

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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THE COMMONWEALTH IS WITNESSING A TRANSFORMATION AT VIRGINIA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY IN VIRGINIA BEACH

John W. Dysart
President
THE DYSART GROUP

Dr. Scott Miller has held presidencies at three other institutions over the last 27 years. He was, in fact, one of the youngest ever to hold the chief position at a college or university.

Miller made a significant difference everywhere he served. His administrations have been characterized by bold leadership, creative academic program expansion, rapid enrollment growth, new construction and, physical plant enhancements and aggressive fund-raising.

He was selected by the Board of Trustees to lead the small college in Virginia in 2015. The changes and progress made in less than two years have been broad and extraordinary.

Major transformations of higher education institutions, although rare, certainly are not new. This newsletter has reported on several colleges and universities over the last thirteen years that have made amazing progress turning around downward trends. The recent

outcomes at Virginia Wesleyan University are unique in both the breadth of positive change and success achieved during an exceptionally short period of time.

I have been in this business for more than 35 years and have witnessed and participated in some enrollment miracles. I have never seen, however, anything like the last 24 months in Virginia Beach.



Dr. Scott Miller, President, VWU

Academic Expansion and Restructuring

Any transformational change will often involve reconsiderations of academic structures and the introduction of new academic programs in response to evolving market conditions and regional and local needs.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

PAGE 1

The Commonwealth is Witnessing a Transformation at Virginia Wesleyan University in Virginia Beach

PAGE 4

Retention 101:
Put Students to Work

PAGE 6

LSUA Continues Breaking Records as it Serves Central Louisiana

PAGE 6

Upcoming Conferences

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TRANSFORMATION AT VIRGINIA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY CONTINUED:

- The academic division at the institution has been reorganized 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.
- Majors and programs have been examined to meet changing market needs and attract more students. The institution has been approved for graduate offerings as well as an extensive online program.
- A name change has occurred to better reflect growth in academic opportunities. Virginia Wesleyan College is now Virginia Wesleyan University with its primary address in Virginia Beach where most of the campus is located, and a marketing emphasis on the Coastal Virginia home of VWU.
- Changes were made to attract more students of superior academic quality. The University just recruited the first class for its new, highly selective Batten Honors College.
- The University recently announced the creation of the new University College to house the operation of all for-credit programs outside of the traditional undergraduate division as well as non-credit, continuing education offerings. These will better serve the local adult market and thus the local economy, as well as students interested in online education throughout the nation.

New Buildings and Infrastructure

- The University recently completed the state-of-the-art Greer Environmental Sciences Center. The new 44,000-square-foot, world-class facility will support a national environmental engagement program. This will provide unprecedented opportunities for students while fostering regional collaboration with entities such as Brock Environmental Sciences Center/Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Virginia Aquarium and Marine

Sciences Center and the Virginia Institute for Marine Science.

- The Frank Blocker Youth Center has been built as a cooperative facility. Tidewater Collegiate Academy will utilize it during the academic year while the YMCA will have access during the summer months.
- The Susan S. Goode Fine and Performing Arts Center is scheduled to be completed in early 2019. The University will break ground on this 23,000-square-foot facility this fall. In addition, the plan is to open the new, \$51 million, multi-use residential complex Oxford Village in 2018. It will include eight buildings and offer nearly 250 apartments.



Virginia Wesleyan University's recently completed Greer Environmental Sciences Center

Athletic Enhancements and Success

- Construction of Birdsong Field for men's and women's lacrosse and field hockey.
- Improvements to stands, dugouts, backstop and press box at the Kenneth R. Perry Baseball Field.
- Construction of the new Betty S. Rogers Track and Field Center to be dedicated during Homecoming and Family Weekend in October 2017.
- Strong leadership in the athletic department has resulted in the introduction of new sports such as swimming. The VWU women's softball team capped a great year for athletics by winning the

TRANSFORMATION AT VIRGINIA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY CONTINUED:

NCAA Division III national championship, following the NCAA Division III national championship in golf by sophomore Evan Cox.

Enrollment Growth

Soon after assuming the presidency, Dr. Scott Miller partnered with **THE DYSART GROUP**, to conduct an enrollment audit to recommend changes in strategies, tactics, policies and procedures to improve admission and financial aid outcomes. It was an easy collaboration as John Dysart and Miller had worked together at two previous institutions. A state-of-the-art recruitment and financial aid model was introduced and quickly implemented.

- The University created a systematic and comprehensive communication plan with prospective students and families. Components included telephone contact, direct mail, email and a new emphasis on text messaging.
- Greater emphasis was placed on career outcomes, and successful alumni were asked to share how their experience at the institution contributed to their career success.
- Institutional scholarship and grant programs were revised to more effectively support recruitment goals and retention. Institutional aid expenditures were positioned to directly influence enrollment.
- Accountability metrics were introduced to monitor contact rates between admission counselors and admission applicants. Metrics also tracked the progress of prospective students through the enrollment funnel.
- Based on a recommendation from John Dysart, Dr. Miller hired a seasoned professional to lead the enrollment division. David Waggoner came to the University after very successful stints at Rockford College, Monmouth University, The

French Culinary Institute in New York and the University of Baltimore. Mr. Waggoner arrived with a track record of extraordinary enrollment growth across a diverse group of institution types.



David Waggoner, Vice President for Enrollment Management, VWU

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TRANSFORMATION AT VIRGINIA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY CONTINUED:

The work of Mr. Waggoner and his team resulted in amazing outcomes over the last 18 months.

- In Fall 2017, the University welcomed 529 new students, the largest and most academically talented group of freshmen in its history.
- Greater geographic diversity was attained. The new students were successfully recruited from 26 states along with Washington, DC.
- The student experience at the University has been enhanced by an increase in the number of international students. New students were enrolled from ten countries including China, Ukraine, Canada, Brazil, Australia, France, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Germany and Turkey.
- The institution reports that 51% of new students are from traditionally under-represented populations including 26% students of color. Virginia Wesleyan University absolutely reflects the region.
- More than 180 of the new students are expected to participate in college athletics. Successful athletic recruitment led by the Athletic Director, Joanne Renn, makes the institution more attractive to both talented athletes and students who enjoy attending athletic events.
- The new student population is better academically prepared with higher average SAT scores.
- The 40 new students enrolled in the Batten Honors College posted a collective high school grade point average of 4.03, an average SAT score of 1344 and an average ACT score of 29!
- Increased enrollment exploded the number of students interested in living on campus which required the University to secure additional

housing options at nearby hotels for juniors and seniors.

- Virginia Wesleyan University has enrolled the largest number of students in its history.
- The University has added early and dual-enrollment options for high school students.

Virginia Wesleyan University has been literally transformed in less than two years. Academic offerings have been increased to better serve both traditional and non-traditional students. New construction and improvements to existing structures have enhanced the academic experience, student co-curricular life, research and athletics. Can't wait to see what happens in the next 24 months!

RETENTION 101: PUT STUDENTS TO WORK

Dr. Marylouise Fennell
Principal
Hyatt-Fennell

Dr. Scott D. Miller
President
Virginia Wesleyan University

Research indicates that students who work part-time on campus while attending college are more likely to graduate. They also feel better prepared for the workforce through development of leadership skills, and become more active and engaged citizens.

In our careers as college and university presidents, we have established work programs on several campuses, successfully replicating a model that pays dividends in important ways. Most prominent in our experience is an improved overall rate of 7 to 10 percent in student retention.

At Scott's Virginia Wesleyan University, a work program provides not only a meaningful learning experience—helping students contribute to their career portfolios—but it also reduces debt and makes higher education more affordable. The most compelling reason students do not complete their undergraduate education is finances.

RETENTION 101: PUT STUDENTS TO WORK CONTINUED:

Therefore, students who can pay off tuition obligations are much more likely to return.

The *Opus* work program at Virginia Wesleyan began with 20 students with financial need who wanted to continue their studies but had tuition balances due. Preference was given to rising sophomores and juniors with a personal account balance owed of \$2,000 to \$3,000, and who also demonstrated, in addition to financial need, a commitment to academic studies and campus involvement.

Participating students lived on campus in residential housing and were provided with modest meal plans. They began their duties following the May Commencement and worked 25 hours per week for 13 weeks. Projects focused on corrective maintenance, grounds and landscaping, and general campus beautification—all under the supervision of administrative staff.

The major goals from the *Opus* program were to ensure the completion of a liberal arts education for students with limited financial resources; to develop strong work ethic, communication and problem-solving skills; to give the future graduates the professional and technical knowledge essential for their work and the executive skills required to plan, organize and prioritize tasks; to build a reliable source of workers who were knowledgeable, skilled and likely to remain in the region; and to increase campus pride among students.

The student workforce was also a welcome addition to the physical-plant staff during the summer term when parking lots needed to be relined, landscaping tended to, and residence halls cleaned.

Of Virginia Wesleyan's total enrollment of 1,500, some 300 students already work in some capacity during the fall and spring terms. The University plans to expand the program during the summer and throughout the year—doubling the number of students participating.

At one of Scott's previous institutions, work opportunities were increased by 90 percent; retention, by 8 percent.

An added benefit can come by way of the advancement office. In Virginia Wesleyan's case, a donor who believed

strongly in the value of student work programs stepped forward with a lead gift to fund the first years of the program.

It's important to recruit selectively for work programs, creating an environment in which students can succeed, can perform the work safely, and can take from the experience skills that are relevant to their career goals. Not all work has to be manual labor. Each year, we have assigned students with strong communication and interpersonal skills as presidential associates, working alongside regular, full-time staff in the president's office. Most are appointed for the academic year and can be reappointed for additional years.

Recruitment and retention of students are the central goals of any enrollment plan; they are vital to the overall budgetary health of institutions. Just as important, administrators need to be alert to opportunities that enrich students' experiences through expanded academic and co-curricular options. Such work programs serve as valuable tools in creating greater financial stability and ease for students at risk of dropping out—helping to ensure that they walk across the commencement stage on time, degrees in hand.

###

Dr. Scott D. Miller is President of Virginia Wesleyan University, Virginia Beach, VA. Previously, he was President of Bethany College, Wesley College, and Lincoln Memorial University. He is Chair of the Board of Directors of Academic Search, Inc.

Dr. Marylouise Fennell, RSM, a former president of Carlow University, is senior counsel for the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) and principal of Hyatt Fennell, a higher education search firm.

They have collaborated on 14 books, including "President to President: Views on Technology in Higher Education" (Volumes I to III) and "Presidential Perspectives" (Volumes I to X). They edit the popular higher education thought series "President to President" (Sodexo).



LSUA CONTINUES BREAKING RECORDS AS IT SERVES CENTRAL LOUISIANA

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group

The final numbers are in for Louisiana State University Alexandria and the news is all good. While many public colleges and universities continue to struggle with declining demographics and reduced state funding, the enrollment division at LSUA continues to buck the national trends:

- The University posted all-time highs in enrollment for the third consecutive year.
- More than 3,370 students will attend the University this fall.
- Enrollment has grown by more than 51% since 2013.
- The number of students enrolling on-line jumped 55% over last year.
- The number of credits exceeded 35,250 this Fall, another record.
- The University attracted 95 international students from 28 countries.

While the work of the individuals in the Department of Recruiting and Admissions has been extraordinary, Chancellor Guiyou Huang also credits the dedication of faculty and staff all over campus for the exciting enrollment outcomes. Congratulations!



Schedule a time to meet with John Dysart, President of **THE DYSART GROUP** to discuss your enrollment and revenue needs at these upcoming conferences:

**TRACS
Annual Conference**
October 25-28, 2017
Hyatt Regency Orlando International
Airport
Orlando, FL

**Academic Impressions
Tuition Discounting
Conference**
February 7-8, 2018
Location TBD

**Association of Business
Administrators of Christian
Colleges
Annual Conference**
February 13-17, 2018
Wyndham Orlando Resort
Orlando, FL

**ABHE
Annual Meeting**
February 21-23, 2018
Rosen Plaza Hotel
Orlando, FL

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When? February 8-9, 2018

Where? Denver, CO

Who should attend? Any finance or enrollment professional balancing competing priorities of maintaining (or attempting to lower) the discount rate while also trying to meet aggressive enrollment goals that are in line with your institutional mission.

Go to <http://academicimpressions.com/conference/aligning-your-enrollment-and-tuition-discounting-strategies>.

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Enrollment Management

We have worked collaboratively with colleges and universities to significantly grow enrollment, enhance academic quality, reduce attrition and increase net revenue.

Financial Aid/Pricing

Client institutions have been able to transform policies and practices to significantly improve operational efficiency, stabilize or reduce discount rates and utilize scarce institutional aid resources to support recruitment and retention objectives.

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