



The Legacy of *President Ronald A. Crutcher* 10TH PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND *2015–2021*

Biography

- Ronald A. Crutcher was appointed president of the University of Richmond in 2015 becoming UR's 10th president.
- He previously served as president of Wheaton College from 2004–2014.
- He was the first cellist to receive the doctor of musical arts degree from Yale, where he also earned his master's. He earned his undergraduate from Miami University.

Raising Academic Profile

President Crutcher recognized early on that UR was an outstanding institution, and also that it was not as well known for its excellence as it should be. During his time, he has worked to change that. To bolster faculty development, UR established the Teaching and Scholarship Hub and the Program on Academic Leadership. UR continued to strengthen the quality and diversity of its student population, while enhancing the retention and graduation rate of its students.

In 2017, President Crutcher established the [Office of Scholars and Fellowships](#) to help more outstanding students receive opportunities for national and international study, research, and service. In its first three years of operation, the office assisted more than 75 students and recent alums with securing prestigious scholarship and fellowships. Since the office opened on campus, UR has seen its first [Beinecke](#), [Boren](#), and [Luce](#) scholars. UR students are also always competitive for Goldwater, Gilman, Critical Language, and Fulbright awards.

President Crutcher established the University Communications division to increase awareness of Richmond and shine a light on UR's high quality and distinctiveness. The division is focused on telling the University of Richmond story and extending UR's reach and reputation. Under Crutcher's leadership, UR launched a new institutional branding campaign, improved in national rankings, increased applications, and inspired new donors.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access, and Affordability

President Crutcher brought the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and affordability to the forefront of UR's work. In July 2019, UR released "[Making Excellence Inclusive: Report and Recommendations](#)," outlining an ambitious plan to make Richmond a more inclusive and welcoming community for all. The [Making Excellence Inclusive Work Plan](#) provides an overview of the progress to date. The Institutional Coordinating Council brings together staff, faculty, and students to foster alignment, communications, and best practices for inclusive excellence across campus.

Rather than name a diversity officer, President Crutcher appointed a senior administrative officer to ensure that values of inclusion and diversity are spread throughout the University. The idea, he said, is that "no single leader alone can bring about cultural change."

Under President Crutcher's leadership, the University of Rich-

mond joined 30 of the nation's most respected colleges and universities as charter members of the American Talent Initiative, whose goal is to increase socioeconomic diversity in higher education.

The University announced it will meet the full demonstrated financial need for all Richmond Public School graduates who qualify to attend with grant aid — not with loans — up to the full cost of attendance at UR. President Crutcher said the University was committed to retaining the region's best students, and the No Loan Program furthers that effort.

Under Crutcher's leadership, the University of Richmond was selected as part of an inaugural cohort of [First Forward](#) institutions by the Center for First-generation Student Success. The designation recognizes institutions of higher education that have demonstrated a commitment to improving experiences and advancing outcomes of first-generation college students. A first-gen student himself, Crutcher actively supported efforts to assist first-gen students at UR and urged students to seek the help they need.

From the moment he arrived on campus, President Crutcher made clear his commitment to mentoring students, a hallmark of his lengthy career as both an educator and higher education administrator. Crutcher served as a mentor to groups of young men of all backgrounds and experiences at the University of Richmond, while his wife, Dr. Betty Neal Crutcher, similarly mentored groups of young women. The Crutchers met monthly with their groups and often held additional opportunities for other students to meet with them during informal events called "Coffee with the Crutchers." Crutcher also met regularly with students to discuss controversial issues across lines of difference.

This summer, the University will begin work to establish a pilot for

a university-wide mentoring program, which will provide training, support, and funding to cultivate a network of mentors for students as they enter our community.

"I have long believed in the potential of mentoring," said Crutcher in an article he wrote for [Inside Higher Ed](#). "Mentoring connects us as educators to our students in a manner that is spontaneous, timely, and genuine."

"I have focused throughout my career on higher education access, affordability, and inclusive excellence, all principles that are more important than ever as our institutions and students face unprecedented challenges."

~ Ronald A. Crutcher

A Respected Voice in American Higher Education

President Crutcher was elected chair of the Board of Directors of the American Council on Education (ACE), the major coordinating body for the nation's colleges and universities. His term began in March 2021 and continues for one year. He also serves on the board

of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. He was named to the Bipartisan Policy Center's Academic Leaders Task Force on Campus Free Expression in 2021.

He is a founding co-chair of Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), the AAC&U's national campaign to demonstrate the value of liberal education. He previously served on the boards of the Posse Foundation and the Fulbright Association.

Crutcher has authored opinion pieces on a variety of topics. In a piece for the [Hechinger Report](#), President Crutcher wrote, "Colleges and universities are uniquely positioned, and have an explicit responsibility, to model substantive disagreement and dialogue that foster change — to give students information they can take into the classroom, living room, workplace and voting booth." For [USA Today](#), he wrote that higher ed should tout diversity as a driver of the bottom line, which he said, might help ease tensions on campus. He shared insights and his personal reflections on a racist yearbook photo for [The New York Times](#).

He also wrote essays for the University's alumni magazine and was a frequent guest speaker. In 2019 President Crutcher spoke at the Council of Europe Global Forum on "Higher Education for Diversity, Social Inclusion, and Community: A Democratic Imperative," held at LUMSA University in Rome.

A select list of his essays and speaking engagements can be found [here](#).

Civil Discourse and Embracing Free Speech

President Crutcher is a strong proponent of civil discourse to spark thoughtful conversations in an environment that models substantive disagreement and dialogue that stimulates thought and ex-

pands perspectives. He modeled this through the Sharp Series, in which he hosted a series of conversations about pressing issues. The 2020 series featured thought leaders from opposite sides of the political spectrum.

The University developed a Statement on Free Expression. In a message to the UR community, President Crutcher wrote that the statement “invites us to leverage our campus as a laboratory of democracy where students learn to understand and value evidence, to respect the backgrounds and perspectives that lead to different points of view, and to participate fully as active citizens in a diverse and complex world. Our commitment to free expression and open inquiry is vital to cultivating the type of vibrant, intellectual environment needed to combat forces of hatred, division, and anti-intellectualism, all of which shut down dialogue and creative thought and so perniciously threaten our democratic institutions.”

Institutional History

President Crutcher created the President’s Advisory Committee for Making Excellence Inclusive, the Interim Coordinating Council, and the Presidential Commission for University History and Identity in support of a thriving and inclusive community at Richmond. Much of that work focused on examining, understanding, and communicating the University’s past more fully and inclusively.

The University installed signage on campus to mark the sacred space of a former burial ground for enslaved persons and describe what is known about the desecration that occurred there. The signage also details the University’s plans to more permanently acknowledge the site going forward. The University plans to memorialize the enslaved burial ground on what is now part of the campus and the history of the

land on which the University now sits, including its intersections with enslavement.

“Our story is often inspirational, but there are aspects of the past we have long ignored, including the significant history of the land on which our campus now stands,” Crutcher said.

On the recommendation of the [Presidential Commission for University History and Identity](#), which called for research regarding Robert Ryland, Douglas Southall Freeman, and slavery on UR’s landscape, two reports were issued. Those reports are “*A Season of Discipline: Enslavement, Education & Faith in the Life of Robert Ryland*” and “*The Virginia Way: Race, The “Lost Cause,” & The Social Influence of Douglas Southall Freeman*.” In a message to the University community, President Crutcher wrote, “The University of Richmond is steeped in a long and often inspirational history. There are aspects of it, however, that we have ignored for too long and left out too often. These reports provide an essential corrective. Part of our [Inclusive History Initiative](#) and [Making Excellence Inclusive](#) plan, they bring to the fore our University’s relationship to the defining moral struggles of our country: slavery and segregation.”

Sustainability

The University’s first comprehensive [sustainability plan](#) was developed during President Crutcher’s time as president. He signed the American Campuses Act on Climate Pledge in 2016, acknowledging that Richmond recognizes environmental stewardship and sustainability as integral components of its mission to prepare students to lead in a global and pluralistic society. That same year, Crutcher also helped establish the University’s first solar array project, which was also the first installed in the Commonwealth under a pilot program. UR also be-

came one of only two higher education institutions in the U.S., and the first in the southeast, to match 100% of its electricity needs with a single solar power source. Spider Solar, is a 20-megawatt solar energy facility that replenishes the electric grid with the same amount of renewable solar energy that the campus uses to run day-to-day operations.

Music

President Crutcher and his wife, Dr. Betty Neal Crutcher, were key in helping secure Richmond as the chosen host location for the 2020 Menuhin Competition, a global music competition often referred to as the Olympics of violin. University of Richmond was to serve as one of the locations in the area where portions of the competition were held; however, Menuhin was postponed and ultimately held virtually in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

He serves on the board of director of the Richmond Symphony and has performed with Joanne Kong, a pianist and harpsichordist. She is the longtime director of accompaniment and coordinator of chamber ensembles at UR. The two also performed with UR’s Mike Davison on a 2017 concert tour of Cuba.

During the pandemic, he joined musicians worldwide who hosted informal concerts in their homes to lessen anxiety and bring joy in the pandemic environment. He performed on his cello during a Facebook Live performance. President Crutcher said he wanted to provide a measure of inspiration, encouragement, and comfort.