

Williamsburg Institute brings new leadership development opportunities to Williamsburg by connecting the past to the present



Courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Download high-res images [here](#).

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (Oct. 9, 2023) – Over 170 people gathered on Williamsburg’s historic Duke of Gloucester Street on Friday evening, Oct. 6, to witness a robust conversation about navigating political shifts and differing ideologies. While the speakers’ manner of dress betrayed their identities as 18th-century thought leaders Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and the Reverend Gowan Pamphlet, their conversation dealt with subjects that are being debated in society, board rooms and executive offices to this day.

The event marked the official launch of [The Williamsburg Institute](#), the newest collaboration between leaders of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and William & Mary (W&M). The Williamsburg Institute leverages Williamsburg’s educational expertise to provide innovative leadership development opportunities rooted in history. It is helmed by founding visionary and Executive Chair Carly Fiorina and Executive Director Christopher Caracci, who co-hosted Friday evening’s event.

“The Institute will play a crucial role in education and preparing individuals to lead, solve problems, engage with others, and advance society,” said Fiorina. “Now more than ever, particularly as we approach the 250th commemoration of founding as a nation, we need leaders who will create a more effective, engaged, civil, and inclusive society.”

The Institute's offerings will include immersive programming aimed at three groups with distinct needs: high school seniors and college undergraduates seeking leadership skills; business professionals and community leaders navigating the challenges of leadership in a rapidly changing world; and lifelong learners interested in exploring the rich history and principles of American leadership.

"The Williamsburg Institute is a first-of-its-kind and unique learning organization," said Caracci. "With Williamsburg as its context, it will act as a bridge connecting our rich historical leadership heritage to both the present and future, informing the way for more effective leadership and civic engagement."

Fiorina and Caracci bring world-class leadership expertise from government, education and the business sector to this venture. Fiorina was the first woman to lead a Fortune 50 company, serving as Chair and CEO of Hewlett-Packard. She currently serves as the Chair of the Board of Trustees of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation as well as the National Honorary Chair of the Virginia 250 Commission. Caracci is a 32-year veteran of The Walt Disney Company (TWDC), specifically the Disney University (internal training and development division of TWDC) and The Disney Institute (the professional executive education division of TWDC). He is also on the faculty of William & Mary's Raymond A. Mason School of Business and at Cornell University in executive education.

The Williamsburg Institute's board of directors includes Cliff Fleet, president and CEO of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Jeff Trammell, former rector of W&M and former member of the William & Mary Board of Visitors; Peggy Agouris, provost of W&M; and Kendrick Ashton, co-founder and co-chief executive officer of The St. James and member of William & Mary's Board of Visitors.

"Williamsburg provides the ideal location for leadership studies with a focus on what we can apply from the past to the future," said Fleet. "The combination of a city rich in American history and a passionate group of scholars and educators who understand and share that history makes The Williamsburg Institute an invaluable resource for both aspiring and seasoned leaders."

The institute's objective to build a more effective, engaged, civil and inclusive society aligns with both the strategic plan of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and W&M's Vision 2026, Agouris noted.

"Through the Democracy cornerstone of Vision 2026, William & Mary continues to lead essential efforts to practice and promote democratic ideals as the nation prepares for its 250th anniversary," said Agouris. "Critical to the health of any democracy is the need to have a fully engaged, informed citizenry across demographic and political spectrums. Such plurality of voice will be fostered by the opportunities for open dialogue, examination of history and leadership development offered by The Williamsburg Institute."

For more information on The Williamsburg Institute, visit williamsburginstitute.org.

Media contact: The Williamsburg Institute
 Christopher Caracci
 ccaracci@williamsburginstitute.org

About The Williamsburg Institute

The Williamsburg Institute is a collaboration between William & Mary (W&M) and The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (CWF) aimed at educating and preparing individuals for effective leadership in their organizations and communities while promoting active civic engagement. Drawing upon the rich history of Williamsburg, the birthplace of American representative government, the Institute provides learners with immersive programs and conferences focused on a deep understanding of the foundational principles of the nation and their contemporary application; equipping them with the skills and tools necessary for inclusive problem-solving, collaborative and engaged leadership, and robust civic engagement.

About The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Colonial Williamsburg is the world's largest U.S. history museum, dedicated to its mission that the future may learn from the past through its expert and distinctive events, collections, programs, and site interpretation.

About William & Mary

Founded by Royal Charter in 1693, William & Mary is the second-oldest institution of higher learning in the country. The Alma Mater of the Nation is a preeminent university, combining the depth and breadth of a liberal arts and sciences education with the disciplined exploration and innovation of a leading, global research university. A vibrant and inclusive community, William & Mary cultivates creative thinkers, principled leaders and compassionate global citizens equipped for lives of meaning and distinction. As a "Public Ivy," the university convenes great minds and hearts to meet the most pressing needs of our time.

– CWF –

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