

**VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF VISITORS  
COMMITTEE ON INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT  
1:45 P.M. THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2026  
Gateway Dining & Events Center  
(on the campus of Virginia State University)  
(No Public Comment Period Scheduled)**

DRAFT AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER.....Dr. Valerie K. Brown, Chair

ROLL CALL

INVOCATION (*Reverend Thomas Wynn, Director of Campus Ministries*)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES (if any)

- February 5, 2026, Committee Meeting

PRESIDENT’S REMARKS..... Dr. Makola M. Abdullah

CLOSED SESSION

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- - Information Items.....Dr. Willis W. Walter, Jr.
    - I. Annual Giving/Donations Update (\$5M in Total Giving)
    - II. Freewill and Trust Update (over \$225K in Pledges)
    - III. Other Major Gifts and Pledges
  - Government Relations Update.....Mr. Eldon Burton
  - Innovations in Advancement Services, Communications & ..... Dr. Joscelyne M. Brazile  
Gala Update
  - Comprehensive Campaign Best Practices.....Dr. Willis Walter, Jr.  
Key Performance Indicators for the five main pillars of the \$150 Million Comprehensive Campaign
    - a. Government relations and advocacy (benchmarks/KPIs)
    - b. Principal gifts (benchmarks/KPIs)
    - c. Corporate and foundation giving (benchmarks/KPIs)
    - d. Alumni and planned giving (benchmarks/KPIs)
    - e. State-approved capital and general funds (benchmarks/KPIs)

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

4.16.26

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**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Dr. Valerie K. Brown called the meeting of the Institutional Advancement Committee to order at 1:30 pm. The meeting was held at the Gateway Dining & Events Center.

**ROLL CALL**

A quorum was present.

**INVOCATION**

Reverend Thomas Wynn, Director of Campus Ministries

**LEGAL COUNSEL:**

Mr. Nathan Moberly

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Dr. Vaalerie K. Brown, Chair

General Dennis L. Via (Vice Rector)

Dr. Robert Denton, Jr. (*virtual from Blacksburg, VA due to medical reasons*)

Ms. Verndell Robinson

Mr. Robert

Thompson Ms.

Kishore Thota

Mr. Victor K. Branch, Rector (ex-officio)

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Ms. Morenike Miles

Mr. Jon Moore (*absent*)

Mr. M. Peter

McPherson Dr. Joseph

A.F. Chase, Jr Dr.

Harold Green, Jr.

Mr. Thomas Cosgrove

Dr. Leonard Haynes, III (*absent*)

**ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:**

Dr. Makola M. Abdullah, President

Dr. Tia A. Minnis, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs

Mr. Kevin Davenport, Senior Vice President for Finance & Administration/CFO

Dr. Willis W. Walter, Interim Vice President For Advancement and External

Engagement Dr. Alexis Brooks-Walter, Vice President for Student Affairs &

Enrollment Management Dr. Annie Redd, Chief of Staff/Director, Board of

Operations & Relations

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**BOARD APPOINTEES:**

Dr. Kenneth Lewis, Faculty Representative

Mr. Marquis Mason, SGA Representative (arrived @2:04pm)

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The Chair called for the approval of the agenda. The Committee approved the agenda by voice vote.

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

The Chair requested a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting, held on February 5, 2026. The Committee approved the minutes from the last meeting by voice vote.

**PRESIDENT'S REMARKS**

Dr. Abdullah appreciates the team under the leadership of Drs. Willis and Walter, for their upcoming presentation, conveyed enthusiasm in anticipation of it. The speaker also extended thanks to the team for their contributions to the upcoming fundraising gala scheduled for Saturday.

**REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**EXTERNAL RELATIONS & INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT UPDATE**

Annual Giving: Dr. Willis Walter, Jr., reported that annual giving increased to approximately \$5 million, up from \$3.9 million the previous year. The growth was driven largely by corporate partners and greater alumni participation, which he described as a strong sign of expanding University support.

Comprehensive Campaign: The campaign is progressing well, with discussions underway about potentially raising the goal from \$125 million to \$150 million. It is expected to conclude alongside the University's 150th anniversary, creating additional opportunities to boost giving and engagement.

Use of Artificial Intelligence: Dr. Walter highlighted efforts to integrate AI within Institutional Advancement to enhance donor engagement, improve communication strategies, and support long-term relationship building.

He also shared that Mr. Burton provided an overview of Virginia General Assembly activity and the state budget, which remains unfinished. Notably, none of the University's requested items have been removed from the proposed budget.

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### **GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE**

2026 General Assembly Update: Mr. Eldon Burton reported that the General Assembly adjourned without passing a final biennial budget and is now in a reconvene session to review the Governor's amendments and vetoes, leaving several budget items still subject to change.

Governor's Proposed Budget: Included funding for the renovation of Virginia Hall (nearly \$70 million) and approximately \$1.7 million for furniture, fixtures, and equipment for the Admissions building under construction. Both the House and Senate retained these projects in their budget proposals.

House Proposed Investments:

- \$25 million (biennium) for HBCU partnership funding
- \$2 million for enterprise resource planning system upgrades
- \$1.8 million to support affordable access and tuition moderation
- \$1 million for agricultural and cooperative extension programs focused on small farmer outreach

Additional Planning Initiative: Funding was included through the Department of Housing and Community Development to support planning for an aquaponics center partnership involving the City of Petersburg, Petersburg Public Schools, and the University.

### **EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND ADVANCEMENT SERVICE UPDATE**

AI-Driven Donor Engagement: Dr. Brazil-Evans reported on the use of AI tools to enhance annual giving. The University's virtual agent, Vanessa S. Upshaw, launched in October 2025, has generated approximately \$150,000 of the nearly \$260,000 raised by the annual gifts team. She has sent over 6,300 personalized email and text messages, resulting in 283 donor responses, demonstrating strong two-way engagement. Her outreach focuses on mid-level donors (\$250–\$4,999) and young alumni, while helping build the major gifts pipeline.

Folio Platform Implementation: The University introduced the Folio platform to replace paper-based stewardship with a digital, personalized donor experience. It provides individualized impact reports, interactive content, and integrated giving options, supported by enhanced analytics (including user behavior tracking) and automation to improve efficiency and reduce staff workload. The approach emphasizes meaningful engagement, compelling content, and personalization, positioning donors as long-term partners.

Alumni Weekend: Scheduled for May 14–16 (registration closed May 1), events include a welcome barbecue, President's Luncheon, class photos, campus tours, the Trojan Derby, and Spring

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Commencement. The weekend aims to both celebrate alumni and strengthen donor relationships and fundraising efforts.

### **COMPREHENSIVE CAMPAIGN PRACTICES**

Strategic Priorities & Growth Goals: Dr. Walter outlined key priorities for resource development, including corporate, foundation, and organizational giving, increased visibility, strengthened alumni engagement, and improved operational accountability. Key performance indicators are guiding annual giving growth, with goals to increase from over \$5 million currently to \$8 million by 2027 and \$10 million by 2032. The current year is projected at \$6–\$7 million, with targeted annual growth increasing from 15% to 25%.

Alumni Association Leadership & Achievements: Ms. Sharon Crenshaw reported on the Virginia State University Alumni Association. Leadership includes President Lori M. Carpenter, Treasurer Irene F. Logan, Recording Secretary Kathy Volt, Corresponding Secretary LaShawn Reed, Financial Secretary Stephanie McNeil, and Chaplain Rev. Kenyana Dawson.

Key Accomplishments (2025–2026):

- Provided \$30,000 in tuition assistance
- Maintained membership above 2,000 for a second year (2,304 members)
- Hosted the first leadership conference on campus, including an alumni authors showcase now in the University library
- Chartered a Social Work alumni chapter
- Supported the concert choir, Trojan Explosion, and Pre-Alumni Association
- Reported total assets reaching \$1 million
- Participated in community engagement, including HBCU Night at CarMax Diamond

Alumnus of the Year: Dr. Latrice Sutton was recognized. She earned a B.A. in History (1979) and M.S. in Education Administration (1989) from VSU, later completing a Ph.D. (2018) from Walden University, and retired as a U.S. Army Colonel.

Recognition: Dr. Walter congratulated Dr. Gwendolyn Dandridge on receiving the LeadHERship Impact Award.

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**REPORT OF AFFILIATED FOUNDATIONS**

Visitor Chase provided a brief report on the affiliated foundations, noting the appointment of four new members: Dr. Tia Minnis, President; Dr. Donald Palm, Vice President; Mr. Osubi Craig; and Dr. Dale Wesson, Secretary. He indicated that these appointments were made at the previous meeting. Visitor Chase further reported that the Foundation has been meeting regularly, or as needed, and expressed optimism for a strong and promising future.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the Chair called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was received, properly seconded, and the Committee voted by voice vote. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 2:30 pm.

**APPROVED:**

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**Chair**

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**Date**