

**VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF VISITORS**  
**FULL BOARD MEETING**  
**10:30 A.M., FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2025**  
**Alfred W. Harris Academic Commons Bldg. 1<sup>st</sup> Floor**  
***(No Public Comment Period Scheduled)***

**DRAFT AGENDA**

**Rector Victor K. Branch, Presiding**

Call to Order ..... Mr. Victor K. Branch, Rector

Roll Call ..... Ms. Verndell Robinson, Secretary

Invocation (*Rev. Thomas Wynn, Director of Campus Ministries*)

Rector's Remarks

Approval of Agenda

Minutes from Previous Meetings:

- September 12, 2025 Full Board Minutes

President's Report ..... Dr. Makola M. Abdullah

Closed Session (if necessary)

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- Academic & Student Affairs Committee
  - **Approval Item(s):**
    - 2025-2028 VSU Strategic Plan
    - VSU 6-year Plan
    - Resolutions to approve Honorary Degrees
  - **Information Item(s):**
    - Summary of Updates
    - Reports from the Faculty and Student Representatives to the Board
      - Dr. Kenneth Lewis, Chair of the Faculty Senate
      - Mr. Marquis Mason, President of the Student Government Association

## FULL BOARD MEETING

Friday, November 21, 2025

Page 2

- Facilities & Finance Committee
  - **Approval Item(s):** None
  - **Information Item(s):**
    - Summary of Updates
- Institutional Advancement Committee
  - **Approval Item(s):** None
  - **Information Item(s):**
    - Summary of Updates
- Audit & Compliance Committee
  - **Approval Item (s):** None
  - **Information Item(s):**
    - Summary of Updates

Report of Affiliated Foundation(s)

Legal Counsel Update (*if any*)

Board Self-Assessment of its Performance

Announcements

**Note: The Personnel, Compensation & Governance Committee did not convene in November 2025**

11.18.25

**VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF VISITORS**  
**FULL BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**NOVEMBER 21, 2025**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Rector Victor K. Branch called the meeting of the Virginia State University (VSU) Board of Visitors (Board) to order at approximately 10:32 a.m. in Alfred W. Harris Academic Commons Bldg. 1<sup>st</sup> Floor. The Rector read a statement that the Full Board meeting is available to the general public via livestream in compliance with the Commonwealth of Virginia's open meeting laws.

**ROLL CALL**

A quorum was present.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Victor K. Branch (Rector) ex officio

Dr. Valerie Brown

Dr. Joseph A. F. Chase, Jr.

Mr. Thomas Cosgrove

Dr. Robert Denton, Jr.

Dr. Harold Green, Jr. (*Virtual*)

Dr. Leonard Haynes, III (*absent*)

Ms. Daphne Meeks

Mr. M. Peter McPherson

Ms. Morenike Miles

Mr. Jon Moore (*absent*)

Ms. Verndell Robinson

Mr. Kishore Thota (*Virtual*) @11:15am

Mr. Robert Thompson

General Dennis L. Via (Vice Chair)

Dr. Harold Green participated virtually from Richmond VA virtually due to medical reasons.

Mr. Kishore Thota participated virtually from New York due to personal reasons.

**BOARD APPOINTEES:**

Dr. Kenneth Lewis, Chair of the Faculty Senate

Mr. Marquis Mason, President of the Student Government Association

**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

Ms. Shawri King-Casey, Vice President for Institutional Integrity and Compliance

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

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

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

**FULL BOARD MEETING**  
**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2025**  
**PAGE 2**

**INVOCATION**

The Rector invited Reverend Thomas Wynn, Director of Campus Ministries, to give the invocation.

**RECTOR'S REMARKS**

Rector Victor K. Branch began by expressing sincere appreciation to Reverend Thomas Wynn for setting the stage for such a productive meeting. The Rector expressed thanks to everyone for their flexibility during the September Board meeting which had to be converted to a virtual format. He stated that all arose to the occasion—particularly the President and his team—and continued to drive the work of the University despite unexpected challenges. As Reverend Wynn noted, Virginia State University knows how to overcome obstacles and persevere, and that was clearly demonstrated during that meeting.

Rector Branch acknowledged that this Board meeting was in the new Alfred W. Harris Academic Commons Building; a beautiful facility that truly showcases that “Greater Happens Here.” He expressed thanks to Dr. Abdullah for arranging for the Board to hold its first in-person meeting in this remarkable space. This building symbolizes the incredible progress and achievements taking place at VSU.

Additionally, Rector Branch recognized his predecessor, Dr. Valerie K. Brown, who continues to serve on the Board with unwavering dedication, giving her time, talent, and treasure to Virginia State University. He expressed gratitude for her mentorship and guidance as he follows in her footsteps. Lastly, Rector Branch expressed thanks to the Board for their engagement and energy during the Thursday sessions and Wednesday evening’s activities. He applauded the Board for their visible passion for the mission of Virginia State University and expressed appreciation for the commitment they bring to this work.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

The Rector asked for a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes. The Committee approved the previous meeting minutes from September 12, 2025 by voice vote.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

President Abdullah introduced the Women’s and Men’s Soccer Teams and their coaches and congratulated them on their recent championships in the USCAA and CIAA Division 2. The teams are new sports programs at VSU, and the coaches shared their views about the importance of investing in our young people to create opportunities for them to excel.

The President recognized Rector Victor Branch on being the recipient of the 2025 Virginia Icon Honors Awards. He also recognized Mrs. Morenike Miles as the newest Board member and Ms. Daphne Meeks on her new position as Director of Finance at the Norfolk Westside Marriott for Concord Hospitality.

**FULL BOARD MEETING**  
**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2025**  
**PAGE 3**

President presented data on six-year graduation rates that included every institution in the country. In summary, the President indicated that graduation rates are important and, we need to increase the numbers; however, comparing VSU to an institution whose student median family income is double that of VSU's is patently unfair. While the easiest way to raise our graduation rates at VSU is to increase the median family income of our students, that would mean not admitting some students. The questions to ask are: 1) Is that what we want to do as a country, as an institution?, and 2) do the young people deserve an opportunity to succeed? Any discussion of graduation rates without a detailed dive into finances will not present an accurate or complete picture of graduation rates.

Discussion followed, and several visitors expressed appreciation to the President for sharing the data that educated them on the challenges of judging institutions by graduation rates.

**CLOSED SESSION**

The Board went into closed session to discussion or consideration of personnel matters pursuant to 2.2-3711 (A)(3), specifically, "...Discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body, namely, physical expansion of the campus by acquisition of real property. Discussion or consideration of matters pursuant to 2.2-3711 (A)(7), specifically, "...Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body;" namely, compliance strategies for specific federal legislation potentially impacting VSU. Discussion or consideration of matters pursuant to 2.2-3711 (A)(7), specifically, "...Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body;" namely, specific items concerning outstanding financial obligations held by the Virginia State University Real Estate Foundation. Discussion or consideration of honorary degrees or special awards pursuant to 2.2-3711 (A)(11); namely, review and approval of candidates for conferral of honorary degrees during the University's Fall 2025 Commencement exercises. Discussion or consideration of information pursuant to 2.2-3711 (A)(19), relating to the "... Discussion of plans to protect public safety as it relates to . . . specific cybersecurity threats or vulnerabilities and briefings by staff members, legal counsel, or law enforcement or emergency service officials concerning actions taken to respond to such matters or a related threat to public safety; discussion of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 2 or 14 or § 2.2-3705.2, where discussion in an open meeting would jeopardize the safety of any person or the security of any facility, building, structure, information technology system, or software program; or discussion of reports or plans related to the security of any governmental facility, building or structure, or the safety of persons using such facility, building or structure."

The motion was made and properly seconded, and approved by roll call. The Full Board went into closed session.

**FULL BOARD MEETING  
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2025  
PAGE 4**

The Rector asked for a motion to return to open session; the motion was made, properly seconded, and approved by voice vote.

Upon returning to the open session, the Board certified by roll call vote that during its closed meeting, the Board discussed only public business matters lawfully exempted 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.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS  
Academic and Student Affairs Committee**

On behalf of the committee, Mr. Cosgrove, Vice Chair, presented recommendations for approval to the Full Board. The motions were made, properly seconded, and approved by roll call votes. Dr. Haynes and Mr. Moore were not present for the votes.

- Approval of the 2025 -2028 VSU Strategic Plan
- Approval of the VSU 2025 6-Year Plan
- Resolution to Award the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Fine Arts to Rob Morgan
- Resolution to Approve a Posthumous Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters for James M. “Jim” Holland

Mr. Cosgrove provided a summary of updates from the Academics and Student Affairs divisions and called upon the Faculty and Student Representatives to give remarks. Dr. Kenneth Lewis, Faculty Senate Chair, gave remarks on behalf of the Faculty Senate. Marquis Mason, the Student Government Association President, gave remarks on behalf of the Student Government. There were no updates from the Staff Senate.

**Facilities and Finance**

On behalf of the committee, Ms. Meeks, Chair, gave an overview of the Division of Finance and Administration’s updates.

**Institutional Advancement**

On behalf of the committee, Dr. Valerie Brown, Chair, provided a summary of updates from the Division of Institutional Advancement.

**Audit and Compliance**

On behalf of the committee and Chair, Ms. Daphne Meeks provided a summary of updates for the Division of Audit and Compliance.

**FULL BOARD MEETING**  
**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2025**  
**PAGE 5**

**REPORT of AFFILIATED FOUNDATIONS**

**LEGAL COUNSEL UPDATE (IF ANY)**

**BOARD ASSESSMENT OF ITS PERFORMANCE**

Several visitors expressed their appreciation for the Wednesday evening dinner, which will serve as a valuable social occasion for Board members to connect informally.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Rector Brown called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was received and properly seconded, and the Committee voted by voice vote. The Chair adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:03 p.m.

Approved:

**VICTOR K. BRANCH (acr)**

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Victor K. Branch, Rector

**December 13, 2025**

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Date

**VERNDELL ROBINSON (acr)**

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Verndell Robinson, Secretary

**December 13, 2025**

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Date

**RESOLUTION OF  
THE VIRGINIA STATE BOARD OF VISITORS TO APPROVE  
A POSTHUMOUS HONORARY DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS, *honoris causa*, FOR  
THE HONORABLE JAMES M. "JIM" HOLLAND**

**November 21, 2025**

**WHEREAS**, the Honorable James M. "Jim" Holland devoted nearly two decades of exemplary public service to Chesterfield County as the Dale District's representative on the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors, serving five terms from 2008 until his passing in 2025 and, at the time of his death, was the Board's longest-tenured member, providing steady, principled leadership in multiple terms as Board Chair and Vice Chair and earning wide respect for his calm, inclusive, and consensus-building approach to governance; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Holland, a United States Army veteran, certified public accountant, and Master of Business Administration graduate, drew upon his expertise in finance and budgeting to help guide Chesterfield County through major fiscal challenges, including the Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring responsible stewardship of public resources while protecting essential services for residents; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Holland's professional career included distinguished service as a long-time accounting instructor and advisor at Virginia Commonwealth University, where he taught and mentored thousands of students, modeling technical excellence, ethical responsibility, and a deep commitment to student success; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Holland championed public education and access to high-quality community facilities, supporting significant investments in new and replacement school construction and modernization projects, and playing a key role in the transformation of the former Beulah Elementary School into the James M. Holland Recreation Complex, a vibrant community hub serving children, families, and residents across the county; and

**WHEREAS**, he further strengthened the economic and social vitality of the region by supporting major economic development initiatives that brought new jobs and capital investment to Chesterfield County and by representing the county on regional bodies and commissions dedicated to tourism, transportation, workforce development, and regional planning; and

**WHEREAS**, successive governors of the Commonwealth of Virginia appointed Mr. Holland to statewide boards and authorities, including those addressing critical issues such as opioid abatement and public health, thereby recognizing his judgment, integrity, and unwavering commitment to the public good; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Holland's life and service reflect the core values that Virginia State University seeks to instill in its students, integrity, humility, a commitment to justice and opportunity, and a dedication to improving the quality of life for all, particularly in communities surrounding the University; and

**WHEREAS**, Virginia State University awards the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters (*honoris causa*) to individuals whose distinguished careers, public service, and contributions to society exemplify the highest ideals of scholarship, leadership, and humanitarian concern; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Visitors of Virginia State University hereby approves the conferral, posthumously, of the honorary Doctor of Humane Letters (*honoris causa*) upon The Honorable James M. "Jim" Holland, in recognition of his extraordinary record of public service, his leadership in advancing educational opportunity and community development, and his lasting contributions to the citizens of Chesterfield County, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the broader region; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this Resolution and the conferral of the honorary Doctor of Humane Letters be entered into the permanent records of the Board of Visitors of Virginia State University; and

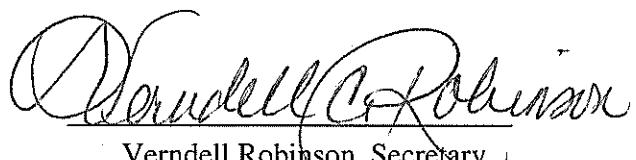
**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that a suitably framed copy of this Resolution be presented to the family of The Honorable James M. "Jim" Holland as a testament to the high esteem in which he is held by the Board of Visitors, the President, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends of Virginia State University.



Victor K. Branch, Rector

11/21/25

Date



Verndell Robinson, Secretary

11-21-25

Date

**RESOLUTION OF  
THE VIRGINIA STATE BOARD OF VISITORS TO AWARD  
THE HONORARY DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF FINE ARTS, *honoris causa*, TO  
ROB MORGAN**

**November 21, 2025**

**WHEREAS**, Rob Morgan, an acclaimed American actor from New Bern, North Carolina, has earned recognition for powerful performances across film and television marked by depth, authenticity, and emotional resonance; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Morgan's career, active since 2004, includes acclaimed roles that highlight his versatility and enduring presence in contemporary entertainment; and

**WHEREAS**, he is widely recognized for his recurring portrayal of Turk Barrett in the Marvel/Netflix television series *Daredevil*, *Luke Cage*, *The Defenders*, *The Punisher*, *Iron Fist*, and *Jessica Jones*; and

**WHEREAS**, his performance as Hap Jackson in the Academy Award-nominated film *Mudbound* (2017) drew significant critical acclaim; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Morgan continues to reach global audiences through his portrayal of Officer Calvin Powell in Netflix's *Stranger Things* (2016–present); and

**WHEREAS**, in 2020, *The New York Times* named Rob Morgan among "The 25 Greatest Actors of the 21st Century," recognizing the humanity and dignity he brings to his roles; and

**WHEREAS**, Rob Morgan is a distinguished alumnus whose achievements in the arts bring honor and recognition to his alma mater, Virginia State University; and

**WHEREAS**, his body of work reflects the values of perseverance, creativity, and integrity that align with the mission of Virginia State University; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Visitors of Virginia State University hereby confers upon Rob Morgan the degree of Doctor of Fine Arts, *honoris causa*, in recognition of his outstanding artistic contributions, excellence in film and television, and enduring influence on American culture; and

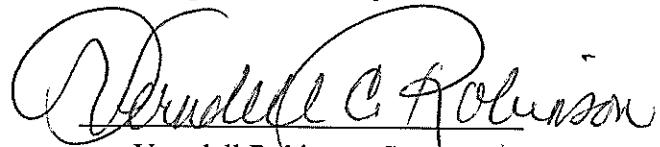
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this honor be formally conferred during the Fall Commencement Ceremony, and that a suitably inscribed diploma be presented as a symbol of the University's esteem and appreciation.



Victor K. Branch, Rector

11/21/25

Date



Verndell Robinson, Secretary

11-21-25

Date