2011-2012 Notable Achievements

• On Friday, September 23, 2011, Virginia State University inaugurated its 13th President, Dr. Keith T. Miller. A week of cultural and community service activities led to the formal inauguration of Dr. Miller.

• Virginia State University celebrated the 130th Anniversary of its founding on March 6, 2012. Virginia Commissioner of Highways Mr. Gregory A. Whirley, Sr. gave the commemorative Founder’s Day address. Alfred W. Harris founded present-day Virginia State University in 1882. It was then known as Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute, the nation’s first, fully state-assisted, college for blacks.

• Virginia State University’s first VSU Cares provided free dental services to 426 patients from local communities. The program, a partnership between VSU, the Virginia Dental Association Foundation’s Missions of Mercy project and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), provided nearly $203,000 in donated care. More than 400 volunteers participated, including 56 dentists, 134 dental assistants and dental students, 46 nurses and medical support staff, 21 pharmacists and pharmacy support staff and 145 non-medical volunteers.

• Virginia State University was presented two Emmy Awards from the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences - National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter. The awards were for the school’s VSU Today newsmagazine and for its Building a Better World commercial campaign. Both were produced through VSU’s Office of The President.

• The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) awarded the department of psychology a two-year, $200,000 grant to conduct an HIV health services research project. The project is designed to research and design an education prevention effort eliminating health disparities among African Americans over age 50. This grant is the only project currently funded as part of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) geared toward finding solutions to health issues that significantly impact African Americans.

• Blending a message of inspiration with a plea for environmental stewardship, Commencement speaker Claes Nobel told the VSU class of 2012 that “the cool heads and warm hearts of youth can change the Earth into what it could and should be.” Nobel told the largest graduating class in VSU’s history that the most important subject – Earth ethics - is taught outside the classroom. In addition to awarding a record number of diplomas, VSU bestowed upon Nobel the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree and recognized Mrs. Gladys Fitzhugh-Pemberton ’68 as Alumnus of the Year.
• Virginia State University (VSU) entered into an agreement with Chesterfield County Public Schools to offer college courses to juniors and seniors in Chesterfield’s 11 public high schools. Chesterfield County represents the ninth, and largest, city or county system with which VSU has signed a concurrent enrollment agreement. VSU has similar agreements Charles City, Dinwiddie, Prince George, Surry and Sussex counties and the cities of Franklin, Petersburg and Richmond.

• Virginia State University’s Reginald F. Lewis School of Business (RFLSB) has been awarded the RichTech Technology Innovation Deployment Award. The award honors companies or organizations that successfully implement creative technologies to enhance processes, methodologies and/or services for their own, or others’, benefit.

• Virginia State University’s Reginald F. Lewis School of Business (RFLSB) was named the “Best Business Program at an HBCU” by The Center for HBCU Media Advocacy. The Center annually recognizes a program which has demonstrated a commitment to innovation and community contributions in research academic exposition and professional development.

• Virginia State University’s Reginald F. Lewis School of Business (RFLSB) chapter of Beta Gamma Sigma international honor society has been honored as a Premier Chapter. To be named a Premier Chapter, at least 85 percent of students qualifying for membership at both undergraduate and graduate levels must accept the invitation to become lifetime members in Beta Gamma Sigma. At the Reginald F. Lewis School of Business, 100 percent of the students accepted the invitation to join this prestigious international honor society for collegiate Schools of Business.

• Gov. Bob McDonnell presented VSU’s Reginald F. Lewis School of Business (RFLSB) with the prestigious Governor’s Technology Award for Innovation in Higher Education. The RFLSB took the top honor for its “Digital at the Core” Initiative. The School developed a new, integrated business curriculum that focuses heavily on technological participation and digital content.

• VSU entered into an agreement with Minor League Baseball (MiLB) to provide internship opportunities for VSU students. Starting in January 2013, three advanced undergraduate students will spend several months in St. Petersburg, FL. They will learn the business of baseball and provide media support services while gaining job experience. Student interns will receive financial support from MiLB, and they will receive 12 semester hours of academic credit toward their VSU degrees. The latest agreement is part of last year’s Letter of Cooperation between VSU and MiLB. That landmark agreement will benefit VSU’s students across various disciplines through the support of and/or participation in Speaker’s Series, Presentations, Projects, Workshops, Seminars and other events.

• A cross-disciplinary group of Virginia State University faculty visited Morocco as part of an International Faculty Development Seminar sponsored by the University System of Georgia’s Africa and Middle East Councils. VSU’s participation in the seminar is an extension of a curriculum internationalization initiative funded by a U.S. Department of Education/Title VI grant in 2010. The grant project, “Building a Community of Arabic Language Learners at Virginia State University,” provides academic support and learning resources to enhance students’ success in Arabic language courses.
Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell announced that Virginia State University was awarded $140,000 to begin planning for the establishment of a college laboratory school to improve the capabilities of local school systems to prepare students for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) careers, including in the advanced manufacturing and logistics sectors which are emerging as key economic drivers in the greater Petersburg area.

For the second consecutive year, Vice President Joe Biden recognized a delegation of Virginia State University students and staff for their work combating domestic violence. On June 21, VSU’s Substance Abuse and Sexual Assault Prevention Coordinator, Dr. Evelyn V. Whitehead, along with students Loretta Granum of New York, NY, a rising junior, biology pre-med major; Akirah Crawford of Newark, NJ, a rising junior majoring in psychology; and Phillip Killebrew of Portsmouth, VA, a senior majoring in mechanical engineering joined Vice President Biden for the release of a new public service announcement *1 is 2 Many* that will air on ESPN, Fox Sports, MLB and NFL Networks this summer.

Virginia State University student Shari Maynard of Dumfries, VA is one of 15 students selected from a national pool to participate in Rutgers University’s Summer Institute for Diversity in Philosophy.

Virginia State University junior Patricia Sidbury, a political science major from Chesapeake, VA was selected to participate in the 2012 Ralph Bunche Summer Institute (RBSI) at Duke University. Ms. Sidbury is one of only 20 students selected from a highly competitive national applicant pool. She is the second student selected from VSU’s department of political science, public administration and economics.

Virginia State University Student Government Association President Brandon Randleman was recently elected Vice Chairman of the Student Advisory Committee for The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV).

Dr. Robert L. Turner, Jr., Executive Director of the VSU Foundation, delivered the Commencement address to 179 graduates of The Lewis College in Sorsogon City, Philippines on March 26. The invitation for Turner to deliver the keynote speech was extended by the College in conjunction with industrialist, philanthropist and College founder Loida Nicolas Lewis, widow of Virginia State University alumnus Reginald F. Lewis.

The American Council on Education selected VSU’s Dr. Douglas Fiore, Professor of Education and Assistant to the Provost for General and Continuing Education, as one of 57 college and university senior faculty and administrators for the 2012-13 class of the ACE Fellows Program.

The Central Virginia Affiliate of Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure® awarded the VSU Student Health Center a second, $50,000 grant to continue funding its PEAM (prevention, education, access and mammograms) breast cancer awareness and prevention program. The grant serves both the VSU and greater Petersburg communities.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack visited VSU for a roundtable discussion that included VSU administrators, extension researchers and students; local farmers and agriculture representatives; USDA staff; and government officials and said Virginia State University has “an extraordinary opportunity to lead” as a new generation of bio-based products become reality.
• Businessman and philanthropist Earl Stafford donated $100,000 to the Reginald F. Lewis School of Business (RFLSB) to create a Trading Portfolio Fund. Stafford’s gift will serve two, very distinct, yet important objectives for the School: to enhance the financial market acumen of young men and women and to encourage alumni and industry investment in this innovative experience and in the School itself.

• The Caterpillar Foundation awarded a grant of $84,000 to VSU that provides scholarships for students participating in study abroad programs in China. The grant provides round-trip airfare to China; housing; study abroad program fees; textbook and meal allowances; and reimbursement for passports, visas and travel immunizations. The grant is part of Caterpillar’s support of President Barack Obama’s “100,000 Strong Initiative” to increase the number of American college students studying in China.

• Virginia State University’s Dr. Rodney Gaines was elected President of the Virginia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (VAHPERD), a professional association that advocates quality programs in the health arena. Dr. Gaines is the second African-American to lead the 75-year-old organization of 1,700 high school and college educators.

• A five-year, $1.15 million, U.S. Department of Education grant, allows Virginia State University to offer assistance to local residents seeking enrollment in college or career prep programs. The Educational Opportunity Program (VSU EOC) will serve 1,000 participants in the Tri-cities, surrounding counties and Fort Lee, providing free assistance in preparing admissions and financial aid applications. Additionally, the program will implement free economic and financial literacy workshops to improve the participants’ overall quality of life.

• The Cameron Foundation awarded Virginia State University a $100,000 grant to establish Community Service Ambassadors to work with agencies in the greater Petersburg area in a two-semester term of community service. Ambassadors will be led by a Community Service Project Coordinator, as well as a community service committee. The program is part of VSU President Keith T. Miller’s Building a Better World initiative and will be administered through his office.

• The Trojan Explosion Marching Band performed at the 10th Annual Honda Battle of the Bands Invitational Showcase, in the Atlanta Georgia Dome on Saturday, Jan. 28, 2012. The Trojan Explosion is the only band to participate in nine consecutive Battle of the Bands showcases.

• The National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded VSU researchers $342,795 to support a project that studies the effectiveness of interventions on the mathematics performance of minority middle and high school students. Ultimately, the project “Improving Minority Student Mathematics Performance and Persistence in STEM Majors Through Cognitive Training,” aims to increase participation of minorities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.

• President Obama nominated VSU Alumnus Dennis L. Via, United States Army, for appointment to the rank of general (4-star) and assignment as Commanding General, United States Army Materiel Command, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama. He is currently serving as Deputy Commanding General/Chief of Staff, United States Army Materiel Command, Redstone Arsenal.
• The CIAA honored VSU’s football team as having the highest Grade Point Average in the conference. The Trojans had a total team GPA of 2.8. On the field, the Trojans finished second in the CIAA Northern Division, showing a balance of athletics and academics.

• Virginia State University’s head men’s tennis coach Gene Thompson and head track & field coach Jason-Lamont Jackson, both received CIAA Coach of the Year Awards. Head football coach Andrew Faison received an award for his team obtaining the highest team GPA in the sport of football throughout the CIAA.

• VSU head volleyball coach Ivana Rich is one of 12 recipients of the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) 2011 Minority Coaches Scholarship. Through a grant provided by the NCAA, these 12 individuals will participate in the ninth professional coaching workshop for minority women.

• VSU sent five student-athletes to the 2012 NCAA Track & Field Championships at Colorado State in Pueblo, CO. The Lady Trojans’ Taylor-Ashley Bean (freshman/ Sandy’s, Bermuda) and Sierra Clayton (senior/ Chesapeake, VA) both ran in the women’s 800 meter event. Samantha Edwards (senior/ Elmont, NY) competed in the women’s 200 meter and 400 meter dashes. Prince Owusu-Mensah (freshman/ Arlington, VA) competed in the men’s 800 meter run. Daniel Ross (junior/ Baltimore, MD) competed in the men’s 400 meter hurdles.