



UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA  
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

August 18, 2021

Adam Steinbaugh  
Foundation for Individual Rights in Education  
510 Walnut Street, Suite 1250  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Via email: adam@thefire.org

Dear Mr. Steinbaugh,

I write in response to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education's letter regarding a former University of Virginia ("UVA" or the "University") student, Morgan Bettinger. After reviewing the letter as well as other information about this matter, I am unable to grant your request for expungement of Ms. Bettinger's University Judiciary Committee's ("UJC") conviction and sanction.

As you highlight in your letter, the University is proud of its green light rating from FIRE, which we have earned consistently since 2010. We recognize the importance of free expression and inquiry and are committed to fostering a community that allows our students to engage in open and honest conversations. In addition to our commitment to free exchange of ideas, the University also values the tradition of student self-governance. This practice makes the University unique and contributes to the community of trust enjoyed by our students. Our system of student self-governance gives important disciplinary authority to the UJC, which applies the Standards of Conduct in the course of adjudicating allegations of misconduct.

I was neither a fact finder nor an adjudicator in the UJC process concerning Ms. Bettinger, and I am therefore unable to speak to the merits of the case. Based on my review, however, I believe the UJC hearing panel was given legally accurate panel instructions regarding free speech, and it applied that correct standard to the evidence presented at Ms. Bettinger's hearing.

Ms. Bettinger received a fair hearing and review by both the UJC and the Judicial Review Board ("JRB"). I have no basis to find that the investigative or adjudicative process was infected with significant procedural errors that would warrant expungement.

As President, it would be inappropriate for me to intervene in a case that has been properly adjudicated and reviewed by the UJC and JRB. Accordingly, I must deny your request to expunge the UJC's findings and sanction.

Best,



James E. Ryan  
President