



CORRESPONDENT OF THE WEEK

University boards must fight for academic freedom

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The recent Richmond Times-Dispatch story ("Democrats in shock over resignation of UVa president Jim Ryan," June 27) on the unfolding leadership crisis at the University of Virginia should alarm every American who believes in the independence, freedom and integrity of higher education. Reports that political pressure from outside forces may have contributed to the expected resignation of the University of Virginia's president are deeply troubling and strike at the heart of institutional autonomy.

This is not just a UVa issue. It reflects a broader, escalating threat to the governance of our colleges and universities nationwide. When external political interests override sound governance practices and undermine campus leadership, the very foundation of higher education is at risk.

Governing boards and institutional leaders across the country must treat this moment as a wake-up call: Now is the time to reaffirm your board's unwavering commitment to institutional autonomy, academic freedom and governance integrity. Boards must stand united with their presidents in the face of politicization, external interference and efforts to erode public trust.

Higher education's mission to advance knowledge, opportunity and democracy itself depends on strong, principled leadership and the courage to resist undue political influence. It is vital that college and university boards and leaders are committed to upholding those principles.

Ross Mugler, board chair and acting president and CEO, Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

Hampton