Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

VMFA Capital Campaign Leadership Briefing

Tuesday, April 3, 2018, 4:30pm

Claiborne Robertson Room

**They were present:**

Hiter Harris (host)

Mary Frediani

Margaret Gottwald

Benjamin Rawles

**By Invitation:**

Stephen Bonadies

Lillian Dunn

Jody Green

Jan Hatchette

Sarah Hendricks

Alex Nyerges

Jayne Shaw

Michael Taylor

1. INTRODUCTION

Foundation Board of Directors President Hiter Harris III welcomed the group and shared the purpose of the preliminary campaign meetings, noting that conversation and questions are encouraged.

1. PREVIEW OF THE CAMPAIGN

Director Alex Nyerges noted that the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts has invited current board members and former board members to the briefings during which the Preliminary Case for Support will be discussed. He expressed that it would be an opportunity to gather feedback and to ask questions.

He then read a letter from a visitor which illustrated the significance of the museum. Director Nyerges noted that the letter reinforces why VMFA wants to secure a vision of a museum experience that engages, captivates, and inspires a growing and diverse audience and remain an incubator of ideas that influence the present and future.

Director Nyerges then reviewed the context for a comprehensive campaign, underscoring how VMFA arrived at its present state. He reminded attendees that the museum completed a major museum expansion in 2010. Since then, VMFA has added the award-winning McGlothlin Wing as well as reinstalled the existing galleries and the Robins Sculpture Garden to create a 15-acre campus. This has tripled VMFA’s attendance and enhanced its economic and educational impact on Richmond and the Commonwealth. Director Nyerges noted that this also has elevated VMFA’s reputation and catapulted it to one of the country’s top ten comprehensive art museums.

Additionally, he explained that the expansion led to development of a 5-year Strategic Plan to build on the opportunities and challenges created by growth. This plan has revealed key opportunities to reach larger and more diverse audiences, deliver education more broadly to all Virginians, and build long-term sustainability.

In 2016, VMFA engaged campaign counsel Benefactor Group to conduct a study of the museum’s capacity and internal readiness for a comprehensive campaign to achieve financial stability and position the museum for the next phase of growth. As a result of the study’s findings, VMFA’s leaders have proceeded to plan and prepare for an aspirational comprehensive campaign. Campaign counsel has assisted VMFA in the planning phase.

Building on key opportunities identified in the Strategic Plan, findings from the Benefactor Group campaign study, and more than 2 years of planning and discussion, VMFA is prepared to embark on a comprehensive campaign to support vital capital improvements, increase the operating endowment, and jumpstart new initiatives.

Director Nyerges then opened the floor to questions before introducing Dr. Michael Taylor, Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Art & Education.

Dr. Taylor presented the case for why VMFA needs a Capital Campaign by reviewing important exhibition, collections and education-related initiatives. These include bringing extraordinary exhibitions of art, such as the Terracotta Army, to Virginia as well as important statewide programs geared towards education. Dr. Taylor noted that VMFA serves more than 400,000 people across Virginia now, and with sustained endowments, the museum has the potential to increase that number to 1 million Virginians across the state per year. He also reviewed important initiatives such as VMFA On the Road and the Museum’s Distance Learning Program.

Dr. Michael Taylor then opened the floor to questions before introducing Stephen Bonadies, Senior Deputy Director for Conservation and Collections.

Mr. Bonadies made the case for The Susan and David Goode Center for Advanced Studies in Art Conservation at VMFA, noting that this center would advance the fields of Conservation and Art History and would become the 5th largest conservation center among American Museums. The Campaign would provide for the center. Additionally, he noted that VMFA recently commissioned a study of its facilities to ensure needs for visitor growth, acquisition and storage, and programs can be met. The plan projects growth needs of 690,000 square feet in the next 10 years and additional space for the next 20 years. Initial capital phase includes expansion of the Main Building allowing the museum to: Display more of the permanent collection; host more special events without closing off other spaces; have a second special exhibition on view at all times; improve the visitor experience; and enhance earned revenue.

Mr. Bonadies then opened the floor to questions before Director Nyerges spoke again.

Director Nyerges then reviewed the possible costs that would be required to build and support each of these initiatives as well as the total cost of the Capital Campaign. He noted that VMFA is a powerful economic asset, an integral part of the Commonwealth’s education infrastructure, a civic connector, and a community anchor. Lastly he stated that when completed, the campaign will propel VMFA to the national forefront in visitor engagement, arts accessibility, conservation, and sustainability; secure the vision of a museum experience that engages, captivates, and inspires a growing and diverse audience; and allow for a sustained – and sustainable – commitment to art for all Virginians.

Director Nyerges then opened the floor to final questions and thanked all attendees for coming.

**Recorded by:** Lillian Dunn

Executive Assistant to the Executive Director of VMFA Foundation and Deputy Director for Advancement and Membership

Interim Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director of Communications