

# Virginia 2020: Agenda for the Third Century

## Overview

The University of Virginia, founded in 1819, will enter its third century in 2020. Envisioning the University's future and planning for the change and opportunities that lie ahead are the goals of Virginia 2020: Agenda for the Third Century.

Virginia 2020 is focused on four areas: the fine and performing arts, international activities, public service and outreach, and science and technology. Strengths exist in all four areas, but each area as a whole offers great potential for achieving higher standards of excellence. The success of Virginia 2020 will help ensure the University's success as an institution dedicated to the fundamental principles of teaching, research, and service, and at the same time, devoted to the changing educational needs of people who will face unique challenges and questions of the 21st century.

President John T. Casteen III, who announced his concept for Virginia 2020 during his State of the University address in March 1998, has described the endeavor as part of the University's ongoing commitment to excellence:

While many goals have been achieved, the University of Virginia does not now find itself at a stopping point. Rather, successes have won us a vantage point to identify directions for further improvement. If our intention is to continue to build on the strong base developed in the last decade and to become the nation's premier public institution in every sense, then we cannot be afraid to acknowledge areas of weakness.

Leading the Virginia 2020 initiative are four distinguished faculty members. In the fall of 1998, they accepted Mr. Casteen's invitation to chair planning commissions for each of the four areas of emphasis. They are:

Robert Chapel – Fine and Performing Arts  
Brantly Womack – International Activities  
Rebecca D. Kneedler – Public Service and Outreach  
Anita K. Jones – Science and Technology

A web site has been developed to disseminate information about Virginia 2020 and to post the commissions' work for responses from the community at-large. The address is:  
[www.virginia.edu/virginia2020](http://www.virginia.edu/virginia2020).

## Why These Four Areas?

The University of Virginia is a strong institution, nationally recognized for the excellence of its academic programs and opportunities available to students and faculty. At the same time, self-

assessment shows great capacity to achieve even higher levels of excellence. When describing the University's institutional growth, President Casteen has said:

The University can be seen as a semi-mature institution: mature enough to have made hard choices and dramatic progress, yet young enough to show surprising potential for growth as well as obvious needs. A hard look at what we have accomplished and our aspirations for the future suggests four areas where we must plan to improve: science and technology, the arts, public service, and international initiatives.

***Science and Technology*** – At no other time in history has the store of knowledge about science and technology increased so rapidly. Science is broadly defined as the search to better understand natural phenomena. Technology is the application of knowledge – scientific knowledge and beyond – for a useful purpose.

The University has solid education and research programs in science and technology, but many endeavors need new support if they are to provide the environment for a first-rate educational experience at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Excellent facilities, excellent laboratories, and constant evaluation are necessary for the University to be a leader in creating knowledge of science and technology and in teaching this expanded body of knowledge.

"Change is prevalent in science and technology," said Anita K. Jones, chair of the Science and Technology Planning Commission. "New discoveries are changing the face of individual science and engineering programs with increasing frequency. That is part of the opportunity."

***Fine and Performing Arts*** – A liberal arts education, embodying all the "useful sciences," makes the fine and performing arts central to all areas of the curriculum. In fact, few areas touch more students, including non-majors. Each semester, the courses in music, art, and drama attract more than 4,600 enrollees.

Despite the programs' influence on students and the local community, the University lacks a comprehensive plan for the arts. Facilities are uneven and, in some cases, severely inadequate. The dean and department chairs in arts and sciences have begun work to identify strengths and weaknesses in these disciplines. Examples of excellence include the Bayly Art Museum's collection of Old Master prints, the Heritage Repertory Theatre's summer productions, the music department's computer composition laboratory, archaeological investigations of an ancient city in Sicily, and an interdisciplinary study of ancient Pompeii using computer models.

These arts programs have made advances under less-than-ideal conditions. Departments lack sufficient scholarships and fellowships to compete for the most talented students. Although more than 400 endowed professorships have been established at the University, only two faculty members hold endowed chairs in all the arts programs.

As a first step toward correcting these deficiencies, a team of architects and faculty members is developing a conceptual physical plan for an Arts Precinct that incorporates the programmatic as well as physical needs for the arts. The project focuses on the art department, the Bayly Museum, the drama department, the architecture school, and the fine arts library.

Plans to strengthen the arts are ambitious. "It will not happen overnight, but my dream is that in the not-too-distant future, when young people who want to major in the arts start considering where they want to go to college, one of their first thoughts will be the University of Virginia," said Robert Chapel, chair of the Fine and Performing Arts Planning Commission.

***Public Service and Outreach*** – Service and outreach are inherent in the University's mission as a public institution. Citizens of the Commonwealth look to the University to provide value through its teaching and research and to demonstrate leadership in determining future priorities.

Defining the scope of its work has been an important first step for the Public Service and Outreach Planning Commission. Rebecca Kneedler, chair, and commission members have developed two working definitions of public service as follows: (1) The application of University of Virginia-based expertise to issues of concern to the greater community, and (2) Harnessing and directing the intellectual resources of the University of Virginia to promote and enhance the economic, intellectual, social, and physical well being of the Commonwealth of Virginia and beyond.

Recognizing that universities have unique obligations to discover knowledge and to transfer it to the communities they serve, the commission is evaluating the University's current public service and outreach efforts and recommend strategies for the future. Joining in the task is the Office of the Vice President for Research and Public Service, a unit established in 1998 under the leadership of Gene Block.

***International Activities*** – Virginia's and America's range is global. The global perspective – in learning, in scholarship, in understanding – is as essential to today's and tomorrow's graduate as are critical thinking and technological competence.

Telecommunications and the Internet are creating an ever-smaller world, and students will need a global perspective to thrive in the 21st century. Internationalizing the curriculum includes many components – study groups that give students the opportunity to live in another culture and speak the language; faculty research in foreign lands; initiatives that bring international experiences back to the Grounds; international business programs; and new endeavors, such as the University's collaboration with the emirate of Qatar to establish a campus in Doha, capital of that Arabian Gulf nation.

"The University and the world are already well mixed," said Brantly Womack, chair of the International Activities Planning Commission. "Our task is to take stock of the current situation and to consider how the University might best structure and encourage its international programs and activities for continued growth and leadership in an ever more internationalized environment."

### **Leadership and Participation**

Organization of the commissions and selection of members was an inclusive process, eliciting the thoughts and suggestions of many in the University community. As a result, each commission is strong in expertise and is representative of a variety of disciplines and individual

interests and talents. The commissions consist primarily of faculty members, but also include students and leaders from the local community. Ad hoc and ex-officio members contribute in meaningful ways as well.

Prior to the commissions' formation, the University's Board of Visitors unanimously endorsed Mr. Casteen's plans at their May 1998 meeting. In September, at the annual All-University Retreat, members of the University community came together to participate in focus groups on each of the four initiatives.

Staff members with responsibilities for communications, development, and technology are providing support for the commissions' work and ensuring that these three critical functions are part of the planning process from the start. Their contributions and roles are expected to increase as the commissions move toward implementation plans. In addition, staff members from the Office of the President are assisting the commission chairs with administration and communication. Denise Karaoli, a member of the president's staff, is the full-time project director for Virginia 2020.

### **The Planning Structure**

The charge for each commission, over the next two years, is substantial: to define clearly the scope of their work, to identify the leading universities or other institutions in that field, to determine which characteristics make them first rate, to measure the University against those benchmarks, to identify opportunities available now and in the future, and to outline what the University needs to seize those opportunities and to bridge the gap between ourselves and the best. The commissions' recommendations will, in effect, constitute the "case statement" for the next generation of significant fund raising.

By late 2000, the commissions will present written reports that, as charged, will outline action plans based in fact and supported by data to validate future fund raising, budgeting, and priority-setting. Recommended priorities and timelines for implementation will include strategies for making investments in current and new programs, such as personnel, facilities, and support services.

Each planning commission chair has developed a structure and work plan that best serve the needs of the individual commission and area of study. While the commissions share some characteristics, their size, use of subcommittees, and work plans vary.

At a March 22 meeting with approximately 15 members of the University's senior leadership, each chair reported on her or his commission's progress and presented a work plan with a projection of tasks and timelines for completing the work. Each commission is planning various activities – a conference, workshops, and focus groups – that will broaden dialogue, seek external evaluation, and help the commission develop final recommendations.

Guiding the commissions' work is a six-step Framework for Planning:

**Definition of Scope.** Each commission is drawing boundaries to determine the scope of its work.

**Identification of Aspiration Groups.** During this phase of their work, the commissions will identify other institutions that represent the best of what the University of Virginia might aspire to be in the area of scope.

**Metrics of Aspiration Group.** This step will involve determining the basis for excellence in the above aspiration groups. Specific factors will be identified and measured.

**Metrics of the University of Virginia.** The same factors, or metrics, used in measuring the aspiration groups will be used to evaluate the University's programs and activities.

**Gap and Opportunity Analysis.** The commissions will use the comparison between U.Va. and "the best" to identify potential improvements that would move us into the aspiration group.

**Strategies for Improvement.** Considerable work will take place during this phase. The commissions will develop specific proposals, strategies, and initiatives, and they will recommend priorities and timelines for implementation. The final results of this work will help to determine the University's immediate funding needs and those to be supported during the next capital campaign.

## **Communications**

Open and inclusive communication with key constituents and stakeholders is a priority for Virginia 2020. In order to be successful in building a common vision and in meeting long-range goals, the commission chairs are seeking and fostering broad communication within the University about their work.

Supporting the effort is a marketing and communications team consisting of staff members from various University offices. Led by Robert Sweeney, vice president for development, and Louise Dudley, director of university relations, the group has developed a communications plan with broad application within the University and beyond.

The plan serves as a guide for disseminating information about the commissions' progress and for identifying opportunities for communicating with various constituents. The University's internal audience – deans, faculty, staff, students, the Board of Visitors, and alumni leaders – is considered the top priority for communications. Other key audiences are alumni at large, parents, friends, members of the local community, state officials, and leaders in higher education.

Vehicles for communication include face-to-face discussions through meetings and public presentations; electronic communications via e-mail updates and a web site; and news coverage in the internal press – primarily Inside UVA, the Cavalier Daily, Alumni News, Envision, Of Arts & Sciences – and externally in the Daily Progress and regional or national publications that may be reporting on activities at the University.

## **Conclusion**

Virginia 2020: Agenda for the Third Century will carry the University into the first part of the 21st century. This endeavor follows the successful planning efforts of the 1990s. The past ten years can be characterized as a time in which disciplined choices, thoughtful planning, and restructured finances have supported progress and enhanced quality in many areas of the University. Success, however, is a process, not an event – and not a single ranking held over time. Virginia 2020 is expected to serve as a template for future planning as the University meets challenges of a new era.

The rewards of this long and painstaking effort will be great. As President Casteen has stated: "The benefits will be more powerful teaching, better prepared graduates, greater impact on the communities we serve, and greater value in all University degrees."