



# The Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture

## STUDENT & PARENT HANDBOOK



AGRICULTURAL, LEADERSHIP,  
AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION  
VIRGINIA TECH.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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### DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL, LEADERSHIP, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

214 Litton-Reaves Hall (0343)

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, VA 24061-0343

Phone: 540-231-6836

Fax: 540-231-3824

Website:

### DIRECTORY

In case of an emergency, the following numbers may be used to contact professionals for assistance. In case of an emergency, parents may want to contact their students at the following numbers. **Students should bring cell phones with them, but they may not be used during class or other scheduled activities. Abuse of cell phones during class or other scheduled activities will result in the temporary confiscation of the cell phone.**

Virginia Governor's School Office

Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm	540-231-6836
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Virginia Governor's School Email Address	agschool@vt.edu
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VGSA Director (24 hrs.)	540-231-1003
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Residential Housing Help Desk (24 hrs.)	540-231-5721
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University Student Health Services	540-231-6444
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Montgomery Regional Hospital	540-951-1111
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Virginia Tech Police/Fire and Rescue

Emergency	911
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Non-emergency	540-231-6411
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**Parents and students, please note that in the case of an emergency, text messaging any of these numbers is not appropriate or expedient to quickly addressing the needs of those involved in any emergency situation. Never, under any circumstances, should you attempt to communicate via text message with these numbers.**

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## **WELCOME TO THE VIRGINIA GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL FOR AGRICULTURE**

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Dear Students, Parents, and Guardians:

Congratulations on your acceptance to the 2025 Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture Summer Residential program! Personnel from your local school divisions and the Virginia Department of Education have chosen the best and the brightest students across Virginia to participate in this program. We desire that this program provides your child with a wealth of academic information and opportunities for personal growth. We understand that you are entrusting your child to our care during the program, and we at the Governor's School take this responsibility seriously. We want to provide a safe, supportive environment for your child to explore new ideas, problem-solve, and think critically in the classroom and through activities. We also want to give your child the opportunity to interact with students from diverse backgrounds and experience living in a college environment. We look forward to seeing your child grow through the Governor's School program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brett Milliken", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Brett Milliken

Director, Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture

## **LAND AND LABOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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Virginia Tech acknowledges that we live and work on the Tutelo/Monacan People's homeland and we recognize their continued relationships with their lands and waterways. We further acknowledge that legislation and practices like the Morrill Act (1862) enabled the commonwealth of Virginia to finance and found Virginia Tech through the forced removal of Native Nations from their lands, both locally and in western territories.

We understand that honoring Native Peoples without explicit material commitments falls short of our institutional responsibilities. Through sustained, transparent, and meaningful engagement with the Tutelo/Monacan Peoples, and other Native Nations, we commit to changing the trajectory of Virginia Tech's history by increasing Indigenous student, staff, and faculty recruitment and retention, diversifying course offerings, and meeting the growing needs of all Virginia tribes and supporting their sovereignty.

We must also recognize that enslaved Black people generated revenue and resources used to establish Virginia Tech and were prohibited from attending until 1953. Through InclusiveVT, the institutional and individual commitment to Ut Prosim (that I may serve) in the spirit of community, diversity, and excellence, we commit to advancing a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

## **VIRGINIA TECH PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY**

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**All VGSA participants are to adhere to Virginia Tech's Principles of Community in all aspects of the program.**

Virginia Tech is a public land-grant university, committed to teaching and learning, research, and outreach to the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world community.

Learning from the experiences that shape Virginia Tech as an institution, we acknowledge those aspects of our legacy that reflected bias and exclusion. Therefore, we adopt and practice the following principles as fundamental to our on-going efforts to increase access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all of its members:

- We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.
- We affirm the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely. We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.
- We affirm the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and the University. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.
- We reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others.
- We pledge our collective commitment to these principles in the spirit of the Virginia Tech motto of *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve).

## MISSION OF THE VIRGINIA GOVERNOR’S SCHOOL FOR AGRICULTURE

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**The mission of the Virginia Governor’s School for Agriculture at Virginia Tech** is to develop future leaders and scientists for careers in agriculture. Concentration is placed on the integration of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, using the [Agriculture and Food Research Initiative \(AFRI\) Foundational and Applied Science Program](#) as the framework for coursework and experiences.

The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Foundational and Applied Science Program focuses on building a foundation of fundamental and applied knowledge in food and agricultural sciences critical for solving current and future societal challenges.

### **Priority Areas**

The AFRI Foundational and Applied Science Program supports grants in six priority areas:

- Plant health and production and plant products
- Animal health and production and animal products
- Food safety, nutrition, and health
- Bioenergy, natural resources, and environment
- Agriculture systems and technology
- Agriculture economics and rural communities

The Virginia Governor’s School for Agriculture also strives to demonstrate and help students connect the five USDA-NIFA initiatives with the [17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). This is done to build an understanding of global issues related to food, fiber, fuel, and shelter, how those issues impact people and communities, and the role agriculture plays in providing solutions to complex problems.

This mission will be accomplished through rigorous scientifically-informed courses and experiential-based activities such as academic research, lab work, and field trips.

## **GOALS OF THE VIRGINIA GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL FOR AGRICULTURE**

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Goals of the VGSA at Virginia Tech are to:

1. Provide a rigorous agricultural educational program that will challenge gifted and talented students to study and research the scientific nature of agriculture as it relates to and affects the Virginia and global agriculture industry;
2. Provide structured educational discourse designed to increase the students' ability to critically think and solve problems associated with providing safe, economical, and environmentally sustainable food, fiber, fuel, and shelter to the world's population.
3. Acquaint rising junior and senior students with scientific education and career opportunities available in agricultural economics, agricultural leadership, animal science, biological systems engineering, food and nutrition science, plant science, and veterinary medicine;
4. Promote an atmosphere of inquiry and dialogue while learning to embrace a diversity of cultures, thoughts, ideas, and perspectives as a way to develop culturally competent and effective communicators.



## **VIRGINIA GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL FOR AGRICULTURE CRITICAL DATES\***

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### **SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 2025 – CHECK-IN: 9:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.**

Students should arrive Saturday, June 28, between 9 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. for check-in to the program and Harper Hall, the residence hall for VGSA. Parking will be available in lots located around Litton-Reaves and Engel Halls. You can park anywhere on campus after 10 p.m. weekdays and anytime on the weekend. The student must be moved into the dormitory by 2:00 p.m. Students will be able to eat lunch in the dining hall today if they choose. Parents, guardians, and family are welcome to eat in the dining hall as well but must purchase their meal. You are also free to eat off campus or pick up any last-minute items from local shopping centers.

### **SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 2025 – OPENING CEREMONY: TIME 2:30 P.M.**

All students and parents must attend the Opening Ceremony, which will be held in Litton-Reaves Hall Auditorium (1670), Saturday, June 28 at 2:30 p.m. At the conclusion of the Opening Ceremony, parents and family will be asked to leave and students will remain in the auditorium with VGSA staff.

### **SATURDAY, JULY 19, 2025– CHECK-OUT: 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

Students must check out of the dorms on Saturday, July 19. All trash and personal items must be removed prior to checkout. Student rooms must be inspected and approved by a VGSA staff member before they may leave. Students will be able to eat lunch in the dining hall today if they choose. Parents, guardians, and family are welcome to eat in the dining hall as well but must purchase their meal. More details will be provided at a future time.

### **SATURDAY, JULY 19, 2025 – GLOBAL SEMINAR SYMPOSIUM: 1:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.**

This event is a presentation of VGSA projects exemplifying the result of the learning experience and effort put forth by students for the duration of the three weeks. The event will take place on Saturday, July 19, with the time and location to be determined at a future date. The approximate time for the students' group presentation will be set during the first week of the program and will be distributed to parents via email. Parents, guardians, teachers, and guests are invited to attend this session to support the students in presenting their final product.

Parking is available for visitors and will not require a parking pass because the event takes place on the weekend. However, VGSA will not be responsible for parking tickets received. Additional instructions for the Global Seminar will be provided at a future time.

### **SATURDAY, JULY 19, 2025– CLOSING CEREMONY: 3:30 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.**

Parents, teachers, and all other supporters are encouraged to attend the closing ceremony. Students must be at the designated location at a time, both to be provided at a future date. All students must be present for the closing ceremony. After the closing ceremony, students may only be picked up by an adult aged

21 or older. This person's name must be on the Emergency Information, Releases, & Health History form on file, and they must show valid government-issued ID when picking the student up.

*\*Please note that times, locations, and other details may change as we get closer to the beginning of Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture. All changes and final details will be communicated to both the participants and their parents/guardians.*

## **CAMPUS LOGISTICS**

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### **VISITING CAMPUS**

No visitors are allowed for the duration of the program. This rule is in place to help the school achieve a cohesive, self-contained environment in which students can study and come to know one another with minimum external distractions. This extends to parents or other family members or friends checking students out. The only exception to this policy will be in cases of emergency.

### **PARKING ON CAMPUS**

Parking passes are required during the weekday before 10:00 p.m., but not after 10:00 p.m. or on weekends. Friends and family may obtain parking passes through Parking Services located at 505 Beamer Way, online (<https://parking.vt.edu/parking/parkmobile.html>), or the ParkMobile app. There is a \$8 fee for the parking passes. Please consult the Parking Services website for more info: <https://parking.vt.edu/parking/visitors.html>. Parking is free on campus during the weekend.

Please adhere to all posted parking guidelines, as VGSA will not be responsible for parking tickets, vehicles being towed, or other outcomes due to not following parking guidelines.

### **MAP**

A Virginia Tech campus map can be found [HERE](#). Litton-Reaves Hall is building #118 in grid between grid G-6 and G-7.

### **MAILING ADDRESS OF STUDENTS**

Friends and family may want to contact students through the mail while they are residents of the school. Please be aware Virginia Tech's Campus Mail adds 1-2 days to all letters and packages since items must go through a central sorting service on campus before being delivered to Litton Reaves Hall. FedEx and UPS will also deliver to the same address. Keep in mind, if the USPS isn't delivering because of a holiday, then neither will Virginia Tech

Campus Mail. Virginia Tech Campus mail also does not deliver on weekends. Additionally, please do not send any packages or letters after July 14, 2025. VGSA cannot be responsible for lost packages or mail once the program is completed.

Below is the address that can be used to contact students. Failure to use this address as written will result in delayed or lost mail.

Students' Name  
C/O Governor's School  
214 Litton Reaves Hall (0343)  
175 W. Campus Drive  
Blacksburg, VA 24061

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## **VIRINGIA GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL FOR AGRICULTURE CURRICULUM**

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The Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture curriculum is designed to develop an appreciation of the broad nature of agriculture and natural resource systems on a global level. Students will experience instruction and activities that provide exposure and insight into the real-world challenges involved in feeding, clothing, and housing the world's population of over 8 billion people.

Students will be involved in a series of courses, career awareness activities, seminars, extracurricular activities, and a group project called Global Seminar. The courses consist of core classes, elective classes, and courses in a major assigned to each student. Courses include both classroom instruction and experiential activities that take place in the lab and in the field.

### **CURRICULUM FOUNDATIONS**

The curriculum for the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture is informed by the [United States Department of Agriculture - Agriculture and Food Research Initiative](#) (USDA-AFRI) priority areas which include:

- Plant health and production and plant products
- Animal health and production and animal products
- Food safety, nutrition, and health
- Bioenergy, natural resources, and environment
- Agriculture systems and technology
- Agriculture economics and rural communities

In addition to the USDA-AFRI priority areas, the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture integrates these initiatives with the [17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). This is done to build an understanding of global issues related to food, fiber, fuel, and shelter, how those issues impact people and communities, and the role agriculture plays in providing solutions to complex problems.

## INSTRUCTORS

Students are taught by internationally known faculty, scientists, researchers, and graduate students from Virginia Tech who are experts in their field of study. Students will potentially interact with approximately 30-40 different faculty, scientists, researchers, and graduate students throughout their time at the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture while engaging in a variety of classroom discussions, field experiences, and research projects.

## CURRICULUM FORMAT

All students will have the opportunity to participate in **Exploration Courses** during the first week of the program. The purpose of these courses is to provide all students with a basic understanding of the complexity and the interdisciplinary nature of agriculture and begin to build connections to science, technology, engineering, mathematics, economics, and natural resources.

During the second and third weeks of the program, students will enroll in **Immersion Courses**. The purpose of these courses is to guide students deeper into more specific topics, issues, and ideas within agriculture. These courses will be taught in groups of approximately 15-18 students and may have lab work, field experiences, or other applied learning opportunities associated with them. Enrollment in these courses will open after the first week of the program.

## GLOBAL SEMINAR

On the first day of the program students will be divided into research teams of 4-5 students to undertake a research-based project situated around the five USDA-AFRI priority areas. Topics will be assigned to groups based on the priority areas. The research-based project will include a written paper, a research poster, and a research conference-style presentation. The project serves as the conceptual centerpiece for the school curriculum and provides the basis for a formal symposium and poster session that serves as the academic culmination of the program. Students will participate in a variety of classes and workshops led by Virginia Tech research librarians and other graduate students to help them actively engage with the project and prepare for the Global Seminar Symposium.

## **GLOBAL SEMINAR SYMPOSIUM**

At the conclusion of the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture, a symposium will be held to showcase the student groups' projects. There will be a general poster session, as well as several concurrent sessions featuring student groups' presentations of their research. Parents/guardians are invited to attend, and students are encouraged to invite a high school teacher who has impacted them to campus to be guests at the symposium.

## **COURSE GUIDE**

The courses, field excursions, and other applied or experiential learning opportunities for the 2025 Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture are not fully confirmed. A course guide will be uploaded to the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture Canvas site.

# **VIRGINIA GOVERNOR’S SCHOOL FOR AGRICULTURE FACULTY AND STAFF**

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A broad and diverse group of Virginia Tech faculty and staff are involved in the planning and delivery of the Virginia Governor’s School for Agriculture. During the Virginia Governor’s School for Agriculture, the students will have the opportunity to interact with many of these individuals. Below is a description of several of the people you will meet, as well as their roles with the Governor’s School.

## **DIRECTOR**

Dr. Brett Milliken serves as the administrator of the Governor’s School for Agriculture. All issues affecting the quality of the program, personnel, instructional faculty, and students’ well-being should be brought to the attention of the Director.

## **ON-SITE DIRECTOR**

The On-site Director, Maggie Morris, is a fourth-year veteran of VGSA and is in her third year in the role of the On-Site Director. She is available to students and lives in the dormitory throughout VGSA. The role of the On-site Director is to guide day-to-day issues, such as supervising staff, transportation, and ensuring the program runs smoothly.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL FACULTY**

Students will often interact with the faculty members or graduate students who are teaching courses for the program. The faculty members and graduate students are from Virginia Tech and the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. These faculty members and graduate students are selected for their participation in the school based on their research and academic specialty, as well as a history of positive teaching evaluations.

## **GOVERNOR’S SCHOOL LEADERS**

Governor’s School Leaders (GSLs) are assigned to work with students throughout their time at the Virginia Governor’s School for Agriculture. These leaders are typically undergraduates or graduate students with expertise in a particular major. They team up in groups of two or more to provide instruction, mentorship, and assistance. They will attend the courses with the students, as well as accompany them on field trips and activities. Leaders are selected to participate in the school because of their academic ability, enthusiasm, and leadership. Many are former Governor’s School participants or GSLs.

## HOUSING INFORMATION

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The Harper Hall is located on the main Blacksburg campus of Virginia Tech and is the assigned residence hall for VGSA 2025. Harper Hall is a modern, air-conditioned, suite-style dormitory, with either two or three room-suites sharing a common living room and bathroom. Each suite's living room is generally furnished with a coffee table, sofa, side chair, and rocker. In addition, residence halls generally feature study lounges, a family/recreation room, and a kitchen. Each room in a suite will house two students of the same gender. Females and males will live in the same dormitory; however, they will be placed in separate areas of the building and supervised by the Governor's School staff. At no time is it permitted to be in the living area or dorm room of the opposite sex.

In the rooms, each student will have the following:

- Twin Bed (Extra Long)
- Mattress
- Closet (share with roommate)
- Bureau/Dresser
- Chair, desk, and bookcase
- T-100 Ethernet connection and electrical outlets
- Shower curtains
- Microwave
- Mini refrigerator

Coin-operated laundry facilities are conveniently located in the residence halls and the cost is approximately \$2.75 to wash and \$2.50 to dry. Students are expected to do their laundry and will need to bring quarters and laundry supplies (e.g., detergent, fabric softener, laundry basket). The laundry facilities do not take cards or cash, only quarters. **Be sure to have enough quarters to do laundry for the entire duration of the program.** Students are advised to bring a drying rack if they prefer not to dry their clothes in a dryer. Please keep in mind that laundry facilities are shared with other Governor's School students and other summer program participants, and prompt removal of clothing from machines is the student's responsibility.

Two keys will be issued at registration. One key is for the student's suite, and the other key is for the student's individual room. Students are responsible for keeping track of keys throughout their time at the school. These two keys will also gain students access to the

residence hall and will be used as their meal card in the dining hall. **Students will be charged a \$35 fee for each lost or stolen key before they can be checked out of the program.** Students are responsible for respecting the property of Virginia Tech and will be charged for damaged or stolen property.

## TELEPHONE ACCESS

Students will not have access to telephones in their dorm rooms. VGSA will be adhering to the Virginia Department of Education cell phone policies as enforced at their high schools. Students should bring cell phones with them, but they may not be used during class or other scheduled activities. Abuse of cell phones during class or other scheduled activities will result in the temporary confiscation of the cell phone.

## SECURITY

Virginia Tech police have general responsibility for residence hall security and make routine, unscheduled visits around and throughout the public portion of all residence halls. To reduce the chance of theft within the residence halls, students need to keep their doors locked to protect their valuables. Objects susceptible to theft include laptops, tablets, or other easily portable or expensive items. The Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

The campus of Virginia Tech is very safe and there is regular Virginia Tech police presence around the clock. However, please keep in mind that Virginia Tech is not a closed campus, and members of the community and other summer programs have access to the campus. Students should remain alert, follow rules, and report any questionable situations to program staff.

## COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to bring a laptop computer to the Governor's School to complete assignments requiring basic word processing, spreadsheet calculations, and online research. Providing a laptop is the responsibility of the student, and VGSA does not provide access to laptops or other electronic devices. If students are bringing their school-issued laptop, they may need to work with their school to make sure they can accept and send emails, and access websites typically used for research. Also, please note the following:

- There is Wi-Fi across campus, including in dorm rooms, classrooms, the library, and most outdoor spaces.
- Virginia Tech IT may not, under any circumstances, troubleshoot or assist students with any personal computer or software-related issues. Please make sure that students are



familiar with the technology that they bring to campus and have a plan in place for dealing with technical issues.

## LIBRARY

The Newman Library is located on the Virginia Tech campus and has many resources that may be helpful to students during their stay.

Newman Library hours:

- Monday – Thursday, 7:30 am – 8:00 pm
- Friday, 7:30 am – 6:00 pm
- Saturday, 9:00 am – 6:00 pm
- Sunday, 9:00 am – 8:00 pm
- Closed July 4, 2024

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## LIST OF ITEMS FOR STUDENTS TO BRING

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Students are **REQUIRED** to bring the following items:

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|--|--|
| • Laptop   | during outdoor field experiences   |
| • Toiletries and personal hygiene items                                  | • Pens, pencils, and notebooks   |
| • Toilet paper   | • Insect repellent   |
| • Towels and washcloths  | • Sunscreen  |
| • About \$25 <b>in quarters</b> for washing and drying clothes           | • Sunglasses   |
| • Laundry detergent  | • Hat  |
| • Rain gear/poncho/umbrella  | • Closed-toe shoes for barns and wading through wet locations                        |
| • Sweatshirt or jacket   | • Money for leisure spending (more information provided below)                       |
| • Footwear suitable for hiking   | • Snacks   |
| • A digital camera or a cell phone that can take photos                  | • Prescription or over-the-counter medications, enough for the entire program length |
| • Old clothing, including long pants and long-sleeved shirts, to be worn |  |

- Twin-sized, extra-long sheets and pillowcase, pillows, and blankets
- Trash can with trash bags
- Box fan or personal fan
- Swimsuit (no string bikinis)

## LIST OF SUGGESTED ITEMS TO BRING

Students may **want** to bring the following items:

- Room decorations and poster putty
- Stationery and stamps
- Snacks and drinks
- Portable iron and ironing board
- Clothes hangers
- Speakers for music
- First aid supplies
- Personal sports equipment
- Musical instruments
- Hats for sun protection
- Extra pillow
- Recreational games
- Dishware
- Tissues and paper towels
- Cleaning supplies
- Small lamp
- Snacks
- Books, activities, and games
- Bathroom mats
- Appropriate board/card games

## LIST OF PROHIBITED ITEMS

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Students are **PROHIBITED** from bringing or possessing the following items:

- Vehicles
- Bicycles, unicycles, scooters
- Rollerblades or skates
- Skateboards/longboards
- Vapes, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, chewing tobacco, marijuana, etc.
- Other wheeled recreational devices
- Televisions
- Large stereos or stereo equipment
- Walkie-talkies or two-way radios
- Fireworks
- Utility/pocketknives, weapons
- Illegal substances

## VEHICLES

Students are NOT permitted to have a vehicle on campus for any part of the Governor's School. This extends to roller skates, rollerblades, bikes, scooters, and skateboards.

## ACTIVITY FEE AND SPENDING MONEY

The Virginia Department of Education and participating schools pay for all the educational and room and board expenses associated with the Governor's School. Consistent with Virginia Board of Education regulations that govern student activity fees there will be a non-refundable \$300 fee per student. Based on financial needs, students may make a request to the program Director for relief or reduction of the activity fee on a case-by-case basis.

Students will have the opportunity to participate in activities, such as bowling, going to the movies, and hiking. Previous VGSA students have found that bringing between \$150 to \$200 is sufficient to cover expenses such as snacks, drinks, souvenirs, etc. There are many ATMs on campus for use with debit and credit cards.

## DINING FACILITIES

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The dining hall offers a variety of food choices in an all-you-can-eat cafeteria venue. The program staff will be provided with meals at the same facilities as the students. Vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, kosher, and halal dishes are available daily and are clearly labeled. If students have any additional dining accommodations, a written request can be submitted to the dining hall with the help of program staff.

Meal cards will be issued to students that will allow them to gain access to the dining hall. Students are responsible for keeping track of their meal cards. **Lost or stolen meal cards will result in a \$50 charge for replacement.** The dining hall is open for scheduled hours each day to serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Dining facility hours of operation are:

- Breakfast: 7:00 am – 9:30 am
- Lunch: 11:00 am – 1:30 pm
- Dinner: 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm

Students will be allowed to gain access to the dining hall only once for each of the mealtimes each day. The dining hall stops serving meals 30 minutes before closing. Dining hall hours of

operation may change and scheduled program activities will dictate the time in which students may eat meals.

If a student is ill and cannot eat in the dining hall, they will need to work with a staff member to get a to-go order from the dining hall.

## **ATTENDANCE**

To receive a certification of completion from the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture (VGSA) at Virginia Tech, students must be in residence from the program's opening ceremony through the closing ceremony. Participants are expected to attend all activities set forth by the VGSA at Virginia Tech. These activities include but are not limited to scheduled classes, meetings, and field trips. Participants are not allowed to leave the VGSA unless special permission is obtained from the VGSA On-site Director and VGSA Director. Special permission is granted in cases of emergency only. These guidelines are in place to ensure the participants are safe and receive the maximum number of benefits that the school has to offer.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

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Being a student enrolled in the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture is a privilege. Students are nominated to become part of the school, and, as such, they represent not only the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture but also their schools, their parents/guardians, and themselves at all times. Students and parents are responsible for reading this handbook in its entirety before the start of the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture.

Compliance with the following rules is mandatory for all VGSA participants:

1. Obey local, state, and federal laws. Abide by any special rules for a VGSA event or activity.
2. Speak and act in a responsible, courteous, and respectful way. Harassment, gossiping, threats, or bullying of any type is prohibited.
3. Act responsibly to maintain a safe environment for all participants. Acting in a manner that could endanger the health, safety, or welfare of yourself or others is prohibited. Report threats to the well-being of any participant immediately to the adult in charge.
4. Possession or use of tobacco, marijuana products, e-cigarettes, vapes, alcohol, or illegal drugs is prohibited.
5. Possession or use of weapons or other dangerous objects is prohibited, except when

required as part of an approved educational program. Weapons are defined to include, but are not limited to, guns, knives, and incendiary or explosive devices of any kind.

6. Respect all property, facilities, equipment, and vehicles. Students are responsible for any damage or other consequences resulting from their behavior.
7. Participate fully in VGSA functions. Be in the assigned program areas (e.g., dorms, classrooms, common areas) on time. If you are unable to attend or participate due to illness, you must tell the adult in charge. Help others have a pleasant experience by making every attempt to include all participants in activities.
8. Dress appropriately for each VGSA function as communicated by program staff.
9. Name tag must be visible and always worn properly unless otherwise specified by VGSA staff.
10. Use of any mobile electronic device during a scheduled VGSA activity (e.g., class, field trip, guest speaker) is prohibited unless activity-specific rules otherwise allow. When permitted, they should be used only in a manner that is consistent with the approved activity and not discourteous or disruptive.
11. The belongings of participants, including but not limited to bags, purses, computers, other electronic devices, and dorm rooms are subject to search and seizure by VGSA faculty/staff upon reasonable suspicion that a prohibited and/or illegally possessed substance or object is contained within that area.
12. Students are never permitted to be in the living area or dorm rooms of the opposite sex.
13. Students are required to walk in groups of two or more at all times.
14. Students must be on VGSA-designated floors in the residence hall by the scheduled time every night unless otherwise stated by VGSA staff.
15. Students will be in their suite by 10:00 p.m. each night and will remain in their suites from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. (unless there is an emergency or medical need).
16. No visitors, including those from other Virginia Tech programs, are permitted in the residence hall or suites at any time other than moving in or out unless granted permission by the On-site Director or the VGSA Director.
17. Students must comply with residence hall rules, as set forth by the VGSA and Virginia Tech officials.
18. Room and suite doors shall be locked when vacant.
19. Students are not allowed in VGSA staff dorm rooms or the dorm rooms of other Virginia Tech programs' participants.

20. Quiet hours will be observed each night. No loud music or other loud noise should be created during these hours. Quiet hours are as follows:
  - Sunday – Thursday, 7:00 p.m. – 10:00 a.m.
  - Friday – Saturday, 11:00 p.m. – 11:00 a.m.
21. Students may not have any guests.
22. Students may not play ball games or throw Frisbees or other objects in the residence hall. Likewise, elevators in any building will be used for their intended purpose.
23. Pets are not permitted in the residence hall.
24. Students must keep rooms and suites clean for the duration of the school.
25. Students must clean rooms and suites before check-out; rooms must be approved by a VGSA staff member before they can check out.
26. Suites will be assigned nightly to clean the common areas. Access to common areas (study rooms, recreation rooms) is a privilege and will be revoked if not treated with respect.

The following occurrences will result in immediate expulsion from the school:

1. Use or possession of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, vaping products, marijuana/cannabis products, or illegal substances of any type.
2. Being in a living area, dorm room, or other closed room alone with a member of the opposite sex without special permission from VGSA staff.
3. Leaving the VGSA-designated areas without special permission from VGSA staff.
4. Possessing or using a weapon of any kind.
5. Committing any act of violence towards oneself or others.
6. Intentionally damaging or stealing the property of Virginia Tech, the VGSA, or another individual.
7. Leaving the residence hall after curfew without permission from the VGSA.
8. Exhibiting potentially harmful behavior to yourself or others, including animals or animal specimens.
9. Bringing a vehicle to campus, riding in a vehicle while not accompanied by parent/guardian, or riding in a vehicle not approved by GSA staff/faculty.
10. Disrespecting faculty, staff, presenters, other students, university employees, or others on campus.

11. Inappropriate social media use, including but not limited to bullying, harassment, impersonation, and intimidation.

## **STUDENT IDENTIFICATION**

Each student will receive a name badge at registration. The Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture student badge must be worn properly at all times. It is required for entrance into the dining hall and all activities. It also allows the faculty and staff to accurately identify the students since the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture is not the only group that visits our campus during the summer. Failure to do so, or a demonstrated unwillingness to do so, will be considered a violation of the rules and result in disciplinary action.

## **TITLE IX VIOLATIONS**

Title IX The Governor's School takes seriously all reports of sexual misconduct. All Governor's School employees in receipt of a complaint or report of discrimination, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct must report it to the Title IX Coordinator without delay. To learn more about Virginia Tech's Title IX policies and procedures please review the information on the [Office of Equity and Accessibility](#) page.

Please note that we take all reports of sexual discrimination, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct seriously. Rumors and gossip that are discussed with or overheard by program staff, even mentioned in jest or joking, will be quickly investigated and responded to with appropriate action.

## **VIOLATION OF RULES**

For minor rule violations, the following steps will be taken:

- 1<sup>st</sup> offense: conference with student and Governor School Leader (GSL) and On-site Director
- 2<sup>nd</sup> offense: conference with the student, GSL, On-site Director, and VGSA Director
- 3<sup>rd</sup> offense: conference call with student, GSL, On-site Director, VGSA Director, and student's parent/guardian
- 4<sup>th</sup> offense: expulsion from school

**Note:** In case of severe violations of the code of conduct, Title IX, or the Virginia Tech Principles of Community, some steps may be omitted and lead directly to expulsion from VGSA.

## **DRESS CODE**

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Students are expected to dress appropriately for the learning environment and to respect the diverse community at Virginia Tech. Students' dress during their enrollment in the school should meet the following guidelines:

The student dress code includes three primary categories: Casual, Business Casual, and Professional, depending on the type of event or activity.

### **CASUAL DRESS**

Most of the program takes place in casual attire. This includes classes, field trips, and time spent in and around the dorms. Below are some general guidelines for casual dress:

#### **Guidelines for All Students (Casual):**

- Pants: Nice jeans or khakis; shorts that are not too short.
- Tops: T-shirts and other casual tops.
- Shoes: Tennis shoes, sandals, boots, and flip-flops are acceptable.
- Note: Closed-toe shoes are required for all labs and some field trip activities.

Please keep in mind that while casual dress is appropriate for the majority of the program, both students and staff will be interacting with a variety of VT faculty and staff, industry professionals, government officials, and other program stakeholders, so a certain level of professionalism—especially from staff—in their dress and attire is expected.

### **BUSINESS CASUAL DRESS**

Certain formal events require business casual attire, such as the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Forestry presentation or the College and Majors Fair. Below are some general guidelines for business casual dress:

#### **Girls:**

- Dress pants or khakis; skirts should be knee-length and not tight or revealing.
- Dress blouse or sweater (no hoodies); optional blazer.
- Heels or flats are acceptable; avoid open-toed shoes and sandals.

#### **Guys:**

- Khakis or solid-colored slacks.
- Collared shirts (button-up or polo); tie and jacket are optional.
- Leather dress shoes such as loafers or oxfords.



## **PROFESSIONAL DRESS**

Professional dress is required for the closing ceremony, symposium, and some evening events. Below are some general guidelines for professional dress:

### **Girls:**

- Full suits or dress pants and blouse.
- Knee-length skirts that are not tight or revealing.
- Closed-toe shoes; basic heels are acceptable (no stilettos or platforms).

### **Guys:**

- Suits are preferred; a sport coat or blazer with dress pants is acceptable.
- Button-up shirt with a collar and a tie (required).
- Leather dress shoes.

## **ADDITIONAL DRESS GUIDELINES**

Students understand and follow these additional expectations:

- During outdoor activities, appropriate casual wear includes shorts, long pants, comfortable shirts, and shoes suitable for hiking or muddy conditions.
- Closed-toe shoes and long pants may be required for specific labs or field activities.
- Students must wear name tags at all times unless otherwise directed. Tags must be clearly visible and worn above the waist.

## **UNACCEPTABLE ATTIRE**

The following items are not permitted and should not be brought to or worn during the program. This extends to the public spaces in the residence halls. When in doubt, ask a staff member or consider what would be unacceptable at your high school:

- Clothing with vulgar, discriminatory, or obscene language or images.
- Items that promote illegal or violent behavior (e.g., drugs, weapons, alcohol, tobacco).
- Clothing with messages, slogans, images, or other writing that are political in nature.
- Clothing that reveals cleavage, the midriff, or undergarments.
- Sagging or low-cut pants, tube tops, spaghetti straps, halter tops, backless or see-through clothing.
- Pajamas or overly casual attire during instructional times, field trips, or planned activities.
- Swimwear is only allowed for water-related recreation. Acceptable styles include:

one- or two-piece swimsuits and board/trunk style shorts (no string bikinis).

- Trunk-style swimsuits for male participants.
- Male participants should wear a shirt while in public spaces.
- People should wear appropriate clothing at all times, in all spaces.

## **CULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

As a part of a diverse community at Virginia Tech, students are asked to avoid clothing and accessories that could be considered controversial or offensive; this applies to staff and students alike. Staff will respectfully guide students in making appropriate wardrobe choices and may direct a student to change if attire is deemed inappropriate for an activity.

## **ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR DRESS CODE**

During class, field trips, and recreation students can wear long or short sleeve shirts, long pants, shorts, comfortable shoes, and footwear suitable for hiking. Closed-toe shoes and long pants may be required for some activities. Old clothes and shoes that can get wet and muddy may also be necessary.

Name tags will be provided and must be always worn unless otherwise stated by the VGSA staff. **Name tags will be worn above the waist and clearly visible.**

## MEDICAL PROTOCOL

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Schiffert Health Center, the Virginia Tech health clinic, will be available to non-students or conference guests during summer 2025. Medical needs exceeding the capability of the Schiffert Health Center or other urgent care providers in the area will be referred to the Montgomery Regional Medical Hospital, which is a modern, comprehensive medical facility located less than five miles from campus. If students need to visit Schiffert, an urgent care facility, or a hospital, a staff member will accompany them, but will not accompany them to the exam room. Forms will be provided for parents/guardians to sign to allow their child to obtain emergency treatment until the parents/guardians are contacted.

The Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture carries an accident and sickness insurance policy that may cover a small amount of the initial cost of any medical event that occurs with the students during the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture. If the cost of treatment exceeds the maximum coverage, the parent/guardian will be billed directly and will be responsible for the remainder. Pre-existing conditions are not covered under the Governor's School's policy. Parents and guardians must disclose all medical information for the safety of their child.

Many insurance providers require a referral to authorize payment for medical care. If the parents/guardians' insurance provider requires a referral, they will need to make the necessary arrangements with their primary care physician. Some medical expenses and medications are not covered by insurance (e.g., co-payments for a physician's visit, replacing eyeglasses/contacts, orthodontic repair, prescriptions). Parents/Guardians should discuss how to cover these unpredictable expenses with their child.

**Please keep in mind that in case of an emergency, DO NOT text any of the program phone numbers provided in this document.**

## **MEDICATION POLICY**

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Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture adheres to the medication policy set forth by the Virginia Tech Office of Youth Protection. Youth participating in a Virginia Tech-sponsored program will not be allowed to keep ANY medicines with them. The only exceptions to this policy are when students have a documented medical need for an inhaler, EpiPen, or diabetes-related items.

All medications (except those mentioned above) must be submitted at check-in and must be in the original container with the student's name printed on the bottle. Over-the-counter medications submitted at check-in must match the medication form submitted with registration. Lose medications in zip-lock bags, other bottles, bottles printed with someone else's name, or any other type of container besides the original will not be accepted. The actual dosage listed on the bottle must be followed unless there is a written note from the prescribing doctor outlining different indications.

Parents may use the Over-the-Counter Medication Permissions form to identify which over-the-counter medications staff may occasionally provide students from the program first aid and medical supplies in non-emergency situations.

There will be no exceptions to the medication policies. If students are found in possession of medications, they may be subject to dismissal from the program.

## **SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS**

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The Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture intends to create an inclusive and welcoming community for all students. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for any student with special needs or circumstances. The Emergency Information, Releases & Health History form has a section for parents/guardians to complete detailing any special needs of their child. Included on the form is room for any details about special dietary needs as well. Parents and students can also review the [D2 website](#). Although the menu options rotate throughout the year, Virginia Tech and D2 make an effort to communicate food options for those with allergies or other dietary restrictions. All students with allergies and other dietary restrictions/needs need to be able to self-manage these needs.

## WORSHIP SERVICES

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Students at the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture are given the opportunity to practice their faith through student-led or virtual services of their choice. No official religious services are provided on campus. The Commonwealth of Virginia regulations prohibit the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture from using state vehicles to transport students to and from religious services. Therefore, no travel off-campus is permitted for religious services. A list of local religious congregations that provide virtual services is listed below. Please speak with a GSL if a private or quiet space is required for prayer or worship.

Blacksburg Baptist Church	540-552-3869
Blacksburg Presbyterian Church	540-552-2504
Blacksburg United Methodist Church	540-552-5424
Christ Episcopal Church	540-980-2413
First Baptist Church	540-552-6393
Luther Memorial Lutheran Church	540-951-1000
The Dwelling Place Christian Fellowship	540-381-5500
The River Anglican Church	540-381-4674

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## RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

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A wide range of recreational facilities are available on the Virginia Tech campus. Some of these facilities are free while others have an entrance fee that is not covered by the VGSA. Some of these facilities also have an age requirement. Below are listed the facilities that are available to students enrolled in the Governor's School.

Squires Student Center:

- Bowling
- Pool/billiards
- Video games
- Music practice room

Outdoor Facilities:

- Tennis courts
- Cross country course
- Volleyball courts
- Basketball courts
- Golf course
- Frisbee golf

**Note:** The VGSA cannot guarantee that facilities will be in operation for the duration of the program. Students who wish to participate in these activities must bring their own equipment, and students are solely responsible for safely storing such equipment. There are no equipment rental options available.

## ATHLETIC FACILITIES

VGSA students DO NOT have access to other recreational facilities, including War Memorial Gym, McComas Gym, or Rec Sports Field House. **This is a Virginia Tech policy, not a Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture policy.** Additionally, no students participating in VGSA will be permitted to meet with, alone or otherwise, student-athletes, coaching staff, mentors, or others connected with Virginia Tech athletics or Virginia Tech-sponsored athletic camps. **No exceptions will be granted to any student under any circumstances to use a Virginia Tech athletic facility.**

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## IN CLOSING

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The faculty and staff at the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture look forward to meeting and working with you this year. If, after reading through this handbook you still have questions, feel free to contact the Director. Questions can be emailed to [agschool@vt.edu](mailto:agschool@vt.edu), or call the Virginia Governor's School for Agriculture office.