

# 2025 VSU POINTS OF PRIDE

Virginia State University stands as one of Virginia's two distinguished land-grant institutions and proudly maintains full accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. At VSU, we don't just educate students, we cultivate innovators, changemakers, and global leaders who are deeply engaged in their learning and committed to uplifting their communities.

As we continue to rise, here are a few of our 2025 VSU Points of Pride that showcase the power, progress, and impact of our Trojan Nation.



**Virginia State University** ranked #11 in the country in U.S. News & World Report's 2026 rankings of the top Historically Black Colleges and Universities, climbing 12 spots from its 2025 ranking of #23. This was the largest increase of all HBCUs featured on the list, marking a significant milestone for VSU and its commitment to being one of the nation's premier HBCUs.

**Virginia State University** received the largest gift in its 143-year history. VSU was gifted \$50 million from author and philanthropist MacKenzie Scott to expand its efforts to transform lives through education and continue the mission outlined in the University's strategic plan.

**Virginia State University** achieved a Carnegie R2 Research Designation as a result of its significant growth in research and graduate education. The designation places VSU among a select group of universities nationwide classified as "Doctoral/Professional Universities with High Research Activity." Only 139 institutions and fewer than 15 HBCUs qualify for R2 status.

**Virginia State University** opened the Alfred W. Harris Academic Commons, the largest and most transformative facility in the University's history. The 175,000-square-foot facility serves as the new home for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and the College of Education, while also symbolizing the University's continued progress and growth.

**Virginia State University** broke ground on a new, state-of-the-art residence hall that will significantly expand the University's on-campus housing capacity. The 110,000-square-foot facility will open in Spring 2026 and add 454 beds to VSU's housing portfolio.

**Virginia State University** launched the world's first HBCU Studies course in Family and Consumer Sciences, starting in Fall 2025. The new course explores factors related to the family experience at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and builds on the University's previous groundbreaking achievement of offering the first-ever HBCU History course.

**Virginia State University** was named a Fulbright HBCU Institutional Leader for the fourth consecutive year. This esteemed honor recognized VSU's unwavering support for global education and diversity during the 2024-25 academic year. Fulbright HBCU Institutional Leaders consistently demonstrate outstanding support for Fulbright exchange participants and effectively promote Fulbright program opportunities on campus.

The **Virginia State University** Department of Music received a full accreditation reaffirmation from the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) through the 2033-34 academic year. This prestigious reaffirmation is a significant milestone that underscores the department's commitment to academic excellence, artistic integrity, and student success. NASM is considered the premier accrediting body for music programs across the nation.



The **Virginia State University** Public Health Institute received a grant of \$500,575 from the Opioid Abatement Authority (OAA) to reduce overdoses through interventions, health education, training, outreach, and resource connectivity.

**Virginia State University** became the first Virginia HBCU to be recognized by the Virginia Higher Education Substance Use Advisory Committee (VHESUAC). This prestigious recognition underscored its commitment to furthering student substance use education, prevention, recovery, and intervention efforts.

**Virginia State University** was awarded a \$2 million grant from the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCf) to launch its AI-Enabled Digital Transformation Initiative. VSU was one of eight historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) selected for Project HBCU Capacity Building, a multi-year initiative empowering institutions to improve enrollment, retention, and graduation rates, strengthen research capacity, modernize operations, and foster collaboration across campuses.

**Virginia State University** was awarded a competitive grant of more than \$1 million from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The grant was presented to Associate Professor in the Department of Biology and the Director of the VSU Center for Biotechnology, Genomics, and Bioinformatics (CBGB), Dr. Xianfa Xie, to fund his research project examining the unique biological phenomenon of bioluminescent fungi (glowing mushrooms).

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) awarded **Virginia State University** \$250,000 to enhance its Artificial Intelligence (AI) instruction by developing AI-focused open educational resources for students and educators.

**Virginia State University** Athletics celebrated multiple championships this year. The men's basketball team won the CIAA Tournament for the first time since 2019, while both the men's and women's soccer teams captured the inaugural CIAA Soccer Cups with 2-1 victories at Rogers Stadium. The women's soccer team capped off a historic season by winning the USCAA National Championship.





The **Virginia State University** College of Engineering and Technology was awarded a \$100,000 Lockheed Martin Grant in partnership with the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCf) for the 2025 academic year. The funding supported the launch of a new initiative, STEP UP – Strengthening Talent, Enrollment, and Persistence through Undergraduate Research and Pre-College Program.



**Virginia State University** received the gift of \$100,000 from esteemed alumna, Board of Visitors member, and former Rector, Dr. Valerie K. Brown. Dr. Brown has been a proud Trojan since graduating from VSU in 1978 and continues to be a dedicated champion of the University's future.

The **Virginia State University** Board of Visitors extended President Dr. Makola M. Abdullah's contract through 2032, ensuring continued growth, student success, and momentum as one of the nation's leading Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Dr. Abdullah, who has served as VSU's 14th president since February 2016, continues to lead the University through a period of record achievement and transformation.



Assistant Professor and Chair of the Department of Languages & Literature, Dr. Latorial Faison, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in Poetry for her book, *Nursery Rhymes in Black*. The Pulitzer Prize is regarded as one of the most prestigious awards in American literature. Winners of the 2026 Pulitzer Prizes are expected to be announced in early May 2026.

**Virginia State University's** Azurest South, also known as the Alumni House, was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL). That designation is the highest federal recognition of a property's historical, architectural, or archeological significance. Azurest South was built in 1939 by VSU alumna Amaza Lee Meredith, one of the first documented African American female architects.

A team of four **Virginia State University** students competed in the 36th Honda Campus All-Star Challenge (HCASC) National Championship in Torrance, California. The year-round academic competition features HBCUs from across the nation in a fast-paced quiz format. VSU was one of 32 schools competing for the national championship.

Fifty-one **Virginia State University** Engineering and Technology students attended this year's National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) Annual Convention in Chicago, an event that offers valuable networking and professional development opportunities. More than 80% of the VSU students who attended the convention secured post-convention interviews, internships, or full-time job offers.

A team of **VSU** students won first place in the 8th Annual Advancing Minorities' Interest in Engineering (AMIE) Design Challenge for developing an innovative AI-powered solution that helps small-scale farmers analyze soil conditions and maximize crop yields.

**Virginia State University** was the only HBCU among 38 institutions invited to compete in the 2025 NASA Lunabotics Challenge in Florida. The VSU Lunabotics Team designed and built a versatile robot capable of navigating and performing complex tasks on simulated lunar terrain, showcasing the University's innovation, technical excellence, and leadership in STEM.



**Virginia State University** partnered with College Pads to offer a new off-campus housing marketplace for students. This partnership has enhanced the University's off-campus living experience, equipping students with the tools to find and secure housing.

**Virginia State University** received a new golf simulator donated by the Professional Golfers' Association of America (PGA). A second simulator was awarded through the University's participation in the White House HBCU Golf Consortium, a national initiative to increase diversity in the golf industry and expose students to unique professional opportunities.



**Virginia State University** Honors College students Camille Hall and Kristina Piercy spent the Fall 2025 semester studying abroad at the University of Oxford in Oxford, England. Both Hall and Piercy represented VSU with distinction while studying at one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in the world.

**Virginia State University** went viral for its "Boots On The Ground" celebration at Spring 2025 Commencement. Graduates were surprised with VSU-themed clapping fans to dance along to the popular song by 803Fresh, featuring the famous line: "Where them fans at?" A video of the celebration garnered millions of views across social media platforms and was picked up by national outlets.



A limited-time sale of the iconic VSU-themed clacking fans from its viral commencement celebration raised \$16,440 for the Student Tuition Assistance Fund. This fund helps students facing unexpected financial challenges that may otherwise hinder their ability to remain enrolled.



# 2025 VSU POINTS OF PRIDE

At VSU, our greatest pride has always been our students. Their achievements, resilience, and innovation fuel the University's forward momentum. These Points of Pride reflect not just institutional success, but the transformational experiences that prepare Trojans to lead, serve, and excel. Virginia State University continues to move with purpose, passion, and progress. As we celebrate these Points of Pride, we honor the collective dedication of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and supporters. Together, we continue to build on our legacy, elevate our impact, and shape a future where Greater Happens Here every single day.

