



2017 State of the University Address

Virginia Wesleyan University

President Scott D. Miller

August 22, 2017

Good afternoon! Thank you for coming...Before we begin, let me pause to convey our sympathy to the City of Charlottesville, the University of Virginia, and all individuals and communities everywhere that confront racism, intolerance, and violence. From its earliest days, Virginia Wesleyan has welcomed all who seek education, acceptance, and understanding. We continue to be—and will always be—an inclusive community, one devoted to personal excellence and societal achievement. We stand with all Americans who oppose bigotry, who fight for justice, and who seek to do God’s work in abundance. As I invite our Chaplain, Greg West, to come forward and bless our gathering today, I challenge our campus community to find ways to support one another and to achieve peace in our society and our world, during this new academic year and beyond.

As part of our response to recent events, I am pleased to announce that Virginia Wesleyan will soon recruit a Director of the Center for Civic Engagement and Service Learning. As determined by discussions yesterday with Provost Tim O’Rourke and Vice President for Student Affairs Keith Moore, the position will build upon a strong foundation of student volunteerism and service learning at Virginia Wesleyan, and will shape, expand, and direct volunteer and service opportunities, neighborhood partnerships, and interfaith dialogue.

Annie and I are pleased and excited to begin our third year with you, and we thank all of you for the warm welcome since joining the Virginia Wesleyan Family. We also thank you for the caring and compassion at the passing of my father in February and the congratulatory messages on the birth of our grandson this month. Virginia Wesleyan University is an incredibly special place.

Before I share my thoughts on our strengths and opportunities, I wish to welcome and thank a number of special guests in attendance:

I am grateful for the generous support of the sponsors of today’s State of the University Address:

- The Bonnewell Group at Morgan Stanley, represented by Trustee Gary Bonnewell, VWU class of 1979
- The Franklin Johnston Group, Taylor Franklin, President and COO and VWU class of 2004.
- Hourigan Construction, Chris Brandt, Executive Vice President
- Sentara, President and CEO Howard Kern and VWU Trustee

- SunTrust, Charity Volman, Hampton Roads President

We are grateful for the tremendous leadership provided by our Board of Trustees. Several join us today:

- Gary Bonnewell
- Butch Everett
- Susan Goode
- Mary Haddad
- Jon Pruden
- Cindy Rodriguez
- Alan Shaw, a new member of the Board of Trustees who is Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer of Norfolk Southern Corporation
- Chip Tsantes, Virginia Wesleyan class of 1983
- John Peters

In the summer of 2015, just two months after arriving, I delivered my first State of the College Address. I challenged Virginia Wesleyan to “be at the top of our game, every day and in every respect...to be alert to those who can share and contribute to our mission, our vision, and our values.”

I stated then what remains even more true today: “...demographic changes, rising costs, new technologies, and increased competition compel us to develop innovative strategies to leverage opportunities.”

Two years later—and it’s been a very fast two years!—we have boldly addressed these challenges. We have made substantial progress toward being not just a “good” institution, but a *great* one.

Although our journey is far from over, and much work remains to be done to secure our future, it is with pride in our community of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends, and with deep appreciation for the many important contributions that you and all of us have made, that I report to you today on exceptional and exciting progress. In just two years, we have transitioned from an aspiring college to an inspiring **university**—*Coastal Virginia’s Premier University of the Liberal Arts and Sciences*. Building on an outstanding academic reputation, we

have forged new partnerships, developed innovative programs, and enhanced our leadership within Hampton Roads, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the nation. Leaders in education, business, government, the Virginia United Methodist Conference, the media, and the non-profit community, among many others, have embraced us, encouraged us, and celebrated with us as we have achieved significant milestones in our journey:

- Approval by our accrediting body to be a graduate-level institution with two new graduate programs and an extensive online program.
- Initiation of the highly selective Batten Honors College, a competitive academic program that will provide a transformative experience for high-achieving students.
- Organization of our academic program into three schools—the Susan S. Goode School of Arts and Humanities, the Joan P. Brock School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and the Birdsong School of Social Science.
- Completion of the state-of-the-art Greer Environmental Sciences Center, a world-class facility that will support a national environmental-engagement program of the University.
- Completion of the Frank Blocker Youth Center, a cooperative facility to be used during the academic year by Tidewater Collegiate Academy and in the summer months by the YMCA Camp Red Feather.
- Construction of the Betty S. Rogers Track and Field Center (scheduled to be completed next month), and plans for the Susan S. Goode Fine and Performing Arts Center (to be completed in late 2018) and Oxford Village (to be constructed in 2018). The latter will include eight buildings and 248 apartments.
- Major improvements to campus infrastructure, based on a year-long, intensive campus master planning process.
- Outstanding progress in the vital areas of enrollment management, capital fundraising, and information technology—including the new University Portal which will permit a revised, streamlined VWU website.
- Rebranding of campus graphics, logos, signage, letterhead, business cards, banners, athletic uniforms, and bookstore merchandise.
- And the winning of an NCAA national championship in softball, among many other successes in our athletic program!

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We begin the year with two new nationally prominent additions that speak to our innovative spirit, an understanding of our enrollment potential, and the power of philanthropy. With the opening of the Batten Honors College and the completion of the Greer Environmental Sciences Center, we have expanded our teaching, research, and service toward the vital goals of studying and preserving the natural environment.

Furthermore, we are now a national leader in environmental disciplines. We are simultaneously developing a related program in environmental engagement, stewardship, and public policy—a means of empowering students to be informed, responsible environmental citizens supported by the latest scientific inquiry, research, and policy analysis. There can be no greater contribution to future generations than a commitment to preserving our planet. Virginia Wesleyan’s investment in environmental programs will create a priceless legacy for our campus community, our home region, and our world.

Let me pause and pay tribute to one whose legacy is defined by many expressions of inspiration, encouragement, and support. Jane Batten, and the Batten family, are friends of the environment—but their definition of “environment” is broader than in the natural sense. Through the years, Jane has understood well the landscape and ecology of *higher education* and of Virginia Wesleyan specifically. She knows that sustaining the environment in which we educate students is an active process that must continually go forward, change with the times, but also foster and preserve valued traditions. Virginia Wesleyan has no truer friend and active partner than Jane Batten, and we send greetings and our deepest appreciation to her.

Before us is one of the most promising years in our story. Virginia Wesleyan continues to grow and mature. We seek to expand our connections to community organizations like Virginia Beach Vision and the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce. As the oldest college or university founded in Virginia Beach, we are proud to call this city our home. To paraphrase Virginia Beach Mayor Will Sessoms—and we thank him and his team for their support of our various initiatives—we are becoming the greatest university in the greatest *city* in the world! Simultaneously, we pursue opportunities that will give us the kind of national prominence that we deserve.

We look outward, yes, and also inward—to the liberal arts, the foundation of our mission, and to our United Methodist heritage, the inspiration for our founding. We look into the minds

and hearts of our students, who in turn look to us for guidance and assurance. As we prepare to educate these coming generations who will take their place in a world quite different from that Virginia Wesleyan's origins in 1961, I invite your continued faith in our plans and your active support of our progress.

There is much to celebrate!

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First, Academics. Our mission is to teach well. Our devoted, talented faculty and academic staff have continued to excel this year under the leadership of our Provost and Vice President, Dr. Timothy O'Rourke.

One year ago I announced the creation of the **Batten Honors College**, and this week we proudly welcomed to campus 21 Batten Fellows and 19 Shumadine Scholars. Collectively, these impressive students have a grade point average of 4.03 on a 4.0 scale, an average SAT score of 1344, and an average ACT score of 29. They will assume an intensive curriculum, designed and approved by our faculty, which includes four interdisciplinary seminar courses, a faculty-led study-away course, a living-learning community, e-portfolio, extensive experiential learning, and a senior capstone project.

Our first graduate program, the online Master of Business Administration, begins this academic year, with coursework developed by faculty in our **Birdsong School of Social Science**. Over 30 students are expected in the program. These faculty members have also worked diligently to create Virginia Wesleyan's first online degree-completion programs for undergraduates majoring in business, social science, sociology, and criminal justice. Online learning no longer plays a supporting role in higher education—it is center stage. And though it will never replace our residential, campus-life experience, online options will be increasingly valuable as we reach students seeking a distinctive, affordable, and convenient way to take courses.

We have facilitated a new agreement with Tidewater Collegiate Academy that provides space on our campus to expand their programming and benefit their educational mission and our own. Through our partnership with the Academy and Chesapeake Bay Academy, also located on our campus, we can expect additional prospects for enrollment at Virginia Wesleyan.

Utilizing some classroom and administrative areas of Pruden Hall and the newly constructed Frank Blocker Youth Center, Tidewater Collegiate Academy—which serves students

from primary grades through high school—will function as an on-campus laboratory school for our teacher-education students. Coupled with the campus-based Chesapeake Bay Academy, we now have outstanding resources to support teacher-education students and to develop an early-enrollment program. Additionally, we have established an early college-entrance program, permitting junior and senior students at both CBA and TCA to take courses here and earn college credits.

The arts are thriving at Virginia Wesleyan in the **Susan S. Goode School of Arts and Humanities**. Last academic year, our performing arts faculty and students delighted audiences with six choral and instrumental concerts, eight theatre productions, and 10 performances as part of the Virginia Wesleyan Concert Series. Our fine arts folks featured six different professional and student exhibitions, including a combination exhibition featuring the work of local presentations and student works created in response.

The Wesleyan Chorale sang their way up the Eastern Seaboard on a performance tour during spring break, and we saw inaugural concerts from the Wesleyan Instrumental Ensemble, Wesleyan Jazz Ensemble, and the newly established VWU Orchestra.

I'm excited to share that we will break ground this November on the 22,800-square-foot Susan S. Goode Fine and Performing Arts Center. We anticipate that this magnificent new facility, resulting from private gifts, will be completed in time for use by the end of 2018.

Many faculty and students in our **Joan P. Brock School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences** will begin this academic year in our new Greer Environmental Sciences Center. This facility is “state-of-the-art and second to none” of any institution in the study of marine sciences, ecology, and preservation and sustainability of the natural world. It will provide unprecedented opportunities for students while fostering regional collaboration with organizations such as the Brock Environmental Center/Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Virginia Aquarium and Marine Sciences Center, and the Virginia Institute for Marine Science. Our partnership with the Norfolk Botanical Garden—with whom we share a Director of Living Landscapes for maintenance and care of our extensive plantings and landscaping surrounding the new Greer Environmental Sciences Center—has added to the learning experience of our students, and their exposure to biodiversity.

On September 7, we celebrate our traditional Founders Day. That day we will recognize outstanding alumni, celebrate the Batten Honors College and dedicate the fabulous Greer

Environmental Sciences Center. But we will also pay tribute to the importance of our environment with a dedication of our historical Beech Forest, a Wesleyan Eco-festival, an environmental service project, and a Chesapeake Bay-themed student dinner on the lawn in front of the Greer Environmental Sciences Center—the day’s celebration made possible through private support.

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Last year when I announced the establishment of the Batten Honors College and formation of the Brock, Goode, and Birdsong Schools, I suggested that a fifth new division would emerge when we achieved sufficient critical mass.

Under the leadership of Provost O’Rourke, Associate Provost Maynard Schaus and Vice President for Enrollment David Waggoner, we have grown enrollment in the non-traditional program to include a new online Master of Business Administration, online degree- completion program, and Early Enrollment. Additionally, over 500 learners took continuing education programs through the Boyd Institute, Center for the Study of Religious Freedom, and Center for Sacred Music. A new non-credit program, taught by our faculty, at Westminster-Canterbury on Chesapeake Bay is introducing courses in history, music, art, literature, and other disciplines. And we have additional strong prospects in these various areas.

In short, our enrollment strategy must look beyond those we traditionally serve to new, additional audiences who will benefit from the excellent teaching and cultural programming that we offer. To accomplish this goal organizationally recommends establishing a new academic division, consonant with our mission and feasible pedagogically and financially.

The answer is at hand. When I announced a year ago that we’d organize academically into three schools and an honors college, I shared my vision that we would develop our non-traditional offerings to include a fifth major unit within the academic affairs division.

I am pleased to announce that beginning this academic year, **University College of Virginia Wesleyan University** will operate all for-credit programs outside of the traditional undergraduate program, and also support non-credit, continuing-education offerings. The University College will be an important source of enrollment, will expand our presence in the higher-education market, and will coordinate planning and promotion of future educational opportunities in the increasingly popular non-traditional market. The University College will not be an auxiliary enterprise; rather, it will be a fully integrated unit of our academic structure and

curriculum. Provost O'Rourke will fine tune the organizational structure and announce leadership of the program in the near future.

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We've seen much growth and progress in our **special academic programs and centers**, including transition of leadership and expansion of our First Year Experience and Winter/Summer Session programs; inventive ideas and workshops from our Center for Innovative Teaching and Engaged Learning; diverse and thought-provoking programming from the Center for Sacred Music and the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom; continued modernization of Hofheimer Library with the addition of its digital archives; and a record number of students participating in study-away, undergraduate research and internships through The Lighthouse: Center for Exploration & Discovery.

At its May meeting, the Board of Trustees approved emeritus status for two faculty members who retired this spring—Dr. Cheul Kang and Dr. Garry Noe.

We congratulate three faculty members who have advanced:

- Kelly Holzer, Associate Professor of English
- John Rudel, Professor of Art
- Jeffrey Toussaint, Assistant Professor of Sociology/Criminal Justice

And we have five newly named Batten Professors for 2017-2020:

- Thomas Brown, Batten Associate Professor of Criminal Justice/Sociology
- Audrey Malagon, Batten Associate Professor of Mathematics
- Gavin Pate, Batten Associate Professor of English
- Lisa Lyon Payne, Batten Associate Professor of Communication
- Sally Shedd, Batten Professor of Theatre

We also have some new academic staff:

- Lauren Frantz, University Advising Coordinator
- Shawn Frazier, Visiting Instructor of Mathematics
- Margaret Henderson, Research Librarian

- Katrina Henry, Assistant Professor of Physics and Earth and Environmental Sciences
- Michelle Vachris, Professor of Management, Business, and Economics
- Kathryn Williams, Library Circulation Supervisor

To our faculty, I say congratulations on your successes. You are essential to exceptional student development and crucial in advancing our institutional mission. Your unique talents and creativity, passion, and hard work continually impress me, and I am grateful for all you do for Virginia Wesleyan.

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When I arrived in the summer of 2015, the biggest area of concern was addressing an uneven 10-year history of enrollment, while staffing, fixed costs, and debt service continued to grow. Enrollment continues to be the biggest issue impacting private colleges nationally. We are not immune to this here in the Commonwealth. The least expensive institution in our immediate market has experienced a nearly 30 percent decline in enrollment since 2012, and overall enrollment at Virginia's Community Colleges is down over six percent, with 16 of 23 colleges in the red.

David Waggoner joined us as Vice President for Enrollment and over the past two years has put in place a contemporary comprehensive enrollment model that includes the five critical components of institutional success. David and his dedicated team of enrollment professionals have laid the foundation for continued growth in numbers of admitted students, representing increasing diversity of students from the United States and around the world.

That comprehensive model has included growing traditional fall enrollment, strengthening and growing Winter and Summer Session, adding graduate programs, and developing online programs. Likewise, we have signed an agreement with EFA, a Florida-based international enrollment services firm, to access international markets through direct promotion, partnerships, and an international agent network. They will represent us in 26 nations.

We have significantly increased contacts, inquiries, applications, and acceptances and grown the traditional freshman class by 22 percent. We have accomplished this while reducing the acceptance rate to 69 percent, increasing the yield rate to 27 percent, and improving the

average SAT to 1063. The 525 new students this fall represent the largest new class since systematic record keeping was started in 2001.

This year's numbers have met what will be our annual expectations to qualitatively grow our University to our goal of 1,500 full-time traditional students. If we repeat this year's success the next two years, we will eliminate the erosion that occurred in the 2012 to 2015 cycle and position ourselves well for the future.

Since last year, we have been significantly over-capacity in the residence halls, so it is imperative that we bring to fruition the Oxford Village project across from the main entrance and explore other opportunities to expand our residence capacity in the future.

Finally, we continue to benefit from our cooperative-degree partnerships with Eastern Virginia Medical School in eight master's programs, in pharmacy with Shenandoah University, in law with Regent University, in forestry and environmental management with Duke University, and others. The new 3-2 cooperative program in Occupational Therapy with Washington University in St. Louis will offer additional competitive opportunities.

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In the area of student affairs, led by Dr. Keith Moore, we continue to explore ways to be a more student-centered University. The new enrollment model, with special terms and online programs for traditional students, will improve retention and cohort graduation rates. Cost is a major factor impacting most of our students. This year, we launched the OPUS summer-work program which provided 15 students the opportunity to continue their educations, with a total of nearly \$35,000 in work grants applied to the students' accounts. From painting lines in the parking lots and campus beautification to answering phones in the president's office, the OPUS students worked side by side with our Batten Center and physical plant staff, providing 4,334 hours of service to the University. This program is designed to narrow the cost gap, provide a valuable experience, and assist the University with meaningful work during the summer season.

We thank our Board of Trustees Chair David Kaufman and his wife Kay for their support in launching this program.

With student wellness always a priority, we have partnered with Sentara Medical Group for managing the Student Health Center. The Center is staffed by an advanced medical practitioner and a medical assistant from Sentara Medical Group, with a supervising physician

serving as medical director. Through this partnership, we will increase responsiveness and health services to our students.

We also strive to instill in our students a healthy and responsible outlook on citizenship. To encourage our students to think philanthropically, 67.4 percent of the 300 graduating seniors made a gift this spring to The Excellence Fund, beating the previous participation record of 28.2 percent. We thank these newest Marlin alumni for funding two annual scholarships for rising seniors and a commemorative Class of 2017 tree planted on campus.

We also look forward to working closely with Volunteer Hampton Roads to identify additional service-learning opportunities, student awareness, and certification in volunteering and volunteer management.

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Executive Director of Intercollegiate Athletics Joanne Renn continues to bring her energy and guidance to our athletic program. Thanks to Joanne, our coaches and other staff, our top NCAA Division III intercollegiate athletic program hit a number of new milestones and achievements this past year.

We watched in May as the Virginia Wesleyan softball team won the NCAA Division III National Championship after playing the majority of the season as the No. 1 team in the nation. The Marlins set a national record for wins in a season (54), had the best overall Earned Run Average in the nation (0.80) as well as the top winning percentage (.947). Freshman pitcher Hanna Hull was the National Player of the Year...and Head Coach Brandon Elliott, a 2003 graduate, was the National Coach of the Year. Hanna, I might add, holds a 3.5 grade point average and aspires to be an engineer.

This is the first team championship for Virginia Wesleyan since men's basketball claimed the crown in the 2005-06 season. Evan Cox of men's golf won an individual national championship last year.

Other athletics highlights include:

- Hanna Hull led the nation in ERA (0.51) and victories (32), and was second with 372 strikeouts. She received 17 conference and national awards, including being named National Freshman of the Year and National Player of the Year.
- Marissa Coombs earned Indoor All-American honors for the mile for the second-straight year and then repeated the honor in outdoor track.

- Five student-athletes earned All-American honors, 18 earned All-Region, 11 earned All-State, and 54 garnered All-ODAC accolades.
- Women's golf competed its first varsity season in 2016-17; men's and women's swimming is set to take to the pool for its first season this year.

Congratulations to our student athletes and coaches for your many successes—and special thanks to our coaches for the vital role they play in our recruitment success.

Our Marlin athletics program benefits tremendously from leadership gifts from alumni and friends. Our baseball team played on the newly-renovated Kenneth R. Perry Field this past spring. Upgrades to the dugouts, backstop, stands, and a new press box were made possible by a contribution from Macon and Joan Brock, and the field is named in memory of Joan's father.

Through the generosity of Trustee O.L. Everett and Trustee Emeritus John Lingo, men's and women's swimming will begin its first season this year in the Jane P. Batten Student Center natatorium.

Construction is underway on our new 400-meter, eight-lane track and field. A significant addition to our athletic facilities, the Betty S. Rogers Track and Field Center, is nearing completion next to the Trinder Center. This wonderful initiative is made possible by an anonymous donor and through additional financial and in-kind support from Bill Shelhorse, a member of the Board of Trustees and a graduate from Virginia Wesleyan's first class in 1970, and from his company, Chesapeake Bay Contractors. The track, named in memory of Bill's late sister, will be completed next month.

These examples demonstrate, again, the importance of philanthropy at Virginia Wesleyan. Recent and planned improvements to academic, athletic, and student-life facilities benefit from the leadership and generosity of alumni and friends. They recognize that a vibrant institution such as Virginia Wesleyan University is a living and growing organization, nurtured by financial commitments to its future. Thank you, all, who contribute to the support and success of Marlin athletics.

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In the area of financial resources, this year we welcomed a new CFO. Jim Cooper, Vice President for Finance and Administration, joined us from Arcadia University in Pennsylvania, with 33 years of non-profit finance and accounting experience, including over 28 years in higher education.

From Ursinus College in Pennsylvania, Sylvia Schelly was hired as our new Assistant Vice President for Finance. This position has been a significant need for many years.

Sylvia has 34 years of accounting and financial-management experience, including the past 11 years in higher education.

Jim and Sylvia have begun to evaluate our current accounting and budget systems with the goals of creating efficiencies, helping the University better manage its resources, developing a collaborative approach to budget and planning, and providing better access to financial information while following industry standards. Some of our processes are no longer effective, and those are being addressed.

Our overall assets have grown to over \$160 million, our endowment to approximately \$57 million, and our budget – this year – should return to the peak level prior to the economic downturn.

In addition to overseeing the financial operations of the University, Jim has also assumed oversight of our physical facilities, food service, bookstore, purchasing, mail and print operations. Despite our tremendous success in fundraising and capital improvements, we remain lean operationally as we overcome the budget erosion of 2012-15.

Some highlights from the financial and resource-management front:

- Growth in enrollment and strong giving means we are managing a balanced budget, but we need to increase our margins and expand our revenue streams. Last year, we challenged our contract providers Sodexo and Aramark to expand our auxiliary enterprises. We increased our on-campus events this summer by 143%, establishing long-term relationships with the YMCA's Camp Red Feather, Campus Horizon and Virginia Beach Leadership, as well as new relationships with Camp Kid Jam, Virginia Beach Collegiate Baseball League, and others.
- Our relationship with Aramark, managers of our physical plant department for over 24 years, had positive changes during the past year. In January, we successfully moved all physical plant employees under the Aramark contract. The outsourcing of this area has resulted in significant operational savings.
- Thanks to a donor, \$600,000 of corrective maintenance projects were completed this year.

As we continually improve our financial standing, we cannot operate the business affairs of the institution as we have in the past. “Business as usual” is not an option. I look forward to keeping the campus community informed on our progress in this vital area, and ask for your support in improving operational efficiencies and working cost-effectively.

After 10 months of analysis and collaboration, the Space Utilization Study, Facilities Assessment and 10-year Campus Master Plan were completed and work has begun to address some of the assessment’s recommendations. The early phase improvements are apparent.

We devoted a great deal of time this summer upgrading many of our administrative software systems, making them easily accessible online, which we expect will help enhance revenue, collections and improve service to our students, alumni, employees and the community. We thank CIO Robert Leitgeb and his team for their solid achievements over the past year.

This year has brought incredible advancements in technology with several updates and additions to our computer systems funded by private gifts and grants.

The most significant advancement is our new Portal, made possible by a significant anonymous donation. The Portal is a single sign-on site for students, staff and faculty that provides access to academic and administrative systems. The Portal brings unprecedented collaboration, digital services, and data-management opportunities to the University. Through Portal, students can manage their finances from start to finish, and student housing can now be better managed through a new system called StarRez. This technology can do in minutes what previously took weeks.

Other improvements:

- The Scribner Bookstore has implemented a new point-of-sale computer system, which will greatly enhance their efficiency and will lead to going fully online with a new University bookstore website in the near future.
- The Financial Aid office has a new online financial aid self-service platform, which will assist students in understanding the status of their aid packages.
- The student-receivables office has implemented a new payment gateway, which will make it easier for students to access their accounts and pay their bills.

All of these new systems will ease pressure on our administrative offices and prepare us for future growth.

With Robert, Senior Vice President Dr. Mort Gamble has co-chaired the transition to university. Simultaneously, Dr. Gamble and Vice President Waggoner have led an institutional re-branding, and the next steps of trademarking our institutional logos and related items.

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You have heard a common theme today—that of generosity to this institution through philanthropy. We are fortunate to have very strong gift support from dedicated friends of the University.

Dr. Gamble and our veteran major-gifts officer and Associate Vice President for Advancement and Board Relations Suzanne Savage provide sound leadership and cover much ground in the advancement area. We are positioned well for the future.

We thank our alumni and friends who have honored us with their support this past year. Over the summer, we welcomed a new class of members of the Virginia Wesleyan Alumni Council, representing graduating-class and geographic diversity in what is now a truly nationally focused Alumni Council. We thank Mavis McKenley, Class of 2011, Alumni Council Chair and a member of our Board of Trustees, for her continuing leadership.

We have challenged the Alumni Council to provide support for increasing alumni participation in Virginia Wesleyan’s giving programs. Our alumni are ambassadors for who we are and what we aspire to as an institution.

Accordingly, we pay special tribute today to the late alumnus Dennie Allen, Class of 1970, the very first student to cross the stage at the very first Commencement of Virginia Wesleyan. Decades later after that day—which he described as “the happiest of his life”—his pride in being at the front of the line at our first graduation ceremony resulted in a magnificent bequest from his estate to his alma mater. In his honor and memory, we dedicate *Allen Village* with our deepest appreciation for his generosity.

Dennie’s story highlights the importance of philanthropy. Even more profoundly, it underscores the value, across half a century, of who we are and what we stand for. We can expect many other “firsts” as we continue to write our institutional story, and we hope that, like Dennie, our students will experience one or more of the “happiest days” of their lives while here.

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In closing, let us support achievement of the following goals this year:

Academics

1. Develop through the Greer Environmental Sciences Center a niche program of environmental stewardship and engagement, to include partnerships with prominent environmental organizations such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center, and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.
2. Recruit a second outstanding cohort for the Batten Honors College and through this distinctive program, produce exceptional student scholars and leaders.
3. Complete a rigorous academic planning process to include updating our mission statement.
4. Develop and strengthen the Colleges/Schools organizational model.
5. Fully implement and expand the graduate and online program.
6. Expand Winter Session to include a freshman requirement. Expand offerings and grow the Summer Session to include online classes.
7. Grow the new Early Enrollment and Advanced Scholars Program.
8. Develop The Wesleyan Plan, emphasizing the four pillars of the University: **undergraduate research, international experience, internships, and civic engagement.**
9. Develop the relationships with campus-based private high schools including our campus based partners – Chesapeake Bay Academy and Tidewater Collegiate Academy.
10. Simultaneously, utilize the ideal opportunities through the Blocker Youth Center and Tidewater Collegiate Academy to develop our relationship with the YMCA, introducing our campus to new school-aged audiences.

Student Affairs

1. Continue focus on retention.
2. Develop the OPUS program, bringing meaningful work opportunities to a larger number of students so they can stay in school and meet their financial obligations. This program will be expanded in the future to benefit greater numbers of working students.
3. Find ways to fund improvements in the older residence halls and expand housing options.

4. Expand and promote the strength and value of our service learning and civic engagement, religious life, student activities, and Greek system.
5. Strengthen the overall student-athlete experience.
6. Recognize the importance of lifetime fitness through an outstanding recreation program.
7. Fully implement the new men's and women's swimming programs.

Enrollment

1. Consistently recruit 500 traditional, full-time new students each fall, meeting our desired academic profile.
2. Recruit the second stellar cohort for the Batten Honors College.
3. Grow enrollment in the University College, including all non-traditional programs and the Early Enrollment Program.
4. Enroll at least 500 additional learners in non-credit programs each year, including the Boyd Institute, Center for Sacred Music, Center for the Study of Religious Freedom, and other programs.
5. Continue to expand, brand, and market online programs of the University.
6. Taking advantage of our location, strengthen the Virginia Beach College Success Scholarship with the Virginia Beach campus of Tidewater Community College.

Advancement

1. Complete next phases of the capital campaign plan and increase alumni participation by 10 percent.
2. Continue fundraising for the arts program to include the Susan S. Goode Fine and Performing Arts Center and renovation of the existing Fine Arts Building.
3. In cooperation with the Center for Enrollment and the Center for Advancement, continue the comprehensive re-branding of the University.
4. Lead the trademarking of University branding.
5. Benefit from the private gifts that have created the Virginia Wesleyan University digital-media broadcasting network—sharing our signature institutional and selected athletic events with a worldwide audience.

Finance and Administration

1. Develop a long-term financial model utilizing new technology to replace antiquated processes and procedures and to achieve a right-sized budget model based on realistic financial projections and enhanced revenue streams.
2. Construct the Susan S. Goode Fine and Performing Arts Center.
3. Construct Oxford Village.
4. Pursue new sources of revenues including camps, conferences, catering, and the online bookstore.
5. With Information Systems and Technology, further develop the Portal and services provided online.

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These remain ambitious but attainable goals for a relatively small institution that is enrollment-driven and budget-conscious. Although the times in which we live and our own past practices dictate that we cannot “do business as usual,” we can take inspiration and derive renewed energy from the progress achieved over the last two years. I’m asking not simply that we work hard as we go forward, but that we work smart—that we take every opportunity to promote what we have here, what we have accomplished, and what we wish to achieve, in a spirit of mutual respect, collaboration, and innovation.

Perilous times remain for American higher education—economically, to be sure, but also operationally—and predictions abound of the declining influence, even failure, of our colleges and universities—predictions with which I disagree. We must recognize that while there are many external forces with which we must contend, our internal attitudes, behaviors, and procedures are just as critical to our success.

With the solid foundation we have built over the past two years at Virginia Wesleyan, we are in a good place now to think about our future and to achieve even greater results.

We’ve placed at everyone’s table the new VWU pin, and I invite you to wear it with pride. We sent the original design back to the vendor; the sample wasn’t bright enough, and given our very bright future, I wanted to make sure this emblem would be suitably bold.

In fact, we’ve also put out some sunglasses at your tables. That’s how bright our prospects are for this new year and beyond!

Our time of hiding out in this former cornfield where we were born is over. Our stage is truly the world now, and we are going to show the world what we can do.

I wish for all of us a year of optimism, accomplishment, and celebration of our possibilities. Thank you for your commitment to Virginia Wesleyan University, have a great year, and, as always, *it's a great day to be a Marlin!*



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