



VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

**VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF VISITORS  
ANNUAL RETREAT  
October 21, 2022  
Virginia Museum of History & Culture  
428 N. Arthur Ashe Blvd.  
Richmond, Virginia**

**MINUTES**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr. H. Benson Dendy III, *Rector*  
Ms. Carolina Espinal, *Vice Rector*  
Mr. Anthony Bedell  
Mr. Peter Farrell (arrived at 12:05 p.m.)  
Mr. Andrew Florance (exited at noon)  
Ms. Ellen Fitzsimmons  
Mr. Todd Haymore  
Dr. V. Dale Jones  
Ambassador Carmen Lomellin  
Mr. Edward McCoy (arrived at 9:43 a.m.)  
Rev. Tyrone Nelson (arrived at 9:38 a.m.)  
Mr. Keith Parker  
Dr. Tonya Parris-Wilkins  
Dr. Clifton Peay  
Ms. Alexis Swann  
Dr. Shantaram Talegaonkar

**OTHERS PRESENT**

President Michael Rao  
Ms. Chelsea Gray, *Executive Director of Board and Executive Operations*  
Ms. Stephanie Hamlett, *University Counsel*  
Ms. Karen Helderman, *Executive Director, University Audit and Compliance Services*  
Presidential Cabinet of VCU  
VCU students, faculty and staff  
Members of the Media

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Rector H. Benson Dendy III called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture, 428 N. Arthur Ashe Blvd., Richmond, Virginia. The public was able to view the open session of the meeting via livestream at <https://mssvideo.vcu.edu/BOV>.

### **RECTOR'S REMARKS**

Rector Dendy welcomed everyone and thanked them for being there. He reminded the board that the retreat is their annual opportunity for open discussion about the issues most important to the Board of Visitors. He recognized that the week before VCU Massey Cancer received \$114 million to work with national partners to increase diversity in clinical trials to improve health outcomes. The School of Medicine also is part of a \$31 million, multi-institutional study focused on helping people with heart disease. In addition, President Rao was honored by his undergraduate alma mater, University of South Florida, as a renowned graduate who has become a standard-bearer in his field, and was presented with a distinguished alumni award for achieving the pinnacle of success in his career. He summarized the agenda and encouraged board members to ask questions. As the VCU brand calls for, unconstrained to share expertise and wisdom, and to seek clarity about strategies and expected outcomes.

### **PRESIDENT'S REMARKS**

President Rao welcomed the board. He spoke about how VCU is fulfilling its commitment to accessibility. VCU puts the needs of students first and those needs are changing rapidly, as is the world. VCU is augmenting the value of a VCU degree so that we can meet students where they are. The university's top priority is enrollment and the success of students. VCU continues to be aggressive and innovative in actions to enroll more students – with targeted scholarships, emphasis on workforce experience and innovative problem-based learning that prepares our students for the future of work. VCU wants all students to have transformative experiences. Work-based experiences, like internships, give students experience in the workforce and are a vital part of VCU's unique student experience, which is connected to its competitive advantage and enrollment. At VCU, students get not just a degree, but hands-on experience that will directly help them get a job, or get into grad school – increasing VCU's value proposition. VCU is focused on three areas: creating opportunity, equity, and personal transformation.

President Rao ended his remarks by recognizing Dr. Charles Klink, senior vice provost for student affairs, for his eight years as head of the Division of Student Affairs. Dr. Klink will take on a new role as associate vice president in student affairs, and VCU is grateful for his continued service to VCU and students.

### **THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE: WORK BASED LEARNING**

Dr. Fotis Sotiropoulos, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, began by discussing transformative learning experiences. He reported that VCU's goal is to scale access and opportunities so that every student has a transformative experience. Strategies designed to address barriers will create required curriculum that aids social mobility for our diverse student population. As of Spring 2022 71.4% of graduates participated in a transformative experience. The goal is by 2026 100% will. He provided examples of transformative experiences to the board. Provost Sotiropoulos continued by explaining "reversed internships" are also important.

This means working with major employers in greater Richmond area to identify education and up-skilling needs of their workforce for VCU develop credentials and provide problem-based learning experiences where the company/organization identifies problems that need to be addressed and/or a team of VCU students, across various majors, led by a faculty member to propose solution to problem. He continued by describing the partnership with Bank of America in which from the program already six students are employed.

The board of visitors then heard from students, Ana Paula Rodriguez Vicuna, Senior in Chemical Engineering and Tyrell Simmons, Senior in Mechanical Engineering about their transformative learning experiences. The board members applauded the students for the wonderful work they are doing.

A copy of Provost Sotiropoulos's presentation is attached hereto as *Attachment A* and is made a part hereof.

### **GOVERNING BOARD AND CABINET COLLABORATION: CONSEQUENTIAL LEADERSHIP FOR ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT SUCCESS**

Dr. Kemal Atkins, Senior Consultant, AGB discussed the collaboration among governing boards and cabinet specifically around enrollment and student success. He talked about the current landscape of enrollment and the continued decline. For boards the top strategic issues are ensuring institutional vitality, improving outcomes for students, strengthening civic education and democracy, grooming new higher education leaders, and managing serious risks.

The board members discussed opportunities such as collaboration with other universities on programs/degrees, adult learners, certificates/badges for stackable degrees, highlight no tuition increase, and leverage the VCU brand.

A copy of Dr. Atkin's presentation is attached hereto as *Attachment B* and is made a part hereof.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

Rector Dendy moved that the Board of Visitors of Virginia Commonwealth University convene a closed session under Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act for the discussion of personnel matters, more specifically relating to the performance evaluation of various staff members; and Section 2.2-3711 (A)(8), for consultation with legal counsel pertaining to specific matters requiring legal advice by counsel.

The motion was seconded and was approved unanimously.

Following the closed session, the public was invited to return to the meeting. Rector Dendy called the meeting to order. On a motion duly made and seconded the following resolution of certification was approved by a roll call vote:

### **Resolution of Certification**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Visitors of Virginia Commonwealth University certifies that, to the best of each member’s knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under this chapter were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed session was convened were heard, discussed or considered by the Board.

| <u>Vote</u>                              | <u>Ayes</u> | <u>Nays</u> |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| Mr. H. Benson Dendy III, <i>Rector</i>   | X           |             |
| Ms. Carolina Espinal, <i>Vice Rector</i> | X           |             |
| Mr. Anthony Bedell                       | X           |             |
| Mr. Peter Farrell                        | X           |             |
| Ms. Ellen Fitzsimmons                    | X           |             |
| Mr. Todd P. Haymore                      | X           |             |
| Dr. Dale Jones                           | X           |             |
| Ambassador Carmen Lomellin               | X           |             |
| Mr. Keith T. Parker                      | X           |             |
| Dr. Tonya Parris-Wilkins                 | X           |             |
| Dr. Clifton Peay                         | X           |             |
| Ms. Alexis Swann                         | X           |             |

Mr. Florance, Mr. McCoy, Rev. Nelson, and Dr. Talegaonkar were not present for the roll call. All members present responding affirmatively, the resolution of certification was adopted.

**HIGHER EDUCATION FUTURE: INSTITUTIONS LIKE ASU & VCU**

Dr. Michael Crow, Arizona State University President, talked about the work that ASU has done over the years to increase online education. Board members asked Dr. Crow about what resistance did he face with this culture change, who has ASU brought in to partner with this, and what approach was taken with strategic communications. The Board commended President Crow for his work and thanked him for participating the discussion.

**UNIVERSITY PRIORITY: ENROLLMENT**

Discussion focused around strategies to increase enrollment. Suggestions included direct communications with students, alumni, parents, high school guidance counselors, social media. Talking about the experience at VCU with others is important. Programs that are doing well need to be expanded and it is important to efficiently make changes.

The board primarily focused on online education. VCU is currently behind in online and the board is looking to leadership to make the changes to get ahead. Culturally it feels like VCU is not there with online and out-of-state. Naturally change is unsettling, but if it is not received well culturally. Leadership explained the barriers they have faced with SCHEV as the timing is challenging. The board members said that they would support International enrollment will be addressed at the March 2023 meeting.

The board recognized the great job that senior leadership is doing and acknowledged there is a level of assurance in the urgency and that they see that senior leadership hears the message loud and clear.

The board suggested leadership move quickly and to look at ASU's model. There is a real urgency to increasing the numbers. The board support things that may cause pushback and any policy and procedure changes that need to be made. The board also requested strengthening advisor roles. There needs to be a focus on general education, movement and number of resources, online, electronics, culture change, and looking at areas of innovation and growth.

A copy of the presentation is attached hereto as *Attachment C* and is made a part hereof.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Rector Dendy adjourned the meeting at 2:57 p.m.