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To: Luke Torian, Chair, Mark Sickles, Vice Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Sam Rasoul, Chair, Shelly Simonds, Vice Chair, House Education Committee
Ghazala Hashmi, Chair, Senate Education and Health Committee
Louise Lucas, Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee
Tori Mabry, Vice Chair, Virginia African American Advisory Board

From: A. Scott Fleming

Subj.: Enslaved Ancestors Memorial and Scholarship Program – Annual Report

During the 2021 legislative session, the General Assembly passed House Bill 1980 (Virginia Code § 23.1-615.1). This legislation requires five institutions – the College of William & Mary, Longwood University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University and Virginia Military Institute – to identify and memorialize, to the extent possible, “all enslaved individuals who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property and [provide] a tangible benefit such as a college scholarship or community-based economic development program for individuals or specific communities with a demonstrated historic connection to slavery that will empower families to be lifted out of the cycle of poverty.”

In 2021, SCHEV worked with the participating institutions to develop a set of guidelines to govern the implementation of the Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program. Each institution has issued an individual report to SCHEV on its implementation of the program and compliance with the guidelines. SCHEV has reviewed and consolidated the individual reports into a consolidated report, which is submitted pursuant to the provisions of Virginia Code § 23.1-615.1.

Thank you for your attention to this information. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable David Reid

Executive Summary

Pursuant to [Virginia Code § 23.1-615.1](#), this report provides an update on the implementation of the Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program in five of the Commonwealth's public institutions. William & Mary, Longwood University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Military Institute and the University of Virginia are required to implement the program without the use of state funds.

The program mandates these five institutions to:

- Identify and memorialize enslaved individuals who labored on institutionally controlled grounds.
- Provide a college scholarship or community-based economic development program for individuals or communities with specific ties to slavery.

All five institutions are members of the [Universities Studying Slavery \(USS\)](#) consortium, which includes more than 100 public and private institutions worldwide. The consortium supports collaborative research, the development of best practices in working with descendant communities, and the hosting of conferences to foster networking and shared learning.

Each individual institution has implemented the Enslaved Ancestors program with different approaches while remaining consistent with the requirements of the program. At the University of Virginia and William & Mary, physical memorials have been erected to honor enslaved individuals whose labor contributed to the foundation of these institutions. These memorials list the names of the enslaved and serve as permanent reminders of their humanity and contributions. In addition to these commemorative efforts, all five institutions have either established annual scholarships for students directly impacted by the legacy of slavery or provided grant support for economic development in communities directly impacted by slavery.

Institutional Highlights (list of all activities provided in Table 1.1)

- **University of Virginia (UVA)**
UVA established the Gibbons Project, named for William and Isabella Gibbons, two formerly enslaved individuals. The project researches the lives and labor of enslaved people and traces their ancestral roots to the present.
- **William & Mary**
The Lemon Project, named for a man once enslaved at the university, symbolizes the many enslaved individuals who helped build and sustain the institution. The project fosters connections between William & Mary and African American communities through research, programming, and support for faculty, staff and

students. The annual Lemon Symposium provides a forum for dialogue on resilience and reconciliation.

- **Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)**

VCU launched Project Gabriel, named after Gabriel Prosser, an enslaved man who led a rebellion to end slavery in Virginia. The initiative promotes community engagement and education through historical recognition. Upcoming initiatives include a virtual museum and a public art installation in collaboration with the East Marshall Street Well Project.

- **Longwood University**

Due to the destruction of records during the Civil War, Longwood has only identified two enslaved laborers—Mimi and Ben. The university focuses on scholarships and community engagement, particularly around civil rights initiatives. Recently, Longwood sponsored the C.G. Gordon Moss Lecture Event, honoring the legacy of black workers at the university.

- **Virginia Military Institute (VMI)**

VMI initially documented its history of slavery through the publication “Slavery at VMI,” using photographs and primary sources to reconstruct the lives of enslaved individuals who supported its early operations. Ongoing faculty and student research focuses on African Americans at VMI from 1850 to 1865, with findings shared through community presentations. Additional efforts include participation in the Jessie Ball DuPont Historical Initiative Certificate Program and funding for the Irma Thompson Program, a Rockbridge NAACP initiative to recruit and support educators of color.

These initiatives represent the Commonwealth’s continued commitment to memorializing the contributions of enslaved individuals and providing tangible benefits to their descendants and communities. Individual institutional submissions are included in this report.

Table 1.1 Institutional Efforts Toward Completion of Enslaved Ancestors Requirements

Institutions	Research/Identification/Memorialization	Scholarship/Community Economic Development
William & Mary	• USS* consortium membership • <u>Hearth</u> - Physical Memorial • <u>The Lemon Project</u> • Lemon Project - Yearly Symposium	• Lemon Scholarship • Anne Willis Scholarship
Longwood	• USS consortium membership • C G. Gordan Moss Lecture Event- honors the legacy of black workers at Longwood	• Moton Legacy Scholarship • Enslaved Ancestors Scholarship • Partnership with <u>Robert Russa Moton Museum</u>
VCU	• USS Consortium membership • <u>Project Gabriel</u> • Plans for Virtual Museum to create digital experience • Public Art Installation - in conjunction with East Marshall Street Well Project	• Project Gabriel Scholarship • Economic Development programs -Food Shelfie Program -Advanced Certificate in Youth Development Management
VMI	• USS consortium membership • <u>Slavery at VMI</u> – Document • Research Project- <i>African Americans at the Virginia Military Institute from 1850 to 1865</i> • Participation by Faculty, Staff and Students in the Jessie Ball DuPont Historical Initiative Certificate Program.	• Financial support for <u>Irma Thompson Program</u>
UVA	• USS consortium membership • <u>Memorial to Enslaved Laborers</u> - Physical Memorial • <u>Gibbons Project</u>	• Enslaved Ancestors Scholarships – 4 awards

*USS Consortium – Universities Studying Slavery

September 30, 2025

TO: SCHEV

RE: William & Mary 2025 Enslaved Ancestors College Access
Scholarship and Memorial Program Report

Memorial Program

Since 2009, Lemon Project faculty, staff, and students have researched the history and experiences of African Americans at William & Mary. Lemon Project team members and community researchers have uncovered over two-hundred people who were enslaved by the institution, its employees, and students' families, or who were hired from others. With the mission to build bridges between William & Mary and African American communities through research, programming, and by supporting students, faculty, and staff, the Lemon Project has long been a leader of the Universities Studying Slavery movement. One way that William & Mary boldly confronts its past as an enslaver and proponent of Jim Crow era ideology is through the Lemon Project Annual Spring Symposium, which marks its sixteenth year in March 2026. The physical manifestation of William & Mary's commitment to reconciling its long and complicated past is *Hearth: Memorial to the Enslaved*, which was dedicated in 2022.

Research and Scholarship

Since 2009, faculty, staff, student, and community volunteer research has provided insight into the experiences of African Americans at William & Mary. This information has been shared at conferences and symposia, during community presentations, in scholarly articles, and in the classroom.

In April 2018, the BOV officially apologized for William & Mary's history of slavery and discrimination:

"The Board of Visitors acknowledges that William & Mary enslaved people, exploited them and their labor and perpetuated the legacies of racial discrimination. The Board profoundly regrets these activities, apologizes for them, expresses its deep appreciation for the contributions made by the African-American members of its community to the vitality of William & Mary then,

now, and for all time coming, and commits to continue our efforts to remedy the lingering effects of past injustices.”

Additional information may be found at the following links:

The Lemon Project: A Journey of Reconciliation
<https://www.wm.edu/sites/lemonproject/index.php>

History of Slavery at William & Mary:
<https://www.wm.edu/sites/enslavedmemorial/slavery-at-wm/index.php>

Hearth: Memorial to the Enslaved

In August 2018, William & Mary announced a [design competition](#) for the Memorial to the Enslaved. The international competition was open to everyone. Dr. Phyllis Slade Martin, Slade & Associates, LLC, served as competition advisor, managing the search through its completion.

“We seek a conceptual design for a physical memorial that establishes a new place of community and contemplation within or directly engaging with the setting of William & Mary’s Historic Campus,” read the [call for submissions](#). “By virtue of its scale, location, materials and narrative content, the conceptual design will create a noble and lasting tribute to the memory of the people who built and served the university.”

The design concept needed to include space for names of the enslaved to be prominently featured. The competition was anonymous. The nine-person jury selected three finalist designs out of over 80 submissions.

From those finalists, President Rowe chose [the winning concept](#), “Hearth” by architect Will Sendor ’11. President Rowe shared “Hearth” with the BOV in April 2019.

Once the concept was chosen, William & Mary sought an architectural firm and construction firm to make the design into a reality. Richmond-based architects Baskervill and construction firm Kjellstrom & Lee, as well as the Memorial Building Committee and William & Mary’s Facilities Management team, spearheaded this phase.

The BOV committed unrestricted donations to match targeted private gifts totaling more than \$1 million. The [groundbreaking](#) for Hearth: Memorial to the Enslaved took place in May 2021 and the dedication was in May 2022. A vessel that will be illuminated during special occasions in recognition of people whom the university enslaved was added in March 2023.

Names of those enslaved may be found at the following link:

<https://www.wm.edu/sites/enslavedmemorial/enslaved-names/index.php>

(Note: Names are displayed with the dates of the records in which they were found.)

Enslaved Ancestors Scholarship

During fiscal year 2022, William & Mary established two endowed scholarships aligned with the SCHEV guidelines for the Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program. Both the Lemon Scholarship Endowment and the Anne R. Willis Scholarship Endowment provides need-based scholarship support for undergraduate students with a demonstrated historic connection to slavery as identified in the process set forth under Virginia law. These endowments are funded entirely by private donors. The Lemon Scholarship and the Anne R. Willis Scholarship Endowment are awarded annually to an eligible student to partially offset tuition and fees. Relying on the eligibility requirements established in the SCHEV guidelines, William & Mary was awarded the Lemon Scholarship and the Anne R. Willis Scholarship for the 2025-26 academic year. The university received more than 43 applications for scholarships. Applications were reviewed by a committee made up of representatives from Admissions, Financial Aid and Inclusive Excellence. Scholarship recipients were selected based on financial need and the strength of essays submitted. Funding for Hearst: Memorial to the Enslaved and scholarships did not result from general funds or from increases in tuition or fees.

23.1-615.1. Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program.

A. The Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program (the Program) is established for the purpose of reckoning with the history of the Commonwealth, addressing the long legacy of slavery in the Commonwealth, and acknowledging that the foundational success of several public institutions of higher education was based on the labor of enslaved individuals.

B. Consistent with the purpose set forth in subsection A, Longwood University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, the Virginia Military Institute, and The College of William and Mary in Virginia shall each implement and execute the Program, with any source of funds other than state funds or tuition or fee increases, by annually (i) identifying and memorializing, to the extent

possible, all enslaved individuals who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property and (ii) providing a tangible benefit such as a college scholarship or community-based economic development program for individuals or specific communities with a demonstrated historic connection to slavery that will empower families to be lifted out of the cycle of poverty.

C. The Council shall collaborate with the institutions set forth in subsection B to establish guidelines for the implementation of the Program, including guidelines for the identification of all enslaved individuals who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property, the development of appropriate means to memorialize these individuals, the development of programs for individuals and communities still experiencing the legacy of slavery to empower them to break the cycle of poverty, eligibility criteria for participation in such programs, and the duration of such programs.

D. Each institution set forth in subsection B shall continue the activities set forth in subsection B pursuant to the Program for a period equal in length to the period during which the institution used enslaved individuals to support the institution or until scholarships have been awarded to a number of recipients equal to 100 percent of the population of enslaved individuals identified pursuant to subsection B who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property, whichever occurs first.

E. Each institution set forth in subsection B shall annually submit to the Council information on the implementation of the Program. The Council shall compile such information in a report and submit such report no later than November 1 of each year to the Chairmen of the House Committee on Appropriations, the House Committee on Education, the Senate Committee on Education and Health, the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations, and the Virginia African American Advisory Board.

F. Each private institution of higher education with a legacy of slavery that is similar to that of any institution set forth in subsection B is strongly encouraged to participate in the Program on a voluntary basis.

2021, Sp. Sess. I, c. [442](#).

Longwood University Report on Enslaved Ancestors, September 2025

In accordance with § 23.1-615.1. of the Code of Virginia, Longwood University seeks to “[address] the long legacy of slavery in the Commonwealth, and [acknowledges] that the foundational success of several public institutions of higher education was based on the labor of enslaved individuals.” Longwood University certifies that state general funds and non-general funds, such as tuition and fees, were not used for any aspect of this program, other than the uses allowed under SCHEV guidance.

Longwood University was incorporated as the Farmville Female Seminary Association on March 5, 1839; in 1860, the name changed to Farmville Female College. From 1839 to 1865, the original property for the seminary was on High Street in Farmville (Lots 105 and 107 of the Josiah Chambers survey). The College did not become a public institution until 1884, when it became the State Female Normal School.

In March 2025, Longwood acknowledged the legacy of Black workers at the institution during the C. G. Gordon Moss Lecture event. This year’s lecture featured Dr. Blair LM Kelley, who was at the time the Joel R. Williamson Distinguished Professor of Southern Studies at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and director of the Center for the Study of the American South. Her lecture focused on her latest book, *Black Folk: The Roots of the Black Working Class*.

In August 2025, Longwood awarded the second Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship, a one-time scholarship to be awarded annually to an eligible undergraduate student from Virginia to partially defray the cost of attendance. To be eligible, an applicant must demonstrate a personal and historical connection to slavery in Virginia or be a member of a specific community that has experienced the negative legacy born out of the institution of slavery. The application can be found [here](#).

Research continues in manuscript collections, newspapers, and government records to attempt to identify enslaved and free Black people with connections to the Farmville Female Seminary and Farmville Female College. There are no institutionally held records that shed insight on the experiences of enslaved people at the Farmville Female Seminary. According to the records of the trustees of the Farmville Female College after the Civil War, the early records of the Farmville Female Seminary Association were burned by the Union Army as it moved through Farmville on April 6-7, 1865.

Evidence has been found that enslaved people were leased to work at the Farmville Female Seminary. Research has uncovered an 1863 lease agreement for an enslaved individual named Mimi (George LaMonte papers, New Jersey Historical Society), and an 1863 runaway slave ad for a boy named Ben “who ran off from the Female College” (Richmond *Whig*, June 16, 1863).

Evidence has also been found that free Black people also worked at the Farmville Female Seminary. In the 1860 census, two women were listed as servants in Principal George

LaMonte's household: Agnes Evans, who was listed as Black and age 45, and L. Smith, who was listed as Mulatto and age 30. Both were listed as servants. Agnes Evans was a free Black woman, who had registered as a free person in Charlotte County in 1837 (her certificate is available through the Library of Virginia). Research has not uncovered yet more information on L. Smith.

In addition to the above efforts regarding the history of enslaved individuals, Longwood continues to be engaged in scholarship, commemoration, and reconciliation work around the Prince Edward County civil rights movement, which is of particular importance to the local community and to Longwood's partnership with the Robert Russa Moton Museum. As part of these efforts, Longwood awards the Moton Legacy Scholarship to a rising senior. Given annually since 2015, it recognizes a student with great promise for a life and career of citizen leadership. The ideal recipient will advance in a contemporary context the ideals espoused by those who fought for equal opportunity in Longwood's home communities of Farmville and Prince Edward County during the civil rights era.

Institutional Contact:

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2025 Update: Implementation Report – University of Virginia

Enslaved Ancestors Memorial and Scholarship Program

Pursuant to [Virginia Code § 23.1-615.1](#), this report provides an update on the implementation of the Enslaved Ancestors Memorial and Scholarship Program at the University of Virginia. This report is intended to expand upon the information provided in 2022, 2023, and 2024, and offer an update of new information and efforts underway in the past year. State general funds and non-general funds prohibited, as outlined by SCHEV guidance, were not used for any aspect of this program other than as allowed under the guidance.

Universities Studying Slavery Consortium and the Gibbons Project

As discussed in the University's 2022, 2023, and 2024 Implementation Reports, the goal of the [Universities Studying Slavery \(USS\) Consortium](#) has been to encourage all higher education institutions to engage in the work of identifying and memorializing, as well as to connect institutions to share research and best practices. The research network that is available because of the Consortium—made up of over 100 institutions of higher education across six countries—helps the University and other institutions break down research silos, connect disparate records, and trace enslaved individuals who moved between institutions in the Americas and across the Atlantic. The Consortium also has established a steering committee—whose membership includes people from over a dozen higher education institutions—working on shaping what shared governance, guiding principles and best practices (including research and building relationships with descendant groups), the cultivation of HBCU collaboration and support, and multi-institution project/funding will look like. In 2025, USS completed a statement of guiding principles for the consortium, held a hybrid symposium hosted by Virginia Tech, and have launched a monthly virtual lunch and learn series for the teams at member schools. The two annual conferences have continued to represent learning, collaboration, and networking opportunities for universities, descendants, and others.

[The Gibbons Project](#) grew from the work of the [President's Commission on Slavery and the University \(PCSU\)](#) and the Commission on the University in the Age of Segregation and has dedicated staff to oversee archival and genealogical research as well as research to connect descendants and their ancestors. Central to these initiatives are the efforts of the [Descendants of Enslaved Communities at UVA](#), the mission of which is to research and reclaim the narrative, to honor the legacies of enslaved and free Black communities and their descendants, and to achieve restorative justice for communities rooted at the University of Virginia and surrounding regions.

Dr. Shelley V. Murphy, the genealogist hired in 2019 as a descendant project researcher with the Gibbons Project, is developing almost 400 family trees. Thus far, approximately 700 of the estimated 4,000 enslaved laborers who worked on Grounds throughout the University's history have been identified. Since the submission of the 2024 report, the Gibbons project has identified 47 new names of enslaved people at UVA.

The Gibbons Project has identified archival collections held at several libraries that include material naming enslaved people who were enslaved by surnames of people affiliated with the University. The identification of these collections expands the known universe of archival collections to almost 700 collections in total, with over 420 collections currently in the University's own holdings and over 250 manuscript collections held in six other libraries. Additionally, these efforts have led to the scanning of 150,000 court documents for further

2025 Update: Implementation Report – University of Virginia

research. Efforts to research these new collections continue. Additionally, the Gibbons Project has built a cloud-based data-tracking system to ensure that the University's descendant outreach researcher (genealogist) and the historical researchers reviewing these archives are sharing data.

Lastly, the Gibbons Project has built and continues to populate a database tracking the local African American community after 1865—including such records as city directories, death records, school censuses, WWII service records, Freedman's Bank and Bureau records, as well as wills, probate records, marriage records, deeds, and other county/municipal records from circa 1780 to 1865. This resource, based upon extensive digitization and research over the past several years, will help the Gibbons Project track the ancestry of living descendants back to 1870, and assist with connecting post-1870 genealogy to those enslaved at UVA.

Memorial to Enslaved Laborers and Memorialization Efforts

The [Memorial to Enslaved Laborers](#)—which was developed in a collaborative effort involving students, faculty, staff, alumni, the design team, and the local community—was formally dedicated in April 2021. The inner facing side of the Memorial's outer ring bears the names of individuals known to be enslaved at UVA and includes memory markers created to identify the lives and names that have yet to be identified. The names of individuals identified as this research effort continues will be added to the Memorial and unveiled to the descendants of the enslaved.

The [decade-long effort](#) to properly memorialize enslaved individuals was first conceived by students and became a central initiative of the PCSU. Prior to the creation of the PCSU, the University placed a small marker near the Rotunda to memorialize free and enslaved laborers. In 2011, a student-led organization, Memorial for Enslaved Laborers (MEL), worked to garner support for the building of a more fitting memorial. In 2012, a plaque honoring [Henry Martin](#) was placed by the University Chapel. Additional efforts to memorialize enslaved individuals at the University included the 2014 renovation and commemoration of a [recently discovered](#) enslaved cemetery, the [2015 naming of Gibbons House residence hall after William and Isabella Gibbons](#)—including [interpretive panels](#) that tell the Gibbons' story—the [adding of interpretive panels at the burial ground that was identified at Gooch Dillard](#) in 1983, and the naming of [Skipwith Hall](#). Additionally, the University recently installed an [interpretive exhibit at Hotel D](#) as well as [an exhibit in Pavilion X](#), both originally commissioned in 2022.

Enslaved Ancestors Scholarship Program

In collaboration with leaders of the Descendants of Enslaved Communities at UVA, the University developed priorities for this scholarship program consistent with the eligibility requirements provided by SCHEV.

In addition to the previously reported four undergraduate students who received scholarships covering the full cost of attendance, and the two students from the School of Continuing and Professional Studies (SCPS) who were awarded full tuition and fees, scholarships were also offered to three additional undergraduate students and one SCPS student who demonstrated a strong alignment with institutional priorities and satisfied all eligibility criteria.

2025 Update: Implementation Report – University of Virginia

Before the scholarships were awarded, the recipients, also consistent with SCHEV guidance, affirmed the accuracy of the information they had provided and their understanding that the awards were subject to the availability of funds and their continued enrollment. They also agreed to permit the University to share their personally identifiable information with SCHEV. The non-state funds that were used for these scholarships met the guidelines provided by SCHEV.

2025 Update: Implementation Report – University of Virginia

Additional Resources

Dedication of the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers (VIDEO): <https://news.virginia.edu/video/dedication-memorial-enslaved-laborers-uva>

Exploring the Design of UVA's Memorial to Enslaved Laborers:
<https://news.virginia.edu/video/exploring-design-uvas-memorial-enslaved-laborers>

Memorial to Enslaved Laborers: <https://mel.virginia.edu/>

Memorial to Enslaved Laborers Timeline: <https://mel.virginia.edu/memorial?open=true#making-the-memorial>

Memorial to Enslaved Laborers Stands Out In Telling UVA History:
<https://news.virginia.edu/content/memorial-enslaved-laborers-stands-out-telling-uva-history>

Pavilion X Exhibit - <https://news.virginia.edu/content/pavilion-x-exhibit-highlights-slavery-history-its-former-residents>

President's Commission on Slavery and the University: <https://slavery.virginia.edu/>

President's Council on UVA-Community Partnerships: <https://prescouncil.president.virginia.edu/>

Pipelines and Pathways Working Group: <https://prescouncil.president.virginia.edu/pipelines-and-pathways>

Slavery at the University of Virginia: A Catalogue of Current and Past Initiatives (2013):
https://dei.virginia.edu/sites/g/files/jsddwu511/files/inline-files/SlaveryatUVA_FAULKNER_001.pdf

Unearthed & Understood (Documentary prepared for the symposium "Universities Confronting the Legacy of Slavery"; 2014): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_997dhrOtM

UVA Magazine – "Unearthing Slavery at the University of Virginia":
https://uvamagazine.org/articles/unearthing_slavery_at_the_university_of_virginia

UVA Today – "UVA and the History of Race": <https://news.virginia.edu/news-category/uva-and-history-race>

Walking Tour Map & App: <https://slavery.virginia.edu/enslaved-african-americans-walking-tour-map-app-updated-for-2021/>

September 29, 2025

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

James Monroe Building

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Background

During the 2021 legislative session, House Bill 1980 was introduced and passed by the General Assembly in special session (Virginia Code § 23.1-615.1). This legislation mandates five institutions, including Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), to research their historical relationships with slavery and establish an Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Identification and Memorial Program.

Following the release of the Identification and Memorialization Guidelines by the State Council of Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV) in 2022, VCU convened a leadership group to explore how to:

1. conduct this research,
2. fund it, and
3. advance the scholarship and memorial programs.

While SCHEV guidelines allow state funds for compensating researchers, VCU chose to use non-state funds for the research component.

To fulfill this obligation, the university formed a working group composed of faculty, archivists, budget officers, and administrators to develop a research methodology. The group commissioned Dr. Peter Wosh, Director of the Archives and Public History Program at New York University, to conduct the research and draft a report. His report, titled *“Slavery and the Medical College of Virginia,”* stated:

“The Medical College of Virginia (MCV) remained thoroughly embedded within the institution of slavery from its founding in 1838. Tax lists and census data confirm that MCV routinely owned and/or rented between four and eight enslaved laborers each year.”

In Spring 2023, VCU's Office of the President launched Project Gabriel to address and heal the wounds caused by the university's historic ties to slavery. Named after Gabriel Prosser,

an enslaved Richmond man who organized a rebellion in 1800 to end slavery in Virginia, the Project Gabriel Commission aims to guide VCU in reckoning with its past and strengthening its communities.

In February 2023, the Project Gabriel Commission was established, along with its membership and charge. The Commission developed a timeline and defined its goals and objectives. Recognizing the importance of community engagement, a series of forums were scheduled. Topics were generated, stakeholders identified, and engagement strategies outlined. The Commission subsequently developed and approved a work plan to determine next steps.

In March 2023, Dr. Wosh presented insights from his report to the Commission.

Three public forums were held during Spring 2023 to gather initial input on the themes of identification and memorialization, scholarships, and community economic programs. These forums were conducted at a local public middle school, on the VCU campus, and virtually. Using a small-group participatory model, community members shared insights about desired initiatives and challenges. These well-attended events engaged several hundred participants. Their valuable feedback was recorded and transcribed.

In April, the Commission held its third forum and began analyzing the collected data, summarizing key themes and sub-themes. Three workgroups were established to draft recommendations, focused on:

1. Community and individual programs
2. Scholarships
3. Identification and memorialization

The community program workgroup was further divided into sub-groups addressing both community and individual programs. These recommendations were presented to VCU President Michael Rao by the Commission co-chairs.

Initial recommendations were also shared with two additional community groups. The faith community was identified as a key stakeholder group, and two listening sessions were held at Second Street Baptist Church of Richmond and Fifth Baptist Church. These groups were charged with providing feedback and prioritizing recommendations.

A final report detailing the Project Gabriel journey and proposed recommendations was submitted to the Board of Visitors for review. Co-chairs Sheryl Garland and Dr. Clifton Peay presented these recommendations and requested the Board direct VCU's administration to consider them promptly—taking into account potential legislative changes, resource availability, operational plans, and legal guidance. On September 15, 2023, the Board approved a motion to receive annual updates from VCU's administration on progress made.

In October 2023, Dr. Faye Belgrave became VCU's Vice President of Inclusive Excellence and Chief Diversity Officer. She was appointed to lead Project Gabriel and serve as the primary contact for HB 1980 and Project Gabriel.

In compliance with Virginia Code § 23.1-615.1, VCU certifies that neither state general funds nor non-general funds—prohibited by SCHEV guidance—were used for any aspect of this program, except as permitted under that guidance.

VCU provided initial funding for Project Gabriel using unrestricted funds and funds from the MCV Health Foundation to hire a Project Director. Funding also supported additional research on enslaved individuals (Recommendation One) and stakeholder engagement.

Dr. Belgrave appointed a search committee for the Project Director position in late Fall 2023, and the position was posted in January 2024. The search committee included former Project Gabriel Commission members, representatives from the East Marshall Street Well Project, Richmond Public Schools, and the VCU community.

After a competitive search, Stephanie Rizzi was appointed as the inaugural Project Director in July 2024. Ms. Rizzi brought extensive experience in community engagement and advocacy, subject matter expertise on enslavement and memorialization, and deep familiarity with VCU—having served the institution for 38 years as a student, staff, faculty member, and administrator.

Community Building and Engagement

Ms. Rizzi has actively built networks with leaders from the four other Virginia universities under the mandate, with the goal of sharing best practices and collaborating on innovative ways to fulfill HB 1980. On September 13, 2025, Ms. Rizzi attended the Descendants Symposium and Descendants Day: Family Reunion at the University of Virginia, where she connected with professionals engaged in genealogy, historical research, memorialization, scholarship development, and community engagement.

VCU funded and Ms. Rizzi hired a Project Assistant and a Community Liaison, both of whom are working on messaging and community outreach for Project Gabriel.

A brief pause in outreach occurred due to the dismantling of Inclusive Excellence, the division originally housing Project Gabriel. Staff have since begun to rebuild networks and re-engage the community.

The first Project Gabriel Town Hall is scheduled for the evening of September 30, 2025.

Identification and Memorialization

In 2024, Dr. Belgrave and Ms. Rizzi met with VCU's Associate Vice President for Facilities Management to initiate a feasibility study on the original First African Baptist Church site (Randolph Minor Hall). An architect was contracted, and the study was underway when legislation transferred the site to Virginia State University. The study was suspended, and Project Gabriel pivoted to exploring alternative memorialization strategies.

Two major proposals emerged:

- 1. Virtual Museum**

A digital experience to tell the story of enslavement and its legacy at MCV/VCU. This multi-disciplinary, multi-year initiative will engage students across fields, leverage cutting-edge technology, and culminate in a virtual museum. It will also provide student internships and workforce preparation opportunities.

- 2. Public Art Installation**

A sculpture, potentially featuring a water element, that honors the resilience and spiritual strength of the enslaved who labored at VCU. This installation is envisioned to align with the East Marshall Street Well Project.

An Inclusive Fellow was hired in October 2024 to support research and implementation. We do not have a student fellow this academic year, but plan to explore options in the future. A genealogist will also be hired to identify enslaved individuals and trace their descendants.

Plans are in place to integrate efforts between the East Marshall Street Well Project and Project Gabriel once the remains are interred.

Scholarships

Ms. Rizzi and Dr. Belgrave collaborated with the VCU Development and Alumni Relations Office to structure the scholarship program in compliance with legal and SCHEV guidelines. After the Office of Inclusive Excellence was dismantled, Ms. Rizzi continued the effort with support from the Office of the President, Development and Alumni Relations, and Financial Aid.

Funds from the MCV Foundation were secured, and after careful review, the first round of scholarships will be awarded by the end of October 2025.

VCU's Development and Alumni Relations Office will continue fundraising to support the Project Gabriel Scholarships.

Community-Based Economic Development Programs

In December 2023, Project Gabriel hosted a celebration at VCU Health's Larrick Center to honor the Commission's work and recognize contributors.

On October 15, 2024, Project Gabriel, in collaboration with the Vice President's Office for Inclusive Excellence and the VCU Common Book Program, hosted a community re-engagement event titled "Restoration and DEI: Where Are We Now."

The upcoming Town Hall on September 30, 2025, will reintroduce Project Gabriel to the public and help recruit members for a Community Advisory Committee.

Project Gabriel hopes to expand support for two VCU-sponsored programs aligned with its economic development goals:

- 1. Food Shelfie Program (VCU da Vinci Center)**

A low-barrier entrepreneurship program supporting:

- **Economic equity and inclusion**
- **Workforce innovation**
- **Community-centered business development**

More info: <https://shiftretail.vcu.edu/programming/shelfie-program/>

2. VCU Advanced Certificate in Youth Development Management

A scalable program supporting:

- **Workforce readiness**
- **K–12 mentorship and academic initiatives**
- **Youth empowerment**
- **Community-rooted economic equity**

More info: <https://mfyc.vcu.edu/rydn/ydncertificate/>

Project Gabriel aims to support and highlight community-empowering programs like these to fulfill its broader mission.

Ms. Rizzi and the VCU administration are committed to fulfilling the requirements of HB 1980. They look forward to further community engagement, student internships focused on memorialization, and broad collaboration to implement the final recommendations of the Project Gabriel Commission.

In compliance with Virginia Code § 23.1-615.1, Virginia Commonwealth University certifies that state general funds and non-general funds prohibited, as outlined by SCHEV guidance, were not used for any aspect of this program—other than as allowed under this guidance.

2025 Annual Report to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program

Submitted by the Virginia Military Institute

Last year we submitted ***Slavery at VMI***, our findings of an 18-month research and writing project. Over the past year, this document has been accessed by several college students and interested local citizens using it as a resource in their own work on this and related subjects. We continue to explore meaningful ways to commemorate this aspect of our shared heritage.

During this reporting cycle a select team of VMI faculty and staff participated in the **Jessie Ball DuPont Historical Initiative Certificate Program**. The program models how institutions can address complex and sometimes troubling past of their founders through an “additive history” approach aimed to expand narratives by incorporating diverse stories and perspectives, rather than centering exclusively on past injustices. VMI participants have now completed a series of training and sharing sessions resulting in an outline of initiative and goals. The VMI Project Design Worksheet details those goals—a copy of which is appended to this report. This work has been accomplished under the initiative and guidance of Brianna Williams, VMI Chief Diversity Officer.

Financial support of minority focused community based economic development efforts in Academic Year 23-24 included a grant of \$5,000 to the Walker Program, whose mission was to lower the barriers to business ownership for entrepreneurs of color in our community. During Academic Year 24-25, VMI provided a \$5,000 grant supporting the Irma Thompson Educators of Color Program (<https://www.irmathompsonprogram.com/>). Under the sponsorship of the Rockbridge NAACP, this program supports the recruitment, retention, and flourishing of educators of color in the public school systems of our area. The Irma Thompson Educators of Color Program addresses the objectives of “advancing policies and practices that expand human and civil rights, eliminate discrimination, and accelerate the well-being, education, and economic security of Black people and all persons of color.” We are honored to assist in that goal. VMI is identifying a community based economic development effort for consideration in Academic Year 25-26.

A key programming activity this year was sponsored by VMI’s Summer Undergraduate Research Initiative, through which VMI faculty partnered with a cadet on a research project titled “*African Americans at the Virginia Military Institute from 1850 to 1865*.” The project explores an important chapter of VMI’s history. The cadet and faculty members will share their findings in both a public presentation and a written research paper on 8 October.

The VMI steering committee certifies that all work has been performed in compliance with Virginia Code § 23.1-615.1. No state general funds or non-general funds were used for any aspect of this program, other than as allowed under the guidance provided by SCHEV. We look forward to continuing the work intended by Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program.

END OF REPORT SPT 2025

Inclusive History Project Design Worksheet

This worksheet serves as an ongoing resource for your team throughout the Fall 2024 semester certificate program, helping to establish a strong foundation as the series advances. We encourage clear and concise responses.

Reminders for centering your project in a strong position within your institution:

- *Position your inclusive history project as a multidisciplinary effort with strong institutional support, ideally anchored within the office of the provost or president, to underscore its importance and visibility.*
- *Align the inclusive history work with your institution's strategic plan and mission, emphasizing how it fosters scholarly inquiry, encourages critical thinking, and strengthens civic and community engagement among students.*
- *Adopt the concept of "additive history" — which aims to expand narratives by incorporating diverse stories and perspectives, rather than centering exclusively on past injustices.*

1. **Historic Framing:** In 1-3 sentences, describe what history or histories your inclusive history project will include, and how your team will structure these stories to allow for broader possibilities.
 - This project will research, document, and share the lives of African Americans associated with Virginia Military Institute (VMI) between 1839-1865.
 - Our first project focuses on Mr. Anderson Dandridge who was involved with VMI during the mid-1800s.
2. **Institutional Support:** Where do you envision the project's leadership being housed or funded within your institution?
 - Leadership: Currently the project is being led by Jane Bartley (Archivist & User Experience Librarian). As the project progresses, the group envisions that the project will be housed jointly in the VMI History Department and VMI Library/Archives.
 - The current Superintendent is aware of the project and has voiced his support. A new Superintendent will be appointed in Summer 2025 and we are unsure if they provide support.
 - Funding: Currently there is no dedicated VMI funding, but the group is exploring opportunities within different departments. The team will search and apply for related external grants, such as those in the digital humanities.
3. **Multidisciplinary Approach:** Which offices, divisions, or departments will you involve ensuring a cross-disciplinary effort? *Add additional units as needed.*
 - Unit: Preston Library and Archives
 - Contact(s):
 - Jane Bartley, bartleyje@vmi.edu
 - Mary Laura Kludy, kludym1@vmi.edu
 - Jeff Kozak, kozakjs@vmi.edu
 - Project Role/Responsibility:
 - Serve as the main repository for primary source material

- Assists with conducting project-related research
 - Provide research assistance
 - Identify potential collections of interest to begin research
 - Create a dedicated collection(s) related to the project
 - Digitize primary source documents (including metadata management)
 - Creation of library/research guides
- Unit: English, Rhetoric, and Humanistic Studies Department
 - Contact(s): Catharine Ingersoll, ingersollcc@vmi.edu
 - Project Role/Responsibility:
 - Engage cadets in project research/presentation through the Fieldwork course (ERH 411).
- Unit: History Department
 - Contact(s): Erin Holmes, holmesem@vmi.edu
 - Project Role/Responsibility:
 - Serves as a project and cadet advisor
 - Course development and cadet research support
 - Conducts project-related research
 - Publishing of project findings, progress, etc.
- Unit: Economics and Business Department
 - Contact(s): Samuel Allen, allensk@vmi.edu
 - Project Role/Responsibility:
 - Quantitative data analysis support
 - Economic research/presentation assistance
 - Assistance in proving context related to ethical economics
- Unit: Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion
 - Contact(s): Briana Williams, williamsba@vmi.edu
 - Project Role/Responsibility:
 - Making connections with Lexington's Black community and community organizations who would be integral to the success of the project.
 - Planning programming to support project goals and create post-wide dialogue about VMI's past and present-day implications.
 - Providing feedback to ensure our project is inclusive in its approaches.
- Unit: Communications and Marketing
 - Contact(s): Sherry Wallace, wallacesl@vmi.edu
 - Project Role/Responsibility:
 - Advertising project efforts to the VMI community and beyond.
 - Assistance with VMI website design changes.
- Unit: VMI Museum System (includes all three sites)
 - Contact(s): Cathy DeSilvey, VMI Museum, desilveycp@vmi.edu
 - Project Role/Responsibility:
 - Outreach
 - Exhibit research and design
 - Contact(s): Sarah Hebert, VA Museum of the Civil War, hebertsm@vmi.edu
 - Project Role/Responsibility:

- Grant research
- Outreach
- Contact(s): Kristin Pace, Jackson House Museum, pacekl@vmi.edu
 - Project Role/Responsibility:
 - Assist with conducting project-related research

4. **External Partnerships:** What local/regional partners (e.g., historic sites, museums, colleges, community groups, churches) do you plan to engage? *Add additional partners as needed.*

- Organization: Rockbridge Historical Society
 - Contact(s): Cathy DeSilvey, Larry Spurgeon (RHS Board President), Eric Wilson (RHS Executive Director)
 - Envisioned Role: Available for event participation, cross-promotion, vetting content for accuracy
 - Spurgeon has additional information on Anderson Dandridge
- Organization: Local Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
 - Contact(s): Pastor Reginald Early
 - Envisioned Role: Raising awareness and community organizing. Perhaps NAACP members can co-host a panel discussion with community members once our project is further along. They could also provide external accountability for our efforts.
- Organization: Rockbridge Racial Equity Coalition
 - Contact(s): Anna Ennchen
 - Envisioned Role: Raising awareness and providing external accountability for our efforts.
- Organization: Community Antiracism (CARE) Rockbridge
 - Contact(s): Robin Leblanc
 - Envisioned Role: CARE Rockbridge has a podcast. They have offered to feature project participants in a future episode.

5. **Student Involvement:** How will students participate in the project?

- The team will seek to partner with current VMI courses to give cadets hands-on research experience related to the project.
- The team will seek to involve cadet clubs/groups on post, such as the Promaji Club, Phi Alpha Theta, Building Bridges, and the Virginia History Society.

6. **Goals and Success:** What are your project's short-, mid-, and long-term goals, and how will you define success at each stage?

- Short-term (Spring 2025 semester) goal(s)
 - Goal 1: Identify current/previous work that identifies and documents the lives of enslaved individuals associated with VMI
 - Success Measurement: An internally accessible repository of current/previous work
 - Update: A Box folder was created and material added.

- Goal 2: Create related course list and reach out to associated departments/faculty. Additionally, speak with departments/faculty about potential course involvement.
 - Success Measurement: A related course list that includes interested faculty/departments
- Goal 3: Create project documentation and outreach plan for the VMI community (e.g., department heads) to communicate the project goals, progress, etc.
 - Success Measurement: A project documentation and outreach plan. This plan will be presented to stakeholders (internal and external) for feedback and updated accordingly. This plan will also have written approval from VMI leadership.
 - Update: A executive summary is being drafted.
- Goal 4: Begin (and possibly finish) research related to Anderson Dandridge.
 - Success Measurement:
 - Comprehensive biographical information.
 - Creation/addition to Dandridge's subject file.
 - Written research summary to be used in outreach, updates, and project website.
 - Update: Collections of interest and resources have been placed in the group's Box folder.
- Mid-term (Fall 2025/Spring 2026 semesters) goal(s)
 - Goal 1: Active cadet involvement in project research (e.g., through course work, club activities)
 - Success Measurement:
 - Completion of a Fieldwork course (ERH 411).
 - Identifying potential Summer Undergraduate Research Institute (SURI) cadets and/or those interested in a project-related independent study.
 - Goal 2: Create outreach material (e.g., display) to document research progress and showcase individuals/history.
 - Success Measurement:
 - Creation of a display that showcases project progress.
 - Creation of other material, such as brochures, flyers, social media posts, etc.
 - Goal 3: Create a dedicated project website.
 - Success Measurement: Creation and publication of a project website.
 - Goal 4: Exhibit information collected about Anderson Dandridge.
 - Success Measurement: Creation of physical and/or digital displays that presents information about Dandridge to a variety of audiences (internal and external).
 - Example: A traveling exhibit, local school presentation
- Long-term (Fall 2026 semester and beyond) goal(s):
 - Goal 1: Create a public-facing database/repository
 - Success Measurement: Creation and publication of a database/repository.

- Goal 2: Expand the project to include later 19th and 20th century histories.
 - Success Measurement: Work collaboratively with stakeholders to determine next project parameters/priorities and create plan
 - Some ideas include: Promaji/1st Black cadets, Jim Crow era, physical expansion of post and relationship to neighboring communities (e.g., Diamond Hill)

END OF Inclusive History Project Design Worksheet