

## **Name Change of Virginia Wesleyan University to Batten University**

### **Discussion Notes**

Date: December 11, 2025

Meeting Location: McGuireWoods Office, Norfolk, VA

Saving Virginia Wesleyan LLC Attendees: Christine Williams (Legal/VWU Alumni), Bob Valvano (LLC/Alumni), Greg Plummer (LLC/Alumni)

VWU Attendees: Kelly Cordova (Chief of Staff), David Black (Executive in Residence), Scott Miller (President), Robert McFarland (Legal/BOT), Nancy DeFord (Chairperson BOT), David Stillman (Legal), Vincent Mastracco (Legal/BOT)

### **Key Takeaways**

Board Members and/or Dr. Miller stated:

- Batten University is the name – and the only name considered.
- There were no conditions or mandates for name change.
- The possibility of changing the name had been considered over several years.
- Decision has been made and the board is “looking forward”.
- Name change is in the best interest of the students.

### **Discussion Topics**

- President Miller led a discussion on the challenges the university faces being associated with the Methodist Church in the context with a modern university.
- Saving VW LLC provided a case study of good governance (Elon Merger) vs poor governance (VW Name Change).
- The current name change process did not engage Alumni Council, Presidents Council, Parents Council, Leadership Council, current or former faculty and staff.
- No recent market analysis has focused on the name change. Dr. Miller referenced reports in 2016/17 (name change to University) and 2018/19 (Methodist affiliation).
- Dr. Miller contends there were 52 interviews (all anonymous) supporting the name change.
- Saving VW LLC responded that it could not be credible given the +6,000 people that had signed the petition in opposition and a recent student survey highlighting 90% disapproval.

- Lengthy discussion on lack of revenue growth (core service flat at approximately \$54M for 10 years) and restricted endowment growth (single donor dependent).
- Dr. Miller responded that revenue growth was driven by a few factors including 12 strategic facilities that were “off the books”.
- We circled back to the lack of transparency, fiduciary responsibility, and governance issues associated with the name change.
- Dr. Miller stated that the cost of the rebranding was being covered by 30 donors (not confirmed).
- We asked – what would it take for the board to reconsider their position given the unpopular response? The answer was that the board holds all the legal rights to the school’s branding. If there are additional matters to address, they must be presented to the board through a formal motion.
- Bob Valvano asked to present a possible compromise in the form of “VW Batten University” at the next board meeting.