

Board of Visitors Meetings | June 5-6, 2025
Regular Board Meeting Minutes
Friday, June 6, 2025
Freeman Center, Meeting Room 201

The Christopher Newport University Board of Visitors met Thursday, June 5, 2025 through Friday, June 6, 2025.

Separate Minutes were taken for each of the Committee meetings.

Present from the Board

Mr. Kevin Callanan
Ms. Jennifer Dunn
William A. Estrada, Esq
Dr. Daniel M. Gade
Kelli Purdy Meadows, CPA, CCIFP
Ms. Christy T. Morton, Presiding Officer
Mr. John R. Lawson, II
LTC (R) Boris G. Robinson
The Honorable Ronald L. Tillett
Keith Windle

Absent from the Board

Mr. Brentley K. Archer
Mr. Sean D. Miller
Mr. C. Larry Pope
Dr. Lee Vreeland

Present from the University

President William G. Kelly
Ms. Jennifer Latour, Chief of Staff
Dr. Quentin Kidd, Executive Vice President, Provost/Chief Academic Officer
Jordan Minot, University Counsel
Mr. Nate Fontaine, President of the Alumni Society
Ms. Emily McKenna, Student Representative to the Board and President of the Student Government Association
Dr. Brian Puaca, Faculty Representative to the Board and Professor, Department of History
Dr. Michael Mulryan, Faculty Senate President
Mr. Kenneth C. Kidd, Clerk to the Board of Visitors
Other Members of the Cabinet, and faculty and staff

Call to Order and Welcome: Rector Morton

At 10:00 a.m., Rector Morton opened a regular meeting of the Board of Visitors welcoming everyone present.

Rector Morton greeted the new BoV student representative and Student Government President, Ms. Emily McKenna, welcomed back Dr. Brian Puaca as the BoV Faculty Representative, and also welcomed the new Faculty Senate President, Dr. Michael Mulryan. She also thanked Mr. Nate Fontaine, outgoing President of the Alumni Society for his service to Christopher Newport. The Rector also recognized three Board members whose terms were expiring: Dr. Daniel Gade, Dr. Lee Vreeland, and Mr. Sean Miller.

Approval of Minutes: Rector Morton

The meeting proceeded to official business, starting with the appointment of an Acting Secretary due to the absence of Mr. Archer, Board Secretary. Rector Morton called for a motion for Mr. William Estrada to serve as Acting Secretary. Mr. Tillett provided the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Windle. Mr. Estrada was thereby appointed as Acting Secretary, approved by a unanimous vote of the Board.

Rector Morton called for a motion for Ms. Emily McKenna to serve as the non-voting student advisory representative. Mr. Estrada provided the motion, which was seconded by Dr. Gade and the motion was approved by a unanimous vote of the Board.

Rector Morton then began the approval process for the minutes from the Board of Visitors Regular Meeting on April 25, 2025 and the April Committee Meetings for the Athletics, Advancement, Student Life, and Academic Affairs committees on April 24-25, 2025.

Rector Morton called for a motion to approve the minutes for the Regular Meeting on April 25, 2025, Mr. Estrada provided the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Tillett and the minutes were approved by a unanimous vote of the Board.

Rector Morton called for a motion to approve the minutes for the Athletics Committee Meeting on April 24, 2025, Mr. Estrada provided the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Callanan and the minutes were approved by a unanimous vote of the Board.

Rector Morton called for a motion to approve the minutes for the Advancement Committee Meeting on April 24, 2025, Mr. Estrada provided the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Windle and the minutes were approved by a unanimous vote of the Board.

Rector Morton called for a motion to approve the minutes for the Student Life Committee Meeting on April 25, 2025, Mr. Callanan provided the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Windle and the minutes were approved by a unanimous vote of the Board.

Rector Morton called for a motion to approve the minutes for the Academic Affairs Committee Meeting on April 24, 2025, Mr. Tillett provided the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Windle and the minutes were approved by a unanimous vote of the Board.

President's Report: Bill Kelly

Key highlights of President Kelly's report include:

Christopher Newport University proudly celebrated its 100th Commencement, conferring 1,005 degrees across ceremonies, including eight new second lieutenants, 46 graduate students, and 18 student-athletes honored at a dedicated Athletics Ceremony. Over 800 graduates participated in the main ceremony. The Class of 2025 left a lasting legacy by raising \$95,000 through the Senior Class Gift Campaign, supporting the Secret Garden renovation, the Alumni House, and a new scholarship fund.

Looking ahead, the university prepares to welcome new students as Setting Sail orientation begins next week. Transfer enrollment is expected to rise by 10%, reaching 200 students. Key academic indicators continue to improve, with a projected retention rate of 86%—up from 81%—a four-year graduation rate of 65%, and a six-year rate of 75%.

On the facilities front, the SERC is set to open in January, a new Plant Operations building is under construction, and planning is underway for a Military Science building. CFO Sarah Herzog was recognized for exemplary financial stewardship and the preparation of the university budget.

CNU Athletics continues to shine nationally. The softball team won its conference and advanced to the NCAA tournament. Men's lacrosse reached the NCAA Elite Eight for the fifth consecutive year, while women's sailing ranked 16th in the nation. Student-athletes continued to excel in the classroom, outperforming non-athletes in GPA, and tennis and track athletes earned national accolades.

In Advancement and Alumni Engagement, the university hosted a successful Scholarship Luncheon, celebrating a total of \$25 million in donor support. The President and Vice President of Advancement connected with alumni during outreach trips to Nashville and New York City, contributing to increased engagement and strong fundraising momentum.

Academic Affairs saw record-breaking external funding with \$5.78 million in grants awarded and \$2.5 million pending. Dr. Anna W. Hickey was named Dean of the Luter School of Business.

Gratitude was expressed to the Board of Visitors, the Cabinet, the faculty, and outgoing Alumni Society President Nate Fontaine. Appreciation was also extended to Board members Dr. Lee Vreeland, Mr. Sean Miller, and Dr. Daniel Gade for their service on the completion of their first terms.

Education Foundation Report: Scott Millar, President

Mr. Scott Millar, President of the Education Foundation, provided an update regarding the Foundation's structure, financial standing, and recent activity. Key highlights of President Millar's report include: The Christopher Newport University Education Foundation is a charitable 501(c)(3) organization that supports the university through strategic fundraising, investment stewardship, and donor engagement. In close partnership with the Office of Advancement and university leadership, the Foundation aligns its efforts with the institution's strategic goals to maximize its impact.

The Foundation's board is composed of 18 elected trustees, 14 of whom are Christopher Newport alumni, along with two appointees from the Board of Visitors and four ex-officio members: the University President, Chief of Staff, Vice President for Advancement, and Alumni Society President. In 2024, the Foundation updated its bylaws to include three new non-voting members—a faculty representative, the CEO of the Captain's Enrichment Fund (CEE Fund), and the SGA Vice President of Finance—ensuring broader representation and engagement across campus. In 2025, the board is prioritizing a review of trustee expectations in preparation for the next comprehensive fundraising campaign.

Strategically, the Foundation remains focused on aligning its work with the university's Strategic Compass, strengthening its fundraising partnership with the university, and laying the groundwork for the next major campaign. In response to a challenge from President Kelly to expand merit aid, the board identified \$325,000 in annual unrestricted support from non-endowed investment earnings, enabling new initiatives such as the Dean's Merit Awards.

Faculty Senate Report: Michael Mulryan

The new Faculty Senate President, Dr. Michael Mulryan, introduced himself by sharing his academic background and passion for 18th-century French literature. He emphasized a commitment to shared governance, collaboration, and mutual respect between faculty and the Board. Dispelling the myth that faculty have summers off, he highlighted the wide range of academic, administrative, and mentoring responsibilities faculty take on year-round. He outlined five Senate goals for the year: drafting AI best practices, responsibly implementing the Strategic Compass, creating a promotion path for instructors, improving Maymester course consistency, and addressing financial challenges tied to faculty scholarship. He closed by expressing admiration for President Kelly and Dr. Quentin Kidd, emphasizing the importance of transparency, engagement, and the transformative power of a liberal arts education.

Alumni Society Report: Nate Fontaine

Alumni Society President Nate Fontaine shared that the Alumni Society is actively engaging with the class of 2025 through a series of "Welcome Home" events across Virginia, helping to connect new graduates with regional networks, especially in light of challenges to federal employment and contracting opportunities. Alumni are encouraged to support recent grads through career outreach and by connecting with the Career Center or Alumni Relations staff. The Alumni Society is also updating its bylaws, preparing for an August awards banquet celebrating alumni contributions, and hosting a chapter leadership advance to coordinate events and build connections between regional and affinity chapters. The Young Alumni Council is gaining traction, with efforts underway to formalize membership criteria for graduates of the past five years. An upcoming "impact report" will educate alumni on how their giving directly benefits students and campus operations. Finally, he reflected on two impactful years of service and expressed gratitude for continued support, noting that a new president will be elected this summer.

Student Government Report: Emily McKenna

Emily McKenna, the new President of the Student Government Association, introduced herself and shared her academic journey and credited faculty support and experiential opportunities for shaping her path. She highlighted recent campus transitions, including finals, move-out, and commencement, and emphasized that even in the summer, students remain deeply engaged in learning through service trips, study abroad, research, and internships. Ms. McKenna shared personal insights from a recent trip to Ireland and spotlighted other immersive learning experiences. She emphasized how these opportunities reflect Christopher Newport's mission and Strategic Compass, preparing students to be thoughtful, global citizens. Her message concluded with a call to continue supporting experiential education as a powerful driver of student transformation and university distinction.

Executive Committee Report: Rector Christy Morton

Rector Morton shared that the Executive Committee held a brief meeting that morning. President Kelly shared updates on the Shoe Lane Task Force and provided a Strategic Compass update. She shared that revised Bylaws were discussed and will be presented for Full Board approval in September.

Operations, Audit and Risk Report: Chair, Kelli Meadows

Ms. Meadows reported that the committee reviewed the draft financial audit report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, with the APA issuing a clean (unmodified) opinion and no material weaknesses identified.

However, four significant deficiencies in internal controls and compliance were noted, including one repeat finding related to financial reporting controls, IT risk management, fiscal and environmental security policies, and IT change management.

CIO Justin Davenport introduced Tom Dunn as the new ISO and highlighted the need to modernize the aging Ellucian ERP system, with a working group set to recommend a replacement by Fall 2025. Amy Saraki introduced Key as the new Deputy Title IX Coordinator, reporting progress on revising harassment policies and related training initiatives.

Chip Filer provided updates on campus safety, including emergency preparedness and recent mass casualty exercise participation. Kayla Faulkner discussed the FY2025 internal audit plan, nearing completion of key projects, staffing updates, and presented the FY2026 work plan covering the next six months.

There were no action items and Mrs. Meadows had two items for closed session to discuss, but otherwise concluded her report.

Finance and Facilities Report: Chair, Vice Rector Tillett

Chairman Tillett reported on behalf of the Finance & Facilities Committee, stating the budget limits tuition increases to 1.25% (2.3% blended), funds 3% salary increases, and supports scholarships, IT, compensation, and master planning. It also reserves funds for maintenance and Strategic Compass needs.

The Chairman shared that the University continues to monitor federal developments impacting higher education and that the final state budget actions were favorable to CNU, though Tech Talent funding remains uncertain. An updated net price analysis is pending new IPEDS data. Chairman Tillett emphasized the need for multi-year planning, especially in light of economic uncertainty and rising costs. He shared that the Committee received a briefing on increasing campus maintenance needs and reviewed a written capital projects update. An updated Six-Year Plan (2026–32) will be presented in September.

Chairman Tillett presented **RESOLUTION 1: Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget**, which had been unanimously approved by the committee, for discussion and approval. Mr. Robinson provided the motion to approve Resolution 1, and it was passed by a unanimous vote of the Board. He then thanked CFO Sarah Herzog, President Kelly, and Chief of Staff Latour for their hard work and the wise stewarding of University resources. Vice Rector Tillett concluded his report.

Closed Session Under the Code of Virginia, as amended: § 2.2-3711: (A)(1) Personnel and § 2.2-3711(A)(7) Consultation with legal counsel

Rector Morton called for a motion at 11:33 a.m. to enter Closed Session under the Code of Virginia §2.2-3711(A)(1) personnel, to receive an update on certain staff vacancies and to discuss the performance plan for the Director of Internal Audit, (A)(8) Consultation with Legal Counsel for the purpose of receiving legal advice on the OCR Dear Colleague Letter and associated FAQs, and (A)(19) to discuss the Identity and Access Management Audit. Mr. Windle provided the motion, it was seconded by Mr. Callanan and the motion was passed by unanimous vote of the Board.

Return to Open Session: Acting Secretary Estrada

The Board returned to Open Session at 12:08 p.m. and Acting Secretary Estrada asked for a roll call certifying that only public matters were discussed that were identified in the motion by which the executive or closed meeting was called. All Board members certified to the above by roll call: Mr. Kevin Callanan, Ms. Jennifer Dunn, Dr. Daniel Gade, Mr. William Estrada, Ms. Kelli Meadows, Ms. Christy Morton, Mr. John Lawson, Mr. Ronald Tillett, and Mr. Keith Windle.

Rector Morton called for a motion to approve **RESOLUTION 2: Christopher Newport's Commitment to Inclusion and Belonging** which was discussed in closed session. Mr. Estrada provided the motion to approve Resolution 2 and it was passed by a unanimous vote of the Board. The resolution is pasted below.

CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY
RESOLUTION 2
CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT’S COMMITMENT
TO CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION AND BELONGING

WHEREAS, Christopher Newport University is committed to its mission of providing educational and cultural opportunities that benefit students, the Commonwealth, and the nation through a strong liberal arts education that encourages intellectual inquiry, civic engagement, and service; and, guided by its Strategic Compass approved by the Board of Visitors on February 7, 2025, the University fosters a community grounded in the core values of honor, scholarship, service, and leadership—one that is inclusive, accessible, and dedicated to excellence.

WHEREAS, in line with the principles articulated in the February 14, 2025 letter from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Christopher Newport University is steadfast in its commitment to adhering to the non-discrimination obligations of institutions receiving federal funds by explicitly acknowledging and reaffirming existing legal requirements under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution, and other pertinent federal civil rights laws; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Christopher Newport University Board of Visitors and Administration hereby affirms that the University will continue to ensure all programs, policies, procedures, and actions are in full compliance with the aforementioned guidance from the U.S. DoE and all applicable federal and state laws.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the President and Cabinet of Christopher Newport University shall continue to follow all applicable federal and state laws while creating a culture of “Inclusion and Belonging” as set forth in the Strategic Compass.

Board Approved:

Christy T. Morton
Rector, Board of Visitors

Date: _____

Adjournment

The Rector called for any new business and there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:11 pm.

Christy T. Morton, Rector

Kenneth C. Kidd, Clerk of the Board of Visitors