



April 2015

Ms. Malia Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Ms. Obama,

I understand that, like millions of high school juniors and seniors, you are in the process of choosing a college. The institutions on your short list are all exceptional, and you really cannot make a mistake. I would like to offer you an alternative, one that will also serve you well, perhaps even better.

As a member of the Virginia Tech Class of 2020, you will join nearly a quarter of a million Hokies around the world who have prepared themselves for, or are already engaged in meaningful lives of service in the spirit of our motto, *Ut Prosim*, "That I May Serve." Sure, we have the best campus food in the country, but it is the strong community, the rigorous academic programs, and the commitment to service that distinguishes the Virginia Tech experience.

Our campus in Blacksburg, which many claim is a dead ringer for Hogwarts, is nestled against the Blue Ridge Mountains, just minutes from the Appalachian Trail and the New River, one of the oldest and most picturesque rivers on the planet. Our students are among the fittest in the country. They hike, they bike, they run and they pursue every sport imaginable.

I mentioned our academic programs. Not only are they varied and challenging, as you would expect from a leading research university, Virginia Tech is the home of some of the most innovative curricula on the planet. You will choose from major fields including Water: Resources, Policy and Management; Systems Biology; Real Estate; Neuroscience;

*Invent the Future*

Nanoscience; and Sustainable Biomaterials; as well as minors in Entrepreneurship; Leadership and Social Change; Science, Engineering and Law; Cinema; and Viticulture.

You will experience and perhaps even find yourself on the stage in the world-class Moss Arts Center. You will have an opportunity to pursue research in one of our nearly seventy departments and seven research institutes, ranging from the Institute for Creativity, Arts and Technology to the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute to the Institute for Society, Culture and Environment ... You will, as we Hokies say, *Invent the Future*.

The Virginia Tech experience is described by our tagline: *hands-on, minds-on*. Whether it is starting a company with some new friends in our Innovate living-learning community, spending the semester with “Hokies on the Hill” (perhaps a little too close to home for you!), or studying abroad at our campus in Riva San Vitale, Switzerland, you will learn by doing.

Our Citizen-Leader track in the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets is designed for students who really want to push themselves. Of course, we are talking about a 5:30 AM wakeup call and a respect for tradition and history, but there is no better preparation for leadership in service to humanity than the Corps’ Rice Center for Leader Development.

Our student population is large and varied, with every imaginable life experience represented. You will work, study and have fun with people from Appalachia and Alexandria – that is, Alexandria, Egypt and Alexandria, Virginia; you will meet students from wealthy families and those that have lived in poverty; you will take classes with artists, Olympians, farmers and entrepreneurs; you will experience every slice of humanity, and like every Virginia Tech student, you will have ample opportunities to expand your ability to engage each person you meet with respect and understanding.

Oh, and don’t forget fall in Blacksburg and the indelible experience of a football Saturday (or Thursday!). From “Enter Sandman” to a sea of Burnt Orange and Chicago Maroon, the scene in Blacksburg cannot be matched at a small exclusive institution. Ask your Mom...she has touched the fabled Hokie Stone at Lane Stadium.

Then there is the living link to history that is the Virginia Tech experience in Blacksburg. As a land-grant university with its origin in Lincoln's Morrill Act, Virginia Tech was created to serve the public good, from educating students of all backgrounds to participate effectively in our democracy, to discovering and implementing new knowledge that supports the development of our economy. Virginia Tech has stayed true to its original mission. When you view our Drillfield from the Pylons, you cannot help but imagine the days when Virginia Tech was a military college. Of course, watching a Pass in Review of the Corps and hearing Skipper fire a round makes that connection to history all the more tangible. What you realize, however, is that original commitment to service in defense of the country has matured into today's "Service to Humanity Academy." We are visibly connected to our roots, but we are not constrained by them.

We hope you will consider taking a campus tour soon with one of our energetic and knowledgeable Hokie Ambassadors.

All the best, whatever you decide,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy D. Sands". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Timothy D. Sands  
President  
Virginia Tech  
On Twitter: @VTSandsman