

Welcome Remarks: Speaker



Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Tia A. Minnis

Dr. Tia A. Minnis serves as the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Virginia State University, where she is recognized as a passionate, transformative leader dedicated to fostering inclusive and empowering learning environments. With more than 15 years of successful leadership experience in higher education, Dr. Minnis has consistently championed student success, academic excellence, and innovation in teaching and learning. A proud native of Nassau, Bahamas, and the eldest of five

siblings, Dr. Minnis embodies the values of service and community. Her unwavering commitment to uplifting, inspiring, and motivating others is evident in her numerous initiatives and leadership roles. She is the founder of the VSU Women's LeadHERship Institute, an initiative committed to nurturing the passion, resilience, and vision of women leaders in higher education. Additionally, Dr. Minnis is deeply committed to the EmpowerHER Leadership and Mentorship Program at VSU. She actively engages with student members, designs impactful programming, and remains invested in their growth, supporting both their immediate goals and long-term success as they push past perceived boundaries to reach their fullest potential.

Dr. Minnis is committed to providing global opportunities for students, particularly international students, through academic support, mentorship, and scholarships. Her impactful collaborations with organizations such as the Cable Bahamas Group of Companies and the Nassau Bahamas Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., have empowered exceptional young Bahamian women to pursue their educational dreams. Her academic credentials are as impressive as her leadership. Dr. Minnis holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Clark Atlanta University, a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Technology from Georgia Southern University, a Bachelor of Business Administration in Management and Computer Information Systems from Savannah State University, and an Associate of Arts in Computer Data Processing from the College of the Bahamas.

Dr. Minnis's dedication extends beyond academia. She serves on numerous boards, including the Virginia Assessment Group (where she has held roles as President-Elect, President, and Immediate Past President, and currently serves as Special Advisor for HBCUs), the American Council of Education Virginia Women's Network, the Virginia Faculty Development Collaborative (Former Chair), the Collington Home Owners Association, the Mableton Improvement Coalition (Former Chairman), the Harmony Leland Elementary School (HELS) Foundation, the Mableton Community Fund (MCF), and the Mosaic Church Leadership Board. She is also the Founding Executive Director of the VSU Women's LeadHERship Board.

Anchored by her faith in God and her love for family, Dr. Minnis views her purpose as uplifting, inspiring, encouraging, motivating, and challenging others to lead and effect meaningful change in their communities and the world. Her relentless drive to elevate others and challenge the status quo makes her not just an educator but a transformative force in higher education.

Opening Remarks: Presenter



President Makola M. Abdullah, Ph.D.

Makola M. Abdullah, Ph.D., became the 14th President of Virginia State University (VSU) on February 1, 2016, aiming to rejuvenate the Commonwealth's sole historically black land-grant university. In 2016, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) renewed the University's full accreditation under his leadership on June 16. Embracing Our Opportunity for Excellence, Abdullah emphasizes sustaining VSU as an 1890 University by providing transformative student experiences, strategically investing in academic programs, partnering to tell the story, embracing our top Land-Grant status, and embracing our role as Virginia's Opportunity University.

Didactic administrator Abdullah strives for perfection. He is an internationally famous educator known for his research. In his career, African Americans have increased in STEM fields, four Ph.D.'s and six M.S.s have graduated, and over \$20 million in funding from federal agencies like the National Science Foundation, NASA, Boeing, and FEMA has been secured, with over \$5 million given as a single Principle Investigator.

He supports historically black colleges and land-grant institutions. Before becoming president, he held positions as provost and senior vice president at Bethune-Cookman University (2013-2016), provost and vice president for academic affairs at Florida Memorial University (2011-2013), and dean and director of 1890 land grant programs at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (2008-2011). He is viewed as an educator and forward thinker who values his presidency and relies on alumni to recruit and guide new Trojans towards academic greatness.

President Abdullah, a Chicago native, is the youngest African American to hold Ph.D. and master's degrees from Northwestern University, as well as an undergraduate degree in civil engineering from Howard University. He belongs to Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and the 5000 Role Models of Excellence. He and his wife, Ahkinyala Cobb-Abdullah, Ph.D., are proud parents of two HBCU graduates, Mikaili and Sefiyetu.

Session: Presenters

Alisha Bazemore

Assistant Director for Innovative Work-Based Learning Initiatives
State Council of Higher Education for Virginia



Alisha Bazemore, Ed.D., is the Assistant Director of Work-Based Learning at the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), where she leads the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP). This statewide initiative supports students, institutions, and employers through resources that promote internships and work-based learning.

Before joining SCHEV, Dr. Bazemore held leadership roles at Norfolk State University, including Director of Career Services and Assistant Vice President for Operations. She earned a B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies and an M.A. in Professional School Counseling from Norfolk State University, followed by an Ed.D. in Learning and Organizational Change from Baylor University. In her free time, she enjoys creative writing, music, and dance.

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Forrest L. Black, LTC, US Army (Retired)

Executive Director
Distance Education and Professional Studies
Virginia State University



LTC (R) Forrest Black is the Executive Director of Distance Education and Professional Studies at Virginia State University. He retired from the U.S. Army in May 2024 after a distinguished 26-year career. In this role, he develops and implements workforce programs aligned with industry demands, equipping students, particularly military personnel, with certifications and technical skills in areas such as Data Science, AI, and Cybersecurity. Previously, LTC Black served as the 27th Professor of Military Science at Virginia State University (2020–2024).

A native of Hampton, Virginia, LTC Black graduated from Norfolk State University, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies and commissioning through the Spartan Army ROTC Program in 2000. He holds a Master's degree in Transportation and Logistics Management from American Military University (2015) and is a graduate of the Command and General Staff School (2013). LTC Black is married to Renae Smith of Axton, VA, and they have two children.

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2025 Summer Institute for Aspiring Deans, Chairs, and Directors

Jade E. Brooks

Interim Chair and Associate Professor
Department of Family and Consumer Sciences
Virginia State University



Dr. Jada E. Brooks is an accomplished educator and scholar with a deep commitment to advancing Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) and promoting the well-being of Black families and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). A former public school teacher in Family and Consumer Sciences, Dr. Brooks has translated her classroom experience into impactful higher education leadership.

Currently serving as interim chair of the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at Virginia State University (VSU), Dr. Brooks brings her journey full circle, having begun her academic and professional path as a FACS undergraduate at VSU. She has led major academic innovations as coordinator of the Family, Child, and Community Development (FCCD) program—updating curriculum, developing two new courses, and establishing a new minor.

Her research focuses on the intersection of Black families and the vital role of HBCUs. Her work in higher education has earned her numerous accolades, including the 2024 Rising Star in Teaching Outstanding Faculty Award and the 2024 HBCU Studies Pioneer Award.

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Antonio T. Cole

Director of Academic Affairs, Operations, & Inclusive Excellence
Office of the Provost and VPAA
Virginia State University



Antonio T. Cole is a dedicated higher education and human resources leader currently serving as Director of Academic Affairs, Operations, & Inclusive Excellence at Virginia State University. During his tenure, he has participated in the inaugural cohort of the John Mercer Langston Institute for African American Political Leadership (JMLI) and served as a Diversity & Inclusion Fellow for Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE). His professional journey includes serving as the inaugural Human Resources Liaison at VSU, for the College of Agriculture, before joining the Office of the Provost as Operations Advisor.

A native of Prince George County, Virginia, and first-generation college graduate, Antonio is a passionate public servant of the Commonwealth of Virginia. He is committed to justice, equity, development, and innovation. As a key advisor to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, he leads the division's academic business operations and partners with institutional leaders to enhance academic resources and student-centered initiatives.

Antonio holds a master's degree in law with a concentration in Human Resources Law, is SHRM-certified, a certified Strategic HR Business Partner, and is pursuing a Ph.D. in Higher Education Leadership and HR Studies at Colorado State University.

His motto: "Greater Grows Where My Roots Run the Deepest."

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Francis Erebholo

Chair and Associate Professor
Department of Mathematics and Economics
Virginia State University



Dr. Francis Erebholo is Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics & Economics at Virginia State University, where he has served since July 2024. He previously held the role of Associate Professor and Director of Undergraduate Programs in Mathematics at Hampton University from 2017 to 2024. Dr. Erebholo earned his Ph.D. in Mathematics from Howard University, with a research focus on longitudinal binary data analysis with incomplete datasets. He also holds an M.A. in Mathematics—Collegiate Teaching from Central Michigan University and an M.Sc. in Mathematics from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

His research spans longitudinal data analysis, logistic regression, missing data methodologies, and error analysis in numerical integration for partial differential equations. He has published widely in peer-reviewed journals and presented at numerous national conferences. His scholarship includes impactful studies on nonlinear Riccati equations, STEM retention among HBCU freshmen, and strategies to improve precalculus outcomes.

Dr. Erebholo has led several federally funded initiatives, including NIH-supported HU-ChEM and HU-URISE, aimed at strengthening biomedical research pipelines and STEM retention at HBCUs. A committed mentor and advocate, he supports faculty and student development through collaborative research, workshops, and efforts to increase diversity in biostatistics and STEM education.

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Eurmon Hervey

Executive Coach and Strategic Thought Partner
Higher Education Administrator



Dr. Eurmon Hervey, Jr. is an accomplished educational executive with a comprehensive blend of nonprofit, government, and academic management experience. Most of his professional career has been in senior leadership positions like Campus CEO, Executive Vice President & Provost, and Associate Professor in colleges and universities. He has also held the titles of Assistant Superintendent and Deputy Chief State School Officer in the K-12 education sector. Further, he is also a community educator and social entrepreneur, having done pioneering work in establishing a community college, two not for profit community organizations, a private elementary school and even a county library.

As the State Higher Education Executive Officer (SHEEO) in Washington DC, he was the licensing, regulatory, and accreditation officer for 100+ post-secondary institutions operating in Washington DC. Further, he has served on external review teams for AdvancED/SACS as a Lead Evaluator, as consultant for non-profit organizations and as a Research Fellow with the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University. He currently serves in senior administrative roles for the Southern University System, the nation's only Historically Black College or University System in the nation, focused on improving academic excellence and student success.

Dr. Hervey holds the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree from Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. He holds the Master of Education (EdM) from Harvard University and the Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Florida. Further, he also earned two degrees in pure mathematics: a master's degree from Clark Atlanta University, and a bachelor's degree from Edward Waters College.

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Tewanna Jennings

Career Services Advisor and Adjunct Professor
Department of Family and Consumer Sciences
Virginia State University



Dr. Tewanna L. Jennings, an accomplished educator with 20+ years of experience across middle school, high school, and higher education levels in Career and Technical Education. Currently serving as an Adjunct Professor at Virginia State University and a Career Advisor and CTE Educator with Fairfax County Public Schools, Dr. Jennings is dedicated to fostering student success and career readiness.

Her expertise includes developing and implementing a curriculum that advances diversity and inclusion, engaging students in work-based learning experiences, and coordinating internship programs.

Dr. Jennings earned her Doctor of Education, Master of Education, and Bachelor of Science degrees from Virginia State University. She remains passionately dedicated to helping others maximize their potential – the same commitment to excellence afforded this Trojan some 23 years ago – ***Greater Happened Here!*** Her dissertation, "From Policy to Practice: A Qualitative Exploratory Study Investigating Equitable Access as Perceived by Administrators to CTE Programs and the Values of Earning an Industry CTE Credential," reflects her commitment to equitable access and the value of industry credentials in CTE. Her research interests also include building effective partnerships between CTE programs and industry.

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Kenneth W. Lewis

Associate Professor of Statistics/Data Analytics
Department of Psychology
Virginia State University



Dr. Kenneth W. Lewis is an associate professor of Statistics/Data Analytics in Psychology in the VSU Psychology Department. Dr. Lewis has been teaching statistics and research methods at VSU since 1997 as an adjunct faculty member and following his retirement from then Fort Lee U.S. Army Logistics University (ALU) in 2016, he was invited to come to the VSU Psychology Department where he continues to teach graduate and undergraduate courses in statistics and research methods.

Dr. Lewis serves as a statistics and research methods advisor to graduate students working on their theses and dissertations, making sure that students know how to let the research data speak truthfully about the research situation. Dr. Lewis was just elected as the VSU Faculty Senate Chair and will serve as the faculty representative to the VSU Board of Visitors and the fearless advocate for faculty rights, privileges and duties.

His local community interests include his serving as President of the Petersburg Symphony Orchestra Board of Directors, the former President of the Willcox Watershed Conservancy of the City of Petersburg, the Alpha Kappa Sigma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. He also serves on the Vestry (Deacons Board) of Saint Stephen's. He enjoys walking, cutting grass, working in his yard, and being owned and operated by his dog, a 12-pound Chihuahua mix, Fang aka (VELCRO). He was elected to the Petersburg School Board where he served from 2006 to 2014, representing the 5th Ward of the City.

Dr. Lewis' motto is "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, ..., I just can't do them all at the same time."

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2025 Summer Institute for Aspiring Deans, Chairs, and Directors

Joseph L. Lyons

Executive Director
Student Engagement and Career Services
Virginia State University



Mr. Joseph Lyons has been blessed to coach, train, and mentor students in higher education for over 35 years. For 24 years Mr. Lyons served at Virginia Commonwealth University. He initially assumed the role of an Academic Advisor but during this tenure was promoted to the University Career Center serving in various positions including Assistant Director and Interim Associate Director.

In November of 2014, Mr. Lyons accepted a career opportunity at Virginia State University. He initially was hired as the Associate Director and STEM Liaison for the College of Engineering and Technology but was later appointed as the Senior Director of Operations and Career Services in the Academic Center for Excellence. Mr. Lyons currently serves as the Executive Director for Student Engagement with the Career Services, Student Activities, Fitness and Wellness, and Campus Ministry offices reporting to him. Mr. Lyons also serves as the Advisor for the Student Government Association.

Mr. Lyons is a member of the National Association for Colleges and Employers (NACE), the Virginia Association for Colleges and Employers (VACE) and the Petersburg (VA) Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. where he holds a life membership and is a member of the Board of Directors. He additionally serves on the Board of Directors for the Petersburg YMCA.

Mr. Lyons received a Master of Counselor Education from Western Kentucky University (WKU) and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Norfolk State University (NSU). Mr. Joseph Lyons was awarded the prestigious John L. Chase Meritorious Service Award by the Virginia Association for Colleges and Employers (VACE). This award honors those who have made exceptionally valuable contributions to cooperative education, career services or college recruiting.

Mr. Lyons is a native of Petersburg, VA and is married to Elder Tracey Lyons and has two sons Joseph Lyons III and Seth Lyons.

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2025 Summer Institute for Aspiring Deans, Chairs, and Directors

Emmanuel O. Omojokun

Dean and Professor
Reginald F. Lewis College of Business
Virginia State University



Dr. Emmanuel Omojokun serves as the Dean of the Reginald F. Lewis College of Business (RFLCB) from 2014 to present. He established the Center for Entrepreneurship in 2015 where students and small business as well as individuals in the community are trained to become entrepreneurs and receive support including developing business plans and on securing funding for their businesses. He has led the faculty and staff of RFLCB to two successful reaccreditations by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), International. Less than 5% of world's Business schools earn this hallmark of excellence. Under the leadership of Dr. Omojokun, the College of Business received several awards – most notable are in 2017 when HBCU Digest awarded “The Best Business Program Among HBCUs” to the College; and due to the incredible work of the Center for Entrepreneurship, AACSB awarded the College “The Innovation that Inspire” in spring 2025.

Dr. Omojokun is very passionate about Student Success and in 2019, he established the “RFLCB Student Success Support Fund.” The fund provides scholarships and emergency financial support to students. Contributions of Dr. Omojokun to Virginia State University is supreme. Selected contributions include the following:

- He designed the first network on campus and selected all network devices – servers, network switches, routers, firewall, workstations, server operating systems and E-mail software. When all network devices and software arrived, he invited two of his colleagues (Dr. Adeyemi Adekoya and Dr. Fidelis Ikem) to work with him on the network implementation for 3 weeks. Dr. Omojokun setup a Fiber Hub in Singleton Hall, invited Fiber Optic Cable company to connect selected buildings on campus to the fiber hub. He then connected the campus-wide network and the router to the Internet.
- He developed the first website on campus.
- He was solely responsible for establishing the Computer Science Program at VSU – developing the curriculum, got it approved by the University and by SCHEV while serving as VSU's SCHEV Liaison. He taught the courses for one year before handing over the program to the School of Natural Sciences because his Dean would not allow him to move from the School of Business.
- He was voted for, and served multiple years as Faculty Representative on the VSU Board of Visitors. He was deemed the first representative who collected faculty accomplishments and presented them to the Board.

Dr. Omojokun has published many peer-reviewed journal articles and peer-reviewed proceedings. He was the Principal Investigator – partnering with Computer Science Corporation and three other HBCUs and developed a successful \$20m research proposal that was funded by the Department of Defense in 1992/93 year. He has received numerous awards at VSU and in his discipline. He has received several funded research grants from U.S. Army, Department of Defense, and participated in joint research grants with University of Virginia.

Dr. Omojokun earned a B.Sc. (Honors) in Mathematics with first class honors (summa cum laude) in 1974 from the Premier Nigerian University of Ibadan. He obtained his M.S. in Computer Science from University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada; and his Ph.D. in Computer Science from the University of Colorado, Boulder Colorado. He is married to his beautiful wife and they have five successful children and nine grandchildren.

2025 Summer Institute for Aspiring Deans, Chairs, and Directors

Justina O. Osa

Professor and Director of Institutional Assessment
Department of Educational Leadership / Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
Virginia State University



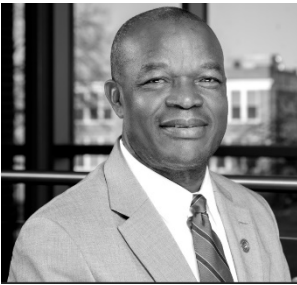
Dr. Justina O. Osa is currently a Professor of Educational Leadership, and Director of Institutional Assessment at Virginia State University. She has an earned doctorate in Educational Leadership and Supervision, a Masters' degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and another Master's degree in Library and Information Sciences. In recent years, her research agenda includes assessment, mentoring and coaching, leadership development, and international education. In 2012, Dr. Osa was invited to join the International Study of Principal Preparation (ISPP), a study involving researchers and recently appointed principals from Australia, Canada, China, England, Germany, Ghana, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Scotland, South Africa, Tanzania, Turkey, and the United States of America. She has published book chapters and peer-reviewed articles, and presented papers internationally, nationally and regionally at professional conferences.

She has been an invited speaker in different professional conferences and workshops and won awards. Dr. Osa has received grants to enhance academic achievement for K-12 students. She went to the United Arab Emirates to develop a Master's program in educational leadership. Dr. Osa serves as reviewer for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (*SACSCOC*), the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC), and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

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Benedict Uzochoukwu

Interim Dean, College of Graduate Studies
Professor of Engineering and Technology
Virginia State University



Benedict Uzochukwu is a Professor of Engineering and Technology and currently serves as the Interim Dean of the College of Graduate Studies (COGS) at the Virginia State University. Prior to assuming this role, he served variously as a Program Coordinator, Information Logistics Technology (INLT), the Chair of the Department of Applied Engineering Technology (AET), Virginia State University as well as the Project Manager, VSU Broadband Infrastructure and Digital Inclusion Project. His research interests include Sensemaking Engineering, design for sustainment, logistics, supply chain management, lifecycle systems, systems integration, human factors and ergonomics as well as management of technology systems.

He has a Ph.D. degree in Industrial Engineering as well as an MBA degree in Business Administration. Dr. Uzochukwu has several peer reviewed publications to his credit. He belongs to a number of professional organizations such as the Institute of Industrial Engineers (IIE), Society for Engineering Management (SEM), Society for Health Systems (SHS) and American Society of Engineering Education (ASEE). He is also a member of Alpha Pi Mu and Phi Kappa Phi Honors society.

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Willis W. Walter

Interim Vice President for External Relations
Dean, College of Education
Virginia State University



Dr. Willis W. Walter is Dean of the nationally accredited, award-winning College of Education at Virginia State University (VSU), where he also serves as a tenured Associate Professor. With more than 25 years of experience in education, he has led efforts to develop academic programs that prepare competent, caring, and culturally responsive professionals in Teacher Education, Counseling, Health/Recreation/Sport Management, and Educational Leadership.

VSU is the third Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Dr. Walter has served. In the last 18 months, the College has secured over \$2.6 million in grants from partners including the Wallace Foundation, Branch Alliance, Verizon, UTeach Institute, and the Virginia Department of Education.

Dr. Walter is the 2024 recipient of the Gloria Ladson-Billings Academic Achievement Award from AACTE's HBCU Topical Action Group. He is a 2021 Deans for Impact Fellow and has held leadership roles with the Virginia Association of Teachers of English/Language Arts, Rotary Club of Petersburg, and the Petersburg Library Foundation. He has also contributed to rewriting national accreditation standards for CAEP.

A native of Chicago, Dr. Walter previously served as a principal in Birmingham City Schools, where his school earned the 1998 Governor's Award for Student Achievement—one of his proudest career milestones.

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2025 Summer Institute for Aspiring Deans, Chairs, and Directors

Isis N. Walton

Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Virginia State University



Isis N. Walton, Ph.D., Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) was appointed by President Abdullah and Provost Palm in 2021 after serving as Interim Dean of CHSS in 2020. Prior to this appointment, she served as Dean of the College of Graduate Studies from 2019-2020. As Dean, Dr. Walton serves as the chief officer for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Her portfolio includes developing and implementing the College's academic programs and policies, supervision of chairs and faculty, and direction for strategic planning for the College. She is committed to innovative, impactful, and intentional education that meets the needs of students where they are, with excellence in learning, support, and success.

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