

UVA DECLINES LAWMAKER'S INQUIRY



ANDREW SHURTLEFF, THE DAILY PROGRESS

Virginia state Sen. Creigh Deeds speaks with University of Virginia officials inside the school's Rotunda, Wednesday, April 13, 2022.

Despite promising to 'respond in full' to state Sen. Creigh Deed's questions regarding Ryan's resignation, the university has reversed course

DAVID VELAZQUEZ
The Daily Progress

Despite assurances they would "respond in full" to a state lawmaker's inquiry into the resignation of University of Virginia President Jim Ryan, UVA attorneys now say ongoing discussions with the Trump administration Department of Justice prevent them from doing just that.

After DOJ pressure over diversity policies prompted Ryan's departure this past July, questions regarding how much the school's governing Board of Visitors knew and when have gone unanswered.

State Sen. Creigh Deeds, D-Charlottesville, sent a charged, six-page, 46-question letter Aug. 1 demanding answers to UVA Rector Rachel Sheridan and Vice Rector Porter Wilkinson. In his letter he cited his authority as a member of the General Assembly, which has a constitutional and statutory interest in the operations of all public institutions in the commonwealth.

Deeds gave the university until Aug. 15 to respond.

But come Aug. 15, no answers had been prepared. Instead, UVA lawyers requested

an additional two weeks to respond.

On Aug. 29, Deeds received a letter prepared by Washington-based law firm Debevoise & Plimpton on behalf of the board.

"The letter is just not responsive," Deeds told The Daily Progress. "It gave partial answers to just a few of the questions, but most of the big ones weren't addressed. And I guess they're going to use the argument that discussions with the Justice Department are confidential, but I just don't accept that."

Deeds said he is worried that the lack of transparency regarding Ryan, his resignation and the reasons behind it isn't helping.

Already, votes of no confidence in the board have been passed by the UVA Student Council and Faculty Senate as well as the university chapters of the United Campus Workers of Virginia and the American Association of University Professors.

"They're fueling speculation because they won't provide enough clarity at all," Deeds said. "They're fueling speculation that they might claim is unjust, but if it's

unjust, deny it, tell us the truth. That's all we're asking for."

Deeds' letter asks Sheridan and Wilkinson — who were not in their positions until July — what influence Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin, who appointed them, had on the Board of Visitor's unanimous March 7 vote to dissolve the university's diversity, equity and inclusion office.

His questions suggest Sheridan and Wilkinson had some knowledge or played some part in the Trump administration's pressure campaign over Ryan's handling of diversity policies that prompted his exit.

The Debevoise & Plimpton letter maintains that answering Deeds' questions would interfere with the ongoing DOJ probes into the university and Ryan's tenure.

"Although we would like to correct a number of inaccurate premises and assumptions in your letter, we are duty-bound to place the university's interests above all else, and we must honor our

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CRIME

Waynesboro man charged with DUI after fatal hit-and-run

NEWS VIRGINIAN STAFF

A Waynesboro man faces multiple charges after police say he was responsible for a drunken hit-and-run that left another man dead Sunday night in Augusta County.

Samuel Call, 36, has been charged with driving while intoxicated and hit-and-run.

The Virginia State Police said Dylan Knowles, 25, was riding an electric bicycle around 9 p.m. Sunday north of the intersection of U.S. 340 and Ladd Road just

outside Waynesboro when he was struck by a northbound Kia Sorento with Call behind the wheel. Knowles died at the scene.

Call fled the scene but was later arrested with the help of the Waynesboro Police Department, according to the state police.

Call remained in custody at Middle River Regional Jail in Verona as of Monday.

Anyone with information regarding the incident is encouraged to contact the Virginia State Police by phone at 1-800-553-0962 or by email at vsp.virginia.gov.

CRIME

Scam callers claiming to be Augusta County law enforcement

NEWS VIRGINIAN STAFF

The Augusta County Sheriff's Office is warning the public of a telephone scam in which callers are impersonating law enforcement personnel.

County residents have recently been receiving calls from someone with a restricted number claiming to be a deputy, sergeant or lieutenant with the sheriff's office. The caller tells their target they have a civil or jury duty summons, or some other legal

matter to discuss, and asks them to call a number not associated with the sheriff's office.

The sheriff's office is asking the public not to engage with the caller, and especially not to send money, gift cards or personal information to the other person on the line.

Augusta County residents who are not sure whether a call is a scam, should contact the Augusta County Sheriff's Office at (540) 245-5333.