



UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICER

STATEMENT FROM THE DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

September 6, 2007

On Tuesday, September 4, 2007, a comic ran in *The Cavalier Daily* with the caption "Ethiopian Food Fight." Many members of the U Va community have been deeply offended by the content of this comic; more than 60 contacted the University's "Just Report It" bias reporting Web site. Our office has reached out to each concerned student consistent with our protocol for handling bias complaints, and we will continue to do so. We also have spoken with many other students and parents who contacted our office, and in each case, we stated firmly that we find the comic strip in question to be in poor taste and of no discernable journalistic merit.

The Cavalier Daily is an independent organization that is neither controlled nor funded by the University. As such, it is solely responsible for its content and exercise of judgment. *The Cavalier Daily*, however, is also an important member of our community and a participant in the daily lives of students. Given this, we expect better from its staff and editors than what appeared this past Tuesday.

We appreciate the decision by *The Cavalier Daily*'s editors to issue a prompt retraction in Wednesday's edition after determining that the comic failed to meet the newspaper's own standards and policies. Furthermore, after meeting with members of the community and hearing their concerns, the editors issued a detailed apology through an editorial published today. Given the University's long tradition of student self-governance, we look to our students to make such decisions as part of their leadership development and growth.

This incident presents another case of needless pain inflicted upon members of our community. Such incidents have occurred in the past, and they both mar and mock the principles of mutual respect, tolerance, and understanding that are basic to our mission and to our values as an academic community. As we reflect upon this incident and then move forward, it is important to reiterate that any intentional acts of derision directed toward individuals or groups are unacceptable.

A sense of community defines the University of Virginia. The strength of our community ensures we can come together – even around difficult issues – to learn from mistakes and to work for improvements. Through mutual support, rather than division, we look forward to the ways that this incident can result in positive change for the community as a whole.

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