

Dear Housing and Residence Life,

UVA Resident Staff are among the thousands of frontline workers who hold a central role in the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 at UVA and in Charlottesville. We are currently in a global pandemic due to COVID-19, and we know the University is tasked with creating a meaningful, safe, and equitable college experience for thousands of students. We know that this is no small feat. However, we worry as UVA Resident Staff that all of the restrictions, guidelines, and precautionary measures set forth by the University will fall short of their goal to keep all students, faculty, and staff safe, a reality that several universities have already faced. We ask that the University treat Resident Staff as what they are for this upcoming semester, frontline workers, and that we are provided with the necessary resources to fulfill our role and protect ourselves, our residents, and the community.

We demand that the University prioritize public health and act promptly to resolve the demands being brought forth in this letter by UVA Resident Staff. Our demands propose both necessary protections from COVID-19 for this semester and steps to address concerns about equity, inclusion, and racial violence faced by RAs during training and the academic year under the supervision of Housing and Residence Life. The University will not protect students, faculty, staff, and the greater Charlottesville community if they do not follow through with the needs of their workers on the frontlines, including Resident Staff.

During virtual “O-Week” training, Resident Staff underwent a 2-hour Zoom training on COVID-19 & Residence Halls and received a follow-up email with the same information. A 2-hour training and an email does not get close to providing RAs and SRs with the emotional, psychological, and physical tools as well as detailed knowledge on how to handle situations related to containing the spread of the virus in residence halls. Resident Staff should not only receive information on how to care, protect, and support their residents, but, perhaps more importantly, how to do so for themselves. It is not fair to ask Resident Staff to put themselves at risk when policing residents on COVID-19 guidelines without adequate resources and physical and emotional protection. We acknowledge the work of the Senior Residents who have listened to the concerns of their fellow RAs. We thank them for their advocacy for fair treatment of Resident Staff during their senior staff training and meetings with Professional Staff. We feel there is no other choice but to create this letter to express ourselves and our needs.

HRL Professional Staff often states that those in the Resident Staff program are people first, then students, then Resident Staff. If this is true, Housing and Residence life must first treat its staff with empathy, dignity, and support as human beings and students before pushing the many requirements and duties expected of us as Resident Staff during this unprecedented time, especially when the only extra compensation is 20 extra meals on our University meal plan. Our proposed changes must be implemented before the mass arrival of first year residents into dorms the first week of September. The University of Virginia must act upon the following demands for the safety of all members of our residential communities and beyond. We stand in solidarity with the United Campus Workers of Virginia at UVA and ask that the University meet their demands as well. We expect a response from the University and Housing and Residence Life no later than Tuesday, September 1st, 2020.

COVID-19 & Safety Related Demands

1. **Financial Compensation & Hazard Pay:** The University and Housing & Residence Life must acknowledge that Resident Staff are frontline workers in the midst of a global pandemic. HRL must provide hazard pay compensation for working during a pandemic. RAs and SRs are risking their health in order to ensure that HRL policies are adhered to.
 - a. As of August 24, UNC-Chapel Hill recorded [238 confirmed cases](#) in residence halls, with seven total clusters. The University recognizes this elevated risk through the [COVID-19 Addendum](#) to the Undergraduate Terms & Conditions of Housing. The addendum states that “living in University housing could increase the risk of contracting any contagious illness simply due to the dense populations in the residence halls.” The regular direct contact with residents inherent in Resident Advisors’ positions magnifies these risks further.
 - b. Provide us, all HRL employees who are working directly with residents with a stipend of \$2,226.67 per semester. This is one-third of our current housing remuneration.
 - c. Provide residents and Resident Staff with discounted prices to laundry services. Individuals may not have sufficient funds to do their laundry weekly despite pressure to keep themselves and their areas clean due to COVID-19.
2. **Adequate Personal Protective Equipment & Risk Reduction:** The risks associated with our jobs as RAs and SRs have increased with the possibility of COVID-19 in the dorms. RAs and SRs will constantly put themselves at risk for On-Call and Coverage Shifts, entering all bathrooms of a residence hall. Given that we are frontline essential staff interacting with students, whether that be for standard violations or COVID-19 policies, Resident Staff must receive additional PPE, including extra masks, face shields, gloves, and disinfecting wipes. This PPE needs to be available prior to September 3rd for first year dorms and August 31st for upperclassmen dorms.
 - a. Additional masks, gloves, and face shields are imperative to maintaining a healthy community environment on our floors. RAs need to be informed about the specific procedure that HRL is planning to take.
 - b. **Clarification as of 8/30/2020:** Resident Staff and Residents all receive the same PPE pack: two masks, two hand sanitizers, and a touchtool. However, Resident Staff are tasked with entering all hall bathrooms for their duties, which puts them at a higher risk. We second that these asks also be acknowledged for Facilities Management as they enter restrooms for cleaning and require extra PPE.
3. **Policing & COVID-19 Guidelines:** We demand that HRL communicate clearly and directly to students prior to their arrival the expectations of students in dorms, including but not limited to, the no guest policy, mask wearing at all times outside of the room, and gathering size. We demand that Professional Staff of HRL acknowledge that Resident Staff cannot constantly police residents to maintain 6 ft. of social distancing in dorms and wear masks in all dorm areas but their rooms. Constantly needing to be hyper vigilant in our halls is traumatizing and detrimental to the mental and physical stability of RAs and SRs.
 - a. If UVA establishes a culture of actively policing and shaming students we run the risk of:

- i. Students exhibiting symptoms of COVID and not reaching out to the proper services in fear of retribution.
 - ii. Students failing to share information about the spread of the virus to fellow residents and Resident Staff.
 - iii. Students feeling even more hesitant to come to Resident Staff about concerns not related to COVID.
 - iv. Marginalized students feeling over policed given the fact that [Black and Asian students](#) are [disproportionately](#) policed.
- 4. **Food Security, Meal Plans, & Kitchens:** Provide HRL members with 318 meals for the fall of 2020 and 378 meals for the spring of 2021, ensuring that all three meals of the day are secure.
 - a. Currently, public kitchens are closed, limiting Resident Staff's ability to cook healthy meals and comply with electrical appliance policies stated by HRL. Shifting a huge amount of responsibility onto Resident Staff without providing extra compensation beyond an extra 20 meals is unjust.
 - b. We recognize this is a time of collective sacrifice, but if RAs are not to be considered employees of the University and instead students first, we must be given the resources to be safe and healthy. A rice cooker, microwave, tea kettle, and fridge do not compensate for an entire kitchen. Furthermore, we cannot assume that all Resident Advisors have access to the stated appliances.
 - c. The previous suggestion made by HRL to ask SR's for access to their kitchens not only endangers both SR's and RA's but also asks SRs to go beyond their job description.
 - d. Many returning staff members and residents are returning due to the need of immediate access to stable shelter, internet access, food, and safety. Additionally, Resident Staff completed two weeks of online training with quizzes without meals or housing. An increased meal plan beyond the 20 extra meals will compensate for these reasons and the extra food needed due to the closure of kitchens.
- 5. **RA Housing Stability:** Ensure that if we are sent home due to COVID-19 for the fall semester, RA's receive financial compensation from their Dining and Housing agreement.
 - b. All members of Resident Staff joined out of a desire to guide and support residents. Because of this, many RAs continued to support residents after we had to vacate Grounds, despite RAs losing their housing and dining contract. This semester, if expected to continue to serve as a primary contact in full capacity as an RA for residents if the University moves fully online, there would need to be monetary compensation for those services. Additionally, ACCESS UVA grants must not be reduced if students are evicted against their will.
 - c. While HRL may say that we are released from our role if we move online, many first years will still need support from us as Resident Advisors.
 - d. The expectation that our residents will stop viewing us as their RAs is unrealistic because of the bond and trust we will have formed during the time with our residents.
- 6. **Financial Aid:** As RAs at the University, we are given housing and meal plan scholarships that transcribe as outside scholarships on our financial aid package. The grants and work-study that RAs qualify for are often reduced or eliminated entirely from our packages. If these scholarships substitute as our "form of payment" for services rendered as RAs, then the scholarships should

not reduce or eliminate any previous material on our financial aid packages as students. This reality greatly impacts students of low-income backgrounds, and a change in this policy would add a crucial layer of diversity to the program.

Resident Staff has the right to know if we are able to stay on grounds to ensure the stability of our housing and those of our residents. HRL must be transparent about policies granted all classes move online during the Fall semester. So far, the disclosure of COVID-related policies has been sporadic, and much of the information we need regarding how we'll communicate with our residents as well as specific procedures have been pushed off down to the wire very close to our return to Grounds. While we acknowledge the need for flexibility in uncertain times, sacrificing clarity and transparency in our rush to reopen has real consequences for us and our residents' safety.

Equity, Inclusion, & Safety Related Demands

1. **RA Representation as Student Employees:** Ensure that Resident Staff are represented in UVA's HR system as student employees of the University, and receive any possible benefits. HR representation would protect RAs with set processes of grievance resolution, protection against retaliation, and employee relations, which are currently not codified within HRL.
 - a. Specifically, provide whistleblower protections for non-Co-Chair Resident Staff who share information to the public or critique Housing and Residence Life.
 - i. There should not be a blanket restriction on RA's publicly speaking about their roles.
 - ii. As students, RAs have a first amendment right to be able to express grievances involving HRL without fear of retaliation because of the grey area in regards to RAs not speaking on behalf of HRL. This University cannot say it believes in student self-governance if it does so only until students speak out against the institutions within it.
2. **Third-Party Anti-Racist Consultant:** Hire an outside 3rd party non-student consulting group trained in anti-racist facilitation to conduct a full external review of UVA Housing & Residence Life.
3. **Professional Staff Liaison:** Hire a non-student individual to serve as a Professional Staff Liaison between RA's and Professional Staff to create transparent communication and represent RA's interests to create concrete change, because enough "conversations" on the problems of inequity within HRL have been had.
4. **Co-Chair Accountability:** Create a system wherein Resident Staff can participate in a democratic process in selecting co-chairs for the program, such as voting, to ensure that someone who really represents us as a program and voices our concerns is in that position of power.

Conclusion

As we wrote this letter, we circled around two crucial concerns. The first is how we can care for our residents and ourselves. Many residents and RAs are returning due to the need of immediate access to stable shelter, internet access, food, and safety. We wrote this letter because we see that HRL has not considered the needs of all students in order to ensure the safest return to us and the community. The second topic we circled around was protection. We, as RA's at the University of Virginia, are constantly trying to navigate the gray area of sharing concerns that are often unaddressed without running the risk of removal or penalties from HRL. We are choosing the route of anonymity due to the blanket restrictions surrounding media coverage.

Sincerely,

University of Virginia Resident Staff

Follow this link to sign on: [Contact information for Organization Support/Signature](#)

With the support of

Organizations:

Student Council

UCW-VA (United Campus Workers of Virginia)

Ethiopian Eritrean Student Association

Take Back The Night

Virginia Student Power Network

undocUVA

IMP Society

ART (Asians Revolutionizing Together) - Collective

Arab Students Organization

OYFA (The Organization of Young Filipino Americans)

The Order

CORE (Culture of Respect Educators)

Third Year Council (TYC)

Student Hip Hop Organization

Asian Student Union

Nepali Student Association

Individual Signatures:

Jacquelyn Kim, Student
Jedidiah Park, Student
Abel Liu, Student
Crystal Jing Luo, Student
Emmy Monaghan, Student
Emily Lockwood, Student
Nettie Webb, Residential Staffer
Kelley Long, Student
Monica Sebastian, UVA Alumna
Revati Joshi, Student
Luca Beale, Graduate Student
Sarandon Elliott, Student
Albert Kwon, Student
Rachel Smilan-Goldstein, Student
Felipe Montini, Student
Sam Hedrick, Student
Andrew Craver, Student
Elizabeth Duncan, Student
Avery Gagne, Residential Staffer
Hannah Han, Student
Vaheed Talebian, Residential Staffer
Abena Appiah-Ofori, Student
Shivani Mullapudi, Student
Juan Zazueta, Student
Isabelle Mayor-Mora, Student
Veronica Sirotic, UVA Alum (% 2020) + Take Back the Night CIO Rep
Nina Richards, Former RA
Jordan Sicklick, Residential Staffer
Jontel Armstead, Student
Amanda Peñalo, Student
Matt Peterson, Student
Aryana Jiménez Senzano, Student
Monica Norton, Student
Ashton Landes, Student
Myka Greene, Student
Hannah Russell-Hunter, Student
Ana Hidalgo, Alumni
Jessica Meyers, Student
Roxie Mosavian, Student
Lucas Critzer, Student
Kathryn Laughon, Faculty - Associate Professor of Nursing
Joel Thomas, Student
Aerin Fortes, Student

Morgan Foster, Student
Caroline Caruso, Student
Catherine Farnsler, Alum
Jayla Hart, Residential Staffer
Zulfiqar Mohamedshah, Alum + Former Staffer
Kristin Myers, Student + Former Staffer
John Edwin Mason, Faculty - Department of History
Reagan Brill, Residential Staffer
Matthew Gillikin, UVA Health Employee + Charlottesville Resident
Stephen Marrone, Student
Caleb Paul Mechem, UVA Staff
Ibtisaam Amin, Alumna (% 2020)
Michael Bacon, Student
Catherine Addington, Student - PhD Candidate
Mariam Syed, Residential Staffer - SR of Woody Cauthen
Ilyas Saltani, Residential Staffer
XYZ, Student
Akosua Odei, Residential Staffer
Victoria Centineo, Residential Staffer
Bridget Thornberry, Residential Staffer
Alexandra Vien, Student
Malcolm Huguenin, Residential Staffer
Alexander Pradhan, Residential Staffer
Caro Campos, Residential Staffer
Camryn Forbes, Student
Chi Chan, Alum + Former 3-Year Staffer
Starr Johnson, Student
Andrea Mercedes, Student
XYZ, Residential Staffer
Zainab Aziz, Student
Jacob Baker, Student
XYZ, Residential Staffer
Briana Doby, Residential Staffer
Caden Schuessler, Student
Peyton Brooks, Fourth Year Residential Staffer
Walter Heinecke, Faculty - Associate Professor in Education
Ben Gustafson, Residential Staffer
Jasmine Mao, Student
Brad Pasanek, Faculty - Associate Professor in English
Shreya Chappidi, Residential Staffer
Dre Dilao, Student
Ellen Yates, Student + Former Member of Resident Staff
Amanda Visconti, University Staff

M.A.M, Student
Zack Landsman, Student
Katie Kirk, Student + Former Member of Resident Staff
Sarah Pharr, Student
John Le, Residential Staffer
Erin Cary, Student
Anna Linehan, Student
Donavon Lea, Student
Iam McClain, Student
Amanda Roberts, Residential Staffer
Isabelle Edwards, Student
Samira Lam, Student
Sarah Kim, Student
Soleil Reed, Alum + Former 3-Year Staffer
Christine Hwang, Residential Staffer
Emma Damazo, Student
Hiam Baidas, Residential Staffer
Lauren Xue, Student
Adrian Mamaril, Student
Mitchell Popielec, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff
Caroline Li, Residential Staffer
Keiara Price, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff
Taamson Joshua, Residential Staffer - SR of Lile-Maupin
Sadie Randall, Student
Sara Dunklee, Residential Staffer
Maya Ramani, Residential Staffer
Holly Sims, Residential Staffer
Lauren Prince, Student
Elizabeth Chung, Student
Darynha Gnep, Student
Ahmed Eitta, Residential Staffer
Andrew Prince, Student
Hannah Feder, Student
Lauren Schmidt, Student
Kavya Ravikanti, Alum
Sydney Bowden, Residential Staffer
XYZ, Residential Staffer
Danielle Ashbahian, Student
Bethany Ludica, Student
Vaishnavi Karimpuzha, Residential Staffer
Emily Riggleman, Student
Uchenna Oguagha, Residential Staffer
Lauren Considine, Residential Staffer

Mira Manalastas, Student
Eliza Woodfin, Student
Casey Breneman, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff
Abigail LeGear, Residential Staffer
Nyasia Harris, Student
Mehdy, Residential Staffer
Hannah Maupin, Residential Staffer
Sarah Mackey, Student
Alex Levin, Alum, Former 3-year staffer and 2-year Senior Resident
Andrea Khattabi, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff
Arnaldo Sandoval-Guerrero, Student
Steven Villereal, Faculty
Eliza Woodfin, Student
Leona Gaither, Residential Staffer
Folasayo Obajuluwa, Student
Amelia Lindsey, Student
Logan Murtha, Residential Staffer
Danielle Ashbahian, Student
Joshua Elias Palmer, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff
Anushey Ahmed, Student
Abbie Morgan, Student
Caroline Noel, Student
Caden Schuessler, Student
Blair Wilner, Student
Kimberly Maravilla, Alum
Dheeraj Ram, Residential Staffer
Shawn Podowski, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff
Mary Garner McGehee, Alum & IRC SR 2018-19
Julija Martin, Student
Nia Williams, Student
Neeka Samimi, Student
Tatiahna Blakely, Former a Member of Resident Staff
Benjamin Borenstein, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff
Annie Williams, Former Member of Resident Staff
Aneesha Goodala, Student
XYZ, Residential Staffer
Smritee Thapa, Residential Staffer
Jessie Bryant, Concerned Individual
Caitlin Nguyen, Student
Mohneet Kaur, Student
Hiam Baidas, Residential Staffer
Bethany Iudica, Student
Christopher O'Neill, Student

Paola Covarrubias, Student
Cameron Bertron, Student
John Barton, Faculty
Abreale Hopkins, Student
Kaylin Belcher, Student
Lauren Parker, Residential Staffer
Janie Cai, Student
Jessica Flester, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff
Edward Carter, Student
Ryan Alcorn, Student
Anisa Mohamed, Residential Staffer
Kate Bellows, Former Member of Resident Staff
Sophia Liao, Student
Ricardo Vallejo, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff
Zach Marhanka, Student
Rachael Tomlinson, Student
Brianna Lehman, Residential Staffer
Saqib Rizvi, Residential Staffer
Foster Garrett, Student
Amanda Benedict, Former Member of Resident Staff
Levi Schult, Student
Draper Smith, Charlottesville Community Member
Gabby Ringer, Student
Aaria Malhotra, Residential Staffer
Grace Medrano, Student
Kris Kokoneshi, Residential Staffer
Wahaj, Residential Staffer
Connor Kenaston, Student
Hannah Hiscott, Student
Omeed Faegh, Residential Staffer
Austin Rapkins, Student + Former Member of Resident Staff
Colin Buyck, Residential Staffer
Rosa Hamilton, Graduate Student
Katie Kenny, Student
Anna Winter, Student
Ja'Mel Reed, Student
Ester Rekhelman, Student
Jordan Bridges, Alum
JaLynn Smith, Residential Staffer
Maxine DeVeaux, Student
Rita Anane-Wae, Student
Omega Ilijevich, Student
Jacob W, Student

Sukriti Thapa, Alum
Thien-Kim Dinh, Student
Kaitlyn Diaz, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff
Logan Dickinson, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff
Eva Paleo, Student
Joe Wei, Student
Calathea Pacifica, Student
Stephanie Lawton, Student
Bridget Thornberry, Residential Staffer
Veena Ramesh, Student
Tryston Raecke, Student
Denzel Mitchell, Residential Staffer
Jackson Kennedy, Student
Lou'ay Hussein, Student
Samira Aden, Student
Saeed Razavi, Student
Akosua Odei, Residential Staffer
Laura Boyle, Student
Mia Gualtieri, Student
Sarah Stegner, Student
Danielle Heckert, Student + Former Staffer
Isabelle Mayor-Mora, Student
Anna Cuddeback, Residential Staffer
Aneesha Goodala, Student
Abreale Hopkins, Student
Tatiana Kennedy, Student
Aline Dolinh, Alum
Leah Baetcke, Student
Miles Woollacott, Student
Merly Konathapally, Residential Staffer
Nayana Painumkal, Residential Staffer
Emma Ellsworth, Student
Zainab Jaffa, Student
Jessica Terry, Residential Staffer
Yaa Awusi-Sarkodie, Residential Staffer

Conrad Furlich, Student
Revati Joshi, Student
Subani Adhikari, Student
Katie Kenny, Student
Ellie Prober, Student
Joshua Dano, Student
XYZ, Residential Staffer

Suraj Patel, CIO Representative
Fawzia Tahsin, Student
Julia Lain, Student
Rachel Greif, Student
Jackson Samples, Alum
Lyla Ward, Student
Eva Surovell, Student
Maddie Ward, Alum
Laura Hahn,
Parent or Guardian of Student/Resident Staffer
Stephen Ward, Parent of Forth-Year Off-Grounds Student
Megan Talarek, Student
Andrew Prince, Student
Cameron Bertron, Student
Arya Royal, Student
Isabelle Talicuran, Student
Camille Kielbasa, Student
Mary Katherine Terrell, Student