LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

November 24, 2026

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honorable Linda E. McMahon
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C. 20202

Re: A National Call to Action for University Presidents and Governing Boards

Dear Secretary McMahon:

On behalf of Liberty University, we appreciate the opportunity to respond to your National Call to Action to University Presidents and Governing Boards. As America celebrates 250 years of freedom, Liberty welcomes the opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to academic excellence, student success, responsible stewardship, and service to the nation.

Under our current leadership and with the guidance of Liberty's Board of Trustees, the University remains firmly committed to its mission of Training Champions for Christ. Since its founding, Liberty has sought to prepare students not only for meaningful careers, but also for lives of service to their families, communities, professions, churches, and country. We believe this mission entails a responsibility to pursue academic rigor, cultivate intellectual curiosity, prepare students for a changing workforce, and develop graduates equipped to be Champions for Christ in their chosen fields.

Liberty's response to the seven questions outlined in your letter describes both the principles that have guided the University and the reforms and initiatives that will continue strengthening our academic programs, student experience, institutional effectiveness, and operations. While Liberty's mission is distinctive, our commitment to excellence, service, and responsible stewardship is shared with the broader higher education community.

1. How will your institution ensure that admissions criteria are transparent and wholly described to prospective applicants? And how will your institution ensure admissions decisions are based on merit, achievement, and your university's educational purpose?

Liberty University communicates its admissions requirements through the University Catalog, the Liberty University website, program-specific admissions information, and the application process. The

Undergraduate Catalog provides admissions requirements for residential and online programs. The Graduate Catalog provides general admissions requirements as well as program-specific requirements, including minimum GPA, recommendations, essays, examinations, and other required documents.

Prospective students can access information about required materials, academic requirements, transcripts, testing requirements, and other requirements for their specific programs. Admissions representatives are also available to answer questions and explain admissions requirements and policies before enrollment.

Liberty bases admissions decisions on established academic and institutional requirements. For undergraduate students, factors such as cumulative GPA, academic performance, academic trends, and other application materials are considered. For residential students, the Admissions Committee also considers intellectual ability, academic achievement, and personal qualities that contribute to the University's mission and campus community. Graduate applicants are evaluated based on their academic background, preparation for graduate-level work, personal information, and, when appropriate, professional experience.

Liberty's admissions process also supports the University's educational purpose and mission. Liberty's mission is to develop Christ-centered men and women with the values, knowledge, and skills essential to impact the world. Admissions policies and procedures are established through the University's academic and governance processes, including the Undergraduate Administrative and Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate and the Graduate Administrative and Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate.

Liberty also maintains policies prohibiting unlawful discrimination in admissions. The University's nondiscrimination statement applies to its educational programs and activities, including admissions, and identifies protected categories under applicable law. These policies support consistent admissions decisions that comply with applicable laws and University policy.

Overall, Liberty makes its admissions requirements available to prospective students, evaluates applicants using established academic and program-specific criteria, and maintains an admissions process that supports the University's educational mission and purpose.

2. How will your institution protect the free exchange of ideas, wide-ranging debate, and open-minded campus discourse? And how will you guarantee that unruly and violent protestors do not harass students or disrupt classes, research, public lectures, and campus operations?

Liberty University protects the free exchange of ideas through its commitments to academic freedom, truth-seeking, and open inquiry within its Christian mission. The Academic Freedom Policy identifies academic freedom as essential to teaching and research, protects student freedom in learning, and provides faculty with freedom to discuss material relevant to their subjects. The University's educational philosophy also emphasizes critical thinking, excellence in teaching, and engagement with American democratic and free-market traditions.

These commitments are grounded in Liberty's mission. The Academic Freedom Policy states that

teaching, research, and service are conducted in accordance with Liberty's Christian mission. It also identifies fidelity to the historic Christian faith as a fundamental commitment of its teachers and scholars, and requires that official University actions and commitments remain consistent with its Christian identity.

The University provides processes for considering competing viewpoints and addressing academic-freedom concerns. The Outside Speakers in Academic Settings Policy permits speakers who do not share all of Liberty's faith convictions to participate in dialogue and educational activities, with Dean and Provost consultation for potentially controversial speakers. Faculty may use a three-step grievance process that culminates in a Provost review and a recommendation from a faculty peer committee. The School of Law also identifies diverse opinions and open discourse as important to inquiry and professional formation.

Liberty pairs these protections for expression with rules that support safety and orderly University operations. The School of Law permits reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions and allows restrictions on genuine threats, unlawful harassment, and conduct that substantially interferes with classes, meetings, library services, interviews, ceremonies, or public events. University-wide conduct rules also prohibit threats, violence, intimidation that creates a reasonable safety concern, and disruption of the educational environment. These rules include disciplinary and appeal processes. Liberty can also limit attendance at events to members of the University community. Together, these policies provide a framework for protecting disagreement while maintaining student safety, access to University operations, and the University's mission.

3. How will your institution encourage intellectual pluralism in all its academic units? How will your faculty hiring and evaluation practices support academic vitality and ensure that all relevant perspectives are taken seriously? And how will your school ensure the research enterprise is dedicated to advancing knowledge, deepening understanding, and serving the American people who fund it?

Liberty University encourages academic freedom and consideration of relevant perspectives within its mission. The Academic Freedom Policy protects discussion, the search for and exposition of truth, faculty freedom in teaching and research, and student freedom in learning. The University's institutional goals call for collaboration and multiple perspectives, while its mission emphasizes critical thinking, scholarship, research competence, and knowledge of American cultural history.

Faculty hiring and review provide multiple levels of review. Candidate vetting includes reviews by the dean, chair, and faculty. Appointment considerations include academic preparation, relevant experience, professional certification or licensure, and a demand index informed by national comparisons and Bureau of Labor Statistics data. Faculty must hold discipline-appropriate credentials. Recurring evaluation and promotion reviews consider teaching, scholarship, service, good standing, peer review, Dean review, and Provost review. Promotion is not automatic and includes consideration of alignment with Liberty's Doctrinal Position, Philosophy of Education, and Statement of Mission and Purpose, along with teaching, scholarship, service, good standing, and testimony.

Consistent with Liberty's mission, research freedom is accompanied by expectations for mission

fidelity, truth, and public stewardship. The Academic Freedom Policy recognizes freedom in teaching and research within the limits of truth and the common good. The Research and Activities Policy establishes additional requirements. Research topics and activities must be consistent with Liberty's Christian worldview, Philosophy of Education, Statement of Mission and Purpose, Doctrinal Position, and The Liberty Way.

Within these parameters, University policy requires reputable sources, integrity in data collection and analysis, discipline alignment, academic rigor, and methods capable of producing valid, reliable, and meaningful knowledge. Responsible-conduct training addresses data management, authorship, mentoring, peer review, collaboration, and research misconduct. The Research Misconduct Handbook establishes procedures for inquiries and investigations involving fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism across Liberty research.

4. How will your institution ensure that families can access affordable, high-return degrees? What can your school do to contain costs, improve pricing transparency, and ensure that every academic program equips students to repay their loans?

Liberty University seeks to make higher education accessible and affordable while equipping students for their careers and continued intellectual and spiritual development. Through restrained tuition growth, management, institutional aid, flexible degree pathways, and workforce-focused academic programs, Liberty seeks to reduce financial barriers for students and families.

Liberty has demonstrated its commitment to cost containment through a multi-year tuition freeze, which reduced uncertainty for students and families and helped address the effects of inflation on educational costs. Liberty has increased undergraduate tuition just two times in the last nine years. As a result, most residential and online tuition rates remain in the top 25% for affordability among Liberty's leading residential and online competitors in 2026.

Liberty also provides students and families with clear information about tuition, fees, scholarships, financing options, and expected borrowing obligations. Individualized financial aid offers, student loan counseling, net price estimation tools, annual debt summary communications, and support from Student Financial Services help students make informed decisions about their cost of attendance and financing their education.

Liberty invests substantially in institutional scholarships, donor-funded scholarships, military and first-responder education benefits, and other financial aid programs intended to reduce students' reliance on borrowing. During the 2025-2026 academic year, the University invested more than $371 million in institutional aid, benefiting more than three-quarters of its students. Liberty also proudly serves one of the nation's largest populations of military-affiliated students through tuition benefits, support services, and transfer-friendly policies.

During the 2024-2025 academic year, Liberty University graduates across all academic levels borrowed an average of $22,259 to complete their Liberty degree. Liberty's undergraduate average indebtedness of $26,581 was below the $29,560 average most recently cited by College Board. Liberty also maintains a federal Cohort Default Rate below national averages, demonstrating that Liberty's graduates understand

and meet their repayment obligations. These outcomes reflect the University's focus on responsible borrowing, financial literacy, and institutional aid.

Liberty provides multiple pathways to degree completion through residential, online, dual enrollment, and transfer-friendly programs. These options allow students to pursue higher education based on their financial circumstances, career objectives, and family responsibilities.

Liberty also evaluates academic programs based on student success, workforce demand, licensure outcomes, and graduate outcomes to align programs with workforce needs and provide a long-term return on investment for graduates. Career readiness is supported through Liberty University's Career Services Office, which provides career coaching, résumé and interview preparation, employer engagement, job-search resources, networking opportunities, and internship support. College success coaching, career development services, internships, employer partnerships, and Christian character formation are also incorporated into the student experience to prepare graduates for their professions and communities.

5. How will your institution incentivize rigor in the age of AI, combat grade inflation, and prioritize excellence in teaching and learning?

Liberty University protects academic rigor by requiring grades and credentials to reflect authentic student effort and learning, including when AI tools are used. The Liberty Way establishes expectations for honesty, originality, authenticity, and proper attribution and identifies unauthorized use of AI writing tools that compromise the originality or authenticity of coursework as misconduct. Faculty reporting, Office of Academic Integrity review, sanctions, and academic appeals provide enforcement mechanisms.

Faculty guidance also addresses the instructional use of AI. A Center for Teaching Excellence resource encourages faculty to establish AI expectations at the beginning of each term, direct students to the Office of Academic Integrity, evaluate AI-enabled activities before assigning them, and help students use AI appropriately and effectively.

Liberty uses a standardized 1,000-point grading system. Courses with the same prefix and number must maintain common titles, descriptions, rationales, learning outcomes, and credit hours. Each learning outcome must be measurable and connected to assignments and assessments.

Recurring faculty and program reviews provide additional accountability for teaching and learning. Instructional faculty are evaluated on teaching performance, achievement of learning outcomes, and assigned academic responsibilities. Every educational program is reviewed at least every five years, and program learning outcomes are assessed at least every three years. Schools compare programs with state, regional, and national peers and document improvements based on student-learning results.

These processes support academic rigor through requirements for authentic student work, common grading standards, measurable learning outcomes, assessment, and recurring review.

6. How will your school protect academic programs from foreign influence and safeguard the integrity of the research enterprise?

While Liberty University is not a research-intensive institution, it recognizes the importance of protecting institutional independence from improper external influence. Academic programs and curriculum decisions are developed and approved through internal governance processes that support alignment with the University's mission, accreditation requirements, and academic standards.

Liberty reviews international partnerships and contractual relationships involving foreign entities for compliance with applicable legal and regulatory requirements. Administrative, legal, and compliance offices evaluate potential concerns related to foreign influence and help ensure that external relationships do not compromise the University's mission or result in undue influence.

Liberty remains committed to maintaining academic programs that align with its mission and remain free from undue external influence.

7. How will your institution answer this national call to action? How can your campus and faculty advance American security interests, deliver academic programs that meet urgent workforce needs, and contribute materially to the Nation's prosperity?

Liberty University responds to the national call through academic programs and partnerships that connect education with workforce preparation, public service, and innovation. Its institutional goals emphasize applied skills and needed credentials, technology-enriched experiential learning, internships and career placement, responsiveness to emerging market trends, and external and industry partnerships. Career Services supports these priorities through employer-informed competencies, internships, apprenticeships, student employment, and faculty-supported career development.

Liberty's educational mission connects a Christian understanding of the person with the intellectual, creative, technological, and economic institutions of a free society. Its educational philosophy holds that education should develop the knowledge, values, and skills that enable people to act freely and contribute to their workplaces and communities. It also identifies that the individual is essential and should remain an important part of democratic and free-market processes.

Within this framework, Liberty develops creativity, rational agency, and vocational contributions across government, political economy, business, the arts, law, technology, and public policy. The Philosophy, Politics, and Economics program examines limited constitutional government, free markets, and institutions that support a flourishing society, and prepares students to apply those principles to contemporary social, political, economic, and ethical challenges. Graduate business and arts curricula also connect research and best practices to organizational improvement, market-based solutions, creativity, technical excellence, and innovative design.

Liberty's current program portfolio includes master's programs in National Security and Homeland Security and Disaster Management, as well as applied cybersecurity and strategic-intelligence coursework. The Undergraduate Catalog includes ROTC coursework that connects officer preparation to the National Security Strategy. The Office of Military Affairs provides military-benefits support,

military-training credit pathways, student-veteran resources, and partnerships for service members, veterans, and military families.

Planning and program-review processes are designed to connect academic capacity with workforce and national needs. Faculty appointment criteria use national higher-education comparisons and Bureau of Labor Statistics data to classify disciplines by demand. Program review requires recurring outcome assessment, comparisons with at least five Virginia programs and 10 regional or national programs, and evidence of improvement based on student-learning results. Liberty's technical studies programs provide one example through industry-recognized curricula, employer partnerships, instructors who work in their fields, and pathways into high-demand skilled trades.

In conclusion, we are grateful for the opportunity to respond to your National Call to Action to University Presidents and Governing Boards. As Liberty celebrates its 55th year, the University reaffirms its commitment to academic excellence, student success, responsible stewardship, and service to the nation while staying committed to our mission of Training Champions for Christ. Thank you for your leadership and service to the United States of America.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dondi E. Costin
President
Liberty University



Tim Lee
Board Chairman
Liberty University