

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY BOARD OF VISITORS ANNUAL RETREAT October 24, 2024

DRAFT MINUTES

VCU BOARD OF VISITORS MEMBERS PRESENT

Hon. Todd Haymore, Rector

Mr. Andy Florance, Vice Rector

Mr. Anthony Bedell, arrived at 9 a.m., exited at 2 p.m.

Ms. Rooz Dadabhoy

Mr. Steven DeLuca

Dr. Siobhan Dunnavant

Hon. Peter Farrell

Ms. Ellen Fitzsimmons, exited at 1:15 p.m.

Dr. V. Dale Jones

Dr. Kenneth Lipstock

Rev. Tyrone Nelson, arrived at 9:30, exited at noon

Dr. Clifton Peay

Mr. Randy Reynolds

Mr. C.J. Sailor

Mr. P2 Sandhu

VCU BOARD OF VISITORS MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Ed McCoy

OTHERS PRESENT

Dr. Michael Rao, President

Dr. Paul Friga, Strategy Development Practice Leader and Senior Consultant, Association of Governing Boards (AGB)

Members of the President's Cabinet

Ms. Chelsea Gray, Executive Director of Board and Executive Operations

Ms. Stephanie Hamlett, University Counsel

Staff and students from VCU

Members of the media

CALL TO ORDER

Rector Todd Haymore called the meeting to order at 8:06 a.m. at 1000 Westover at Maymont, located at 1000 Westover Road, Richmond, Virginia. The public was able to view the meeting via livestream at https://mssvideo.vcu.edu/BOV.

RECTOR'S REMARKS

Rector Haymore began by welcoming everyone and thanking those who attended the VCU Board of Visitors/VCUHS Board of Directors reunion event the evening prior. He explained that the focus at the meeting would be on strategic goals. He continued by reviewing the agenda and reminding the board members that the items were specifically expressed as areas of interest by members in discussions he had with individual board members.

Rector Haymore then mentioned the board would discuss a topic that's increasingly at the forefront of higher education: the balance between free speech and maintaining a safe, welcoming campus. He acknowledged it is a lively and sometimes challenging conversation, but it's a critical one everyone must have to ensure VCU stays a place where ideas are exchanged freely and respectfully.

He closed by encouraging others to ask questions and engage in robust dialogue to ensure that the conversations are productive. And finally, he spoke enthusiastically about the renewal of Dr. Rao's contract, and the importance of continuing the progress and good work that has been led by the president and his leadership team.

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

President Rao began by thanking Rector Haymore for his strategic abilities, focus, and representation of the board as well as his efforts to connect with board members. He continued by recognizing that the retreat is designed to reinforce and support roles in governance, priorities, and policy-making for a major national research university and an academic medical center, emphasizing VCU's mission as a public research university that serves a diverse student population that reflects America.

President Rao continued by talking about VCU's research and academic pursuits, covering the integration of research into the undergraduate experience and emphasizing the value of research on advancing knowledge and saving lives. Importantly, he noted that patients who receive care at academic medical centers, like VCU Health, have a 20% higher survival rate than patients seen at non-teaching hospitals. He then remarked about the significant economic impact that VCU has had on the city of Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia, noting that most VCU students come from within the Commonwealth and most stay in Virginia after graduation.

He continued by discussing the university's priority of having research cut across more disciplines. VCU is recognized as one of Virginia's major research universities and ranks among the top 50 public research universities by the National Science Foundation.

He concluded by proudly announcing VCU's record-breaking research funding, which reached \$506 million, an 86% increase over six years, noting that the success is attributed to the faculty. He expressed

gratitude to key university leaders including Dr. Srirama Rao, Vice President for Research and Innovation, and emphasized the importance of having the right resources aligned to conduct impactful research.

Looking ahead, Dr. Rao spoke enthusiastically about 2025, noting that it is on track to be the best year yet for VCU.

BOARD GOVERNANCE & BEST PRACTICES

Dr. Paul Friga began by introducing himself as a professor of strategy, with over 30 years of experience working with institutions of higher education, and consulting with organizations like McKinsey and PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and currently the Association of Governing Boards (AGB). Dr. Friga recognized VCU's board excellence and how it has impacted VCU achieving its goal of having an impact and has been used as a model for other institutions that he consults with to improve their strategy.

Dr. Friga noted the following areas to guide the discussion - clarifying the role of the board, identifying challenges for boards, and generating ideas to advance the mission of the university - and encouraged members to ask questions and participate in the discussion with the goal of generating ideas for improvement.

He began by sharing that the board's role is to maintain a duty of care and loyalty to the institution. The board should have input for the vision of the university, provide guidance and prioritize monitoring the reputation of VCU. He mentioned the board's fiduciary responsibility to the Commonwealth, which includes weighing important decisions related to budget and tuition-setting, along with tracking student success and employee satisfaction. He also emphasized the importance of providing leadership oversight, and directed members to be advocates for, and supporters of, the institution.

Dr. Friga introduced AGB's *Principles of Trusteeship* that emphasize leading by example, understanding governance, and thinking strategically. He clarified that leading by example involves championing justice, equity, and inclusion, and maintaining impeccable integrity; that understanding governance means knowing the difference between the board's role and management's role and being an ambassador for the institution; and finally, that thinking strategically involves asking insightful questions, focusing on long-term sustainability, and addressing challenges in higher education. He contrasted VCU's growth and investment with other institutions' cutting and restructuring, noting the importance of strategic thinking and careful planning to navigate challenges.

He encouraged members to continually seek opportunities to improve, even though VCU is doing well. He advised members to prepare in advance for meetings and show up ready for discussion - emphasizing the importance of leaving operational decisions to university leadership. He recommended that members bring their personal and professional talents to their roles as board members, to strategically approach issues and stay informed of trends. Dr. Friga noted that board members are clearly reminded of their roles and informed and engaged on the right issues. He emphasized the importance of leading by example and maintaining a healthy dynamic among members, and highlighted AGB's best practices as well as the board orientation information that is made available to new members through the university as well as the Commonwealth. He noted that institutions do not get to "choose" their board members, so it is important to have team players and distributed influence in order to maintain a healthy board dynamic. He noted that collective wisdom and collaboration are strengths of healthy boards - not individual convictions. Dr.

Friga also encouraged other healthy versus unhealthy practices of boards, such as engaged listening rather than dominant speaking; and maintaining transparency over back-channel sabotage and leaks. He encouraged members to focus on mutual accountability and continuous innovation.

He highlighted the risks of not adequately practicing governance, which include strategic failures like not listening to subject matter experts, paralyzing the administration, stagnation, accusations of political/micromanaging, reputational impact, erosion of trust between members, members having tunnel vision and blind spots.

Moving forward, board members suggested improving and prioritizing board best practices to ensure that VCU remains a desirable place for leaders to consider, i.e. create and sustain an attractive environment for current and future presidents. Members embraced the idea of focusing their time as members on strategies that tie to the mission and goals rather than focusing on the operational aspects. Importantly, members suggested that more of the time during meetings could be spent on strategic discussions rather than presentations; also, limiting the number of topics that the board focuses on at any given time. They also expressed a desire to prioritize agenda management - making sure that meetings are planned based on what members want to hear about at subsequent meetings.

Board members expressed interest in discussing more board member succession planning. Dr. Friga then recommended an annual board self-review that includes peer feedback, that assesses how well the board is functioning. This tool includes a deeper dive every three years so that decisions can be made regarding making changes to the structure of the meetings.

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

BOARD PRIORITY: CULTIVATING COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT VCU'S CAMPUS

Ms. Karen Helderman, Chief of Staff, began by explaining the intent of the panel discussion was to provide members with updates about the multifaceted work that is being conducted across campus to address culture and climate related issues. She informed the board that a work group has been convened to review the Columbia University recommendations related to climate and culture on campus that was conducted in 2024. Ms. Helderman reminded members that VCU has been committed to ensuring a safe climate and culture on campus - long before 2023.

Dr. Cleo Magwaro, Associate Vice President for Equity and Access Services, provided an overview of the first amendment. She then posed a number of scenarios to members, as an exercise to demonstrate what kinds of instances constitute violations of the first amendment, and what kinds of instances would not classify as free speech violations on college campuses. She asked questions to engage members in a dialogue about free speech, hate crimes, non-discrimination, expression and censorship, and outlined VCU's policies to ensure safety as well as compliance with local, state and federal law.

Next, Ms. Helderman spoke about the *Use of Space* policy that was updated at the start of the semester. She spoke about the policy setting and revision process that began about a year and a half ago. She outlined interim policies versus permanent policies. She explained the process for all policies includes

opportunities for public comment and consideration as well as the shared governance process of reviewing, approving and implementing updated policies.

Drs. Aaron Hart, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Andrew Arroyo, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, spoke next about the *The Guidelines for Addressing Disruptions to Educational and Other University Operations Document*. Dr. Arroyo explained that the guidelines were intended to be one piece of a larger effort to ensure that the university is covered in the event that a disruption occurs. To date, the guidelines have not been needed but Dr. Hart reiterated that the document is evidence of VCU's intent to be proactive rather than reactive. Dr. Hart noted that the Student Affairs staff will work directly with students to ensure that they are physically present if incidents occur. It was noted that VCU has been recognized as a leader in proactively planning and preparing for incidents, and VCU is regarded well among its peers in the Commonwealth for its preparedness. Board members engaged in discussion about non-students disrupting campus activities and asked questions about those who are invited to campus by student organizations, and how those organizations are funded.

Panel members explained that VCU's Student Code of Conduct, along with state and federal laws, address behavior on campus. The university worked collaboratively with VCUPD, local police, Capitol police, state police and the Commonwealth's Attorney to address any behavior from the incidents that occurred in the spring. It was noted that VCU is responsive to complaints that are received.

Next, Dr. Gabe Willis, Associate Vice President and Dean of Student Advocacy, discussed how VCU convened a work group that included over 40 students, faculty, staff and students to dissect and strengthen the *Reservation and Space Policy* into the interim *Campus Expression and Space Reservation* policy. The interim policy was distributed via email to over 28,000 students. Importantly, to date, less than 5 complaints were received about the interim policy. Dr. Willis explained the assignment of the work group was to ensure that structures were in place to support a campus that had robust free speech. The policy is still undergoing the shared governance process as part of its review, which will include a comment period. The group will continue to meet biweekly to proactively discuss and anticipate issues that may impact the policy moving forward. Board members and President Rao commended the student affairs team for the good, hard work they have done to coordinate and address policies and being empathetic throughout these discussions.

The panel continued with Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Fotis Sotiropoulos and Vice President for Inclusive Excellence and Chief Diversity Officer Faye Belgrave, who spoke about the Provost's lecture series and training that the Division of Inclusive Excellence has brought to campus to discuss campus climate. Provost Sotiropoulos shared that the purpose of the Provost's lecture series is to showcase VCU's faculty, to attract world-class research and scholarly leaders, and to use moments of global significance to encourage thoughtful and respectful dialogue to advance thinking and teaching. In response to a question, Dr. Sotiropoulos discussed the recent lecture focusing on Courageous Conversations that provided an avenue for folks to have challenging discussions in a productive manner. He stated that the transformative learning initiative that is underway at VCU is designed to create opportunities for students to form teams across multiple disciplines and perspectives to examine problems, and develop the ability to talk to each other. Members provided suggestions on how to promote the university as a place that welcomes and celebrates a broad range of diversity.

Dr. Belgrave stated that the university's approach has been to be inclusive and welcoming to all VCU students, faculty, staff and patients. She spoke about the trainings on inclusion and accessibility that are offered by the Division of Inclusive Excellence. She explained the process for identifying potential speakers. Dr. Belgrave emphasized that the Division of Inclusive Excellence provides training, not curriculum. She emphasized the importance of bringing people together from different political and ideological backgrounds for civil discussion, and also noted that these opportunities are not just happening through Inclusive Excellence, but are also happening in other units. She mentioned six ambassador students will be receiving training and certification to lead crucial conversations with other students.

In response to a board member comment, Dr. Rao affirmed that VCU will not lose its diversity and abandon its commitment to embracing and growing its diversity. Dr. Belgrave noted that for the seventh year in a row, VCU was recognized with a Diversity Champion Award, which champions diversity among universities.

Ms. Helderman explained the Helpline, the mechanism for reporting misconduct and concerns through the Integrity and Compliance Office (ICO). She discussed how reports are received, evaluated and routed for handling. She informed members that data is shared with the Board through the Audit, Integrity and Compliance Committee. Next, Dr. Magwaro spoke about the kinds of reports that are routed to the Equity and Access teams for handling and provided an overview of the options and resources that are provided to reporters for handling issues.

Dr. Chuck Klink, Associate Vice President for Holistic Well-Being, provided a brief overview of VCU's dedicated Threat Assessment Team and violence prevention committee as mandated by Virginia Code 23.1-805. The violence prevention committee focuses on education and outreach, meeting several times each semester, while the threat assessment team meets weekly to review cases. The threat assessment committee has been co-chaired by Dr. Klink and VCU Chief of Police John Venuti for over 14 years and includes members from various departments like the police department, student affairs, human resources, and legal counsel. The committee collaborates with local mental health agencies, law enforcement, and occasionally consults with the FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit.

Lastly, Dr. Meredith Weiss, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration and CFO provided the group with an overview of the Incident Coordination Team. Dr. Weiss outlined the role of the team, which is responsible for managing various incidents like civil unrest, active threats, power outages, and IT outages. This team makes crucial decisions and handles communications during these situations. The team is co-chaired by Dr. Weiss and VCU Chief of Police John Venuti, and is composed of representatives from diverse departments, including academic affairs, athletics, human resources, and others, to ensure comprehensive coordination. In significant incidents, the team convenes in a command center equipped with advanced technology to gather and analyze information from various sources for informed decision-making.

BOARD PRIORITY: STUDENT SUCCESS - BOV SCHOLARSHIP

Mr. Xavier Lewis and Ms. Nyomi Shah were recognized by Rector Haymore and asked to discuss their

experiences as recipients of the 2024 BOV Scholarship. Members of the board had an opportunity to hear from both Mr. Lewis and Ms. Niyomi Shah about their accomplishments as a result of the scholarship.

Mr. Lewis shared his experience providing leadership to the Men of Color initiative. Board members expressed interest in learning more about the initiative and providing their insights. Ms. Shah shared her aspiration for a career in medicine, focusing on healthcare access and community service. Both recipients shared the opportunities the scholarship has provided then for a more transformational learning experience.

Mr. Jay Davenport, Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations, discussed the challenge of selecting recipients for full-tuition scholarships from a pool of outstanding students. He emphasized the need to increase the number of scholarships as part of the upcoming comprehensive campaign launching in September 2025. He highlighted the unique and high participation rate of the board members in supporting the institution financially. Mr. Davenport encouraged board members to consider donating to the scholarship fund, with an emphasis on full-tuition scholarships or smaller, recurring donations. The goal is to document available funds for the selection committee and demonstrate the board's commitment to the community, thus inspiring others to contribute. He concluded his report by recognizing and expressing gratitude to BOV member Mr. Andy Florance, for his significant donation which has allowed for more flexible awarding of scholarships.

BOARD PRIORITY: VCU ENTERPRISE BRAND

Mr. Grant Heston, Vice President for Enterprise Marketing and Communication, led a discussion with the members focused on the importance of telling VCU's story and adapting to the changing media landscape. He reflected on how VCU has evolved and emphasized the need to effectively communicate VCU's impact to various audiences, from students and parents to policymakers and the general community, particularly through student-focused messages.

He highlighted the use of local and national media, social media, and website optimization to reach a broader audience. Artificial intelligence has also been used in marketing efforts for creative brainstorming, testing ideas, and creating campaign content. He emphasized the importance of measuring VCU's brand and student attraction metrics.

Members discussed VCU's significant economic impact on the local and state economy, by generating substantial revenue for the city of Richmond, and the importance of effectively communicating this impact to various stakeholders, such as employers and government officials. The board emphasized the importance of correcting misconceptions about VCU's role and recommended using visual storytelling to showcase VCU's contributions

Mr. Heston noted that over the past two years, efforts have led to a significant increase in VCU's brand awareness, reaching 72% in 18 months. He then highlighted three consecutive years of record growth in undergraduate applications after three years of decline. Mr. Heston continued by noting VCU's overall *US News and World Report* ranking is 136, with a reputation rank of 117. Globally, VCU is in the top 20% of universities.

He debuted a new campaign called "Uncommon Heroes" which focuses on academic excellence, and features faculty members who are making significant contributions to research and healthcare. The campaign includes ads and videos to tell these stories more effectively.

Mr. Heston concluded by emphasizing the importance of using visual storytelling and praised the team's efforts in improving VCU's communication and branding strategies. He expressed excitement about the ongoing and future initiatives aimed at enhancing VCU's reputation and impact.

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

BOARD PRIORITY: STUDENT SUCCESS - ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The presentation was led by Dr. Fotis Sotiropoulos and Chief Information Officer Alex Henson, aimed to provide an overview of artificial intelligence (AI), and how VCU is transforming its academic enterprise to incorporate AI in learning and research. Dr. Sotiropoulos introduced the discussion by reminding members that AI is a top priority for the board. He mentioned that AI could replace a significant percentage of jobs, regardless of educational attainment, so the message to students needs to be to embrace AI tools to enhance productivity, rather than fear job displacement.

Mr. Henson emphasized the importance of a cautious and deliberate approach to adopting AI technologies at VCU. He highlighted the current stage of generative AI and the need to navigate toward productivity. To manage the complexities and risks associated with AI, VCU aligned its policies and standards to ensure privacy, and maintain transparency. He added that VCU has created a position that will focus on facilitating the development of AI use cases to ensure policy and infrastructure alignment. He stated that VCU has taken a cautious approach to adopting AI technologies including practices that mitigate the risk of data being accessed by others, ensure data security and privacy. Mr. Henson explained that VCU uses Microsoft Copilot and OpenAI tools in a secure environment where data sources and learning feedback are controlled - ensuring that AI tools are used effectively and securely within the university.

Provost Sotiropoulos explained that at VCU, the focus is on preparing students for the future by restructuring education to emphasize AI literacy, experiential learning, and advancing research. Some key initiatives at VCU include infusing AI into the entire curriculum, training faculty to use AI in teaching and learning, and leveraging AI to create new knowledge and advance cutting-edge science through experiential learning opportunities. He emphasized that VCU aims to ensure students develop the skills to creatively coexist with powerful algorithms, emphasizing the importance of understanding AI at a basic level for all students.

He explained the "AI pyramid" that VCU has developed to structure its AI-related academic offerings. At the top are specialized degrees in engineering, data science, and computer science, including a new Bachelor of Arts in computer science for non-specialists. At the base, the pyramid provides opportunities for all VCU students to become AI literate, with general education courses like ethics of AI and innovative minors in practical AI and the metaverse. He mentioned the new *Academy for Interdisciplinary Innovation*, which focuses on quickly designing interdisciplinary degrees, including bachelors, masters, and minors. He also outlined VCU's comprehensive approach to integrating AI into education and research, highlighting transformative learning that emphasizes internships, project-based learning, and

research engagement to develop soft skills for interacting with advanced technologies, mentioning the DaVinci Center.

Provost Sotiropulos reiterated that the rapid development and faculty collaboration has led to over 3,000 students enrolling in AI courses within one year. He emphasized that VCU is positioning itself as a pioneer in AI education in the Commonwealth.

Provost Sotiropoulos remarked that the VCU Common Book for 2025, "The Coming Wave" by Mustafa Suleyman, explores the potential ethical dangers of AI and its societal impacts, and discussed the extensive work being done by the Provost's office to support faculty in integrating AI into their courses and highlighted the ongoing efforts to advance AI research. The board applauded the Provost and his team's continued efforts

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

CLOSED SESSION

Rector Haymore made the the motion, 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 relating to the performance evaluation and compensation of the Senior Vice President of Health Sciences and other employees and for discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective health sciences candidates for employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body; and under Section 2.2-3711(A)(23), to discuss operational strategies related to the chief executive officer, where disclosure of such strategies would adversely affect the competitive position of the authority, specifically, the finance and operating trends of the authority. The motion was seconded and was approved unanimously.

Following the closed session, the public was invited to return to the meeting. Rector Haymore 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. Todd Haymore, Rector	X	

Mr. Andy Florance, Vice Rector	X
Ms. Rooz Dadabhoy	X
Mr. Steven DeLuca	X
Dr. Siobhan Dunnavant	X
Hon. Peter Farrell	X
Dr. Dale Jones	X
Dr. Ken Lipstock	X
Mr. Randy Reynolds	X
Dr. Clifton Peay	X
Mr. C.J. Sailor	X
Mr. P2 Sandhu	X

Mr. Anthony Bedell, Ms. Ellen Fitzsimmons, and Rev. Tyrone Nelson were absent from the vote. All members present responding affirmatively, the resolution of certification was adopted.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Rector Haymore adjourned the meeting at 3:18 p.m.





ATTACHMENT A

Best Practices in Governance



Brought to you by: AGB Consulting

October 24, 2024

It is an honor to join you today!



Paul N. Friga, Ph.D.

- AGB Sr. Consultant–Strategy and MAP;
- Clinical Professor of Strategy UNC Chapel Hill
- Former Chief Strategy Officer, HelioCampus
- Leading higher education thought leader with over 22 articles in the Chronicle of Higher Ed and InsideHigherEd and numerous webinars and blogs over the past 24 months; significant consulting projects
- Former consultant McKinsey & PwC
- Former Trustee Saint Francis University, Loretto, PA
- Former Board Chair Saints Francis & Clare Church, Greenwood, Indiana
- Founded ABC Insights, a leading higher ed benchmarking consortium
- Created NACUBO Master Class in Financial Transformation for CFOs
- Author of The McKinsey Mind and The McKinsey Engagement

About

Paul is one of the foremost higher education thought leaders and strategists. With 20 years of experience as a professor, researcher and consultant at UNC CH and Indiana University, Paul understands how public education really works and how it should change. His former experience as a consultant with PwC (earned CPA and CMA designations as) and McKinsey (including projects in public higher education) round out additional relevant experience. He has also served as a Trustee at Saint Francis University and the Board Chair at Saints Francis and Clare Church in Greenwood, Indiana. He has an MBA and Ph.D. from UNC Chapel Hill.

For the past 12 years, Paul has been researching best practices strategic resource allocation in higher education, presenting at international conferences, and cofounded ABC Insights, a premier higher education benchmarking consortium that was acquired by HelioCampus. Over the past 24 months, Paul has authored 22 articles in the Chronicle of Higher Education and InsideHigherEd on strategies for change in higher education and positioning universities for the long-term (over 500K views/downloads). He has also conducted many strategic planning projects and board retreats for universities, not-for-profit entities (including the Marines), and corporations (including The Biltmore Estate). He has written two best-selling books on team problem-solving (*The McKinsey Mind* and *The McKinsey Engagement*) and is an award-winning teacher of strategy and consulting for undergrads, MBAs, and Executives. He delivers numerous webinars and conference presentation and is AGB's lead on Strategy Development.

Your reputation precedes you!



JAN. 26, 2022

Board of Visitors recognized for leadership in justice, diversity, equity and inclusion

JUNE 26, 2024

VCU ranked among top 20% of global universities

Research performance and reputation secure high placement among 2,250 schools rated by U.S. News & World Report.



Today's Agenda



- 1. What is Your Role?
 - 2. Challenges for Boards
- **3.**) Ideas Moving Forward

Today's Agenda



- 1. What is Your Role?
 - 2. Challenges for Boards
- 3.) Ideas Moving Forward

What is your role (from memory)?



What is your role?

The Board of Visitors at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) serves as the primary governing body responsible for oversight and strategic decision-making at the university. Its duties include:

- 1. Strategic and Operational Oversight: The board ensures VCU aligns with its mission and state objectives by shaping policies and guiding the university's strategic direction.
- 2. Financial Governance: It manages financial matters, including approving budgets, tuition, and fees, while ensuring transparency and accountability.
- 3. Executive Leadership: The board appoints and evaluates the university president, who acts as the chief executive officer.
- 4. Academic and Policy Governance: Members oversee academic policies and new program approvals, ensuring high academic standards and student success initiatives.
- 5. Representation and Advocacy: As public trustees, they advocate for the university with government stakeholders and engage in community and institutional outreach.

The Board of Visitors consists of 16 voting members appointed by the Governor of Virginia, with additional non-voting advisory representatives from the student, faculty, and staff communities. Members serve four-year terms, contributing to university operation development, and long-term policy evolution.

AGB Guidance for the board role and responsibilities

"The Governing Board's Basic Responsibilities" from Effective Governing Boards

Establish, disseminate, and keep current the institution's mission

Select a chief executive to lead the institution

Support and periodically assess the performance of the chief executive and establish and review the chief executive's compensation

Charge the chief executive with the task of leading a strategic planning process, participate in that process, approve the strategic plan, and monitor its progress

Ensure the institution's fiscal integrity, preserve and protect its assets for posterity, and engage directly in fundraising and philanthropy

Ensure the educational quality of the institution

Preserve and protect institutional autonomy and academic freedom

Ensure that institutional policies and procedures are current and properly implemented

In concert with senior administration, engage regularly with the institution's major constituencies

Conduct the board's business in an exemplary fashion and with appropriate transparency; ensure the currency of board governance policies and practices, and periodically assess the performance of the board, its committees, and its members

Principles of Trusteeship - AGB





And a further drill down

	Fiduciary	Team Member	Individual
Understanding Governance			
Embrace the full scope of your responsibilities as a board member.	Fulfill your fiduciary responsibilities.	Recognize that governance is a collective endeavor.	Prepare in advance, show up fully present, and participate productively.
2. Respect the difference between the board's role and the administration's role.	Honor the academic norm of shared governance, which includes the president, administration, and faculty.	Be humble and respect your partners in governance and leadership.	Provide advice and counsel but leave operational decisions to the administration.
3. Be an ambassador for your institution and higher education.	Advocate on behalf of your institution and higher education.	Represent the institution proudly and recognize who speaks for the board and for the institution.	Engage actively and appropriately.
Lead by Example			
4 Conduct yourself with impeccable integrity.	Act in the institution's best interests, putting them ahead of your personal preferences and political allegiances.	Preemptively disclose conflicts— actual and perceived—and dualities of interest.	Uphold the highest ethical standards.
5. Think independently and act collectively.	Constructively challenge and support the president, administration, and committees.	Speak up on important issues, even if they are uncomfortable or unpopular.	Express your concerns diplomatically to the appropriate person(s) at an appropriate time.
6. Champion justice, equity, and inclusion.	Protect and promote justice and equity throughout the enterprise.	Seek diversity and model inclusion on the board.	Be mindful of how your experience shapes your assumptions.
Think Strategically			
7. Learn about your institution's mission, constituents, culture, and context.	Shape your institution's vision and strategy based on its unique purpose and constituents.	Understand the present state of the enterprise and focus on its future needs.	Become a student of higher education.
8. Focus on what matters most to long-term sustainability.	Make decisions based on the strategy and vitality of the entire enterprise.	Help define what constitutes success for your institution.	Focus your personal and professional talents on significant strategic issues.
9. Ask insightful questions and listen with an open mind.	Pose the right questions, rather than prescribe answers.	Listen actively and seek to understand.	Bring genuine curiosity and an open mind to board service.

FOCUS on Fiduciary Responsibilities

Four fiduciary assets that boards should sustain and enhance:





Today's Agenda



1. What is Your Role?

2. Challenges for Boards

3.) Ideas Moving Forward

Understand and Embrace Core Principles of Trusteeship

Public institutions and systems: reinforce a strong culture of "institution first" and accountability

Public institutions often have less control over board composition. This means even more emphasis on understanding governance and leading by example!

Understand governance – know and respect board v. admin roles; understand and embrace trustee responsibilities; be a positive ambassador for the institution and Higher Ed

Lead by example – act with integrity and humility; act collectively; be a champion for positive outcomes and core principles of the institution.





Understand and Embrace Core Principles of Trusteeship

Focus the board on the "right" issues – requires board education and knowledge about the institution's context, outcomes, and higher ed trends

Board members must be engaged and understand and own their roles, responsibilities and what is *NOT* in their responsibility set

Trustees must increasingly think strategically – which enables the board to become more strategic. This requires professional development.

Think Strategically:

Learn about mission, vision, context, outcomes Understand ROI, critical data Understand key trends – how to orient to them and allocate resources Be open, creative, supportive Ask insightful questions and listen Ensure accountability for implementation but don't micromanage it.





Governance Assessment – What we See Across the Country

HEALTHY

- Team players
- Distributed influence
- Collective wisdom
- Engaged listeners
- Constructive dissent
- Transparency
- Confidentiality
- Diligence
- Mutual accountability
- Focus on the Institution's success
- Continually innovating

UNHEALTHY

- Huddle of quarterbacks
- Dominant inner circle
- Individual convictions
- Dominant speakers
- Back-channel sabotage
- Obfuscation
- Leaks
- Disengagement
- Collective impunity
- Factions
- Status Quo thinking



Challenge for Boards (1) – Focus on Strategic Issues



Board Independence and Leadership



Student Success, the Student Experience, and Inclusion on Campus



Leadership Succession and Support



Business Model Innovation and Digital Transformation



Key questions for board focus

Board Focus

- What issues or topics occupy most of the board's attention?
- Is the board focused on the right strategic issues?
- Is the board united and able to act collectively?
- Do trustees consistently think strategically?

Board Time

- Where is the bulk of the board's time spent in conversation?
- Are board meetings strategic in focus?
- Do committees focus on the right strategic issues?
- Does the board embrace a culture of professional development?

Board Contributions

- Is the board offering the right types of questions and strategic insights?
- Is the board supportive of leadership's goals and appreciative of the challenges of leadership?
- Is the board appropriately contributing financially to the health of the institution?
- Do trustees / does the board represent the institution well in public and at events?

What are the risks if we lose strategic focus?

- Boards that drift into operational matters rather than focusing on long-term strategy risk undermining their core responsibilities. RISKS:
- Loss of Strategic Direction: Over-involvement in operational details may cause the board to miss emerging challenges and opportunities critical to the university's long-term sustainability.
- **Inefficient Use of Time and Resources**: Time spent on operational issues reduces time for high-level discussions on mission alignment, financial health, and future growth.
- Weakened Executive Leadership: The president and administration may feel disempowered if the board focuses excessively on day-to-day matters rather than longterm goals.
- **Reactive, Short-Term Thinking:** Without strategic foresight, the institution may operate in a reactive mode, addressing issues only as they arise rather than anticipating and planning for them.

Challenge for Boards (2) – Governance vs. Management

- Shape strategy, set policy, support goals, hold executive accountable
- Share governance
- Accept recommendations from governance partners not unconditionally but respectfully
- Serve as thought partner, sounding board, pro bono advisor
- Don't manage, implement, or operate

A drill down on suggested roles/responsibilities

The President

- Develops the strategic vision of the institution and ensures that resources are available to support the plan.
- Assesses the risk of the college's competitive environment and any threats to its long-term sustainability.
- Recruits the leadership team to manage the day-to-day operations and motivate staff by creating an inclusive culture while engaging them in the decision-making process.
- Periodically reviews the business model to assess its ability to adapt to current and future threats and opportunities.
- Serves as the spokesperson on behalf of the institution
- Executes contracts, agreements, leases, and other financial obligations on behalf of the institution as authorized by the board.

The Board

- Approves the mission and purpose of the institution.
- Recruits, appoints, supports and evaluates the chief executive officer.
- Guards the fiscal integrity of the institution.
- Considers and approves the institution's budget.
- Oversees and participates in periodic strategic planning and monitors progress on its outcomes.
- Is aware of educational, research, and service programs and demands evidence that the institution's academic priorities are being met.
- In concert with the senior administration, regularly engages with the institution's major constituencies.
- Remains informed about institutional issues and the challenges confronting higher education.
- Serves, as necessary, as a final court of appeals on matters relating to governance and on institutional policies and practices in accordance with campus grievance procedures.

What are the risks if we move from governance to management?

- When boards interfere with management tasks, it can blur the lines between governance and administration, leading to significant risks. RISKS:
- Erosion of Trust between Board and Leadership: Intrusion into management could strain the relationship between the board and the president, creating conflict and undermining effective collaboration.
- **Inconsistent Decision-Making**: Board members involved in operational matters may make inconsistent decisions, leading to confusion and disrupting administrative processes.
- Demoralized Administration: Faculty and staff may feel disempowered or micromanaged, reducing morale and productivity.
- Governance Failure and Legal Risks: Overstepping governance boundaries can result in legal liabilities if board actions conflict with bylaws or regulatory requirement.
- Public Perception and Reputation Risk: Governance failures are often scrutinized publicly, which could harm VCU's reputation and affect public trust and fundraising efforts.

Challenge for Boards (3) – Inadequate Reflection

- Self Assessment
- Benchmarking
- External reviews

Strategic Governance – Diagnostic Questions

Board Focus

- What issues or topics occupy most of the board's attention?
- Is the board focused on the right strategic issues?
- Is the board united and able to act collectively?
- Do trustees consistently think strategically?

Board Time

- Where is the bulk of the board's time spent in conversation?
- Are board meetings strategic in focus?
- Do committees focus on the right strategic issues?
- Does the board embrace a culture of professional development?

Board Contributions

- Is the board offering the right types of questions and strategic insights?
- Is the board supportive of leadership's goals and appreciative of the challenges of leadership?
- Is the board appropriately contributing financially to the health of the institution?
- Do trustees / does the board represent the institution well in public and at events?



Common Pitfalls that Derail Strategic Thinking and Action

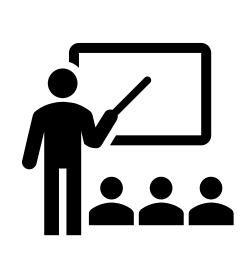
Dysfunction	In Practice	Solution(s)
1. Ignorance – Arrogance	Trustees who have expertise and success in one area are prone to pass judgment quickly in other areas both because things always look simpler from the outside and because passing judgment is a familiar go-to behavior for any "expert."	Self-awareness and becoming less ego-centric. Open minds / open ears — become a student of Higher Education and don't assume it is a "simpler" industry than the world of finance, business or law.
2. Bright shiny object syndrome	The board's belief that there is one yet-to-be discovered thing that will put the institution on the map and/or solve its financial problem. Can create inertia and offset accountability.	Ground reality and focus on unique value and differentiation that matters. Why should our institution exist and continue to exist – what need in the world does it solve? If we were to start today, would we still create X institution?
3. Nostalgia	Most board members in Higher Ed lack experience with Higher Ed, except as students.	Level set on current context and realities. Educate on current and anticipated trends; engage in professional development.
4. Misplaced accountability	Board's request more and more data in hopes of locating silver bullet solution to fix all problems.	Regular self-assessment. Institute term limits and intentional onboarding practices. Truthful answers to: Have our decisions as they relate to our primary board responsibilities, such as hiring/firing presidents and maintaining fiduciary oversight, had positive results?
5. Limited or bad information from both internal and external sources	Board's obtain info from the President or direct reports. These may not mirror reality. Data quality and integrity are critical, but often taken for granted.	360 comprehensive reviews of President (and cabinet). Read industry news – IHE, CHE, HigherEd Dive – and stay on top of emerging issues.



What are the risks if we have inadequate reflection?

- Without a structured self-assessment process, the board risks becoming stagnant and unresponsive to challenges. RISKS:
- Stagnant Governance: The board may fall into complacency, relying on outdated practices instead of evolving with institutional needs
- Blind Spots and Groupthink: Failure to reflect on board performance can lead to unchecked biases and groupthink, resulting in poor decision-making.
- Reduced Accountability: Lack of transparency and self-assessment may erode trust with stakeholders (students, faculty, alumni, government) who expect high standards from leadership.
- Missed Opportunities for Improvement: The absence of feedback loops could prevent the board from identifying areas for skill development or recruiting the right expertise to meet future challenges.

Today's Agenda



1. What is Your Role?

2. Challenges for Boards

3. Ideas Moving Forward

Guidance and Advice for Action

Focus board and individual work on adding value (reflection)

Balance board focus: 1/3 oversight; 1/3 insight; 1/3 foresight

Align committee and board agendas with institutional strategy rather than organizational charts.

Fulfill the board's "Duty of Inquiry" role --- asking the right strategic question, of the right person, at the right time.



What do you think?

Ideas for improvement moving forward

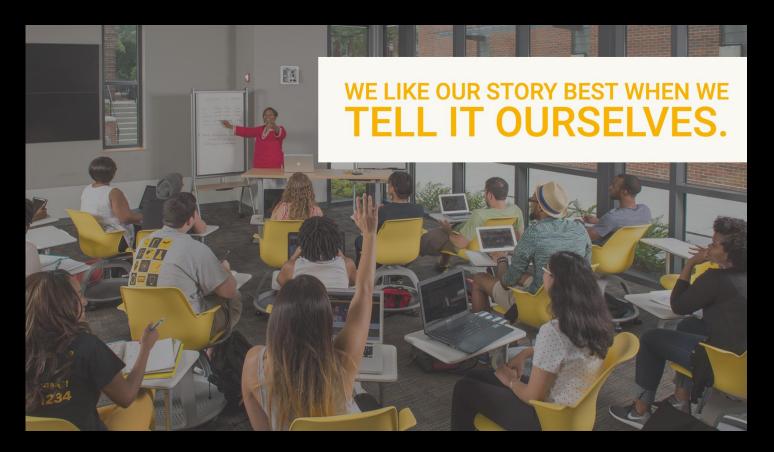


BRAND CONVERSATION

October 2024

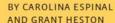














TO TELL OUR STORY

N HIGHER EDUCATION MARKETING, there is the phrase "a sea of sameness." The phrase refers to the strikingly similar (and familiar) way most people describe public research universities as beacons of "academic excellence," "student success," or "cutting-edge research and discovery." These are clichés institutions should avoid in pursuit of more authentic and distinctive narratives.

Let's face it—higher education has a differentiator problem.

One of our Virginia university colleagues, Aaron Basko, said so much in the Chronicle of Higher Education last year: "It seems that trying to be all things to all people is our fatal flaw. And everyone sees it but us."

That's why it's refreshing—and strategic and invigorating—to see an institution describe itself in more "untraditional" terms.

More than ever, universities must lean into distinction to describe what they do and why they matter. With so many institutions competing for a shrinking college-age population, brilliant faculty, and scarce funding, the way institutions talk about themselves makes all the difference.

Strategic communications and marketing experts know that the best brand positioning is distinctive and can strengthen organizational reputation in the near and longer term. They also understand the unique value of evolving stakeholder dynamics and diversity in elevating an organization's story. For Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), this has entailed reimagining an authentic way to show the world what the university stands for and investing in a framework for measuring our success. We say that the VCU story we like best is the one we tell ourselves.

Rather than take the path of least resistance—branding the university with familiar slogans and visuals—VCU chose the path of most resistance by building a platform for the inclusive culture and unique character that set the campus apart. Now 18 months later, the university has an "uncommon" way to tell its story that captures the essence of who VCU is and who it serves.

Every university's brand should signal its highest priorities and reflect strategic decision-making at the most executive level. The "Uncommon VCU" brand was created in partnership between the

Board of Visitors and senior university leadership to tell a story that combines the institution's formidable academic, research, and health care reputation with a clear commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), serving our communities and shattering the status quo.

"As a leader, the greatest gift you can give an institution is to be really bold about distinguishing what you do, how you do it, and the impact it has," said Michael Rao, president of VCU and VCU Health System. And that's what VCU has done, in a way that we believe will be "unstoppable." Here's how we did it and what we learned.

Restructure Branding for Transformation

Like so many institutions, VCU previously suffered an identity crisis. A decentralized structure meant every college and department, and even VCU's health system, had separate branding and marketing strategies.

The immediate past rector of the VCU Board of Visitors, Keith Parker, said it best: "Before this [branding effort], people weren't quite sure what VCU stood for. If you asked 50 people, you got 50 answers," he told us.

That's because VCU is many things to many people. The university is a Virginia leader in enrolling first-generation students, Pell Grant recipients, and students from underrepresented backgrounds. The National Science Foundation ranks VCU among the top 50 public research universities in the country.



Perceptions and Aspirations







Aided and unaided awareness 2021





Undergraduate applications

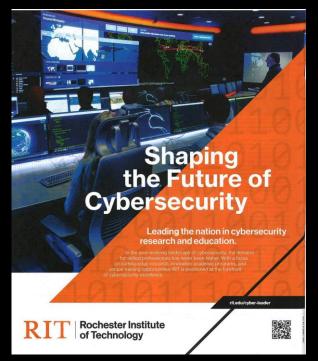


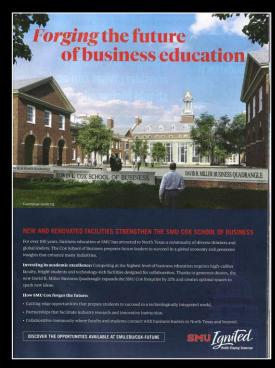


Authentic Inspirational Distinctive



















Richmond voted
set Place to Live In Virginia"

WEARETHE UNCOME















Where we are.



Aided and unaided awareness 2021





Aided and unaided awareness 2024





Undergraduate applications

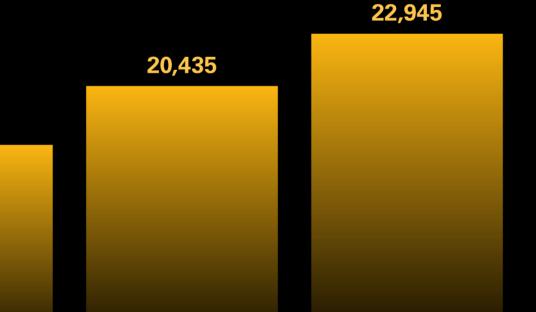




Undergraduate applications

19,378

2022

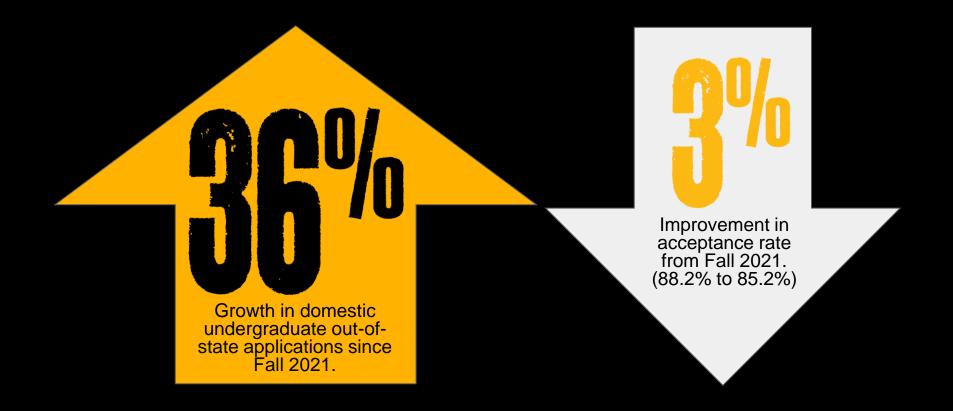


2023



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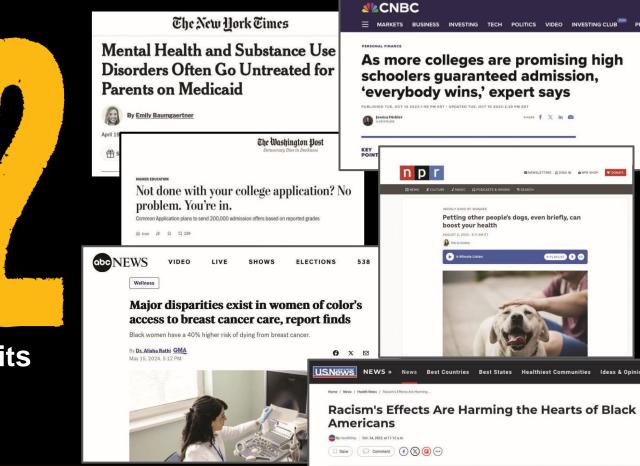
2024







top tier media hits

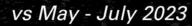


By Cara Murez HealthDay Reporter



May 2024 - July 2024 Social media growth













USNEWS REPORT

NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES
PUBLIC
2024



overall rank



overall reputation rank



Where we are going.



Quest goals

applications by Fall 2028

76-80% awareness by 2028

acceptance rate by Fall 2028

top-tier media placements by Fall 2025

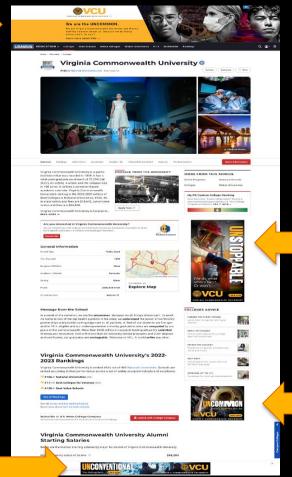


U.S. News Initiative





U.S. News Initiative





U.S. News Initiative

















New media platforms























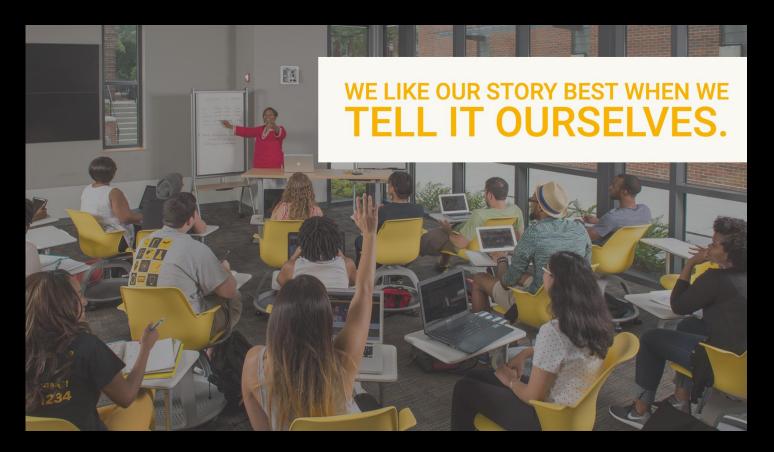














BRAND CONVERSATION

October 2024





EMC Leadership



















Web

Page views

Unique visitors

New vs. repeat visitors

Average time spent

Bounce rate

Traffic sources

Top pages

Web inquiries

Search terms

Traditional Advertising

Traditional reach and frequency

Impressions

Cost-per-click, cost-per-impression

Traffic to trackable URL

Ad awareness



Digital Advertising

Cost-per-click

Conversion rate

Cost to acquire lead

Cost per application

SEO tracking and costs

Social

Facebook (page views/likes,

interactions/posts, groups, most/fewest likes)

Twitter (Tweets/retweets, followers, mentions, profile

views, @Reply ratio, clicks per tweet, most/fewest

retweets)

Blog RSS feed subscribers

LinkedIn contacts

YouTube (views, top videos)

Instagram

Pinterest (referral traffic, links, pins, followers)

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Direct Response

Email campaigns (click throughs, open rates, unsubscribes, shares) Direct mail (hits to URLs, reply cards, call-to-action response)

Customer Service

Attendance at training/events Internal communications Awards

Admissions/Enrollment

Inquiries, applicants, deposits First choice Admit rate Yield rate

Surveys

Public sentiment Brand affiliation Awareness (aided and unaided)

Media Relations

Media placements
Type of placement
"Tone" of media coverage
Key terms and brand language

Brand and Reputation

Rankings
Brand strength metrics
Awareness
Event attendance







At VCU, we do what others can't. Or won't. Like Dr. Sanyal who is making a revolutionary impact on longevity — one liver at a time.



UNTIRING
MISSION



Liver = heart + brain life-saver

Learn more

Prevention, not just treatment.

Learn more

Global impact.

Learn more



Like



Comment



Share



Growth in FOIA





WE ARE THE **UNCOMMON**.



BOARD OF VISITORS RETREAT - OCTOBER 24, 2024

VCU in the AI Era: Empowering Innovation, Research, and Education for the Future

Dr. Fotis Sotiropoulos
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Alex Henson
Chief Information Officer



This discussion will cover:

- The definition of artificial intelligence (AI)
- VCU's holistic response to embracing changing technologies while mitigating risks
- VCU's commitment to transforming the academic and research enterprises to prepare faculty and students for the ethical use of new technologies, now and in the future

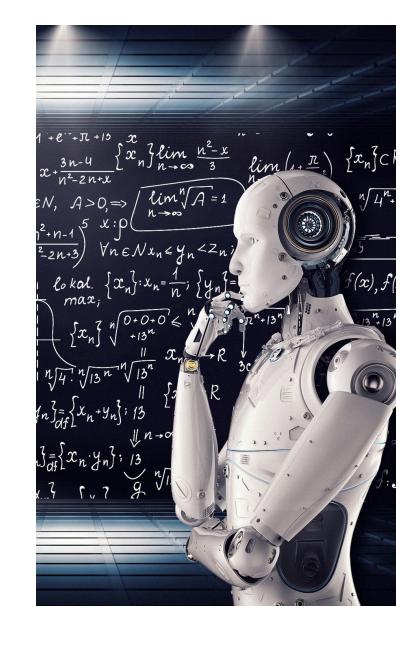


Defining Al



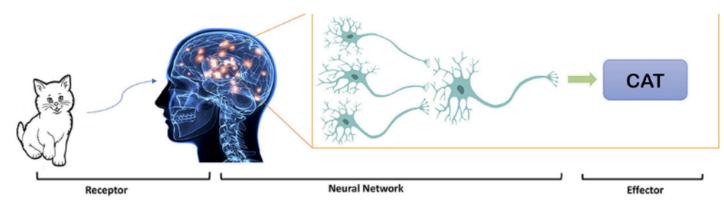
"Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the development of computer systems... designed to simulate human cognitive processes. They can learn from vast amounts of data, recognize patterns, and make decisions based on that information.

Microsoft CoPilot

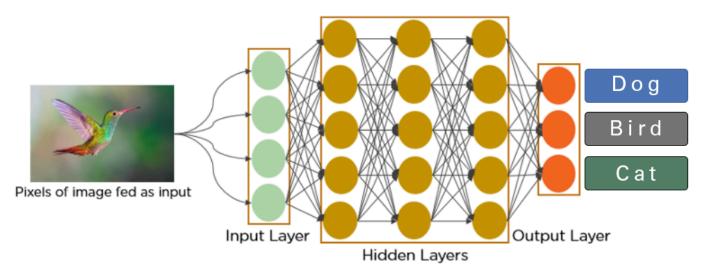




What is Al?



Biological neural network in the human brain



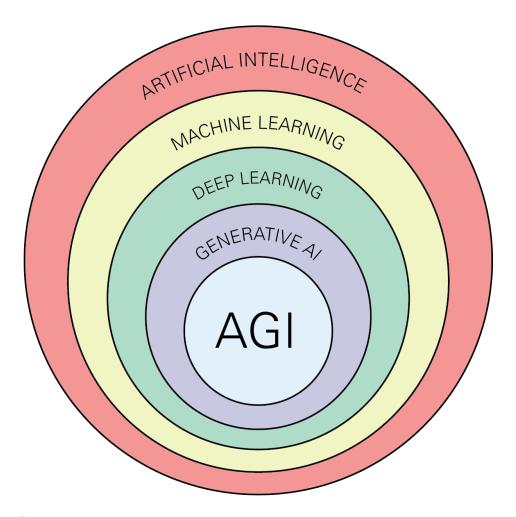
Artificial neural network in the computer

Artificial neural networks are computational algorithms trained with big data to "mimic" the function of biological neural networks in the human brain:

- Process information
- Detect patterns
- Come up with inferences
- Understand and generate language



Defining AI: A glossary of terms



Machine learning: Algorithms learn from labeled data and human-curated features to identify patterns, make predictions, or inform decisions without explicit programming.

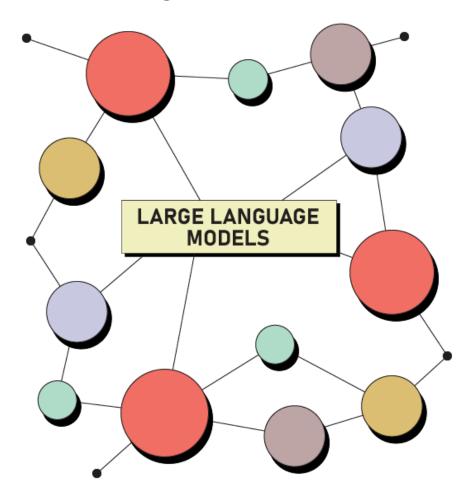
Deep Learning: Algorithms that autonomously learn complex, hierarchical patterns from vast datasets, excelling in tasks such as image recognition and natural language processing.

Generative AI (GenAI): Leverages models to synthesize new and coherent content—text, images, or other media—by learning the underlying structure of data and generating novel outputs.

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI): A form of AI that has not yet been developed. It can understand, learn, and perform any intellectual task that a human can, with full cognitive capabilities across diverse domains.



Defining Al



Large Language Models (LLMs) AI models trained on vast amounts of text data to understand, generate, and manipulate human language.

- They use deep learning techniques, particularly neural networks, to perform tasks such as translation, summarization, and questionanswering by predicting and generating contextually relevant text.
- Examples of currently available tools: OpenAI (GPT-4), Google (Gemini), Anthropic (Claude 3)



An example of Generative Al

An Al-Derived Podcast of The Environmental Studies Academic Program Review

Dr. Rodney Dyer Director and Professor Center for Environmental Studies

Listen here: https://www.rodneydyer.com/an-ai- <u>derived-podcast-of-our-academic-program-review-</u> in-environmental-studies-2/





The big picture



Gen Al impact on the global economy

1 Billion

The number of ChatGPT web visits in the first two months after its launch on November 30, 2022.

\$521 Billion*

from AI software, hardware and services forecasted for 2027, compared with \$180 billion in 2023.

\$15.7 Trillion*

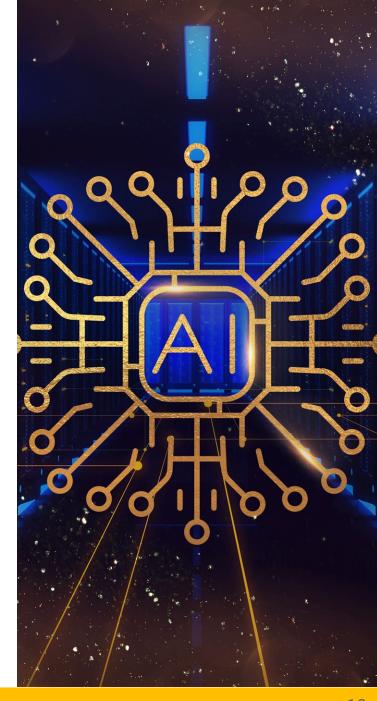
The amount that Al could contribute to the global economy by 2030.

* size of global economy: ~ \$105 trillion

Source: Bank of America Research Institute



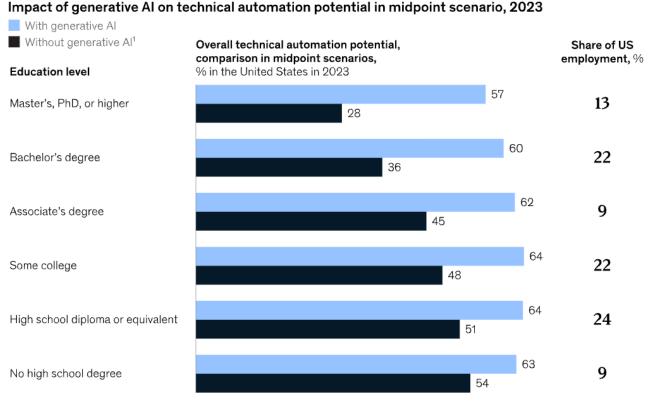
* Updated



Gen Al increases the potential for automation in jobs requiring higher level of education attainment!



Source: McKinsey Digital, report on the economic potential of generative Al



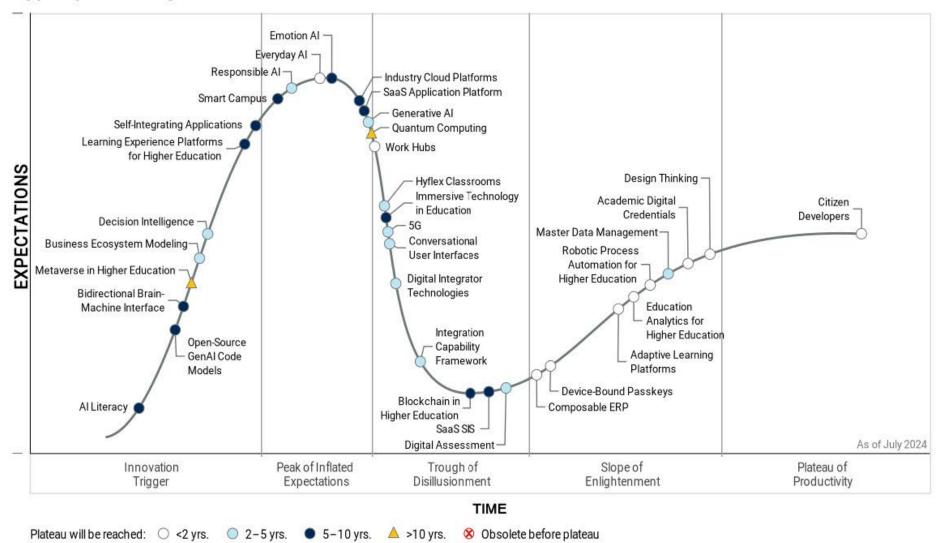


¹Previous assessment of work automation before the rise of generative Al. Source: McKinsey Global Institute analysis

Preparing VCU to operate in an Al world



Hype Cycle for Higher Education, 2024







Responding to the complexities of Al

Policies, guidelines, and standards around Al in business operations

Evolving infrastructure to ensure ethical use while mitigating risks

Sound administrative strategy around Al use

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Policies, guidelines, and standards around AI in business operations

- Executive Order 30
 - https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/governor-of-virginia/pdf/eo/EO-30.pdf
- IT Standards for data security
 - https://ts.vcu.edu/askit/policies-and-publications/information-technology-policies-standards-baselines-guidelines/
- IT Governance process
 - https://itgovernance.vcu.edu/



Evolving infrastructure to ensure ethical use while mitigating risks



Emerging technologies program manager





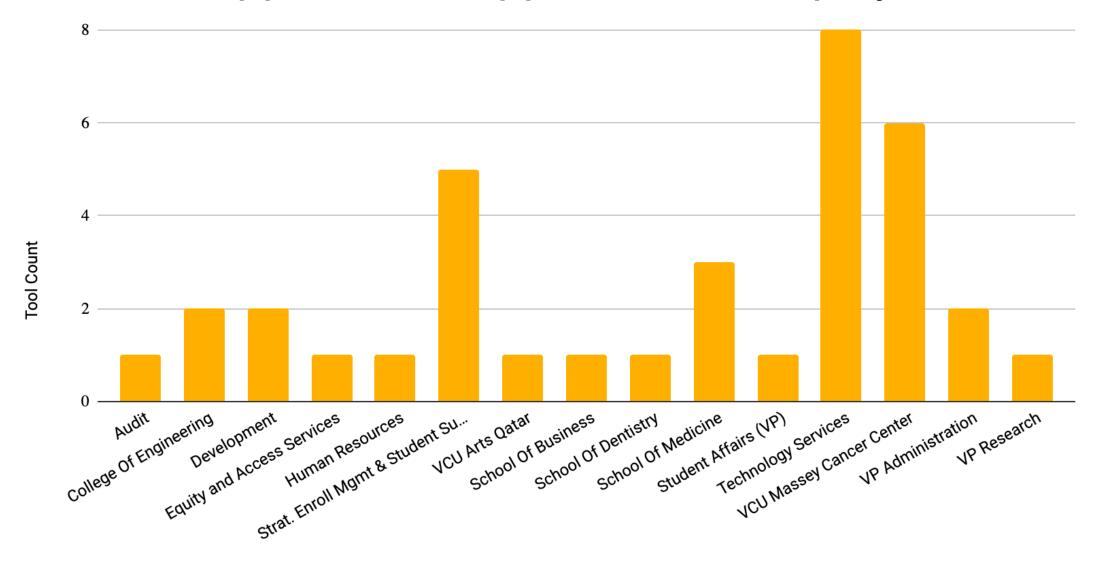


Zoom Meeting Transcription



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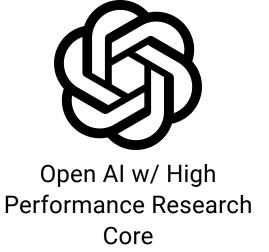
Al Applications approved and deployed





Sound administrative strategy around AI use







IT security guidance chat bot demo



RamsCentral Service point



Al for the public good

VCU's Promise



The future of work in the era of Al

- Technical ability: understanding how intelligent machines function and how to interact with them. Workers with a grounding in coding and engineering principles will be better placed to thrive in this new kind of workplace.
- Data discipline: Workers will need data literacy to read, analyze, and use the almost bottomless troves of information that are increasingly guiding everything.
- The human discipline: "which is what we humans can do that machines for the foreseeable future, cannot emulate." In educational terms, this means less emphasis on the classroom and a greater emphasis on experiential learning.

"A degree in philosophy may soon be worth more than a degree in computer science." - Mark Cuban



ROBOT-PROOF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE JOSEPH E. AOUN

Incorporating AI into VCU's academic enterprise



Infusing AI into the entire curriculum



Training faculty to use AI in teaching and learning



Creating AI knowledge and research in all disciplines





Integrating AI into the curriculum

Al for Specialists

- Artificial Intelligence minor (Target: Engineering students)
- Data Science minor (Target: Computer Science and Math/Statistics students)
- MS, Data Science
- BA, BS, MS, Ph.D., Computer Science

Practical AI for all students

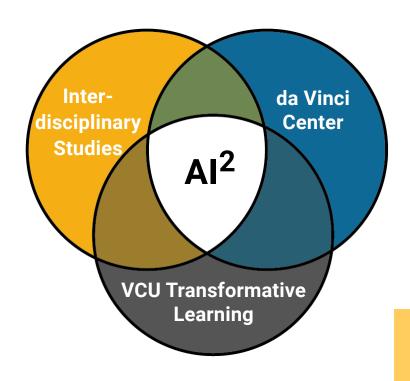
- Ethics and Philosophy of Al microcreditional
- Mixed and Immersive Reality Studies minor
- Practical Al minor
- Master of Interdisciplinary Studies, Practical Artificial Intelligence focus (in development)

Introductory AI in General Education

- ENGR 125 Practical Artificial Intelligence (Engineering)
- PHIL 202 Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (Philosophy)
- CMSC 225 Essentials of Artificial Intelligence (Computer Science)



Academy for Interdisciplinary Innovation (AI²)



Benefits

- Advance and scale VCU's vision for transformative, experiential, real-world, and entrepreneurial learning, including internships
- Support the bold goals set by VCU's QEP, "Every Ram's a Researcher"
- Respond to emerging job market trends and address rapidly evolving student needs
- Speedy creation and incubation of new credit and non-credit credentials including new concentrations, minors, majors and microcredentials.

New in fall 2024

- Practical Al minor
- Mixed and Immersive Reality Studies Minor
- Microcredentials
- Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies

- Master of Interdisciplinary Studies
- Master of Product Innovation
- Undergraduate certificates in Product Innovation and Venture Creation
- Graduate certificate in Health Care Innovation (collaboration with the School of Nursing)



Al in Curriculum: Common Book

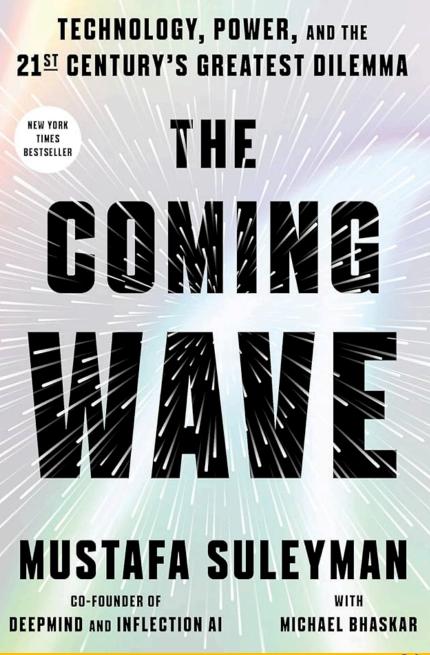
The 2025-26 selection is:

The Coming Wave: Technology, Power, and the 21st Century's Greatest Dilemma

VCU's Common Book Program

- a universitywide initiative that introduces students to complex social issues through a common text
- frames those issues with an interdisciplinary lens through which the selection can be analyzed and discussed in an academic setting
- learn about the 2024-25 Common Book at commonbook.vcu.edu





"A fascinating, well-written, and important book." —YUVAL NOAH HARARI

Al to enhance instruction and advance student success

Generative AI: Teaching and Learning Tool (link)

Guidelines, developed at VCU, for faculty on AI terminology; considerations for the use of Gen AI in teaching & learning; and opportunities for faculty engagement through the Faculty Advisory Committee.

- Gen Al and Teaching Guidelines Faculty
- Gen Al Guidelines for Students

Instructional Design Team

Support faculty in integrating AI into course learning experiences using AI tools that promote active learning and the development of critical thinking skills in multiple disciplines.

Flipping the Script: Integrating the Study of Work into General Education

Created by Focused Inquiry faculty. Provides problems and solutions for Focused Inquiry instructors in building future work skills into general education courses.





Al enhancing research

Al Futures Lab (CHS)

Bringing together individuals from the humanities, arts, social sciences, and sciences together to collaboratively examine Al technologies and their impacts on the world - the intersection of Al with race, gender, disability, environmental concerns, etc.

Faculty Engagement

 College of Humanities and Sciences, VCU Libraries, School of Education, School of Business, Office of the Vice President for Research & Innovation

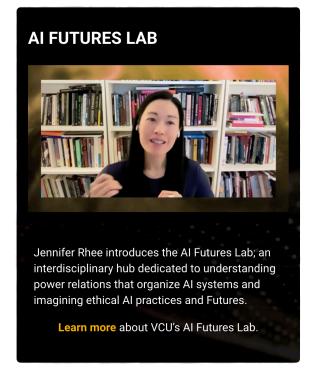
Student Engagement

 Students pursuing research on the following topics: diffusion models, emotion AI, AI and consent in healthcare, AI and bias in healthcare

Community Engagement

Discussions around Al and pedagogy, Al and creativity, Al's environmental impacts,
 Al and discrimination







Lab introduction video: https://youtu.be/87nTRY-d3Ac?si=WYWzbmP6rr5vcfuF

Al enhancing research

RAMS RESEARCH TEAM

College of Engineering

Robotics, Autonomy, and Mechatronics (RAMs) Research

- Collaborative effort involving faculty, students, postdocs, and researchers across College of Engineering departments
- Conduct robotics, autonomy, and mechatronics research supported by multiple sponsors including federal and state government agencies, private foundations, and numerous industries
- Explore a wide range of applications from aerial drones and underwater robots to autonomous vehicles, collaborative and rehabilitation robots, and even neuro-controlled machines and medical devices



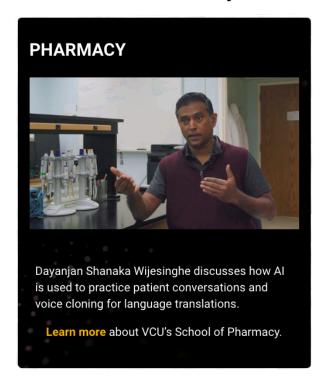
https://egr.vcu.edu/rams-team/



Al enhancing research

Digital Health Initiative

School of Pharmacy



View: https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=vw0ocigx7ik&t=3s



https://www.pharmtutorai.com

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

Earned **first place** for the 2024 American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy -AACP Laboratory Instructors Special Interest Group's Laboratory Innovation and Teaching Excellence Award



Convergence Labs @ VCU for AI+

Universitywide virtual consortium of faculty focusing on applied AI for public good.

Integration opportunities

for new interdisciplinary curriculum development and transformative learning initiatives

Connect

centers, institutes
and other initiatives
that have an
applied AI focus

Establish industry relationships

for research internships, workforce training

Cluster Hires

to create faculty cores with AI+ focal areas

curated and
searchable
repository
of VCU AI
publications and
presentations

Develop multi-disciplinary

proposals for state and federal funding

Spin-off

micro credentials, enhance continuing education and online offerings Annual conference

of academic, community and industry partners and leaders



A **bold** vision for VCU: Al-powered exploration and innovation for the betterment of society





Strategic cluster hires of faculty across the entire institution, along with industry partnerships, to prepare students for collaborative engagement with intelligent machines and to catalyze VCU's emergence as a pioneer in applied AI for social progress and economic advancement.



Ethics, social justice, cultural evolution, regulatory framework and policy

Healthcare delivery and personalized medicine

Mental health

Learning sciences and student success

Autonomous systems

Energy transition for sustainability

Drug discovery and manufacturing

Cybersecurity



Scan to open the Al Guidebook

aiguidebook.vcu.edu



Questions/Discussion

