



May 7, 2023

The Hon. Glenn Youngkin
Commonwealth of Virginia
Constituent Services
P.O Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear. Governor Youngkin:

The crude and dismissive comments of Virginia's Chief of Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion, Martin D. Brown in a meeting with faculty and staff at the Virginia Military Institute show him as unfit for any public office, but particularly for the office to which he was appointed.

Dismissing the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion and proclaiming it "dead" at any institution of higher education is inappropriate, but particularly so when offered at VMI with its deep history of racism and sexism. Just two years ago, an independent investigation of VMI found a "racist and sexist culture," fierce resistance to change, and a fear of retaliation among students and faculty who want to report bigotry or sexual misconduct to administrators. This culture has been mitigated in the short intervening time but has not disappeared.

Mr. Brown implies that efforts at equity and diversity are antithetical to excellence. These are the kind of specious arguments that the American Association of University Women (AAUW) challenged 141 years ago when we fought for admission of women to higher education in the United States. Women now make up a majority of college and university students and have graduation rates significantly higher than that of men. Diversity of race and gender support rather than diminish excellence.

Today's graduates of Virginia's public colleges are entering a highly diverse workforce that reflects the ever-increasing diversity of our country. If these graduates are to be successful, they must understand how to respectfully work across gender, racial, and ethnic lines. Virginia cannot provide its graduates the educational experience that will enable them to be the leaders of tomorrow unless it continues to focus on achieving and respecting diversity in our public higher education system.

AAUW of Virginia joins other organizations in calling for Mr. Brown's resignation or dismissal. He has shown that he is not capable of fulfilling his leadership role.

Sincerely,

Lane Stone, President
Alexandria, VA

Sarita McCoy Gregory, Administrator
Yorktown, VA

Denise Murden
Co-VP Public Policy
Suffolk, VA

Janine Greenwood
Co-VP Public Policy
Reston, VA