Dear Members of the University Community:

We are deeply saddened and disturbed by the events reported in the recent Rolling Stone magazine article. Conduct of the sort described in the article is utterly unacceptable and will not be condoned at the University of Virginia.

Our focus continues to be, first and foremost, the safety and well-being of our students and of the University community as a whole. Sexual assault is an abhorrent violent crime, and it should be punished as a crime under applicable law.

On Wednesday, the President referred the specific allegations of criminal conduct contained in the Rolling Stone article to the Charlottesville Police Department. Many of the details contained in the article had not previously been disclosed to University officials. Fairness to all potentially affected persons, as well as privacy obligations and the rights of sexual assault survivors, necessitates that we refrain from comment on those specific allegations while law enforcement authorities carry out their work. We need not wait, however, to seek independent advice on some of the difficult issues raised by this case, and by sexual assault cases nationwide, in order to better protect our students and the University community.

As President Sullivan described yesterday, the University and University community have taken the initiative to address sexual misconduct in various ways. Earlier this year, before much of the current media attention was focused on the issue, President Sullivan convened a national conference that brought together experts and professionals from approximately 60 colleges and universities to discuss best practices and strategies for prevention and response. A number of other initiatives, including the HoosGotYourBack program and Not On Our Grounds awareness campaign, are underway or soon will commence.

In addition to these measures, we must do everything possible to ensure that the opportunity for a timely and appropriate law enforcement response is maximized, and that the University community is fully protected from future violence, even in situations where a sexual assault survivor chooses not to lodge a criminal or administrative complaint.

The issue of how to respond-lawfully, appropriately, and effectively-to credible information regarding alleged sexual assault in circumstances where the survivor declines to file a criminal or administrative complaint is a pressing and difficult national topic. Even if, as the Rolling Stone article asserts, the problem of sexual misconduct at other colleges and universities is comparable to that at the University of Virginia, the status quo is unacceptable, and the University of Virginia should be a leader in finding solutions.
Accordingly, and with the full support of President Sullivan, I contacted Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring and requested that, in addition to receiving the continued able assistance by his Office, the University be authorized to engage independent counsel to advise and assist the Board of Visitors and University administration in determining how the University can better deal with the issue of campus sexual assaults, including how best to maximize opportunities for successful criminal prosecution of sexual misconduct cases. The counsel will examine the relevant legal issues as well as the University's policies and processes, giving particular attention to the question of how to respond in situations where there is serious and credible information about sexual misconduct but no willing complainant. The counsel will share his findings and recommendations with the Board of Visitors, President Sullivan and the Attorney General.

General Herring and I have agreed that Mark Filip, a senior partner with the distinguished firm of Kirkland and Ellis, should lead this review. Mr. Filip is a former prosecutor, federal judge and deputy attorney general of the United States.

Again, this is a critical issue and we are committed to finding solutions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

George Keith Martin
Rector