



Memorials and Commemorations

Policy Type: Board of Visitors

Responsible Office: Office of the President

Initial Policy Approved: 05/10/2019

Current Revision Approved: 04/26/2026

Policy Statement and Purpose

This policy outlines the university's process for establishing, creating, renaming, and/or removing memorials and commemorations on property owned or managed by Virginia Commonwealth University.

Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

Policy Exceptions: This policy does not apply to art on campus, philanthropic donor recognition or marketing-related signage.

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Who Should Know this Policy

University community including faculty, staff, and students and members of affiliated VCU Boards and foundations must be familiar with its contents and provisions.

Definitions

Memorial

An object or structure that honors and preserves the memory of a person, group, or event.

Commemoration

An object, artifact, ceremony, or university naming that serves as lasting recognition of a person, group or event.

De-commemoration

The act of removing a commemoration or memorial of a person, group or event.

Contacts

The Office of the President officially interprets this policy and is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions and questions regarding this policy should be directed to this office.

Policy Specifics

The Board of Visitors of Virginia Commonwealth University delegates the authority in the creation, placement and existence of memorials and commemorations on property owned or managed by the University. Decisions will reflect the values and mission of the University.

Commemorations must primarily recognize significant persons, places, or events that relate to the history of the institution or the history of the physical area now encompassing the University and its academic health center. The creation of a memorial does not give any individual the right to, or interest in, the preservation or maintenance of such a memorial.

All memorials and commemorations will meet the style and architectural standards of campus.

The Board of Visitors, in its sole discretion, has the authority to de-commemorate or remove memorials and commemorations. Any member of the University community may propose removal at any time.

Considerations for removal may include:

- o The honoree engaged in conduct inconsistent with the mission and/or values of VCU;
- o Information is discovered that negates the accomplishments that were cited as the basis for creating the memorial, or
- o The memorial and/or honoree injures the reputation of the University or the Commonwealth of Virginia.

All requests for memorials, commemoration and/or de-commemoration will be submitted in writing to the Assistant Secretary to the Board of Visitors, who will refer the request to the Committee on Commemorations and Memorials.

The Committee on Commemorations and Memorials shall make a recommendation to approve memorials and commemorations to the President for consideration and approval,

The committee shall make recommendations to the Board to de-commemorate or de-memorialize any previously awarded commemorations or memorials. The Board shall consider and vote on the committee recommendation. The President must carry out the decision.

The Committee on Commemorations and Memorials

The Committee on Commemorations and Memorials (the “Committee”) is composed of individuals appointed and charged by the President and/or his/her designee(s) to review requests and make recommendations for the approval or removal of memorials, commemorations.

All members of the Committee are expected to serve in an impartial manner, free of conflicts of interest, or appearances thereof, and consistent with the University expectations. This enables and supports a transparent and engaged deliberative process in which all community members may participate.

Committee members shall be appointed by the President and shall include the University Archivist. All other individuals will be determined by the President.

The President shall appoint the chair(s) and committee members every fiscal year. The President reserves the right to modify the committee’s membership as necessary, including filling vacancies.

The Committee shall adhere to a formal decision-making process that is approved by the President and documented by the Assistant Secretary to the Board.

Forms

There are no forms associated with this policy.

Related Documents

VCU Policy: [University Recognition through Naming](#)

VCU Policy: [Art on Campus](#)

Revision History

This policy has been revised on the following dates:

05/10/2019	Initially Adopted
09/13/2024	Amended
04/24/2026	Minor revisions

FAQ

What is the difference between a memorial and a commemoration?

- A. A memorial is an object or structure that preserves the memory of something, usually a deceased person or event. A commemoration, through a ceremony, special object or artifact, acknowledges historical appreciation or acclaim for an achievement of a person, group or event.

Examples of commemorations:

- Public events recognizing the elimination of any kind of barriers – race, gender, ageism accessibility, etc., -- that result in equity and access for all members of the VCU community
- Public event with an associated plaque that recognize significant achievements by individuals whose work and/or action has resulted in lasting improvements and the betterment of VCU
- A named university space or program in recognition of extraordinary contributions of a retired leader or faculty member

Examples of Memorials:

- A statue of the founding VCU president installed in a university common area
- A bronze plaque in the Student Commons honoring VCU alumni who died serving the country as members of the U.S. armed forces

Does this policy apply to events such as groundbreakings, ribbon-cuttings celebrations?

- A. No. These are celebrations of short-term achievements or acclaim.

Does this policy apply to namings and naming events?

- A. When the naming is solely honorific and historical, it falls under this policy. In most cases, namings and naming events are the result of significant philanthropic activities.

Does this policy apply to funerals or memorial services celebrating the lives and careers of individuals associated with VCU?

- A. No.

Does this policy apply to annual observances related to a chosen theme or topic?

- A. No.

Does this policy apply to contextualization for a memorial or commemoration?

- A. No. A committee specifically selected to create contextualization for each new and existing memorial will be appointed by the president's office when it is determined that contextualization is needed.