

**VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF VISITORS
COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS
9:00 A.M., THURSDAY, September 10, 2026
Gateway Dining & Events Center
(on the campus of Virginia State University)**

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER.....Mr. Thomas Cosgrove, Chair

ROLL CALL

INVOCATION

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

- April 23, 2026

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

CLOSED SESSION

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Academic Affairs Updates Dr. Tia A. Minnis
Sr. Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Academic Spotlight – College of Agriculture..... Dr. Jewel Bronaugh
Dean, College of Agriculture; Director of Land Grant Programs

Enrollment Updates..... Dr. Alexis Brooks-Walter
Chief Operating Officer/Sr. Vice President for Student Success & Administration

Student Success Strategic Initiatives.....Dr. Tia A. Minnis
Sr. Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

**VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF VISITORS
COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, September 10, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER

Visitor Cosgrove, Chair, called the Academic and Student Affairs Committee to order at approximately 9:03 am. The meeting was held at the Gateway Dining and Events Center on the 2nd floor.

ROLL CALL

A quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Thomas Cosgrove (*Chair*)

Mr. Peter McPherson

Ms. Clarice Torian

Ms. Morenike Miles

Dr. Victor Branch, Rector

Dr. Robert Denton, Jr.

BOARD APPOINTEES

Dr. Kenneth Lewis, Faculty Representative (*arrived at 9:05 am*)

Mr. Zin Cambridge, SGA Representative

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Ms. Verndell Robinson

General Dennis L. Via

Mr. Robert Thompson

Ms. Daphne Meeks

Dr. Joseph A.F. Chase, Jr.

Mr. Baron Braswell

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Jon Moore

Dr. William Murray

Mr. Kishore Thota

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT

Dr. Makola M. Abdullah, President

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

Ms. Joyce Wilkins, Associate VP for Budget & Finance/Interim Chief Financial Officer

Ms. Kendra White, Asst. Vice President for Institutional Integrity & Compliance

Dr. Willis W. Walter, Vice President for Advancement and External Engagement

Dr. Alexi Brooks-Walter, COO/Sr. VP for Student Success & Administration

Dr. Annie Redd, Chief of Staff/Director, Board of Operations & Relations

COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS
THURSDAY, September 10, 2026
MEETING MINUTES
PAGE 2

LEGAL COUNSEL

Mr. Nathan Moberley

Chair Cosgrove announced several additions to the agenda. He stated that, following the closed session, the Committee would conduct the election of a Vice Chair due to his recent elevation to Chair. He also added a period for Chair's Remarks. In addition, Chair Cosgrove noted that, at the conclusion of the agenda, President Abdullah would provide remarks regarding the University's graduation stretch goal initiative.

INVOCATION

Visitor Cosgrove invited Rev. Thomas Wynn, Director of Campus Ministries, to offer the invocation.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The committee approved the agenda by voice vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The committee approved the minutes from the April 23, 2026, meeting by voice vote.

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

President Abdullah welcomed the attendees. He expressed his appreciation for the Committee members' attendance, service, and ongoing commitment to Virginia State University. For the students who were present, President Abdullah shared the role and importance of the Board of Visitors. President Abdullah noted that the meeting provided an opportunity to formally introduce the University's two new Senior Vice Presidents, Dr. Alexis Brooks-Walter and Dr. Tia Minnis. He welcomed both leaders and acknowledged their appointments to the University's senior leadership team.

President Abdullah publicly recognized and thanked the Dean of the College of Agriculture for her dedication, leadership, and commitment to advancing Virginia State University and supporting its mission of excellence. He expressed appreciation for her contributions and efforts to help make the University the best institution it can be.

CLOSED SESSION

The Chair asked for a motion to enter a closed session for the Discussion or consideration of matters pursuant to 2.2-3711 (A)(1), specifically, "...assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body..." namely, items concerning promotion and tenure. The committee went into closed session at 9:07 am.

COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS
THURSDAY, September 10, 2026
MEETING MINUTES
PAGE 3

The Chair asked for a motion to return to open session. The motion was made, properly seconded, and approved by voice vote. The Chair read a statement certifying that, during its closed meeting, the Board discussed only public business matters lawfully exempt from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and only those public business matters identified

in the motion convening the Board in closed session. The Committee voted by roll call to certify the meeting.

Chair Cosgrove announced that, with his elevation to Chair, the Committee needed to fill the Vice Chair position. He nominated Visitor Morenike Miles to serve as Vice Chair, citing her leadership on the Board and her commitment to academic and student affairs. After calling for additional nominations and receiving none, the nomination was seconded. The Committee then voted, and Visitor Morenike Miles was elected Vice Chair unanimously.

COMMITTEE CHAIR REMARKS

Chair Cosgrove outlined four priorities for the Committee during the upcoming year. First, he proposed beginning each meeting with a focus on the University's mission by recognizing student and faculty achievements. Second, he recommended developing a consistent student and academic affairs dashboard that would provide the Committee with recurring data and key performance measures. Third, he emphasized the importance of maintaining purposeful agendas focused on governance responsibilities, student outcomes, and university-wide priorities. Finally, he proposed making the improvement of student retention, persistence, and graduation rates a standing focus of the Committee. Chair Cosgrove highlighted the Board's long-term goal of significantly improving graduation outcomes, emphasizing the importance of data-informed decision-making, accountability, and ongoing collaboration between the Committee and University administration to support student success. He encouraged Committee members to provide feedback regarding key metrics, priorities, and strategies for achieving these objectives.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Academic Affairs Updates

Dr. Minnis emphasized the importance of workforce development and experiential learning in preparing students for academic and professional success. She highlighted several students whose internships, research, and study abroad experiences demonstrated the impact of these opportunities.

Dr. Minnis recognized Aileen McConnon, a May graduate in Computer Science who returned to Virginia State University to pursue a master's degree. During the summer, she completed an internship with Philip Morris and was recognized by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) as one of Virginia's Top 50 Interns. She also served as the mechanical lead on the University's NASA Lunabotics team.

COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS
THURSDAY, September 10, 2026
MEETING MINUTES
PAGE 4

She also recognized Charles Randall, a junior Manufacturing Engineering major with a 3.77 GPA, who completed an internship with General Motors. His work contributed to improvements in maintenance operations, including a reported reduction in equipment downtime. Randall was also recognized for his involvement with the University's NASA Lunabotics team, which was a finalist in the NASA robotics competition focused on lunar regolith collection.

Dr. Minnis further highlighted Kristina Piercy and Camille Hall, Political Science majors who participated in a study abroad program at Hertford College, University of Oxford. She noted that they were the first Virginia State University students to participate in the program. Hall graduated in May with a 4.0 GPA and is pursuing a career in law, while Piercy shared that the experience expanded her academic, professional, and global perspectives. Dr. Minnis commended both students for representing the University with distinction.

Dr. Minnis also recognized Dr. Dan Roberts, Dean of Honors College and leader of the Division of Global Leadership and Talent Development, for creating transformative opportunities that support student growth and success.

Following the student spotlight, Dr. Minnis introduced Dr. Jewel Bronaugh, Dean of the College of Agriculture. She welcomed Dr. Bronaugh back to Virginia State University and highlighted her distinguished career, which includes service as Chief Executive Officer of the 1890 Universities Foundation, Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and previous service as Dean of the College of Agriculture at Virginia State University. Dr. Minnis expressed appreciation for Dr. Bronaugh's leadership and welcomed her return to the University.

College of Agriculture

Dr. Jewel Bronaugh, Dean of the College of Agriculture, provided an overview of the College and its role in advancing Virginia State University's land-grant mission through teaching, research, and extension services. She highlighted the College's commitment to serving agricultural communities through its integrated approach to education, research, and outreach, supported by the University's 416-acre research farm and nationally recognized Small Farm Outreach Program.

Dr. Bronaugh reported that Fall enrollment in the College of Agriculture increased to 418 students, reflecting a 15 percent increase from the previous year. She noted that the College currently offers degree programs in Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Hospitality Management, along with certificate programs and graduate opportunities. She also highlighted the growing representation of women in agricultural sciences, consistent with national trends.

The presentation emphasized the College's success in developing future leaders and attracting alumni back to serve the University. Dr. Bronaugh recognized several alumni who have returned

COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS
THURSDAY, September 10, 2026
MEETING MINUTES
PAGE 5

to Virginia State University in leadership roles, including individuals serving in extension, research, and farm management positions.

Dr. Bronaugh also thanked University leadership and elected officials for their support of the College and noted several recent visits by state and federal leaders. She further announced that members of the Virginia General Assembly would visit Randolph Farm for an upcoming educational program.

As part of the presentation, three students shared their academic and professional experiences:

A senior Dietetics student discussed his work providing nutrition-focused services and health assessments through campus programs. He highlighted the practical experiences that help prepare him for a career as a registered dietitian.

An Agricultural Business and Economics student described her involvement in agricultural technology, research, business competitions, drone technology, and software development projects. She shared her goal of utilizing technology and business solutions to support global food production and sustainability efforts.

A senior Hospitality Management major, he highlighted internship experiences with Legends Hospitality and Wolfgang Puck Catering, research presentations at national and international conferences, and leadership roles within the hospitality profession. He noted that these experiences have prepared him to pursue a career as a chef in the sports industry.

Dr. Bronaugh concluded by expressing her pride in the students and emphasizing the College's commitment to providing hands-on learning experiences, leadership development opportunities, and career preparation that support student success and workforce readiness.

President Abdullah publicly recognized and thanked the Dean of the College of Agriculture for her dedication, leadership, and commitment to advancing Virginia State University and supporting its mission of excellence. He expressed appreciation for her contributions and efforts to help make the University the best institution it can be.

Enrollment Updates

Dr. Brooks-Walter presented a preliminary enrollment, and admissions update and noted that the data remained subject to change pending final census verification in October. Final enrollment figures will be presented at the November meeting. She emphasized that the admissions team demonstrated exceptional commitment throughout the recruitment cycle and was instrumental in achieving the University's enrollment success despite leadership transitions within the admissions office.

COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS
THURSDAY, September 10, 2026
MEETING MINUTES
PAGE 5

Dr. Brooks-Walter reported that fall admissions results reflected more than 22,000 applications, over 16,000 admissions offers, and more than 2,000 enrollment deposits. She noted that these figures represented a significant achievement given the ongoing national demographic decline in the number of high school graduates. In response to Committee questions, she explained that higher education institutions continue to compete for a smaller pool of prospective students and that Virginia State University has successfully increased enrollment despite those challenges.

Committee members discussed the impact of increased enrollment on campus infrastructure, safety, and student services. Dr. Brooks-Walter acknowledged that continued growth requires ongoing investments in personnel, facilities, technology, and campus security. She outlined several initiatives underway, including expanding campus police and security staffing, enhancing surveillance technology, improving residence hall access controls, and evaluating additional perimeter security measures.

Committee discussion also focused on campus safety and security. Members noted that colleges and universities nationwide continue to face evolving security challenges. It was emphasized that while infrastructure and security investments are essential, fostering a culture of shared responsibility among students is equally important. Committee members commended the University for its proactive approach to safety and encouraged continued efforts to educate students on situational awareness and reporting potential concerns.

Student Success Strategic Initiatives

The Committee reviewed graduation rate data for first-time, full-time undergraduate students, noting that graduate students are not included in the First-Time-in-College (FTIC) cohort used for graduation rate calculations. While graduate enrollment experienced a 14.8% increase and now represents a larger share of the university's student population, those students are excluded from the graduation rate metrics presented.

Administration reported current four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates for FTIC students. Members noted that each graduation rate is based on prior student cohorts, with the four-year graduation rate reflecting the Fall 2022 cohort and the five-year graduation rate reflecting the Fall 2021 cohort. The Committee discussed the importance of considering historical cohort performance when evaluating graduation outcomes and establishing future goals.

President Abdullah shared a concern regarding the President's stretch goal for graduation rates approved in April 2026. President Abdullah shared insights that a six-year graduation rate target in 2030 had already started--with the 2024 class. Therefore, he recommended modifying the 2030 stretch goal to a four-year graduation rate, beginning with the Fall class of 2026.

Committee members emphasized that graduation stretch goals should be ambitious yet attainable. Discussion centered on the value of setting goals that inspire confidence and commitment from

COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS
THURSDAY, September 10, 2026
MEETING MINUTES
PAGE 6

the university community while remaining realistic. Members noted that the administration has engaged in thoughtful consultation with campus stakeholders regarding the development of graduation goals and strategies to improve student success.

The Committee discussed several possible approaches for evaluating and setting graduation targets, including extending goal timelines, emphasizing four-year graduation rates, and examining retention data as a predictor of future graduation outcomes. Members observed that improvements in student retention historically correlate with increased graduation rates and may provide useful indicators of long-term success.

Committee members expressed support for President Abdullah's collaborative approach to establishing graduation goals and developing strategies to achieve them. The discussion also highlighted the potential use of available resources to support student success initiatives, including enhanced advising, academic support programs, and other retention-focused efforts.

The Committee concluded that graduation rate improvement remains an important strategic priority and agreed that further collaboration between the Committee, the President, and the administration will be necessary to refine goals and identify effective pathways for increasing student success and degree completion rates.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Visitor Cosgrove called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was received, properly seconded, and the committee voted by voice vote. The Vice Chair adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:20 a.m.

APPROVED:

Chair

Date