

## Industry Council(s)

Minutes

April 11, 2025

Embassy Suites by Hilton at 2925 Emerywood Parkway, Richmond 23294

8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

Attendees:

Members: Bernard Robinson (Chair), Mike Matthews; Steve Farbstein, Mike King, Dante Washington, Diane Beirne, Phillip Noel, Diane Hamilton, Ray ferguson, Andy Shulick, Linda Melton, Kimion Walker, Sean Purple, Lori Jennings, Aaron Smith, Troy Bell, Mason Cowan, Emily Krause, Jay Ellington, Reggie Booker, Ervin Clarke, Rachelle Epps and Nekeshia Packer-Love

Other Attendees: John Cario and Steven Rios

Staff: Emmanuel Omojokun, Ephrem Eyob, Venkat Mummalaneni, Hari Sharma and Jonathan Young

### Internships

How does VSU identify and/or solicit internship opportunities?

The short answer is that it is a team effort. Staff with responsibilities for business development including e.g. Jonathan Young and Lorin Sodell actively recruit and solicit companies for internships. Staff with responsibilities for connecting students with internships and/or managing internships including e.g. Joe Lyons and Arifah Goodwin are also actively soliciting opportunities including principally from existing relationships. Staff with responsibilities for executive management including e.g. Makola Abdullah and Kevin Davenport identify opportunities and share with relevant staff.

Identifying opportunities does not constitute a hardship for the University.

How does VSU retain the opportunities?

In one word, performance. Internship opportunities that go unfilled either because no one applied and/or candidates didn't merit the opportunity materialize in cessation of opportunity. The same is of course true if a student doesn't perform well. Alternatively, if and when VSU facilitates a smooth process including promptly identifying candidates with the right KSAs and the student(s) perform well there isn't any problem retaining the opportunity.

Students that earn an internship invariably perform well. The secret sauce regards intimate relationships that afford staff knowledge of students' interest and/or capabilities and match-making in lieu of just blanketing the campus with an invite to apply. The principal challenge regards scaling student interest/availability in internships and/or affording more students relevant KSAs.

Is there a Career Services department in the College of Business?

Yes; Jonathan Young's shop manages.

The College's students also benefit from the University's Career Services department along with the Honor's College Career Services department both of whom do terrific work.

Leverage platforms like e.g. "handshake" pertinent to internships.

The University is a "handshake" school.

Students' preferred platforms include Indeed and LinkedIn. Irrespective of the platform, the key regards IF the University has a relationship with the employer.

## **Marketing**

It is important to share information relevant to VSU happenings.

Both the University and the College invest a lot of energy in multiple marketing strategies but perhaps is currently leaning on social media the most in 2025. Past efforts included billboards, TV, etc. The College of Business in a year reaches over 20,000 unique viewers with more than 200,000 views. The University as a whole obviously extends even wider and deeper.

Candidly, this is perhaps the College's and the University's sweet spot.

Success stories, updates, newsletters, etc. are valuable.

The College publishes three newsletters in a years, click here <https://www.vsu.edu/files/docs/business/newsletter-fall-2024.pdf> for the most recent but anticipate receipt shortly of the spring newsletter. Every Friday the College disseminates a list of Student Accomplishments to every student, faculty, staff, etc. identifying success stories for the week along with pictures. The College includes video and large TV monitors in Singleton Hall that profile hundreds of students and their accomplishments.

Bragging on students and their accomplishments to be blunt exceeds any University yours truly has familiarity with including my alma mater(s) William and Mary and Virginia Commonwealth.

## **Mentoring**

Additional support for mentoring is identified as important.

The College has a long list of persons willing to be a mentor but a very short list of persons genuinely interested in being a mentee. Most students communicate an interest in being a mentee but barriers preclude active mentor/mentee relationships. Barriers often include lack of follow up.

Emphasis should be put on a structured mentoring program. Emily Krause offered to help.

The College adopted a very structured industry led mentoring program but it fell a-part largely because to work it needs someone to be able to devote a lot of time to following up with

mentors/mentees to ensure that regular communication is materializing. It should be noted that the College and University has many peer to peer mentoring programs.

Self-selection is key.

## **Curriculum**

An AI course should be required of students.

AI is being embedded in several courses and is like at every institution of higher learning an emphasis by the University with the Office of Provost requiring metrics pertinent to inclusion in curriculum.

AI is tricky because like so many things in life is a double-edge sword, click here for a recent survey: <https://nypost.com/2025/04/21/tech/gen-z-grads-say-their-college-degrees-are-worthless-thanks-to-ai/>

Attending industry events specific to AI should be emphasized.

The College has begun sending students to events for AI but needs to scale.

Agreed!

A project management course should be required.

Project Management is addressed in some business courses but it is not per se an emphasis.

Mandatory courses already preclude much student ownership of their curriculum BUT an opportunity regards affording business students more opportunities to take engineering school project management coursework to be counted to a business curriculum.

A financial management course should be required.

The College used to require a financial management course but it is now an elective.

Mandatory courses already preclude much student ownership of their curriculum BUT a new initiative with the Shawn Carter Foundation and the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business has led to more than 60 students a semester taking the coursework.

A personal branding course should be afforded students.

Students are required to take a personal branding course.

Personal branding should be incorporated in EVERY course. This is an opportunity for improvement.

## **Self and Career Exploration**

Assist students in identifying goals.

The College excels in this respect. Between Sharon Taylor's advising department and Jonathan Young's shop along with faculty/staff and student organizations any student genuinely interested in goal setting is afforded countless opportunities.

VSU does this very well.

Afford students exposure to career opportunities.

The College hosts over 250 companies in the building in a semester.

The College doesn't have any challenge in this regard. If any challenge, it regards scaling student interest.

### **Entrepreneurship**

Collaborate with entrepreneurs on projects.

The College has some limited success in this regard but a lot more opportunities would benefit students and faculty/staff. The College's Center for Entrepreneurship is doing a terrific job in identifying opportunities and connecting the dots.

VSU benefits from a lot of student entrepreneurs; the culture supports entrepreneurs. However, more diversity of the kinds of entrepreneurial products and services is key.

### **Financial Planning**

Afford students an opportunity to train and to earn certifications.

The College largely leans on third-party friends to train students in financial planning pertinent to certification.

This could be a big opportunity for VSU.

### **Cross Pollination**

Develop interdisciplinary collaboration between e.g. business and engineering students.

Collaboration is currently limited but opportunities abound.

This could look something like VCU's Da Vinci Center.

### **Externships**

Emphasize shadow visits, field trips, etc.

The College has a shadow program and prioritizes off-campus experiences.

Absolutely key!

**Soft Skills**

Emphasize communication including email, writing, follow up, networking, public speaking, etc.

The College requires a course pertinent to the preceding.

VSU would benefit from requiring all students irrespective of discipline to take the Soft Skills course.