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**PROGRESS REPORT**

**A MUSEUM WITHOUT WALLS 2020-2025**

J. B. Keiper, Ph.D.

Executive Director

**Introduction**

VMNH ended its previous strategic plan while the world entered a pandemic in 2020, yet continued to pursue that plan’s completion and the seven areas of focus in the current strategic plan beginning May 2020. With strong state support, and excellent engagement from the communities we serve, the first two years of this strategic planning period went extremely well.

* We grew our scientific staff, hiring two archaeologists, a myriopodologist, and a herpetologist.
* R&C staff established two new facilities, the updated Molecular Systematics Lab, and the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab (situated in the shared STEM Lab).
* Opened a new in-house exhibit and updated existing galleries at our Starling Avenue facility.
* Began upgrades to the infrastructure of the Douglas Avenue facility.
* Re-engaged the educational community and grew the education staff by one.
* Positioned the museum to start construction on the Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion.
* Received the funds for Detailed Design for the VMNH-Waynesboro campus.
* Advantageously took advantage of funds from the VA Department of Energy to begin upgrades to the Starling Avenue facility including LED light installation, upgraded HVAC systems, added insulation, EV charger installation, and the installation of a solar array.
* In other significant VMNH and VMNH-Foundation activities, we a) Restarted our Grapes and Grains annual event with success, b) grew the endowment, c) produced significant publications by the curatorial staff and colleagues, d) began fact finding for the proposed VMNH canopy walk to J. Frank Wilson Park, and e) conducted significant collections-based projects including the excavation of *Petra*, the ancient cave cat from a cave in far southwest Virginia.

The successes of the museum are indeed driven by not only the support of our collaborators and community partners, but also the VMNH Board of Trustees and the VMNH-Foundation Board of Directors. While working together, the museum has grown in its mission and outreach, and is well positioned to finish the final 3 years of the current strategic plan strongly.

**SYNOPSIS OF THE SEVEN POINTS OF EFFORT FROM A MUSEUM WITHOUT WALLS 2020-2025**

***Enhance our impact as Virginia’s only state institution mandated to investigate, preserve, and exhibit elements of natural history, as well as educate all citizens***

1. Establish three Research Centers through interdepartmental collaboration.

* VMNH Center for Biodiversity
	+ Recent Invertebrates, Mammalogy, Herpetology
	+ This center is growing, and already conducts interdisciplinary work around the molecular systematics lab.
* VMNH Center for Earth Sciences
	+ Vertebrate Paleontology
	+ With the retirement of Dr. Beard, this center has just one department.
* VMNH Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab
	+ Archaeology
	+ This is an active laboratory.

2. Expand VMNH collections support by upgrading the Douglas Avenue facility

* A new roof is currently being installed with maintenance reserve funds.
* Next, upgrades to the HVAC and plumbing systems will be determined.

3. Obtain reaccreditation through the American Alliance of Museums.

* A board-level *ad hoc* committee will begin work in January 2023.

***Sustain VMNH by enhancing draw and impact through expanded facilities that will impart high quality scientific information and nature-based experiences for all***

4. Create a space for our youngest visitors.

* The library space is being prepped to accept exhibits and activities appropriate for our preK-5th grade visitors.

5. Build the Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion.

* Work will begin on the pavilion installation soon. Working drawings are complete and new bids will be requested.

6. Explore a Treetop Canopy concept.

* A team of staff and board members are exploring the concept, currently using the canopy walk at the Vermont Institute of Natural Science as a model. The architect involved has been engaged and will produce a proposal to help us explore the concept at VMNH.

7. Establish a new branch of VMNH near the Shenandoah National Park.

* We expect to have an A&E lead under contract for Detailed Design in May 2022.