



Jefferson Scholars Foundation Endowed Professorships in Constitutionalism, Democracy &
Political Economy
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA

"This institution of my native state, the hobby of my old age, will be based on the illimitable freedom of the human mind to explore and to expose every subject susceptible of its contemplation."
— Thomas Jefferson

THE SEARCH

The College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences at the University of Virginia (UVA) invites applications and nominations for two recently established endowed professorships: the Melville Foundation Jefferson Scholars Foundation Distinguished University Professorship and the Jefferson Scholars Foundation Distinguished Professorship in Political Economy, Law & Democracy. These endowed professorships represent among the highest honors conferred upon UVA faculty and are [Jefferson Scholars Endowed Professorships](#) supported by the [Jefferson Scholars Foundation](#) (JSF). UVA seeks innovative and collaborative academic leaders who are eager to consolidate and build on the University of Virginia's premier position among American universities in research and teaching on democracy and the legal and institutional foundations of liberal societies.

The endowed professors will anchor a planned expansion of the [Program on Constitutionalism and Democracy](#) (PCD). As a public institution founded by Thomas Jefferson, the University of Virginia has long embraced its [mission](#) of forming free and thoughtful citizen leaders through a liberal arts formation. The PCD reflects this commitment by supporting scholarship and teaching on the philosophical foundations of republican constitutionalism and liberal democratic government, as well as the development of the American political system.

The endowed professors will join a community of exceptional scholars of democracy and the American political tradition, found across the University, including the [Frank Batten School of Public Policy](#), the [School of Law](#), the [Karsh Institute of Democracy](#), and the [Miller Center](#). They will benefit from UVA's rich historical and cultural endowment, including the [Papers of George Washington](#) and the [Papers of James Madison](#), the [John L. Nau III Center for Civil War History](#), the [Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections](#)

[Library](#), whose holdings include one of the first published copies of the Declaration of Independence, and the University's close relationship with and proximity to [Monticello](#).

Successful candidates will be eminent scholars in the humanities or social sciences with established records of excellence in research and teaching in one or more of the following areas: history of democracy; republican constitutionalism; contemporary North Atlantic democracies; and/or liberal traditions of political thought and practice. Applications and inquiries are invited from scholars who study the philosophical, legal, religious, scientific, sociological, literary, or artistic dimensions of liberal democratic government and/or American civic life. We are particularly interested in candidates who engage in public scholarship on the development of American political traditions and their future possibilities. In addition to a record of recognized excellence in research and scholarship, successful candidates will have a demonstrated commitment to undergraduate education.

PROGRAM ON CONSTITUTIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY

The Melville Foundation Jefferson Scholars Foundation Distinguished University Professor and the Jefferson Scholars Foundation Distinguished Professor in Political Economy, Law & Democracy will be charged with expanding the [Program on Constitutionalism and Democracy](#), a cornerstone initiative that reflects UVA's commitment to liberal arts education and the cultivation of citizen leaders. The PCD's mission is to promote scholarship and undergraduate teaching that is informed by political theory and by the political science of the American Founding. Established in 2006, the PCD draws inspiration from the "[Rockfish Gap Report](#)," authored by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison in 1818. The Report outlines a curricular vision designed to foster an enlightened body of citizens for a liberal democracy. Benefitting from increased investment and surging interest in the importance of civic thought in American higher education, the PCD is well-poised for growth as it enters its third decade. The endowed professors will shape the future of the PCD, working together with colleagues in the College and across the University to make it a vibrant, visible interdisciplinary initiative—one that offers students a distinctive academic formation and fosters intellectual pluralism in pursuit of what Jefferson called "[the illimitable freedom of the human mind](#)."

As part of this revitalization, one of the two endowed professors may assume the role of the PCD Program Director, providing strategic leadership and vision for the next chapter of the PCD. This individual will be responsible for shaping the program's academic direction, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, mentoring faculty and students, and enhancing the program's visibility both within and beyond the University to grow the PCD into a vibrant, visible, and intellectually pluralistic initiative that offers students a distinctive academic formation and contributes meaningfully to public discourse on democracy and civic life.

THE ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIPS

The future holders of the Melville Foundation Jefferson Scholars Foundation Distinguished University Professor and the Jefferson Scholars Foundation Distinguished Professorship in Political Economy, Law &

Democracy will be receiving one of the most prestigious honors that can be bestowed on a UVA faculty member. The highest levels of performance and national and international recognition of that performance are inherent guidelines for appointment of a chair holder. The institutional expectation of unquestionable excellence means that they are deemed to have achieved the highest stature and exemplary accomplishment in a discipline or area of research as judged by an independent assessment of their peers.

These endowed professorships are both [Jefferson Scholars Endowed Professorships](#) supported by the [Jefferson Scholars Foundation](#) (JSF). Candidates should have achieved exemplary accomplishments in their discipline, as determined by an independent assessment of their peers. While these senior positions are tenured (not termed), all Jefferson Scholars Foundation Chairs are five-year appointments with presumptive renewal; chairs are expected to demonstrate a strong commitment to teaching and to participate in the Jefferson Scholars Foundation community. Participation in the JSF community can include activities such as attending Foundation events, assisting the Foundation in recruiting Scholars and Fellows, and serving on Foundation selection committees.

In addition to the University's minimum criteria for an eminent scholar professorship, the successful candidate for each professorship must meet the following criteria desired by the Foundation and its benefactors:

- National and international recognition as a scholar and leader;
- Demonstrated excellence as a teacher;
- Strong commitment to interdisciplinary collaborations; and
- Willingness to participate actively in the Foundation's community as outlined in the JSF Memorandum of Understanding

The Melville Foundation Jefferson Scholars Foundation Distinguished University Professor is also a University Professorship. The University has established distinguished University professorships for faculty holding the rank of professor who teach and conduct research that crosses school boundaries. University professors are eminent in their respective disciplines, hold the same or higher qualifications of any faculty holding an endowed professorship, and are held in the highest regard by their national and international academic peers. University professors also hold appointments as professors in department(s) and school(s) and may retain any (other) endowed professorships they may hold in addition to the title of University professor. University professors report to the president but remain accountable to the dean(s) of their appointed school(s). They are expected to engage in educational and scholarly activities across school boundaries.

ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The endowed professors will be renowned scholars in the humanities or social sciences, and ideally, public intellectuals whose work enhances the undergraduate experience and contributes meaningfully to the

broader academic and civic mission of the University of Virginia. They will meet the University's minimum criteria for an eminent scholar professorship and the criteria desired by the Jefferson Scholars Foundation as outlined above.

Ideal candidates will embody a combination of scholarly distinction, pedagogical excellence, and institutional citizenship. They will bring a distinguished record in scholarship, teaching, and service consistent with the expectations of the rank of tenured full professor in a department housed in the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences at UVA. They will also bring most, if not all, of the following qualities and experiences:

- **Eminence in their field**, demonstrated through a sustained record of impactful scholarship, national and international recognition, and contributions to the advancement of knowledge in areas related to liberal democracy, constitutionalism, and civic life.
- **Exemplary teaching ability**, with a demonstrated commitment to undergraduate education and a capacity to inspire students through intellectually rigorous and inclusive pedagogy.
- **Interdisciplinary orientation**, with a proven ability to collaborate across academic boundaries and contribute to the development of innovative, cross-cutting programs such as the Program on Constitutionalism and Democracy.
- **Engagement in public scholarship**, including work that bridges academic research and public discourse, and that contributes to the understanding and development of American political traditions and democratic institutions.
- **Commitment to intellectual pluralism**, fostering a climate of open inquiry and respectful debate within the University community.
- **Innovation and vision**, with the capacity to help shape and grow a high-profile academic initiative and mentor junior faculty and students.
- **Willingness to actively participate in the Jefferson Scholars Foundation community**, including involvement in recruitment, selection, and programming efforts that support the Foundation's mission.
- **Alignment with UVA's mission**, embracing the University's values of service, discovery, and the formation of citizen-leaders through a liberal arts education.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-virginia/jefferson-scholars-endowed-professorships-political-economy-law>.

John Isaacson, Chair
Amy Gillespie, Senior Associate
Mindy Cimini, Senior Search Coordinator

Isaacson, Miller

The University of Virginia anticipates additional faculty hires to support the planned expansion of the Program on Constitutionalism and Democracy. Particularly strong candidates who are not sufficiently senior for the Melville Foundation Jefferson Scholars Foundation Distinguished University Professor and the Jefferson Scholars Foundation Distinguished Professor in Political Economy, Law & Democracy are also encouraged to apply for other positions that may become available.

The University of Virginia is an equal opportunity employer.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the University of Virginia. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by the University of Virginia would supersede any conflicting information in this document.

ADDITIONAL ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

The University of Virginia

The [University of Virginia](#) was founded to advance human knowledge, educate leaders, and cultivate an informed citizenry. Today, the University's students represent virtually every state in the nation and 98 countries. Over a quarter of a million alumni around the world actively support UVA's mission to serve the greater good. UVA encompasses [twelve schools](#) in Charlottesville as well as the [College at Wise](#), a small, liberal arts college in Southwest Virginia. For 2025, the University was ranked the No. 4 best public university by *U.S. News & World Report*. With its strong financial position and its reputation for excellence, UVA offers an enviable array of opportunities and possibilities. One of the largest employers in central Virginia, the University employs nearly 34,000 people, including approximately 11,000 faculty and staff, and approximately 10,000 UVA Health employees.

The Princeton Review consistently ranks UVA among the top public schools for financial aid. UVA also this year secured the No. 2 spot as the best value public university, No. 5 for career placement, and No. 1 for student health. Recognized for providing exceptional financial aid, health services, and strong alumni networks, UVA continues to deliver outstanding value and support to students. UVA remains one of the few public universities to meet 100% of every undergraduate student's demonstrated financial need and offers admission to students with no consideration of a family's income. Several schools are among the highest ranked in their fields, and some, including the Darden School of Business and School of Law, have received No. 1 rankings.

In 2019, the University created the [2030 Strategic Plan](#), "*A Great and Good University*," which continues to guide its direction. The plan articulates four central goals: strengthening the University's foundation, cultivating a vibrant and inclusive academic community, driving research and discovery that improves lives, and making service a defining feature of the institution. These goals are supported by ten key initiatives, including expanding financial aid and advising under the SuccessUVA program; fostering public service to create citizen-leaders for the 21st century; and deepening community partnerships through the Good Neighbor Program, which addresses local challenges like affordable housing, wages, and public health. UVA also launched bold new academic expansions, such as the establishment of the School of Data Science and the development of the [Emmet-ivy corridor](#), a 14.5-acre gateway to the University that houses the Center for the Arts, a new hotel and conference center, and other academic buildings that make up a thriving academic and cultural center supporting interdisciplinary collaboration on democracy, creativity, and innovation.

The College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences

The College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences (A&S) remains the historical and intellectual foundation of the University of Virginia. The largest of UVA's 12 schools, A&S offers more than 50 undergraduate degrees and concentrations, as well as 29 graduate degree programs. It educates 70% of

all of the University's undergraduate students (conferring upwards of 2,500 degrees each year), trains a quarter of the graduate students, appoints 60% of the tenure-track faculty, and houses the core disciplines upon which UVA's academic reputation is built.

The College's mission is to educate the world's future citizens and leaders, advance collective knowledge through innovative research, and support the advancement of the Commonwealth, the nation, and the world. To address both the historic challenges of the 21st century and the enduring questions that have fueled human inquiry for generations, the College offers a number of innovative educational programs, including its unique, new liberal arts and sciences curriculum that provides undergraduate students with the skills, knowledge, and habits of mind necessary to flourish in the complex and interconnected global environment of the 21st century.

A&S graduates go on to successful and high-impact careers in virtually every field of endeavor. They serve as leaders and innovators across the world in every branch of business, in government, in the arts, and in the non-profit sector. The impact they have in the world is a result of the rigorous, well-integrated, and broad-based education they receive in the liberal arts and sciences while students of the College.

Between 2014 and 2022, in the midst of a generational turnover of esteemed faculty, A&S has attracted more than 200 renowned faculty members, lured to UVA by the College's culture of innovation and academic excellence. The College continues to emphasize the importance of recruiting the most talented professors and instructors while enhancing the faculty's diversity.

The Graduate School features five departments boasting top-30 U.S. News & World Report rankings. In 2021, English was ranked 11th nationally, with its "American literature before 1865" graduate program ranked 7th overall; History was ranked in a tie for 18th, with its U.S. Colonial History program ranked 4th nationally; Psychology's PhD clinical psychology program was also ranked in a tie for 18th; Economics was ranked in a tie for 26th, and the Department of Politics jumped up nine spots to earn a tie for 28th.