

**VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF VISITORS  
ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS  
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, February 6, 2020

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Pamela Currey, Committee Chair, called the meeting of the Virginia State University (“VSU”) Board of Visitors (“Board”) Academic and Student Affairs Committee to order in Salon A of the Gateway Dining and Event Center on the campus of Virginia State University at approximately 12:35 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

A quorum was present.

*Committee Members Present:*

Ms. Pamela Currey  
Dr. Daryl Dance  
Mr. Charlie Hill  
Mr. Xavier Richardson  
Mr. Wayne Turnage (*absent*)  
Mr. Gregory Whirley (*arrived 12:51 p.m.*)  
Mr. Huron Winstead, Rector  
Mr. Joshua Hines, Student Representative  
Dr. Zoe Spencer, Faculty Representative

*Other Board Members Present:*

Ms. Thursa D. Crittenden  
Ms. Jennifer Hunter  
Mr. Glenn Sessoms

*Administration Present:*

Dr. Makola M. Abdullah, President  
Dr. Donald Palm, Provost/ Sr. Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs  
Mr. Hubert Harris, Vice President of Administration  
Mr. Rodney Hall, Asst. Vice President, Enrollment Management  
Dr. Jame'l Hodges, Associate VP, Student Success and Engagement  
Dr. Tia Minnis, Associate Vice Provost/Ex. Director, Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness  
Ms. Sheila Alves, Chief Audit Executive  
Dr. Annie C. Redd, Special Assistant to the President and Board Liaison

*Legal Counsel Present:*

Ms. Ramona L. Taylor, University Legal Counsel Board of Visitors  
Ms. Deb Love, Office of the State Attorney General

*Other Attendees:*

Franklin Johnson, Jr., VSU Foundation  
Brenda Stith Finch, VSU Foundation  
Irene Logan, VSU Foundation  
Dr. Valerie Jones, VSU Foundation  
Wilbert J. Briggs, VSU Foundation  
Ms. Ruby Potts, Office of the President

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The Committee approved the meeting agenda.

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The Committee approved the minutes from the November 13, 2019 meeting.

**PRESIDENT'S REMARKS**

None.

**REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Division of Academic and Student Affairs

Mr. Joseph Lyons, Senior Director of Career Services presented an overview that emphasized redefining Career Services at VSU while capitalizing on corporate partnerships. Mr. Lyons informed the Board that the Center serves current students and alumni. The Center prepares students for success through career advising which includes among many services; resume building, social media review, and mock interviews. The department hosts career expos with potential employers and provides links to internships which have increased to more than 300 students in Fall 2019. Leadership development, and business etiquette were discussed by faculty and members of the Board as enhancements to the VSU students' career development that would distinguish them from their peers. Increased classroom and faculty collaboration as well as more intentional parental and alumni engagement were also discussed.

Mr. Rodney Hall reported that Spring 2020 enrollment numbers which include admissions and validations are lower than Fall 2019 which is typical. Fall 2020 admissions including transfer numbers are ahead of last year with full-time enrollment on target. Mr. Hall discussed future enrollment trends which are forecast to be flat with an uptick in 2024 and after that, sharply decline. This scenario correlates with a stagnating and declining high school population. VSU must find a way to diversify student outreach to include more Hispanic students and appeal to other non-white and non-athlete applicants. It was suggested that VSU enlist current students and alumni groups more frequently in the outreach efforts to engage prospective students. The impact of the Virginia Union tuition decrease was determined not to be a major factor in the overall competition for students.

Dr. Alexis Brooks-Walter, Interim Sr. Executive Director ACE Operations and Student Success Initiatives and Dr. Sabin Duncan, Executive Director Student Success Initiatives presented a report to the board entitled 'Building a Retention Foundation'. Using the strategic plan as the framework, several key initiatives have been developed to improve institutional quality in the key metrics of student retention and

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graduation rates to reach the goal by 2025 of 75% of the students in each class graduating. A major new development was the creation of 40 small sections of 25-35 students to teach the FRST 101 course with students assigned to the classes by major. The process for identifying and flagging students at-risk of failing one or more classes has been revamped to allow for earlier intervention. Analytics based on prior performance allow the departments to anticipate the courses needed and appropriate class sizes to increase student success. Increasing collaboration and communication across campus and streamlining the advising process including the transcript audits for graduating students will have a positive impact on student outcomes.

Dr. Cynthia Ellison, Director of the University Counseling Center, painted a very compelling picture of the mental health issues affecting VSU students. Dr. Ellison informed the Board that depression, not anxiety, is the dominant diagnosis. Many of the affected students present as victims of past trauma with previously undiagnosed mental health issues. Staffing was reported to be a major problem as there are only two licensed behavioral health professionals available to treat 239 students. President Abdullah pledged his commitment to meeting the student's needs and expressed gratitude for the work already being done.

Dr. Jame'l Hodges, Associate Vice President for Student Engagement, highlighted division wide accomplishments which include an increase of 347 students voting in SGA elections and completing an application for a \$253,032 grant for the TRiO programs. Participation in the MLK Day of Service increased to over 200 students. Upcoming events include the Membership Intake Cycle for Greek Life and the Alternative Spring Break which will take place on Chincoteague Island this year.

Dr. Palm gave updates on the status of the proposed new academic programs' accreditations. The RN-BSN in Nursing – Degree Completion Program and The Counselor Education program increase to 60 hours were both approved by SACSCOC in December, 2019 and started in January, 2020. Three new proposed programs include the MBA in Business Administration, MS in Data Analytics and the Master of Social Work which are all projected to start in January 2021 after the approval process is complete.

Dr. Palm also reported that five request for proposal (RFP) applications were reviewed on February 5, 2019 for the Climate Survey which is slated to begin in March. A robust budget will be developed in April for the Completion Initiative for Computer Science and Computer Engineering.

### Division of Administration

Hubert Harris, Vice President for Administration, announced that the Athletic Department received the Division II Award of Excellence in Anaheim, CA for the Samaritan's Feet project. The student athletes provided 300 pairs of shoes and socks to Cool Spring Elementary School students. In regards to electronic transcripts, Mr. Harris reported that the project is still in the test phase as precautions are taken to make sure the process is secure. Mr. Harris informed the Board that the automated external defibrillator (AED) program will be fully rolled out by March and as of now defibrillators are in every campus police car. Mr. Harris also reported that there was an overall reduction of 15.6% in on campus crimes.

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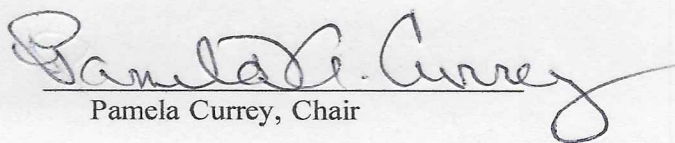
**CLOSED SESSION**

On behalf of the Chair, the Board Liaison read the motion for the committee to convene a closed session @ 3:29 p.m. pursuant to 2.2-3711(A)(1), (2), and (8) of the Code of Virginia for discussion and consideration of personnel and disciplinary matters, and consultation with legal counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring provision of legal advice. The motion was properly seconded. The motion called for President Makola Abdullah; Dr. Donald Palm, Provost; Ramona L. Taylor, University Legal Counsel; Dr. Cynthia Ellison, Director, University Counseling Center; Hubert Harris, VP for Administration; Reshunda Mahone, VP for Institutional Advancement; Charmica Epps, Interim Associate VP for Institutional Advancement; Kevin Davenport, VP for Finance/CFO; Dr. Jame'l Hodges, Associate VP for Student Affairs; Dr. Tia Minnis, Associate VP/Ex. Director, OPIE; Ms. Sheila Alves, Chief Audit Executive; Rodney Hall, Asst. VP for Enrollment; and Dr. Annie C. Redd, Board Liaison, to attend the closed meeting because (1) their presence in the closed meeting was deemed necessary; and or their presence would aid the Board in its consideration of this matter.

The Board Liaison asked for a motion to return to open meeting. With the motion made and properly seconded, the committee re-convened in opened session at 4:17 p.m. with a roll call of Board members to certify that the Committee discussed or considered only those public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:30 p.m.

  
Pamela Currey, Chair

9-18-2020  
Date