

To whom it may concern:

We believe the Fall Activities Fair would be considerably improved by hosting it across the entirety of the Lawn, rather than divided between the South Lawn and the Amphitheater. Recognizing the many benefits to the student body that could be achieved through such a change, we seek permission to hold the Fall Activities Fair across the full Lawn.

The Lawn is, of course, more than just the historical foundation of our University. It is the center of the contemporary student life and community bonding. The main Lawn is the site of some of UVA's most beloved community events, including First Year Convocation in the summer, Trick-or-Treating on the Lawn in the fall, Lighting of the Lawn in the winter, and Springfest. The Fall Activities Fair could not be a more fitting addition to this tradition. The Activities Fair is one of the most inclusive and expansive events of the year. It brings together students from all years and organizations representing many different faiths, hobbies, cultures, academic disciplines, and community service engagements. In many ways, the experience reflects the mission of the Lawn community itself, uniting students from varied backgrounds.

Although the Lawn community has made great strides in recent years to dismantle barriers to accessing the space, the Lawn regrettably remains an exclusive institution for many UVA students. Access to the Lawn can too frequently feel limited to those who closely know a current resident. We see the Activities Fair as an opportunity to further combat this sentiment. The Activities Fair is much more than a program hosted by a single organization; it is a robust demonstration of student self-governance to have the vast majority of student activities present in one place, interacting with the student body. Ownership of the Activities Fair is shared by every member of our community who participates. With its impactful timing during the first weekend of the year and its collaborative nature, holding the Activities Fair on the Lawn offers the chance to extend the message that the Lawn belongs to all members of our community from the very start of the year.

There are also many potential logistical benefits to such a change. The Activities Fair is notoriously hot and overcrowded. Representatives from more than 400 organizations are crowded into the areas of the South Lawn and Amphitheatre while thousands of students stream in throughout the course of the event. There is too little room to maneuver easily in the space and the noise level often prevents critical communication. Following the Fall Activities Fair in 2017, Student Council distributed feedback surveys to gather data on participation and satisfaction. Unexpectedly, when given the

opportunity to propose changes for the Fair in an open-ended questions, approximately 50% of respondents for the Fall 2017 evaluation form listed complaints that could be addressed by expanding the fair to the full Lawn. Specifically, these included several concerns about lack of shade, overcrowding, and consequent heat. A number of respondents directly suggested expanding the event to the main Lawn.

New students, for whom the first weekend of college may already prove stressful, often find the Activities Fair overwhelming and consequently too inaccessible to navigate the entire event. The three-quarters of the Lawn that remain unused during the Activities Fair afford considerably more shade and, importantly, more space to reduce crowding between tables. The space could provide an opportunity to build stronger relationships between students and organizations without the necessary density of the current setup.

We also consider the need to make the event physically accessible. There is not a direct route between the Amphitheatre and South Lawn areas; to travel between the two parts of the Fair, individuals must make a wide circle using the road behind the Amphitheatre. We anticipate that this concern could be easily addressed in moving the event to the main Lawn. The Lawn is frequently made accessible through establishing ramps between terraces. This would allow participants to traverse all parts of the event with considerable more ease. Revenue from the event could cover the expenses necessary to ensure accessibility.

Finally, this proposal carries an immense opportunity. In our Bicentennial year - one in which we will welcome a new President to Grounds, continue to challenge our legacy and reaffirm our commitment to institutional inclusion - holding the Activities Fair on the Lawn offers to reinvigorate the student body's sense of love for and belonging on the Lawn. Few events could better represent the interconnectedness of our community than thousands of students spread from the statue of Homer to the steps of the Rotunda, building connections and starting their careers as public citizens.

If you support this proposal, please consider expressing your support through [this form](#). We would also appreciate any testimony or ideas you may have. Let's make both the Activities Fair and the Lawn more comfortable, accessible, and memorable.

Signed,

Student Council