Honor, Student Self-Governance & Traditions

The Honor System

The University of Virginia’s Honor Code is the oldest student-run Honor system in the United States. Priding themselves in upholding honor and integrity in all aspects of their life, students pledge not to lie, cheat, or steal as they enter the Community of Trust at UVa. Under the University’s single sanction system, the punishment upon being found guilty of an Honor offense is expulsion from the University. While this sounds daunting, the Honor system is much more rewarding than it is punitive. UVa’s Honor Code creates a Community of Trust not only between students but also between students and professors, allowing students the opportunity to take exams on their own time, take assignments home and trust that no outside resources will be used, etc.

Student Self-Governance

Student self-governance is one of the greatest and strongest traditions at the University of Virginia. Organizations such as the University Judiciary Committee, Honor Committee, Student Council, Lawn Selection Committee, and many more represent the University’s priority of entrusting students with much of the University’s decision-making. These organizations are completely student self-run, governed, and staffed. It is no wonder the University creates such successful leaders since student self-governance allows UVa students to gain hands-on experience fundraising, budgeting, and running organizations.

Traditions

Founded in 1819 by Thomas Jefferson, the University of Virginia is big on tradition. Some old, some new, traditions are a great unifying force at the University; however, there are constantly new traditions being added and there is always room for change. A few of our traditions include singing the “Good Ole Song” after every touchdown at football games where many students dress-up in dresses and bow ties. Secret societies are also an old tradition at UVa, but some newer traditions include Trick-or-Treating on the Lawn and Lighting of the Lawn. Trick-or-Treating on the Lawn is an event that happens every Halloween when children from the Charlottesville community come dressed up in costumes to trick-or-treat from lawn room to lawn room. UVa students get really into it and it is a great way to unite the University and the greater Charlottesville area. Lighting of the Lawn is also another hit here at the University, beginning after the 9/11 tragedies; this event began as a way to unite our University community. The Thursday before finals begin in December, the many acapella groups perform; a poem is read as a recap of the year’s events; and then the Lawn is lit up with holiday lights strung on the pavilions and the Rotunda. It is a great time and the lawn is packed with students, plus in the past couple of years the lights go to music so the event usually ends in a huge dance part on the Lawn!