



BOARD OF VISITORS
Student Enhancement & Engagement and Digital Learning Committee
June 12, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

The Student Enhancement & Engagement and Digital Learning Committee of the Board of Visitors of Old Dominion University met on Friday, June 12, 2026 from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the Board Room of the Kate and John Broderick Dining Commons.

Present from the Committee:

Susan Allen, Chair
Claire Wulf Winiarek, Ph.D., Vice Chair
P. Murry Pitts (*ex officio*)
Robert S. Corn
Elza H. Mitchum
Charlene A. Moring, Esq.
Cade Franklin (*Student Representative*)

Absent from the Committee:

Andrew Hodge (*ex officio*)
Tatyana Lobova, Ph.D. (*Faculty Representative*)

Also present from the Board:

E.G. (Rudy) Middleton
Keith H. Newby, Sr., MD
The Honorable Kenneth R. (Ken) Plum
D.R. (Rick) Wyatt

Also present were:

Alfred Abuhamad, M.D.
Austin Agho, Ph.D.
Krystal Allen, Ph.D.
Karen Andrewlavage
Ashleigh Boothe
Alonzo Brandon
Nikos Chrisochoides, Ph.D.
Kirk Dewyea
Annie Gibson

Susan Kenter, Ph.D.
Kate Ledger
Mason Leclerc
Victoria Martin, Ed.D.
Ashley Miller, Ed.D.
Megan Moore
Kimberly Osborne
Brian Payne, Ph.D.
Pearson, Ph.D.

Melanie Graham, Ph.D.
Brian O. Hemphill, Ph.D.
Adam Henken
Brandi Hephner LaBanc, Ed.D.
Aaron Hodnett
Shannon Hurt
Stephanie Jannelle
Makalya Johson
Rachel Jones
LaToya Jordan
Kiran Karande, Ph.D.
Mary Jo Karlis

Stacy Purcell, Esq.
Chad Reed
Lauren Robins, Ed.S.
Nina Rodriguez Gonser
September Sanderlin
Ashley Schumaker
Garrett Shelton
Dwayne Smith
Fred Tugas, Ed.D.
Bridget Weikel, Ph.D.
JaRenae Whitehead-Cooper
Allen Wilson, Esq.

- I. Call to Order – Committee Chair Susan Allen called the meeting to order at 8:59 a.m.
- II. Approval of Minutes – Upon a motion made by P. Murry Pitts and seconded by Robert S. Corn, the minutes of the Student Enhancement & Engagement and Digital Learning Committee meeting held on Friday, April 24, 2026 as presented were approved by all members present and voting.

III. Report from Brandi Hephner LaBanc, Ed.D., Vice President for Student and Campus Life

Brandi Hephner LaBanc, Ed.D., Vice President of Student and Campus Life, highlighted divisional efforts to move toward the university's Fall 2028 strategic plan first-time, full-time retention goal of 82%. To achieve this goal, the division is focused on sustained investments in the student experience, including mental health care, success coaching, and fostering a sense of belonging. A critical component of this work is targeted summer outreach to identify and address barriers to fall enrollment, helping students register for classes and supporting institutional retention goals. Vice President Hephner LaBanc also described the launch of the Big Blue Bundle, a new flat-fee course materials program that will begin this fall. The program will strengthen retention efforts by improving affordability and equitable access, ensuring all course materials are available by the first day of class, and supporting faculty in delivering course content that promotes student success. National data shows program participants are 16% more likely to complete their courses and 72% more likely to remain enrolled.

Vice President Hephner LaBanc introduced Fred Tugas, Ed.D., Chief of Staff and Assistant Vice President for Strategic Operations, to discuss student employment as a student success strategy. Dr. Tugas reported that students participating in on-campus employment experience higher retention rates compared to their peers. He outlined how student employment supports affordability, builds career readiness, and fosters a sense of belonging. Krystal Allen, Ph.D., Director of Residence Education, then provided a deeper look at the impact of student employment through the Resident Assistant experience. She noted that Resident Assistants must meet position eligibility requirements and serve in roles that support student belonging through mentorship, community building, and support referrals. She highlighted the Responsibility, Opportunities, Accountability, Respect, and Self (ROARS) programming model used by Resident Assistants to foster belonging through structured programming and to guide

referral of students to appropriate campus resources. Dr. Allen also described how the role supports the development of leadership and career competencies. She reported that more than 80% of Resident Assistants maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

Continuing the discussion of student development through experiential learning opportunities, Garrett Shelton, Chief of Police and Assistant Vice President for Public Safety, provided the public safety report. He highlighted student engagement initiatives, including internships, the Police Cadet Program, and the Citizens Academy. These programs build relationships between students and public safety officers, offer insight into emergency management operations, and provide students interested in public safety careers with knowledge and skills to support their professional preparation. He also described a new partnership with Old Dominion University's Darden College of Education and Professional Studies that will provide counseling graduate students with applied learning experiences supporting first responder mental health needs. The program aims to create a workforce pipeline of trauma-informed professionals equipped to support the lived realities of first responders across the region and beyond.

IV. Report from Nina Rodriguez Gonser, Vice President for Digital Transformation and Technology

Nina Rodriguez Gonser, Vice President for Digital Transformation and Technology, reported strong year-over-year growth in new student applications, up 21%, and admissions, up nearly 23%, across on-campus and online programs. Registrations of first-time campus students are 55.6% ahead of last year, and orientation registrations have increased by 33%. Growth in online applications and admissions reflects demand for the University's new asynchronous accelerated online programs. With ten weeks remaining before the fall semester and the strongest online recruitment period still ahead, the University has reached 65% of its enrollment goal.

Vice President Rodriguez Gonser also highlighted how investments in digital infrastructure are advancing the University's mission areas. The cloud research ecosystem supports more than 100 research projects and 85 researchers through scalable computing resources, AI tools, secure data environments, and high-performance storage. Examples included AI, digital twin, and neural network research. She welcomed Kiran Karande, Ph.D., Professor of Marketing, who discussed research on consumer interactions with AI-powered systems and digital experiences.

Vice President Rodriguez Gonser next introduced Nikos Chrisochoides, Ph.D., Richard T. Cheng Endowed Chair Professor and Eminent Scholar in the Computer Science and Physics Departments. Dr. Chrisochoides said Old Dominion University's adoption of a top R1 institution framework that integrates advanced research into the classroom strengthens student career readiness. He highlighted the Quantum Information Science program, the AI-enabled Intelligent Tutoring Assistant System, and MonarchSphere, the University's secure enterprise AI environment. Together, these initiatives expand computing access, support personalized learning, foster innovation, and maintain data privacy and security. He noted that technology accelerates research while transforming teaching, learning, and workforce development.

Rachel Jones, Director of Media and Digital Operations, reported on the Extended/Virtual Reality Lab which enables learning experiences not possible in a traditional classroom. Lauren Robins, Ed.S., Clinical Assistant Professor and Distance Learning Coordinator, described customized virtual reality simulations that enhance clinical training and prepare students for

practicum experiences through repeated practice, exposure to diverse client presentations, and immediate analytical feedback.

Dr. Robins and other faculty presenters expressed appreciation for the Division's partnership and support, and Director Jones reaffirmed the Division's commitment to advancing innovative teaching and research initiatives. Vice President Rodriguez Gonser concluded by reaffirming the Division's goal of positioning Old Dominion University as a leader in innovation across the Commonwealth.

- V. Adjournment – There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:33 a.m.