



WILLIAM & MARY

Charter Day

2026



Year of Civic Leadership

Civic leadership at William & Mary rests on the conviction that knowledge carries responsibility, and that wisdom, formed over time, must be placed in service to the common good. From its founding, the university and its people have played a formative role in the life of the republic, understanding leadership as a moral charge — shaped by history, guided by reason and entrusted to each generation in turn. At William & Mary, civic leaders listen across difference, reason with care and act with integrity. They cultivate trust, sustain partnerships and commit themselves to work that endures beyond the moment. Rooted in the values of Service and Integrity, civic leadership calls each of us to steward our communities — and the nation — with humility, courage and reverence for what is perpetual and universal.

Official Party Platform

PRESIDENT

Katherine A. Rowe

CHANCELLOR

Robert M. Gates '65, L.H.D. '98

BOARD OF VISITORS

Charles E. Poston J.D. '74, P '02, P '06, *Rector*
Norfolk, Virginia

Ardine Williams, *Vice Rector*
Williamsburg, Virginia

Kendrick F. Ashton, Jr. '98, *Secretary*
McLean, Virginia

Melissa J. Ballenger '92, P '22, P '25
Williamsburg, Virginia

John L. Brownlee J.D. '94, P '22
Great Falls, Virginia

Eric I. Cantor J.D. '88, LL.D. '11
Glen Allen, Virginia

AnnaMaria DeSalva '90
Greenwich, Connecticut

Robey W. Estes, Jr. '74, P '06
Richmond, Virginia

W. Taylor Franklin
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Stephen J. Huebner '76, P '09
Toano, Virginia

Jennifer Tepper Mackesy '91
Bronxville, New York

Courtney M. Malveaux J.D. '02
Richmond, Virginia

Thomas K. Norment, Jr. J.D. '73
Williamsburg, Virginia

C. Michael Petters M.B.A. '93
Newport News, Virginia

Laura Keehner Rigas '01
Alexandria, Virginia

Jill Holtzman Vogel '92
Upperville, Virginia

Hillary Waldron '02
Alexandria, Virginia

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Zoe Wang '25, M.P.P. '26
College Mace Bearer

FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE

K. Scott Swan

GRADUATE COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Quinn Girasek M.S. '26
Marischal Mace Bearer

STAFF LIAISON

Adam White



ORDER OF EXERCISES

PRE-PROCESSIONAL

The William & Mary Wind Ensemble | *Richard C. Marcus, Director of Bands*

PROCESSIONAL: THE WILLIAM & MARY HYMN

The William & Mary Choir | *Mark Helms, Director of Choirs*

PRESENTATION OF COLORS

Queens' Guard

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THE WELCOME

President Katherine A. Rowe

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

REFLECTIONS ON THE ROYAL CHARTER

RECOGNITIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The President

YEAR OF CIVIC LEADERSHIP

REINVESTITURE OF THE CHANCELLOR

Rector Charles E. Poston J.D. '74, P '02, P '06

REMARKS FROM THE CHANCELLOR

Chancellor Robert M. Gates '65, L.H.D. '98

CONFERRAL OF THE HONORARY DEGREES

The Chancellor and The Rector

Ken Burns | *Documentary Filmmaker*

Abigail D. Spanberger | *Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia*

THE CLOSING

The President

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

The Botetourt Chamber Singers | *Michelle Kwok, Interim Director*

ALMA MATER

The Botetourt Chamber Singers with the William & Mary Choir

RETIREMENT OF COLORS

Queens' Guard

RECESSIONAL: THE WILLIAM & MARY HYMN





28TH PRESIDENT OF WILLIAM & MARY

KATHERINE A. ROWE

A nationally recognized innovator in higher education, Katherine A. Rowe was sworn in as William & Mary's 28th president on July 1, 2018. She was inaugurated during the Charter Day Ceremony in February 2019.

Rowe oversaw the creation of William & Mary's strategic plan, Vision 2026, including crafting the university's first-ever values statement. Built on four cornerstone initiatives — data, water, democracy and careers — Vision 2026 invests in the capacities required for leadership in the 21st century.

At William & Mary, Rowe has advanced access and affordability, including covering full tuition and fees for all in-state, undergraduate Pell Grant recipients. Under her leadership, the university founded a new School of Computing, Data Sciences & Physics and received R1 designation by the Carnegie Classification system. Rowe's cross-university initiatives include a civics curriculum, a central Entrepreneurship Hub and the restoration of the Williamsburg Bray School — the oldest extant schoolhouse for Black children in the western hemisphere. Major gifts during her tenure include support for military and veteran students and conservation science. A \$100 million gift established William & Mary's Batten School of Coastal & Marine Sciences & VIMS as the national leader in coastal resilience. A \$50 million scholarship gift in 2025 provides full tuition support for students pursuing coastal and marine sciences for all times coming.

Rowe successfully closed the university's \$1.1 billion *For the Bold* campaign in 2020 and a dedicated campaign for W&M Athletics, *All In*, in 2023. As fan-in-chief for William & Mary's 23 Division I athletics teams, Rowe frequently leads the cheering section during competitions.

An award-winning teacher and scholar, Rowe is also an entrepreneur. She serves on numerous technology and workforce boards in Virginia. She is a past president of the Shakespeare Association of America.

Rowe holds a bachelor's degree from Carleton College and a master's and a Ph.D. from Harvard University. She has completed graduate work in cinema and media studies at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

Rowe spent more than a decade coaching Ultimate Frisbee. She was a World Ultimate Club Finalist and a Women's Nationals Finalist. She co-founded the nonprofit Boston Ultimate Disc Alliance and the Carleton College women's Ultimate team.

Rowe shares her love of Ultimate with her spouse, Bruce Jacobson, William & Mary's First Gentleman. They have two adult children, Daniel and Beah.



24TH CHANCELLOR OF WILLIAM & MARY

ROBERT M. GATES '65, L.H.D. '98

Robert M. Gates '65, L.H.D. '98, William & Mary's 24th chancellor, is the first alumnus to hold this position in the university's modern era and the longest-serving chancellor in William & Mary's history. He began his first seven-year term as Chancellor in 2012 and a second term in 2019. In 2025, William & Mary's Board of Visitors appointed him to an unprecedented third term.

As the U.S. Secretary of Defense from 2006 to 2011, he became the only secretary in American history to serve under presidents from different political parties. In his words, William & Mary instilled in him "a calling to serve—a sense of duty to community and country that this university has sought to instill in each generation of students for more than 300 years."

Gates began his career at the Central Intelligence Agency and is the only career officer in the CIA's history to rise from entry-level employee to director. Gates took office as the nation's 22nd Secretary of Defense under President George W. Bush; President Barack Obama asked him to continue in that office and, in 2011, awarded Chancellor Gates the Presidential Medal of Freedom—the country's highest civilian honor.

A history major at William & Mary, Gates was an active member of Alpha Phi Omega. At graduation, he received the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award, given to honor splendid characteristics of heart, mind and helpfulness to others. He has been a trustee of the William & Mary Foundation. He received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from the university and the Alumni Medallion, the William & Mary Alumni Association's highest honor.

As chancellor, Gates regularly meets with students and faculty on campus. In 2022, he launched the inaugural Gates Forum at William & Mary, hosted by the Gates Global Policy Center in partnership with the university's Global Research Institute. In 2024, William & Mary broke ground on Robert M. Gates Hall, the first academic building in the nation to bear Gates' name.

A native of Kansas, Gates earned his master's degree in history from Indiana University and a doctorate in Russian and Soviet history from Georgetown University. From 2002 until 2006, he was president of Texas A&M University.

Gates has authored four books, including his memoirs and a guide to leadership and institutional reform. His most recent book, "Exercise of Power," details nonmilitary instruments of power and their incorporation into U.S. foreign policy. He and his wife, Becky, live in Washington state.





**HONORARY
DEGREE
RECIPIENTS**



HONORARY DEGREE CITATION

KEN BURNS

Kenneth Lauren Burns, you embrace America's complexity with integrity and insight. Your award-winning documentaries about our country's past illuminate our present so that we can shape the future. As you have said, "there is as much drama in what is, and what was, as anything the human imagination dreams of."

Your interest in the history of our country ignited during your college years at Hampshire. You filmed your senior project — an award-winning documentary about rural Americans after the Revolutionary War — at Old Sturbridge Village. Then you founded an independent production company, Florentine Films, together with college friends.

In the history of American public media, your films define documentary in the 21st century. Their themes range from baseball to warfare, to Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. Your camera and microphone travel history's byways, in the field and the archive, across oceans and continents — and often to William & Mary's own backyard. Your most recent series, "The American Revolution," explores the competing claims on liberty and dominion that fractured the early American republic. The film makes vivid the labor required for a pluralistic democracy to flourish — and why our institutions remain worthwhile today.

The New York Times has hailed you as "the most accomplished documentary filmmaker" of your generation, with seventeen Emmy Awards, two Grammy Awards and two Oscar nominations for the landmark series "The Civil War". The Academy of Television Arts & Sciences honored you with a Lifetime Achievement Award. And you have been inducted into the Television Academy Hall of Fame. These laurels fuel your commitment to other artists — particularly aspiring filmmakers. By co-founding the Better Angels Society to preserve American voices through documentary film, you help cultivate the next generation of moral storytellers.

Kenneth Lauren Burns, during this Year of Civic Leadership, at the turn of the U.S. quarter millennium, William & Mary proudly honors your commitment to our country. By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Board of Visitors and the Ancient Royal Charter of The College of William & Mary in Virginia, I hereby confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Arts, *Honoris Causa*.



HONORARY DEGREE CITATION

ABIGAIL D. SPANBERGER

Abigail Davis Spanberger, you have dedicated your career to public service. In 2025, you were elected the 75th governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Last month, you made history as the first woman to hold Virginia's highest office. At your inauguration, you swore "faithfully and impartially" to execute duties incumbent upon this office. The Alma Mater of the Nation honors your oath of service.

You learned the value of service early from your parents. Your mother put herself through nursing school. Your father, a U.S. Army veteran, attended school on the G.I. Bill and became a career law enforcement officer. Your parents' faith in civic engagement inspired your own civic-minded growth — from a bachelor's degree at UVA to an international MBA from Purdue and the GISMA business school in Germany.

You began your career at the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, where you investigated narcotics and money laundering — often the only woman on the arrest team. From 2006 to 2014, you served as a case officer for the Central Intelligence Agency, investigating and averting threats to the United States.

In 2018, you brought this formidable track record to Congress, where you were elected as the first woman to represent Virginia's Seventh Congressional District. Over three consecutive terms as a lawmaker, you earned a reputation for collaboration and consensus-building. Your bipartisan leadership bolstered infrastructure, agriculture and public education in Virginia.

As governor, you have already identified public education and support for veterans as key imperatives. William & Mary — our country's first university — applauds your commitment to these public goods. The Alma Mater of the Nation ranks among the most military and veteran-friendly universities in the country. We stand ready to support your efforts to advance our Commonwealth and all its citizens.

Abigail Davis Spanberger, your abiding sense of duty to others will serve you well as the 75th governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia. By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Board of Visitors and the Ancient Royal Charter of The College of William and Mary in Virginia, I hereby confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Public Service, *Honoris Causa*.



Alumni Medallion Awards

The highest and most prestigious award given by the William & Mary Alumni Association, the Alumni Medallion recognizes outstanding alumni for commitment, dedication and assistance to William & Mary; exemplary accomplishments in their professional lives; and leadership in civic engagement in their communities, states or nations. The award reflects the honor that recipients bring to the university and its alumni through their actions and contributions.

2026 Alumni Medallion Awards Recipients

ELIZABETH CABELL JENNINGS '85, P '17

LEANNE DORMAN KURLAND '75, P '05

DEVIN I. MURPHY '82, P '10, P '14

STUART "STU" D. SPIRN '67, J.D. '70

The Alumni Medallion awards will be bestowed at the Alumni Medallion & Service Awards ceremony on Saturday, February 7, at 10 a.m. in the Commonwealth Auditorium at the Sadler Center, with a reception immediately following in Hunter Hall at the Alumni House.



More information on the
Alumni Medallion Awards
and previous winners



Thomas Jefferson Awards

The Thomas Jefferson Award and the Thomas Jefferson Teaching Award have been made possible by the generosity of the Robert Earl McConnell Foundation. The first award provides the opportunity for William & Mary to express appreciation to a member of the university faculty for significant service through his or her personal activities, influence or leadership. The Certificate of Award to be presented specifies that the recipient “exemplifies through his or her life, character and influence, the principles and the ideals of Thomas Jefferson.” We are thus reminded that it is not only the intellectual achievement, but also character and service to one’s fellow human beings that should be fostered by an institution of higher learning.

The Thomas Jefferson Teaching Award is a tribute to the faculty of William & Mary who influenced and encouraged so profoundly the young Jefferson. This award is given annually to a younger teaching member of the university community who has demonstrated, through concern as a teacher and through character and influence, the inspiration and stimulation of learning to the betterment of the individual and society as exemplified by Thomas Jefferson.

Each year, the faculty presents the Thomas Jefferson Prize in Natural Philosophy to a deserving undergraduate. This prize has been endowed by the trustees of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation of Charlottesville, Virginia. Their generous gift recognizes excellence in the sciences and honors the relationship that Jefferson enjoyed with Professor William Small, his tutor in mathematics and the “natural sciences.”

2026 Thomas Jefferson Prize Recipients

Thomas Jefferson Teaching Award

JENNIFER A. LORDEN

Thomas Jefferson Prize in Natural Philosophy

KATE CARLINE '26

Thomas Jefferson Award

RANDOLPH M. CHAMBERS



More information on the
Thomas Jefferson Awards
and previous winners



James Monroe Prize in Civic Leadership

In his first inaugural address, James Monroe, fifth president of the United States and alumnus of the university, told the nation, "From a just responsibility I will never shrink." Today, Monroe's alma mater is committed to inspiring its students to use their talents in the execution of just responsibilities — to lead not merely by the accumulation of office but through service to the greater good.

The James Monroe Prize in Civic Leadership recognizes the William & Mary student who best demonstrates sustained leadership of an unusual quality — leadership combined with initiative, character and an unfailing commitment to leveraging the assets of the William & Mary community to address the needs of our society. The Monroe Prize was established in 2005 through the generosity and vision of the Owens Foundation. Honorees receive a scholarship and a framed citation, and their names are added to a permanent plaque describing the award in the university's Sadler Center.

2026 James Monroe Prize Recipient

JASON X. ZHENG '26



More information on the
James Monroe Prize
and previous winners



Special Thanks

CEREMONY MARSHALS

Deborah C. Bebout | *Chemistry*
Thomas J. McSweeney | *Law*
Robert D. Pike | *Chemistry*
Jon Pineda | *English*
Silvia R. Tandeciarz | *Modern Languages and Literatures*

REPRESENTATIVE STUDENT ORGANIZATION LEADERS

We offer sincere gratitude to the many individuals and teams whose wisdom, collaboration and sense of civic responsibility made this Charter Day celebration possible. We are grateful to the Charter Day Working Committee and to the university departments, units and individuals whose expertise and talent shaped this occasion. Their efforts honor William & Mary's enduring role in preparing principled leaders, advancing the public good and fostering community.

WILLIAM
& MARY

