

History

Founded by the late Delegate Alfred W. Harris in 1882, Virginia State University (VSU) serves as a public, comprehensive, historically Black, Land-Grant institution within the Commonwealth of Virginia. As its mission states, Virginia State University “is committed to the preparation of a diverse population of men and women through the advancement of academic programs and services that integrate instruction, research, extension, and outreach. The University endeavors to meet the educational needs of students, graduating lifelong learners who are well equipped to serve their communities as informed citizens, globally competitive leaders, and highly effective, ethical professionals.”

Virginia State provides academic coursework within seven colleges that include the College of Agriculture, the Reginald F. Lewis College of Business, the College of Engineering and Technology, the College of Natural and Health Sciences, the College of Education, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the College of Graduate Studies. Virginia State offers 55 baccalaureate and masters degree programs, two doctoral degree programs, and eight certificates, and is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The College of Business is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the College of Education is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

President

On February 1, 2016, Makola M. Abdullah, Ph.D. became the 14th President of Virginia State University. In his remarks during his introduction to the Trojan family, President Abdullah outlined his four core beliefs: I believe in God. I believe in family. I believe in the transformative nature of education. I believe in Virginia State University.

President Abdullah also emphasized several focus areas to sustain VSU as an 1890 Land-Grant University. The areas of focus include

providing a transformative experience for students, strategically investing in academic programs, partnering with others as a university to tell the VSU story, embracing the University’s Land-Grant Mission and embracing VSU’s role as Virginia’s Opportunity University.

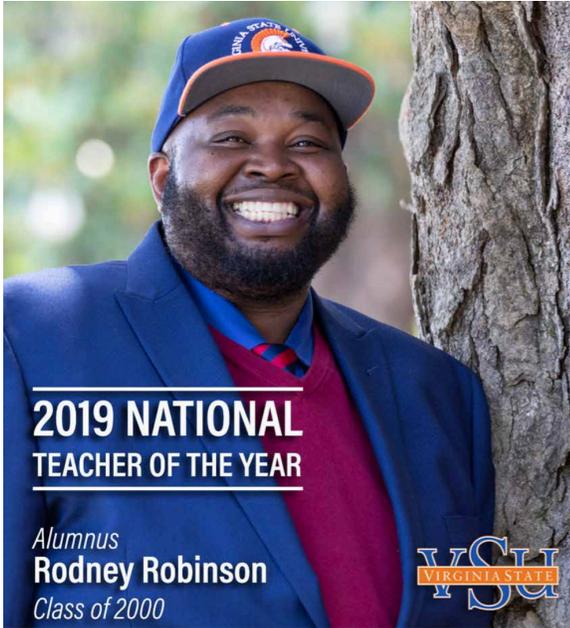
Under President Abdullah’s leadership, the University has experienced some significant achievements.

- Recognized as one of the nation’s top 20 “Best Colleges for African Americans” by ESSENCE magazine
- Established partnerships with local public school systems wherein VSU students tutor students in mathematics and reading
- Opened the Academic Center of Excellence as a one-stop hub for first-year students to receive career and





President (cont.)



**2019 NATIONAL
TEACHER OF THE YEAR**

Alumnus
Rodney Robinson
Class of 2000



academic advising and tutorial services

- In July 2017, former Commonwealth of Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe presented the inaugural Outstanding State Stewardship Award to VSU for the preservation of Summerseat, an historic house built around 1860 near VSU.
- Established the University's Advisory Board for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer/Questioning Intersex Ally+ (LGBTQIA+) Inclusion to investigate ways for the institution to be a more affirming learning environment for all students, faculty and staff within the LGBTQIA+ community

Quick Facts

- One of Virginia's two Land-Grant institutions
- Located 20 minutes south of Richmond in Ettrick village
- Scenic 231-acre campus overlooking the Appomattox River
- 11 residence halls, 18 academic buildings
- 416-acre agriculture research facility
- Current student population: Approximately 4,400
- In-state tuition: \$20,698
- 36 undergraduate, 16 graduate, two doctoral degree programs, and eight certificate programs

Achievements

VSU is a winning institution with numerous accolades, high-ranking programs, departments, and students. In 2015, College Choice ranked VSU 12 out of 104 historically black colleges or universities (HBCUs) in America; VSU also placed fifth among the nation for top producers of teachers. HBCU Digest named our Department of Art and Design as the Best Fine Arts Program in an HBCU. In 2015, Correctionalofficer.org ranked the Criminal Justice program third out of 40 state institutions. The Reserve Officers Training Corp (ROTC) program is nationally ranked and two alumni were recently inducted into the U.S. Army Cadet Command Hall of Fame.

VSU scholars are excelling in many ways. The U.S. Fulbright Student Scholarship Board awarded a student an English Teaching Assistantship, 16 students participated in the prestigious Leadership Institute by the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, and a scholar served as a student ambassador for the White House Initiative on HBCUs. In June of 2018, HBCU Digest recognized VSU as the top HBCU, the Best Female

Student and the Best Board of Trustees.

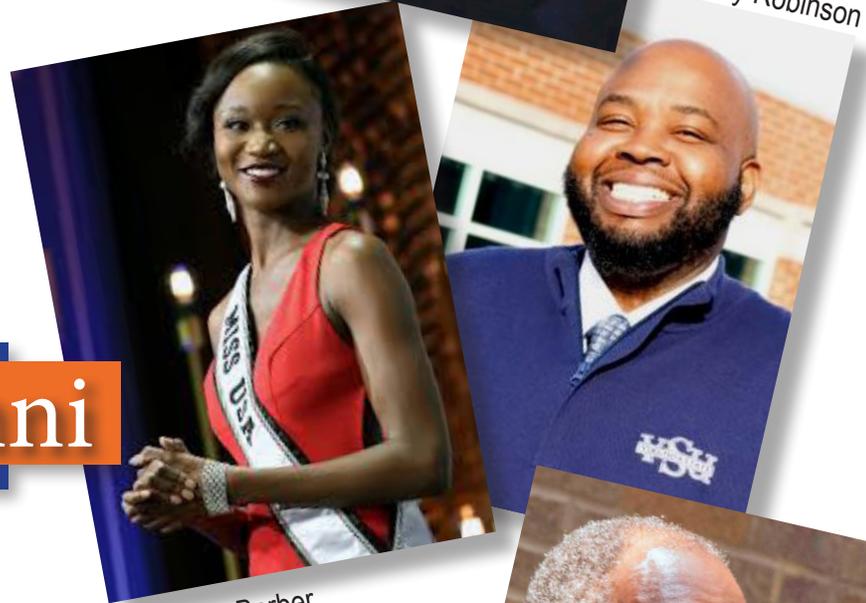
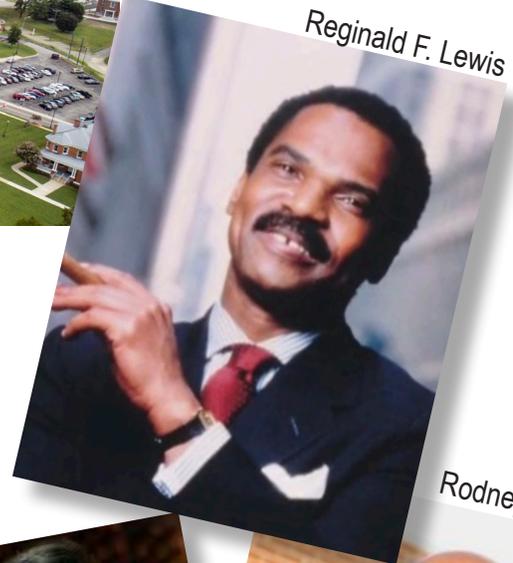
VSU significantly impacts the community. Its College of Agriculture is thriving with new research programs in industrial hemp, health benefits of specialty crops and food safety and processing at its Agricultural Research Station; new 4-H STEM and Leadership programs for youth; a new International Agriculture Certificate program to help students compete globally and a dietetic training program that is empowering black registered dieticians to combat obesity and chronic diseases in our communities. Two dozen students received internships and scholarships through partnerships with the USDA. VSU's Virginia Cooperative Extension and Small Farm Outreach Program expanded training and outreach to small, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and continue to be an important advocate in the Commonwealth.



Colleges

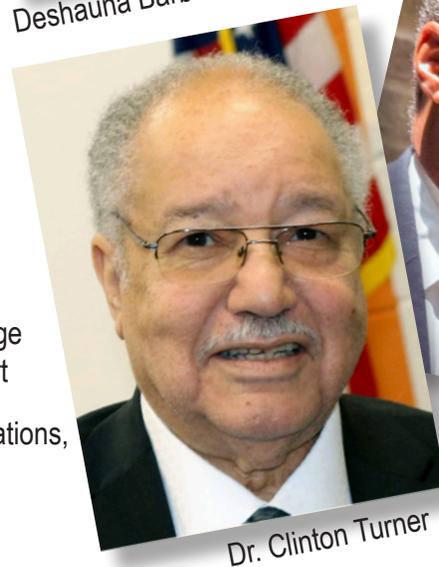
VSU features academic environments in seven colleges:

- College of Agriculture
- Reginald F. Lewis College of Business
- College of Education
- College of Engineering and Technology
- College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- College of Natural and Health Sciences
- College of Graduate Studies



Notable Alumni

- Reginald F. Lewis – Entrepreneur
- Deshauna Barber – Former Miss USA (2016)
- Rodney Robinson – 2019 National Teacher of the Year
- Gladys West – Co-developer of the GPS System
- The late Dr. Clinton Turner – First African American in the nation to hold a cabinet level position in agriculture
- Robert Morgan – Actor
- Judge Rodger Gregory – Chief United States Circuit Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Court
- Dr. Robert Holland – Former Associate Director for Operations, USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)



Research



Dr. Rafat Siddiqui, Food Scientist, VSU Agricultural Research Station

Specialty Crops Show Health Benefits

Chronic diseases, such as obesity, cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, are prevalent in society. While not a cure, research shows promising signs that consuming specialty crops, such as ginger, turmeric, plums and papayas, have important health benefits that can help control or slow down the progression of these diseases. The Food Chemistry and Nutrition Science laboratory at Virginia State University is actively involved in investigating beneficial effects of fruits and vegetables for preventing and/or treating chronic diseases. The purpose of this program is to introduce new profitable crops in Virginia for promoting agriculture-based business development and human health and nutrition.

In Virginia, the obesity rate in adults is 30.1%, according to the 2018 State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America report. Obesity is one of the leading contributory factors in developing chronic diseases including cancer, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. In Virginia, cancer is the leading cause of death, followed by cardiovascular disease. About 5.9% of Virginians are living with a variety of cardiovascular diseases, while 9.6% of Virginians (nearly 1 in every 10) are living with diabetes, which is the 7th leading cause of death in the state. While those numbers

are disconcerting, more awareness of how consuming foods that help prevent and treat chronic diseases, particularly obesity, is helping to educate consumers about the health benefits gained from ginger, turmeric, plums and papayas.

Modern science has discovered that most food contains effective disease preventive biomolecules that can improve our health and reduce our risk for many diseases including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, poor bone health and neurological diseases.

Promotion of the health benefits of these crops will help encourage the public to consume certain types of produce to reduce or slow down the progression of chronic diseases. The Food Chemistry and Nutrition Science program will also provide incentives for farmers to grow these crops in Virginia.

Ginger is a new emerging niche crop for small farmers in Virginia. VSU's Small Fruits and Vegetable Program conducted a statewide ginger and turmeric workshop attended by more than 95 participants. Locally grown "baby ginger" has proven to be superior for its nutrients contents and its anti-obesity effects than that of mature ginger. Consuming baby ginger can lower the incidences of obesity. In 2019, Virginia consumers had access to locally grown ginger and turmeric substituted for imported ginger and turmeric from other countries. A total of 3,000 lbs. of ginger and 2,000 lbs. of turmeric with a total value of \$55,000 was sold by Virginia growers at local markets.



Dr. Reza Rafie, Extension Horticulture Specialist

Extension



Dr. Theresa Nartea, Extension Marketing & Agribusiness Specialist

Value Added Products Increase Revenue for Small Farmers and Ranchers



In Virginia, 10,862 Virginia farmers earned less than \$1,000 from their farm operation (USDA, 2017). Conversely, USDA (2018) reported that Virginia producers sold nearly \$1.3 million in value added products, which were sold directly to customers through farm stands, farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture and online sales.

With market demand skyrocketing for ready to eat specialty food products, educational outreach on cost effective methods of producing and marketing value added farm products to Virginia small and minority farmers may provide significant economic benefits. Additional education and technical assistance are needed to assist small, minority, limited-resource farmers to adopt value added production and marketing practices.

From 2010 to 2019, in collaboration with the Virginia Food Works (VFW) Processing Facility, the Southern Virginia Food Hub and the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP), more than 15 educational, hands-on workshops and processing facility tours have been conducted with more than 500 limited-resource, socially disadvantaged farmers and food artisans throughout Virginia. Additionally, direct technical service from the VCE Marketing and Agribusiness program at VSU and cooperating VCE Extension specialists and

VSU SFOP agents is provided to participants needing additional assistance in understanding regulations, label creation, consumer promotional materials and cost-effective packaging options. In 2019, the Marketing and Agribusiness program created an outreach brochure for VFW to distribute to potential clientele to explain the value added opportunities available from VFW.

As a result of collaborative value added farm tours, workshops and the VFW brochure, educational outreach efforts on behalf of the Virginia Food Works Processing Facility and Southern Virginia Food Hub, 100 unique value added farm products from strawberry jam to spicy tomato salsa have been created with Virginia grown farm products and are being sold directly to the public through farm stands, farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture, food hubs and online sales with an estimated retail value range of \$5 to \$15 per specialty product netting 100 limited-resource, socially disadvantaged farmers and food artisans a minimum annual gross income range of \$125,000.

Academics

Ivi Mitchell is well on her way to becoming a leader in the agriculture industry. Mitchell, who graduated from Virginia State University in May, was an 1890 USDA Scholar and standout student. She majored in agriculture with a concentration in plant and soil science and minored in Spanish. Mitchell, 21, aspires to become a plant geneticist.

Mitchell's passion for plants grew from a seed planted in high school. When she went to a new school in her hometown of Columbia, South Carolina, she was required to take a transfer class that introduced her to agriculture. The class was floriculture and horticulture based, and her budding curiosity sprouted from there.

"Even though it was a requirement, it was something I found a genuine interest in," she said. That interest led her to Virginia State University's College of Agriculture.

"I love the plant and soil sciences aspect, because when you look at it, you kind of realize plants are like humans in a way. They just can't talk, which is my favorite part about it."



As a USDA Scholar, Mitchell not only had the opportunity for a full scholarship and a high quality education, she also had an unbelievable career opportunity,

having received numerous USDA internships while at VSU.

Ag Notes

- Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP) Director **William Crutchfield** was appointed to the advisory board of the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (SDFR) Policy Research Center at Alcorn State University. He also signed an agreement with National Conservation Resources Service to expand SFOP outreach efforts to North Carolina and Maryland.
- Fall 2019, **Rosetta Brice** is the first graduate of the VSU's new **International Agriculture Certificate Program**.
- **Dr. Chantel Wilson**, Cooperative Extension 4-H STEAM educational specialist, was selected to serve on the leadership team for the Mars Base Camp 4-H STEM Challenge for 4-H National Youth Science Day.

IMPACTS



She was also among 20 undergraduates and 10 graduate students selected from across the country as part of the USDA's Agricultural Outlook Forum's Future Leaders in Agriculture Program. In an effort to promote the importance of developing the next generation of agriculture leaders, each year USDA selects a small group of exemplary students to attend the Agricultural Outlook Forum. As part of the program, she attended the weeklong forum in February in Washington, DC and met Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue. Mitchell said she's grateful for the many opportunities she received from VSU and USDA. This strong foundation is helping her make her mark as a leader and paving the way to a bright future.



- VSU was awarded a **Tree Campus USA University** designation from the National Arbor Day Foundation for the sixth year in a row for its dedication to campus forestry management and environmental stewardship.
- **Dr. Yixiang Xu**, food scientist with the Agricultural Research Station, was named an associate editor for the American Chemical Society's newest publication, ACS Food Science & Technology.
- VSU's **Dietetic Internship Program** – one of only six programs of its kind at an HBCU - has contributed to the training of .5% of all black registered dietitians in the U.S. over the past five years.
- The first **Virtual Ag Discovery Program** launched in Summer 2020 at VSU and among 1890 participating institutions.