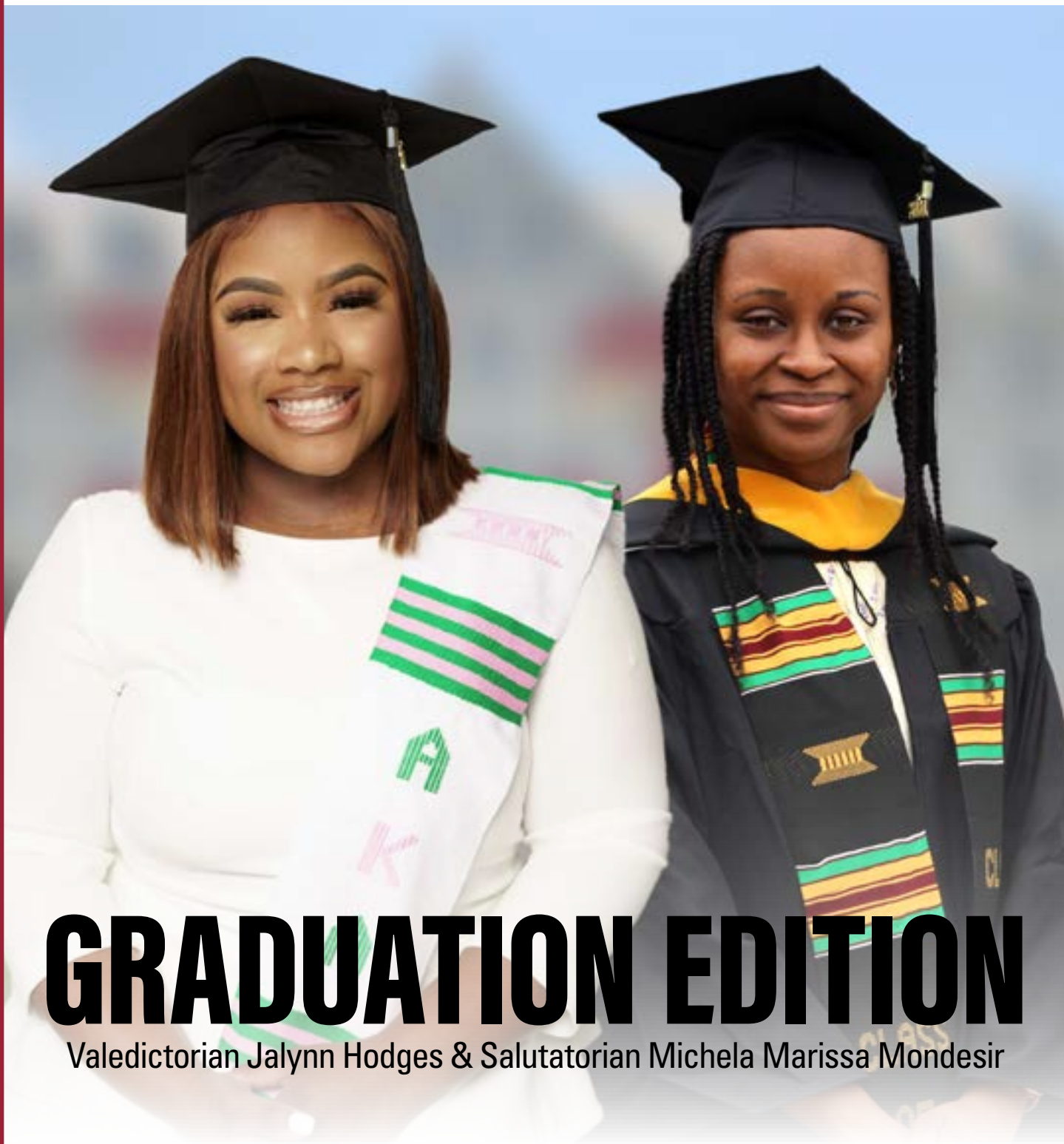


MAY 2021 / UNIVERSITY NEWS

UNIONITE EXPRESS

VIRGINIA UNION UNIVERSITY



GRADUATION EDITION

Valedictorian Jalynn Hodges & Salutatorian Michela Marissa Mondesir



**JALYNN HODGES
2020-21 VALEDICTORIAN**

Jalynn Hodges took the campus by storm as a voice for her peers as a part of the Student Government Association. The senior from Hampton, VA aspires to be a Medical Doctor. During her freshman summer, Hodges was selected to take part in an internship at Meharry Medical College, which would serve as a bridge program with acceptance into the MD program upon her completion at Virginia Union.

In the classroom, Hodges is a stellar scholar with the opportunity to graduate magna cum laude. Outside of the classroom, she fights for the longevity and sustainability of HBCUs. Most recently, Hodges spoke on Capitol Hill to argue on behalf of government funding of Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Hodges first opportunity was during the previous senate funding bill hearing for minority institutions, which expired in September of 2019. The fund was established in 2008 specifically for schools that primarily educate minority students: tribal colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions, and historically black colleges/universities.

Hodges took the Senate Floor and opened her powerful speech candidly speaking about her experience at Virginia Union. She spoke of her personal experience as well as how the university uses the funding to support the dreams of students like her, and why it's necessary for minority serving institutions to continue to receive funding. Eventually, in late 2020, the funding bill was signed into law guaranteeing minority-serving institutions receive the funding they need annually.

Among the number of accomplishments Hodges has achieved, she made history by becoming the first active student to become a Board of Trustee Member. The Virginia Union University Board of Trustees has committed to the success and uplifting of everything VUU. More specifically, the Board of Trustees is the governing body of the university. Trustees are entrusted with responsibilities such as approving the university's mission, strategic goals, establishing policies. While the Board primary focus is the operation of the university as a whole, each member represents a subdivision of the university.

To date, Hodges is on the front line in the battle against Covid. She is currently working full time in a lab testing and analyzing COVID-19 specimens. In her spare time Hodges has begun volunteering with a crisis hotline providing emotional support for individuals facing personal challenges.



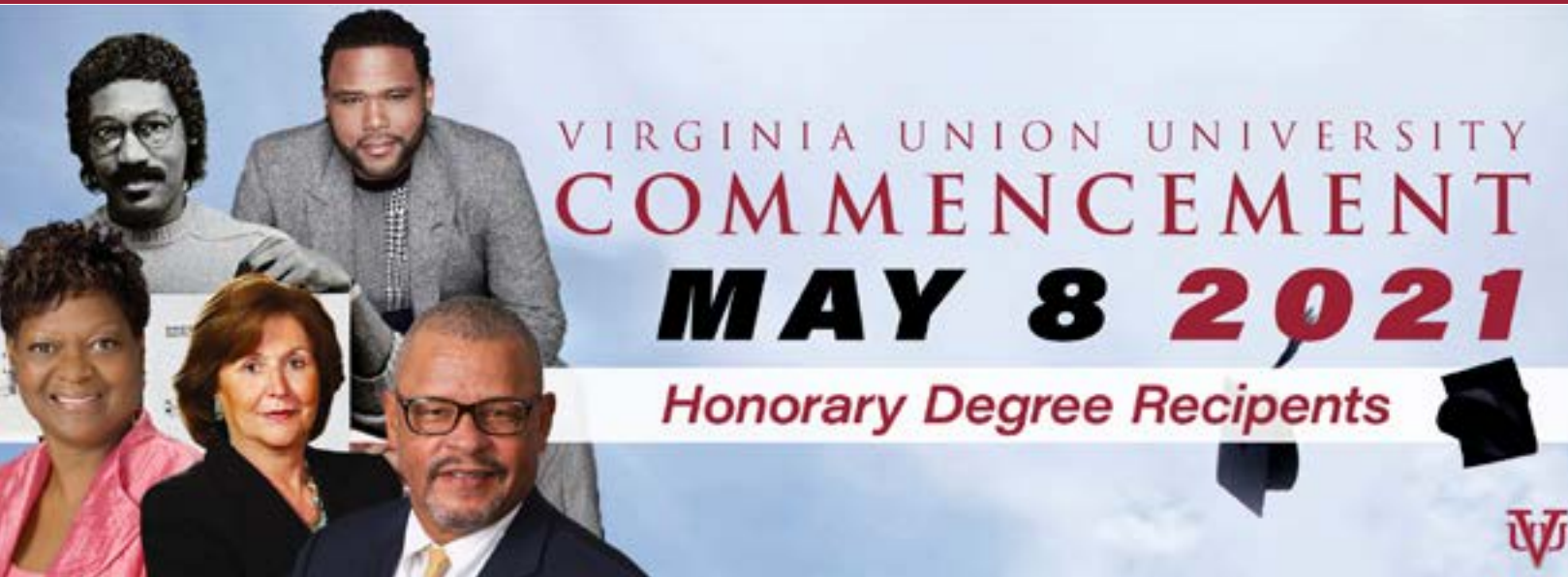
**MICHELA MARISSA MONDESIR
2020-21 SALUTATORIAN**

Salutatorian, Michela Mondesir, is graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Biology after maintaining a 4.03 Grade Point Average. She has been accepted to and will attend the Oregon Health & Science University with a concentration in Neuroscience.

Mondesir's groundbreaking research earned her an invitation to present her neuroscience explorations to the students and administration at Harvard University. She has gone on to regularly present her scientific methods at conferences throughout the country, and has garnered a great deal of attention in the field of Neuroscience.

Whenever she takes a step away from her studies, she spends much of her time on the tennis court. The standout senior is a 4 year letter winner in tennis under Head Coach Guy Walton.





**EVA TEIG HARDY
HONORARY DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS**

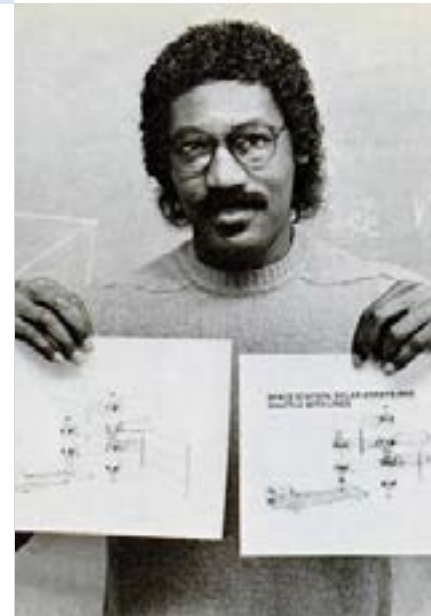
Eva Teig Hardy has left an indelible mark on government and corporate administration. She has been an advisor to Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, and former Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe. She was appointed to serve as Virginia Secretary of Health and Human Services by former Governor Gerald Baliles where she oversaw 17 state agencies including medicaid, social services, and mental health. As secretary, Hardy established one of the first confidential AIDS testing and counseling programs in the country and managed Virginia’s largest ever community mental health initiative. She was later selected by President Bill Clinton to travel with him for the Peace treaty signing between the nations of Israel and Jordan. Ms. Hardy eventually accepted a role with Virginia Power and then Dominion Energy. She retired after 20 years as Executive Vice President of Public Policy and Communications for nine states where Dominion Energy had assets.



**ANTHONY ANDERSON
COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER &
HONORARY DOCTOR OF ARTS**

Actor, Producer, and Philanthropist Anthony Anderson’s performances on television and in movies has earned him Emmy and golden globe award nominations. After attending Howard University on a Drama and Performance Arts scholarship, he made his mark in Hollywood.

Anderson is a benevolent humanitarian, hosting an annual celebrity golf tournament. The event raises funds to support causes like diabetes awareness and the Boys & Girls Club of America. His generosity spreads to his hometown of Compton, California where supports the youth and hosts holiday food giveaways.



**DAVID R. HEDGLEY JR.
HONORARY DOCTOR OF SCIENCE**

Dr. David R. Hedgley, Jr., graduate of VUU’s Class of 1958 with a degree in biology, is internationally recognized as the “Father of 3-D graphics”. His mathematical research and discovery changed the face of computers and computer graphics forever. While working as a research scientist at NASA, he developed what’s known as “Hedgley’s Algorithm.” A way for computers to draw an unrestricted number of three-dimensional creations. It led to groundbreaking gaming graphics, enhanced film quality and superior computer imagery. He would then go on to make another groundbreaking discovery. Creating an unusually complex algorithm to route traces on a printed circuit board. A formula so complex, new symbols were invented to help explain it.

**DELORES L. MCQUINN
HONORARY DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS**

Virginia Delegate Delores McQuinn was elected to the General Assembly in 2009. She has tirelessly worked to improve public education, to care for the elderly and less fortunate, and to make our communities a safer place to live. She championed legislation which gives local governments the freedom to decide how to deal with Confederate Statues. She sponsored the “CROWN Act” legislation which prohibits discrimination based on hair types and hair styles. And, she supported the Historic Justice agenda, which led to a \$25 million investment to help transform and preserve historical sites, including VUU’s birthplace, the Lumpkin’s Jail site, and the Richmond Slave Trail. A breast cancer survivor, McQuinn is a staunch advocate for cancer screenings and has introduced legislation to bring awareness to early detection.



**LUKE E. TORIAN
HONORARY DOCTOR OF DIVINITY**

Virginia Delegate Luke E. Torian is a proud graduate of VUU’s Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology. He was elected to the General Assembly in 2009. And, in 2020, he made history when he became the first African American to chair the powerful, budget-wielding House Appropriations Committee. Delegate Torian has successfully passed over 40 bills and resolutions including legislation improving education, housing, and criminal justice policies.

Torian has also spent 35-years in ministry. He is the Pastor of First Mount Zion Baptist Church in Dumfries, Virginia where he has grown the congregation from 650 to over 4300 members.





MRESTAN J. KINSLER

Mr. Mrestan J. Kinsler is a Senior Finance and Banking major with a minor in Marketing. He has accepted a job (Producer Help Desk) with United Health Group located in Minnetonka, Minnesota. Mr. Kinsler is very active at Virginia Union University. He serves as President of Delta Mu Delta and Vice President of Sigma Nu Tau Entrepreneurship Honor Society. During his Junior year he interned at Richmond Heritage Federal Credit Union. Mr. Kinsler's hometown is Stone Mountain, Georgia.

BRANTLEY FOWLER

Mr. Brantley Fowler is a senior majoring in Accounting. He accepted a job at Textron which is an aviation company located in Maryland. Mr. Fowler will also be attending graduate school at George Mason University. He will be pursuing a Master's in Accounting. In addition, he was awarded an accounting internship this summer through the Business office at Virginia Union University prior to starting his new job at Textron.



ADAMA KENDALL

Miss Adama Kendall is a senior majoring in Entrepreneur Management. She currently owns her own retail business. After graduation, she will start the Executive Master of Business Administration program at Virginia Union University.



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Healthcare Workforce Certificate Program

VIRGINIA UNION UNIVERSITY WITH ANTHEM BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD FOUNDATION PARTNER TO LAUNCH HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Virginia Union University (VUU) is excited to announce the creation of a new Healthcare Management Certificate Program that will train and prepare students to enter the healthcare field. The certificate program will help meet the growing demand for healthcare workers needed to provide health-based services in the coming years. The new certificate program was created thanks to a \$72,000 grant from the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation.

Beginning in May 2021, the seven-week healthcare management curriculum will provide a short-term, low-cost program that will offer specialized training to help students develop usable, transferable workplace skills in the healthcare profession. The certificate program is offered through a collaboration with VUU's Sydney Lewis School of Business, the School of Arts and Sciences, and VUU Global.

"VUU is dedicated to providing education to individuals who were affected by these unpredictable times," said Ralph Dickerson, Vice President of Institutional Advancement at VUU. "In response to the global pandemic and the increased unemployment rates, the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation approached us with an idea and we worked together to achieve a major goal for both parties, and that is to provide educational opportunities in the healthcare field that will lead to sustainable income."

The inaugural cohort will include 10 students for the 2021-2022 term. The growth plan includes an increase in enrolled students in each healthcare certificate cohort moving forward. The Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation funding will create the certificate program infrastructure, and provide student laptops and instructional simulation equipment. Each student enrolled in the healthcare certificate program will receive a \$1,500 scholarship, and a VUU mentor who will ensure they complete the program and acquire access to employment opportunities.

"We are pleased to collaborate with VUU to help create the next generation of Virginia healthcare workers through the new certificate program," said Maureen Dempsey, M.D., Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield's chief clinical officer. "As part of our COVID-19 relief work, one of our goals is to ensure that individuals, their families and businesses can recover and reach full potential in the years ahead by supporting economic development through training, mentoring and job creation. Programs like VUU's Healthcare Certificate Program offers interested students' important knowledge and tools as they enter the healthcare field."

To enroll in the Healthcare Certificate Program, students must be residents of Richmond, Virginia. Pre-requisites or other healthcare courses are not required for certificate program admission. By adding the new Healthcare Certificate Program, VUU now offers four certificates. In addition, Virginia Union University began offering six new master's degree and two new bachelor's degree programs in January 2021

THE MARY MORTON PARSONS FOUNDATION HAS BESTOWED \$250K UPON THE UNIVERSITY TO SUPPORT RENOVATIONS

Virginia Union is elated to announce the Mary Morton Parsons Foundation has bestowed \$250K upon the university to support the renovations set to be made on the historic Industrial Hall.

"To see the growth and development of the campus is thrilling", said Dr. Hakim Lucas, President and CEO at Virginia Union University. "Industrial Hall was once an essential part of our campus, and with this gift, we can focus on having it return to its prominence."

Founded in 1988, The Mary Morton Parsons Foundation took its name after Founder, Mrs. Mary Morton Parsons. The private, non-operating foundation supports the capital needs of charitable organizations. To date, the Foundation has awarded approximately \$128 million to qualified grantees, typically issues between \$3-5 million annually.

"We are always actively looking to make an impact in the lives of others and what better opportunity than this for Virginia Union", Executive Director Amy Nisenson. "We understand what Industrial Hall has meant to VUU's history and we're excited to see the vision of what it will become turn into a reality. Providing a space for art, culture, and education provides an essential trifecta for the modern student's educational foundation. We were so glad to be able to share this moment with the Virginia Union family."

The proceeds will be used toward revitalizing Industrial Hall into university museum, gallery and cultural education center. It will house VUU distinctive art collection as it continues to grow, while also providing space for a learning sector for students to experience art in a multitude of styles and genres.

Industrial Hall, which is also referred to as the "Power Plant", is accompanied by the towering smokestack and beside it, once stood, was the Industrial Training School during the University's early years. In the early 1900s, the university generated its own power, had its own water supplies, and kept barn full of livestock including cows, horses, pigs and chickens. Students would commonly work the farm and take on other jobs at Industrial Hall for money to pay for books, supplies and other educational needs as part of the "work study" equivalent of those early years.

"We're so thankful to the Mary Morton Parsons Foundation for providing such a generous gift to VUU", said Ralph Dickerson, VP of Institutional Advancement at Virginia Union. "This is the beginning of a great relationship. We take pride in the partnerships we forge throughout the city and we look for the opportunity to be of service to The Mary Morton Parsons Foundation should the opportunity arise."



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SATURDAY, JUNE 26, 2021

VUU Alumni Panel & Workshops
 State of THE Union Town Hall

Featured Speakers:
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Alumni Open Mic Night

SUNDAY, JUNE 27, 2021

Closing Session
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www.vuu.edu/vuu-opening-plan