



## Full Rides For Low-Income Students At UR

*By Anne O'Dell*

Although “full ride” award packages at many schools are reserved for the exceptionally gifted, especially college athletes, the University of Richmond has recently launched a program to cover full tuition, room, and board costs for students whose family income is \$40,000 or less.

UR hopes the program will help attract more in-state students.

The Richmond financial aid office will, after determining that the student is eligible for need-based aid, construct a financial aid package of grants that do not have to be repaid.

For other students, the university has a \$4,000 annual cap on student loans to help ensure that student debt will not cripple the fortunes and futures of UR graduates. Their financial aid packages also meet 100 percent of demonstrated financial need through grants, loans, and work-study programs. Last year, the average aid package exceeded \$26,000.

According to a recent press release, twenty-eight 2006-2007 applicants from Virginia were offered the “full ride” package; and 21 of those students enrolled. The university also noted in the release that undergraduate admission applications have increased 10 percent since last year.

UR President William E. Cooper said in the release, “The University of Richmond seeks highly qualified Virginia students. The goal of this program is to encourage more students from Virginia to choose to come to Richmond by helping to make it more affordable.”

Other “full ride” packages are awarded in the form of more than 50 merit scholarships each year, several of which are set aside for in-state students. The financial aid office estimates that one out of 15 UR undergrads receives a full-tuition merit scholarship.

Although the university is focusing on meeting the financial needs of its students, currently, UR is one of a very small number of colleges and universities that has what is known as a need-blind admissions policy.

One group, the 589 President’s Group, is composed of officials from institutions with need-blind admissions who are dedicated to finding ways to award non-federal aid to meet demonstrated financial need. This group is named after Section 568 of the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 and held its most recent meeting just last week.

The Section 568 exemption states that a group of need-blind colleges and universities can agree to award only need-based financial aid, to use certain common principles to determine need, to use a common form for financial aid applications, and to exchange certain kinds of information about students who typically receive financial aid.

The group is working to find a better, clearer, and fairer way to evaluate financial need; members use consensus methodology to achieve these common standards. Consensus methodology does not deal with financial aid packages or merit-based awards.

The University of Richmond is not included in the list of 568 Group members. The group's membership includes 28 institutions, among them, Yale, Duke, Georgetown, and Northwestern.