



On February 1, 2016, Makola M. Abdullah, Ph.D. became the 14th President of Virginia State University (VSU). In his remarks during his introduction to the Trojan family, President Abdullah outlined his four core beliefs: *I believe in God. I believe in family. I believe in the transformative nature of education. I believe in Virginia State University.*

President Abdullah also emphasized several focus areas to sustain VSU as an 1890 Land-Grant University. The areas of focus include providing a transformative experience for students, strategically investing in academic programs, partnering with others as a university to tell the VSU story, embracing the University's Land Grant Mission and embracing VSU's role as *Virginia's Opportunity University*

President Abdullah is an academic administrator committed to excellence. He is also an internationally-renowned educator recognized for outstanding research.

Dr. Abdullah is an active member with various organizations having served as:

- Association of Public Land Grant (APLU) Universities; Chair, Council of 1890s Presidents)
- Southern Assoc. of Colleges Schools Commission on College; Vice Chair, Board of Trustees
- Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA); Vice Chair/Member, Board of Trustees
- Council of Presidents for Virginia Institutions of Higher Education; Vice Chair
- A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership (dba GENEDGE); Board of Trustees
- Task Force for the Identification of the History of Formerly Enslaved African Americans in Virginia.
- Central VA Trust Regional Advisory Board
- Virginia Historical Society; Board of Trustees

Under President Abdullah's leadership, the University has experienced extensive and significant achievements to include:

- Implementation of a new 2020-2025 Strategic Plan: Preeminence with a Purpose to chart the University's path to continued growth and excellence.
- A \$30-million-dollar gift to VSU from philanthropist, MacKenzie Scott, the largest single donor gift in the University's history.
- Increased enrollment of first-time in college students
- Increased 4-year graduation rate to the highest 4-year graduation rate recorded in the history of VSU.
- A new partnership with Richard Bland College (RBC) for students to earn their four-year degree from VSU after completing their associate degree at RBC.
- New doctoral, master's, educationalist specialist, and bachelor's degree programs
- Implementation of a new initiative to provide free tuition for an estimated 300 Pell eligible, first-time freshmen from area high schools.
- Establishment of the John Mercer Langston Institute for African American Political Leadership to assess, develop and empower African American leaders.
- Establishment of the VSU Public Health Institute to address health disparities and prepare health professionals.
- Recognition of VSU as one of the nation's top 20 "Best Colleges for African Americans" by ESSENCE magazine.
- Creation of the Academic Center of Excellence as a one-stop hub for first-year students to receive career and academic advising and tutorial services.
- Establishment of the University's Advisory Board for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer/Questioning Intersex Ally+ (LGBTQIA+) Inclusion to investigate ways for the institution to be a more affirming learning environment for all students, faculty and staff within the LGBTQIA+ community.
- In June of 2018, the University was named the HBCU of the Year and awarded Best Board of Trustees of the Year and Female Student of the Year by HBCU Digest, an online blog. Additionally, in 2017, President Abdullah was named the HBCU Male President of the Year.
- Ranked as the No. 19 historically black college or university (HBCUs) on the 2019 U.S. News & World Report's Best Colleges rankings.

Prior to his appointment as president of Virginia State University, Dr. Abdullah served as provost and senior vice president at Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Fla. (2013-2016), provost and vice president for academic affairs at Florida Memorial University in Miami Gardens, Fla. (2011-2013), and dean and director of 1890 land grant programs at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University in Tallahassee, Fla (2008-2011).

Dr. Abdullah is a Chicago native. He earned his undergraduate degree from Howard University in civil engineering and his doctorate and master's degrees in civil engineering from Northwestern University. He is the youngest African American to receive a Ph.D. in engineering. He is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated

He and his wife, Ahkinyala Cobb-Abdullah, Ph.D., are the proud parents of a son, Mikaili, and a daughter, Sefiyetu, who both are college graduates.

**Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Information Required From Nongovernmental Witnesses**

House rules require nongovernmental witnesses to provide their resume or biographical sketch prior to testifying. If you do not have a resume or biographical sketch available, please complete this form.

1. Name: Makola M. Abdullah, Ph.D.
2. Organization you represent: Chair, Council of 1890s Universities, Virginia State University
3. Please list any occupational, employment, or work-related experience you have which add to your qualification to provide testimony before the Committee: President of Virginia State University, an 1890s Land Grant University. Chair of the Council of 1890s Universities
4. Please list any special training, education, or professional experience you have which add to your qualifications to provide testimony before the Committee: President Abdullah is an academic administrator committed to excellence. He is also an internationally-renowned educator recognized for outstanding research. Prior to his appointment as president of Virginia State University, Dr. Abdullah served as provost and senior vice president at Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Fla. (2013-2016), provost and vice president for academic affairs at Florida Memorial University in Miami Gardens, Fla. (2011-2013), and dean and director of 1890 land grant programs at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University in Tallahassee, Fla (2008-2011). Dr. Abdullah is a Chicago native. He earned his undergraduate degree from Howard University in civil engineering and his doctorate and master's degrees in civil engineering from Northwestern University. He is the youngest African American to receive a Ph.D. in engineering.
5. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list the capacity in which you are representing that organization, including any offices or elected positions you hold: President of Virginia State University, an 1890s Land Grant University. Chair of the Council of 1890s Universities

**PLEASE ATTACH THIS FORM OR YOUR BIOGRAPHY TO EACH COPY OF  
TESTIMONY.**