



The Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VFIC Launches Presidential Scholars Program to Cultivate the Next Generation of Values-Based Leaders

Richmond, VA. (July 14, 2026) The Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges (VFIC) announces the launch of the **VFIC Presidential Scholars Program**, a new statewide initiative designed to develop the next generation of values-based leaders across Virginia's independent colleges and universities. In its inaugural year, the program recognizes one exceptional rising second-year student from each of the 17 VFIC member institutions. Selected by their college or university presidents, these scholars exemplify outstanding leadership, a commitment to service, and a passion for strengthening their communities.

"The VFIC Presidential Scholars Program reflects our belief that leadership grounded in ethics, service, and responsibility is essential to the future of the Commonwealth," said Locke Ogens, VFIC President.

With generous funding provided by Bonnie and Wick Moorman, each Presidential Scholar will receive a comprehensive package of financial support and leadership opportunities, including:

- A **\$10,000 annual scholarship** for up to three years
- **Mentorship provided by their** college or university president
- Participation in **leadership development seminars** including statewide networking opportunities with business, government, and non-profit leaders, including VFIC trustees
- A **fully funded experiential learning opportunity**, such as study abroad, an internship, or a research project

Through this cohort-based experience, scholars will connect with peers from across Virginia, build leadership skills, and prepare to lead with integrity in their chosen professions and communities.

The VFIC plans to expand the Presidential Scholars Program annually, adding a new cohort each year until three cohorts are active at the same time. Over time, the program will create a robust statewide network of alumni—graduates equipped to make meaningful contributions across industries and communities throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.

The **inaugural cohort (2026–2029)** reflects the remarkable diversity of talent across Virginia’s independent colleges and universities, with scholars pursuing a wide range of academic disciplines and representing communities from across the Commonwealth.

2026-2029 VFIC Presidential Scholars Cohort:

Batten University - *Eleanor VanDuyne*
Bridgewater College - *Juli Ramos*
Emory & Henry University - *Rachel Sexton*
Hampden-Sydney College - *Kayne Wooten*
Hampton University - *Kernice Smith*
Hollins University - *Kelly O'Brien*
Mary Baldwin University - *Bibian Mejia*
Marymount University - *Isabel Fierro*
Randolph College - *Michelle Collins*
Randolph-Macon College - *Ashleigh Flores*
Roanoke College - *Shane Stevens*
Shenandoah University - *Dillon Mauzy*
Sweet Briar College - *Jocelyn Flannery*
University of Lynchburg - *Michael Pellican*
University of Richmond - *Luke Schroeder*
Virginia Union University - *Samirah Spates*
Washington and Lee University - *Sophie Csatlos*

About the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges

Established in 1952, the **Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges (VFIC)** advances the distinctive values and strengths of Virginia’s leading independent colleges and universities. VFIC represents a consortium of seventeen institutions committed to providing an exceptional education in highly personalized learning environments.

VFIC’s mission is to ensure that **academically qualified students—many of whom are first-generation college students—can attend an independent college regardless of financial circumstances.** Through strategic

fundraising, partnerships, and student-centered programs, VFIC has provided **more than \$183 million in support** to its member institutions and their students since its founding.

The Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges supports the programs and students of the following seventeen independent colleges and universities in the Commonwealth: **Batten University, Bridgewater College, Emory & Henry University, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampton University, Hollins University, Mary Baldwin University, Marymount University, Randolph College, Randolph-Macon College, Roanoke College, Shenandoah University, Sweet Briar College, University of Lynchburg, University of Richmond, Virginia Union University, and Washington and Lee University.**

For additional information on the VFIC, visit www.vfic.org.

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