

Day of Dialogue: Civic Learning and Engagement

Speaker Bios

Opening Speakers



Jonathan Alger

Jonathan Alger became the 6th president of James Madison University (JMU) on July 1, 2012. Under his leadership, the university developed a bold new vision to be “the national model of the engaged university: engaged with ideas and the world,” and a strategic plan focused on engaged learning, community engagement, and civic engagement.

Mr. Alger is a nationally recognized scholar and speaker on higher education policy and law and has given hundreds of presentations across the United States and abroad on a wide range of topics. He has published numerous articles and has done significant editorial work for scholarly journals and publications such as the *The Journal of College and University Law* and *The Law of Higher Education* (the leading treatise in the field). He received the American Council on Education Council of Fellows/Fidelity Investments Mentor Award in 2021 for his contributions to enhancing the diversity and capacity of future leaders of American higher education. A national leader in the field of civic engagement in higher education, Mr. Alger also received the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Standout Campus President Award in 2019 and serves on that organization's Presidents Council. He has co-taught a leadership seminar in JMU's Honors College and has previously taught graduate and undergraduate courses at Rutgers and Michigan in law, higher education, public policy, and diversity.



Marge Connelly

Marge Connelly is a former financial services executive, having held senior roles in Virginia with Capital One and Wachovia Securities, as well as with Barclays in London. She was appointed to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) by Governor McAuliffe in 2014 and again by Governor Northam in 2018. She currently serves as the Council's chair.

As a strong advocate for higher education, Ms. Connelly has served a number of institutions including the University of Richmond, Robins School of Business Executive Advisory Council; the VCU Business School Foundation Board; rector of the Board of Visitors for Longwood University; and Longwood interim president for the 2012-13 academic year. Ms. Connelly has also served on the boards of several other nonprofit organizations including the Council for Virginia's Future, the Greater Richmond Partnership, the Greater Richmond YMCA, and the Central Virginia Food Bank. She currently serves as chair of The Women's Initiative, a nonprofit organization that provides mental healthcare services to women in the Charlottesville area, and also serves on the corporate boards of The PRA Group and Altria.

Plenary #1: The Shifting Context for Civic Learning & Engagement



Vanessa Diamond

Vanessa Diamond is the senior vice president of civic engagement for the Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond. In this capacity, she convenes coalitions of community organizations, business leaders, institutions of higher education, and government entities to help create a strong and connected ecosystem for civic engagement and nonprofit sustainability across the Richmond region. Her focus is to connect people with opportunities to learn about and engage with the Greater Richmond community, empowering them to give back in a variety of ways that are both meaningful and impactful.

Ms. Diamond is a co-founder of HandsOn Greater Richmond, the region's volunteer center, which merged with the Community Foundation in 2018. Over her career, she served in AmeriCorps in Oregon for two years and then in a variety of staff roles with national service programs. Upon moving to Richmond, Ms. Diamond led service learning programming for Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and later became vice president of the Partnership for Nonprofit Excellence, which was a regional nonprofit resource center that included HandsOn Greater Richmond. Ms. Diamond earned a bachelor's degree from NC State University and a master's in public administration from VCU.

Ms. Diamond serves on local, national, and international boards to support civic innovation. She is the vice chair of Points of Light's Global Affiliate Assembly, and vice chair of the Virginia Governor's Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism. She is also a board member for the Urban League of Greater Richmond, Virginia Service Foundation and the Association of Service Commissions.



Ashley Finley, Ph.D.

Dr. Ashley Finley is the Vice President of Research and Senior Advisor to the President for the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). She was previously the senior director of assessment and research at AAC&U and also national evaluator for the [Bringing Theory to Practice Project](#). Most recently she served as the associate vice president for academic affairs & dean of the Dominican Experience at Dominican University of California, where she implemented a comprehensive framework for student learning and success centered around high-impact practices, including holistic advising and ePortfolios.

Dr. Finley's research and campus consultations focus on connecting best practices for program implementation, assessment design, and equity with institutional outcomes for student success and strategic planning. A significant component of this work at the campus and national levels has focused on the connection of students' personal development (such as resilience, belonging, identity, and sense of purpose) with their learning and civic engagement. She has published a

number of articles, book chapters, and monographs, including *Assessing Underserved Students' Engagement in High-impact Practices* (with co-author Tia McNair), *Civic Learning and Teaching; Assessing Underserved Students' Engagement in High-Impact Practices*; and "Well-Being: An Essential Outcome for Higher Education."

Prior to beginning her national work, Dr. Finley was a faculty member in the department of sociology at Dickinson College. She received a B.A. from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and an M.A. and Ph.D., both in sociology, from the University of Iowa.



Quentin Kidd, Ph.D.

Dr. Quentin Kidd is Dean of the College of Social Sciences, professor of political science, and Academic Director of the Judy Ford Wason Center for Public Policy at Christopher Newport University in Newport News. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Texas Tech University and an M.A. and B.A. from the University of Arkansas. Dr. Kidd's teaching and research focuses on American civic and political behavior and politics of the American South.

Dr. Kidd has written or edited five books including *The Rational Southerner* (co-authored with M.V. Hood III and Irwin L. Morris) and *Civic Participation in America*. He is editor of *American Government: Readings from Across Society* and *Government and Politics in Virginia: The Old Dominion at the 21st Century*. Additionally, he has authored or co-authored over 30 peer reviewed studies and book chapters, and funded research reports.

Dr. Kidd served on the 2019 Commemoration Steering Committee, a multi-year statewide commemoration of Virginia from 1619 to 2019. He was appointed by Governor Bob McDonnell to serve as an advisor to the (Virginia) Independent Bipartisan Advisory Commission on Redistricting in 2011 and was appointed by Governor Mark Warner to serve on the Virginia Commission for National and Community Service from 2002 to 2006. He served for eleven years in the U.S. Army and U.S. Army Reserves as a psychological operations specialist, including a combat tour in Kuwait and Iraq during the Persian Gulf War in 1990 and 1991, where he was awarded an Army Commendation Medal with Combat "V" device.



Marisol Morales, Ed.D.

Dr. Marisol Morales currently serves as the Executive Director of the Carnegie Elective Classifications for the American Council on Education (ACE). In this role she provides conceptual leadership and operational oversight to the Carnegie Elective Classifications. This includes the collaborative development of and responsibility for all initiatives, oversight and facilitation of relevant national and international advisory committees, conceptualizing and implementing extensive data archives as well as developing and enacting a shared vision regarding access to and use of the knowledge produced by

the Carnegie Elective Classifications to beneficially guide research, policy, and practice. Prior to this role she was the Vice President for Network Leadership at Campus Compact, from 2018 to 2022.

Dr. Morales was the Founding Director of the Office of Civic and Community Engagement at the University of La Verne from 2013 to 2018 and the Associate Director of the Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning and Community Service Studies at DePaul University from 2005 to 2013. In 2020, she was appointed as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Community-Engaged Scholarship at University of Central Florida and also serves as an adjunct faculty in the ENLACE Higher Education Master's program at Northeastern Illinois University.

Dr. Morales holds a B.A. in Latin American/Latino Studies and a M.S./M.S. in International Public Service Management, both from DePaul University. She earned her Ed.D. in organizational leadership at the University of La Verne in 2020. Her dissertation focused on the community engagement experiences of Latinx students at a Hispanic Serving Institution.



Alvin J. Schexnider, Ph.D.

Dr. Alvin J. Schexnider is principal consultant of Schexnider & Associates, LLC, a management and executive development consulting firm where he specializes in executive coaching and governance. Before retiring in 2007 he was executive vice president and interim president Norfolk State University. Following an 18-month hiatus he came out of retirement to serve as president of Thomas Nelson Community College from 2008 to 2011. A former chancellor of Winston-Salem State University, he has held faculty and administrative positions at public and private institutions including Syracuse University, Virginia Commonwealth University and Wake Forest University.

Dr. Schexnider is a former member of the Board of Trustees of Virginia Wesleyan College, and currently serves as a senior consultant with the Association of Governing Boards (AGB). His service to the Commonwealth of Virginia includes gubernatorial appointments to the Commission of Virginia's Future, the Board of Visitors of Virginia State University, the Commission on Local Government, the Virginia Board of Education, the Commission on the Revitalization of Virginia's Cities, and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. In August 2021 he accepted a gubernatorial appointment to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV).

Dr. Schexnider earned a B.A. degree in political science at Grambling State University. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. in political science from Northwestern University, where he held Norman Wait Harris, Ford Foundation and Woodrow Wilson fellowships. He is the author of *Saving Black Colleges* and the co-author of *Blacks and the Military*, and he has written extensively on public management and higher education.

Plenary #2: Civic Learning & Engagement in a Polarized Society



Ronald A. Crutcher, D.M.A.

Dr. Ronald A. Crutcher, a national leader in higher education and a distinguished classical musician, was the president of the University of Richmond from 2015 to 2021. He is also president emeritus of Wheaton College in Massachusetts. Prior to Wheaton, he was provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at Miami University of Ohio. In August 2021, he was named a senior fellow in the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program.

Dr. Crutcher writes and speaks widely on the value of liberal education, the democratic purposes of higher education, diversity and inclusion, and free expression on college campuses. He is chair of the board of the American Council on Education (ACE), a senator of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, and a member of the board of IES Abroad. He previously served on the boards of the Posse Foundation, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), the Fulbright Association, and he was chair of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts. His thematic memoir, *I Had No Idea You Were Black: Navigating Race on the Road to Leadership* (<https://clydehillpublishing.com/product/no-idea-you-were-black/>), was published in February 2021.

Dr. Crutcher was the first cellist to receive the doctor of musical arts degree from Yale University, where he also earned his master's degree. During his graduate study, he received a Fulbright Fellowship, a Ford Foundation Doctoral Fellowship, and a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Miami University of Ohio, he has received honorary degrees from Wheaton College (MA), Colgate University, Muhlenberg College, Randolph-Macon College, University of Richmond, and the University of Cordoba in Spain.



Jonathan Page

Jonathan Page is the Director of Multicultural Affairs, Title VI Coordinator, and Co-chair of the University Diversity Council at Longwood University and has been an educator for 24 years in both secondary and higher education settings. He earned his bachelor's degree from James Madison University, his master's degree from Longwood University, and is currently a doctoral student at Northeastern University. He has extensive training and experience in the areas of diversity, equity, access, inclusion and social justice. Mr. Page has presented workshops, seminars, trainings, and keynotes widely and focuses much of his work in the areas of social justice, intercultural communication and engagement, intersectionality, and colorism. His areas of research interest and educational focus are culturally responsive pedagogy, multicultural competence, identity development, multicultural organizational development, and inclusive leadership. Mr. Page also has experience in curriculum design and development. His passion for education is fueled by his desire for equity and to challenge students to understand themselves and others through introspection by examining their ideas, beliefs, and

values as they become more familiar with and understand the lenses through which they view the world as they become the citizen leaders of tomorrow.

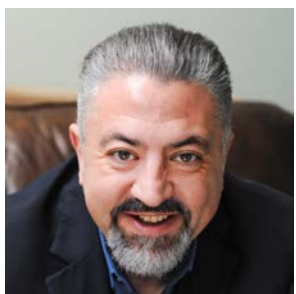


Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill, Ph.D.

Dr. Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill is director of the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) Campus Free Expression Project. She works with senior college leaders to provide consultative assistance and expertise in approaches that will support a campus culture that is diverse, inclusive, and open to robust intellectual exchange. In this work, she convenes closed and public events. In partnership with BPC Action, she engages staff of U.S. Congress members to help Congress better understand that colleges and universities, not government, are the best stewards of campus free expression.

Prior to joining BPC, Dr. Merrill was the executive director of the Fund for Academic Renewal, a program of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA). Before leading ACTA's Fund for Academic Renewal, Merrill served as ACTA's vice president of development. Earlier in her career, Merrill served on the faculties of St. John's College (Annapolis), known for its Great Books curriculum, and the College of William & Mary. She has also taught at Duke University, the University of Calgary, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, and in the college program at Maryland's only prison for women. Her articles and essays have appeared in venues including *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and *Perspectives on Political Science*. She is a contributing editor at *Paideia Times*.

Dr. Merrill earned her B.A. (First Class Honours) from the University of Calgary and her M.A. and Ph.D. from Duke University.



The Honorable David Ramadan, Ed.D.

Dr. David Ramadan is a seasoned executive and international consultant with more than 30 years of advocacy, business, and government relations experience. He served two terms in the Virginia House of Delegates (2012-16). His finesse for cultivating relationships and working across the aisle has enabled him to advise political candidates for president, governor, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House.

Dr. Ramadan serves as an adjunct faculty member at the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University. From 2010 to 2012, he was a member of GMU's Board of Visitors, appointed by the Governor of Virginia.

Dr. Ramadan emigrated to the United States from Lebanon in 1989 after attending International College in Beirut. He graduated from Mason with a bachelor's degree in government and politics, and a master's degree in international trade and transactions. Dr. Ramadan completed graduate studies

at Oxford University, the American Graduate School of Business in Geneva, Johns Hopkins University, and Georgetown University. He earned his doctor of education degree in leadership and learning in organizations from Vanderbilt University.

Dr. Ramadan is often quoted in national publications such as the *New York Times*, *The Hill*, the *Washington Post*, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, and the *Roanoke Times*. He also makes frequent appearances on television and radio, including CNN, NPR, France 24, Al Arabiyah, and MTV Lebanon.



Eric Vanover, Ph.D.

Dr. Eric Vanover is an associate professor of history, co-chair of the general education assessment committee, and interim dean of arts and sciences at Germanna Community College. He earned a B.A. in history from the University of Virginia's College at Wise, an M.A. in history from Virginia Tech, and a Ph.D. from Old Dominion University in community college leadership. His doctoral research focused on civic engagement in general education at community colleges. He published "The Case for Civic Learning in the Humanities at Community Colleges" in *Peer Review* in 2018. Dr. Vanover served on the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) general education taskforce charged with establishing civic engagement as one of six systemwide core competencies of general education. He served as a member of the VCCS strategic plan taskforce that drafted the equity-driven Opportunity 2027 strategic plan recently adopted by the VCCS. He continues to serve on the Reimagining Teaching and Learning Committee focusing on an equity-driven review of the curriculum content for cultural responsiveness and representation. At Germanna, Dr. Vanover works with the Center for Teaching and Learning to create co-curricular civic learning opportunities for students, staff, faculty and the public. Germanna is also on schedule to fully assess the civic engagement general education competency with a plan designed to introduce and reinforce civic learning concepts in the curriculum and merge these concepts with co-curricular programming.