the purposes of the said institution."

The outrage expressed by the faculty and public at the termination of the president is misplaced.

The Board is taking fire for doing what it was appointed to do.

You are seeing the predictable academic playbook: faculty and administrators and insiders circle the wagons, making the status quo a cause celebre – when in fact they should acknowledge the board for proactive behavior in very challenging times for American higher education.

Clearly, these times are difficult as you are besieged from all sides, and no doubt feeling hamstrung since this involves a personnel matter. By definition, some issues must remain confidential and the board alone knows all the circumstances. We assume that this is why you have failed to articulate reasons in greater detail.

But, at the end of the day, please take heart: a board doesn't need to get community buy-in. A college presidency is not a popularity contest—and shared governance does not mean shared fiduciary responsibility.

Faculty are typically committed to their disciplines; presidents are often focused on institutional growth; the board is the only entity that is charged with addressing competing priorities in the best interests of students and taxpayers. The Board of Visitors is legally responsible for the academic and financial health of the institution; no one else.

If a board determines that the president's continuing service is no longer in the best interests of the institution, then, you are right, difficult decisions have to be made.

This is about the board's responsibility to bring courageous, even innovative thinking to higher education when it is faced with many challenges. It used to be simple – demand more state money, raise tuition. But

the economic downturn has changed all that. You should be commended for acknowledging that higher ed can't simply keep operating the way it always has.

As you know, earlier this year we sent to all of you the findings of our recent VA report, and you have a right to be concerned about your institution:

<http://www.goacta.org/publications/downloads/VirginiaReportFinal.pdf>

- Students can graduate with large gaps in their knowledge because of the lack of a core curriculum. They don't even have to study American history at Jefferson's institution.
- Between 2004-5 and 2010-11, the UVA –Charlottesville tuition rose 38%.
- Today, the "sticker price" tuition at UVA Charlottesville – amounts to nearly 18% (17.9) of the median household income of a VA family.
- Between 2002-3 and 2008-9, Charlottesville's administrative spending went up 68.9% compared to instructional spending which went up only 42.4%.
- At the University of VA at Wise, the proportionate share of E and G devoted to administrative expenses increased by 38 percent, while at the Charlottesville campus, the same portion rose by 34.5% over six years. (between 2002-3 and 2008-9). This is a key indicator of how fast administrative spending is growing relative to the rest of the institution's budget.
- The Wise four-year graduation rate for first time full time students starting in 2004 was 35%.
- There is no evidence that UVA has taken any steps to measure student outcomes with one of the nationally normed instruments (as seen in the groundbreaking study, Academically Adrift).

The public wants universities to do more and better with

less. [http://www.publicagenda.org/files/pdf/SqueezePlay2010report\\_0.pdf](http://www.publicagenda.org/files/pdf/SqueezePlay2010report_0.pdf)

Presidents are generally satisfied and believe more money is the answer. <http://www.publicagenda.org/blogs/college-presidents-are-too-complacent>; [http://www.publicagenda.org/files/pdf/iron\\_triangle.pdf](http://www.publicagenda.org/files/pdf/iron_triangle.pdf)

Thank you for setting an example of courageous and engaged leadership. We hope that you are the first of many college and university boards willing to take the bold steps necessary to keep American higher education the finest in the world.

Best, Anne

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*ACTA is an independent nonprofit dedicated to academic excellence, academic freedom and accountability in American higher education.*