

## MINUTES

Thursday, October 5, 2023

3:00-4:30 p.m.

A meeting of the University Council was held on Thursday, October 5, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. in the VCU Cabell Library, conference room 303 and via Zoom.

The following members and alternates were present:

**Officers:** President Michael Rao, Fotis Sotiropoulos, and Scott Street

**Administration:** Scott Breuninger, Hernan Bucheli, Matt Conrad, Jean Giddens, Karol Gray, Catherine Ingrassia, Alison Miller, and Kelechi Ogbonna

**Faculty:** Chrisa Arcan, Julie Arendt, Lisa Brown, Paul Bukevakis, Beth Bukoski, Everett Carpenter, Amita Chin, Carrie Connolly, Jody Cox, Alexis Crawford, Katherine Dabney, Kostadin Damevski, Hope Ginsberg, Jacob Goffnett, Nancy Husson, Kanako Iwanaga, Cassie DeSena Jacobs, Aniket Jadhav, Nancy Jallo, Amie Knapp, Jair Lecky, Shillpa Naavaal, Bettina Peacemaker, Peter Pidcoe, Maria Rivera, Valerie Robnolt, Michael Rosenberg, Roxanne Spindle, Christy Tyndall, Stacy Wahl, Larry Williams, Cesar Zamudio, and Kim Zicafoose.

**Postdoctoral Scholar:**

**Classified Staff:** Melissa Burton, Valarie Carter, Holly Dean, Brogan King, Louise Putnam, Jennifer Tennison, and Katina Velentzas

**Students:** Mmesoma Azi, Emerson Hernandez, and Zachary Hodgen

**Ex-Officio and Guests:** Andrew Arroyo, Irene Herold, Magnus Johnsson, Charles Klink, and Mangala Subramaniam

### 1. President's Report

President Rao welcomed Council members to the second UC meeting of the academic year. Dr. Rao noted that VCU has started off the year exceeding some important mission centered milestones.

- Research is a core part of our mission and funding broke another record – \$465 million for 2023.
- This year, we had record charitable giving totals across the VCU enterprise – \$271 million.

- Last month US News and World Report ranked Virginia Commonwealth University as one of the nation's 20 most innovative public universities in its 2024 Best Colleges rankings.
- Dr. Rao expressed his appreciation and noted that these successes are because of the hard work of council members, and the students, faculty and staff they represent.

He then focused on achievements for VCU Health.

- Recently, national credit-rating agencies Moodys and S&P reaffirmed VCU Health's ratings – Aa3 credit rating, with a stable outlook from Moodys, and AA- from S&P. 10 years ago, our ratings were single A—well below the current ratings
- Recently, the VCU Massey Cancer Center officially became VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, to reflect its new status.
- Clay St, a project VCU Health pursued prior to the pandemic has been in the news as our board decided not to continue with it at a cost that was significant, albeit about nine times less than going forward.
  - VCU and VCU Health are separate legal entities, so impacts to the health systems finances do not affect the university. Second, our boards (as VCU president, Dr. Rao serves as chair of the Health System board) and staff continue to implement best practices around complex development agreements. We are working to ensure successful projects like the AOP and new tower for the Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU, which are two recent, very successful new facilities that will serve patients for decades to come.

Additional announcements:

- VCU enrollment numbers continue to point to this being one of the biggest, if not the biggest, freshman classes we have had.
- VCU just announced a new guaranteed admission program to freshman first-year applicants with high academic credentials.
- The One VCU Academic Repositioning Task Force has generated more than 120 ideas. We expect to receive final recommendations in November. Faculty have stepped up in creative and exciting ways, and we are grateful.
- While VCU continues to focus on enrolling new students, we also must maintain our commitment to increasing graduation rates and helping our students succeed. Dr. Rao asked that the VCU community continue its focus on supporting our students and helping them overcome barriers to graduation.

## **2. Minutes**

The minutes of September 7, 2023 were approved.

## **3. University Council Committee Updates**

Scott Street discussed membership and meeting processes. A general discussion followed.

**4. Constituent Reports**

Mmesoma Azi provided an SGA Report, and a general discussion followed.

Maria Rivera provided a Faculty Senate Report, and a general discussion followed.

Brogan King provided a Staff Senate Report, and a general discussion followed.

**5. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:38 p.m.