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## VIMS Branding & Logo Committee

### *Committee Members*

Mary Fabrizio, Professor and Chair, Fisheries Science; Marjy Friedrichs, Research Professor, Biological Sciences; Lorie Gomez, Associate Director of Advancement; Kirk Havens, Research Professor and Director, Center for Coastal Resources Management; Malina Loeher, PhD student, Aquatic Health Sciences; Dave Malmquist, Director, News & Media Services (chair); and Susan Stein, Media Production Supervisor.

### *Committee Charge*

In an e-mail dated September 22, 2021, Dean & Director Aday convened a Branding & Logo Committee to “initiate a discussion to identify a path forward to create a centralized approach to brands and logos for units and sub-units of VIMS.” The committee was established in response to concerns regarding “unit and sub-unit specific logos that potentially diminish our identity and brand recognition.” During the committee’s first meeting, on October 12, we formalized and further specified this charge by agreeing to “establish an efficient process for equitable, effective, and enforceable ‘sub-branding.’”

### *Nature & Scope of Issue*

The current VIMS logo has been in use for more than a decade, with a few minor, largely imperceptible, revisions. It was the product of a year-long design process funded by the VIMS Foundation, with input from all facets of the VIMS community as guided by input from external stakeholders. Howell Creative Group in Williamsburg worked with us to finalize the logo after many months of *pro bono* help from Altria in Richmond. The current logo aligns with our broader [Style Guide](#), incorporates design elements from a previous logo that had been in use since the mid-1990s (see Figure 1), and is in widespread use. It thus has significant brand equity.<sup>1</sup>

Our logo comprises three main elements (Figure 1): our wordmark or logotype (Virginia Institute of Marine Science), the William & Mary wordmark, and our letterform/logomark (VIMS set in Serpentine font with a stylized internal wave). These elements are separated and accentuated by a vertical and a horizontal line. We specify combined use of all these elements in our official logo “lockup;” however, we sometimes use the letterform/logomark in isolation due to space constraints, as in many of our social media channels (Figure 2).

We have also developed an official sub-brand logo template, with the name of the sub-branded unit immediately below our main-brand logomark, using the same Baskerville font and VIMS Blue color. To date, eight administrative units at VIMS are using this sub-brand logo (Figure 1): the Eastern Shore Laboratory, Marine Advisory Program, Marine Operations, Nunnally Ichthyology Collection, RV *Virginia*, SMS, Scientific Diving Program, and Shellfish Aquaculture Science Initiative. Permission for these sub-brand logos was typically granted by the Director of

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B and Appendix C for a history of logo usage at VIMS.

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Letterform/Logomark

W&M Wordmark



All 3 elements equal logo "lockup"

Wordmark/Logotype

Above - Current VIMS logo in full color

Below - Sub-brands



Figure 1: Existing main-brand and sub-brand logos at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. Those covered by a red "no" symbol will be retired in line with the recommendations of this white paper.

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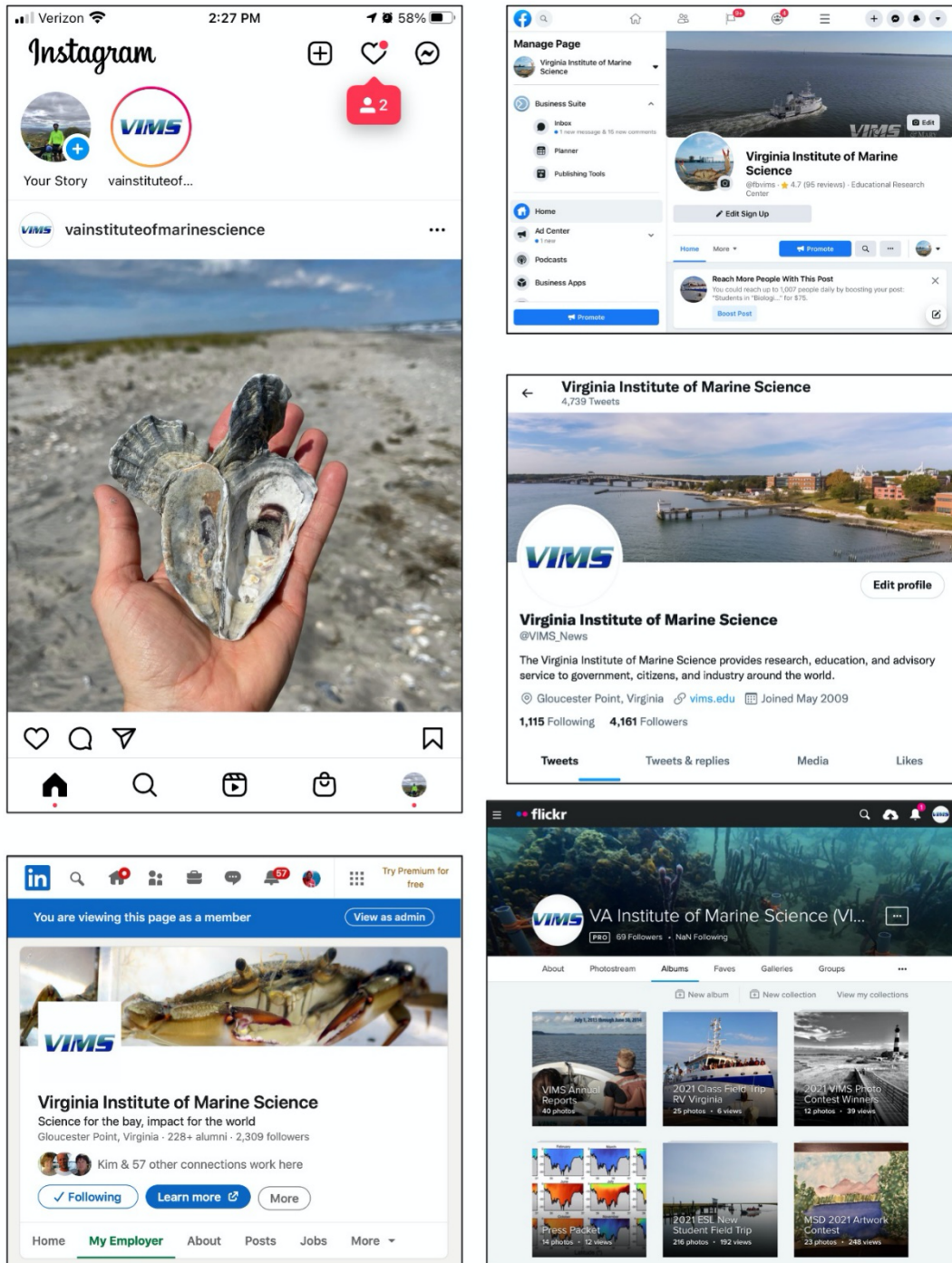


Figure 2: Space constraints in social media necessitate use of the VIMS logomark in isolation.

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Communications (now News & Media Services), based largely on an imprecise assessment of the unit’s perceived “status” and the perseverance of the requesting party.

The VIMS logo is displayed across a wide variety of media, both physical and digital. This includes use on printed materials (e.g., letterhead, envelopes, technical reports, marketing collateral) vehicles, vessels, signage (campus, building, and road), Gift Shop merchandise, and our website.

There are several physical locations (Visitors Center, Andrews Hall, and Greate Road) where a previous version of our logo is still in use. Moreover, directional and building signage on both our Gloucester Point and Eastern Shore campuses are branded with the W&M logo and colors rather than those for VIMS. It should also be noted that a “VIMS” letterform is used by numerous other organizations worldwide (Appendix A). This duplication not only spawns brand confusion but requires effort to prevent spurious results in our media-monitoring efforts. Our main “evil twins” are the Vydehi Institute of Medical Sciences in India and the Cassini spacecraft’s Visual and Infrared Mapping Spectrometer.

There are also multiple extra-brand logos in use by administrative units, programs, and grant-funded projects at VIMS (see Figure 3 for some examples) and by affiliated on-campus entities (see Figure 4 for some examples). Recent efforts to rein in further proliferation of extra-brand logos has been largely successful, with sizable segments of the VIMS community now recognizing the benefits of a unified approach to institutional branding and thus agreeing to retire existing extra-brand logos and to refrain from requesting or creating new ones.



Figure 3 (left) Some extra-brand logos in use at VIMS. These will be retired. Figure 4 (right): Affiliated logos in use at VIMS.

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### **Recommendations**

Five “E”s should guide future logo and branding decisions at VIMS, as defined in our charge to establish an “Efficient process for Equitable, Effective, and Enforceable ‘sub-branding.’” A fifth E, brand Equity, stresses the importance of maintaining the value already earned by our existing brand.

Our specific recommendations are detailed below:

**1. Continue to offer ready access to the official VIMS logo**

Because marketing research shows a strong positive correlation between consistent logo use and brand value,<sup>2</sup> all VIMS units have ready access to the official VIMS logo. We strongly encourage use of this logo—and only this logo—for both official (e.g., scientific talks and posters, technical reports, websites) and informal (e.g., T-shirts) purposes. The logo and associated usage guidelines are available via [the VIMS Style Guide](#).

**2. Transform the Branding & Logo Committee from an *ad hoc* body to a standing body, with responsibility for deciding all future branding and logo queries**

We recommend the current *ad hoc* Branding & Logo committee continue to serve, henceforth as a standing committee, with its focus shifting to case-by-case determinations of future sub-branding proposals by majority vote, monitoring the use of current and future (sub-brand) logos, and authority to issue “cease and desist” orders for unapproved uses. Transfer of logo decisions to a committee will help mitigate the current power imbalance wherein staffers are responsible for making and enforcing decisions on logos requested by senior personnel. The Strategic Director of Marketing and Communications will be responsible for appointing new members as needed to maintain a 7-person committee with representatives from across the VIMS community.

**3. Use a decision tree to determine future logo and branding decisions**

Currently, the process and criteria for determining whether a VIMS unit does or does not warrant a sub-brand logo are poorly defined. We recommend adopting a decision tree (Figure 5) that is based on a set of defensible criteria for what constitutes an authentic and effective sub-brand among the profusion of assemblies, centers, clubs, councils, departments, facilities, initiatives, lab groups, offices, programs, teams, and titles that constitutes VIMS. Our recommended decision tree incorporates two main criteria. In order to warrant a sub-brand logo, a VIMS unit must first serve an external audience as a primary component of its mission. Second, the unit head must report directly to the Dean & Director or Associate Dean of Research & Advisory Service (Figure 6).

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<sup>2</sup> E.g., see these journal articles and citations therein: Pullig C, Simmons CJ, Netemeyer RG. Brand Dilution: When Do New Brands Hurt Existing Brands? *Journal of Marketing*. 2006. 70(2):52-66. doi:[10.1509/jmkg.70.2.052](https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.70.2.052). Jacoby, J, The Psychological Foundations of Trademark Law: Secondary Meaning, Acquired Distinctiveness, Genericism, Fame, Confusion and Dilution (April 2000). NYU, Ctr for Law and Business Research Paper No. 00-03, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=229325>

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**4. Retire any existing sub-brand logos that do not meet the decision-tree criteria**

For the sake of fairness and consistency, the same decision-tree criteria used to judge any new logo request should also be applied to existing sub-brand and extra-brand logos (e.g., Figures 1, 3). This would necessitate retirement of multiple logos including those for ABC, CCRM, Nunnally Ichthyology Collection, R/V *Virginia*, Scientific Diving Program, shellfish aquaculture initiative; and all the logos displayed in Figure 3.

**5. Retain separate branding for federal partners and SMS/W&M merchandise**

We recommend that our on-campus federal partners (Virginia Sea Grant and CBNERRVA)—and any future on-campus federal partners—continue to use their own logos. We also recommend the use of a specialized “School of Marine Science” lockup for use on official, licensed W&M merchandise (Figure 7), in a manner consistent with similar lockups in use for W&M’s other graduate and professional schools.

**6. Update all instances of our current main-brand logo (e.g., signage, vehicles, vessels)**

We recommend a one-time infusion of funds to replace the outdated logos used in building signage, internal signage, campus directional signage, land vehicles, aerial vehicles, and vessels.

**7. Establish an internal educational campaign to emphasize the importance of uniform and consistent institutional branding.**

We recommend creation and presentation of a seminar to further inform and educate the VIMS community concerning the importance of consistent branding. We recommend that creation and presentation of the seminar be the responsibility of the Strategic Director of Marketing and Communications, with input from other units as needed.

**8. Provide a process to appeal a decision reached by the Branding & Logo Committee**

We recognize that scientists have a tradition of creating logos and acronyms for their lab groups and/or research projects, both to distinguish their research and for the professed goal of team cohesion and morale. Any group that believes these perceived benefits outweigh the resultant dilution of the overall VIMS brand may petition the Dean & Director for an exemption to a negative logo-request response. If and when a research group receives such an exemption, they may only use their extra-brand marks for informal, unofficial purposes such as T-shirts, and must display them in a manner that is separate and distinct from VIMS’ official logo as set out in the “Size and Placement” section of the VIMS Style Guide.

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# Decision Tree

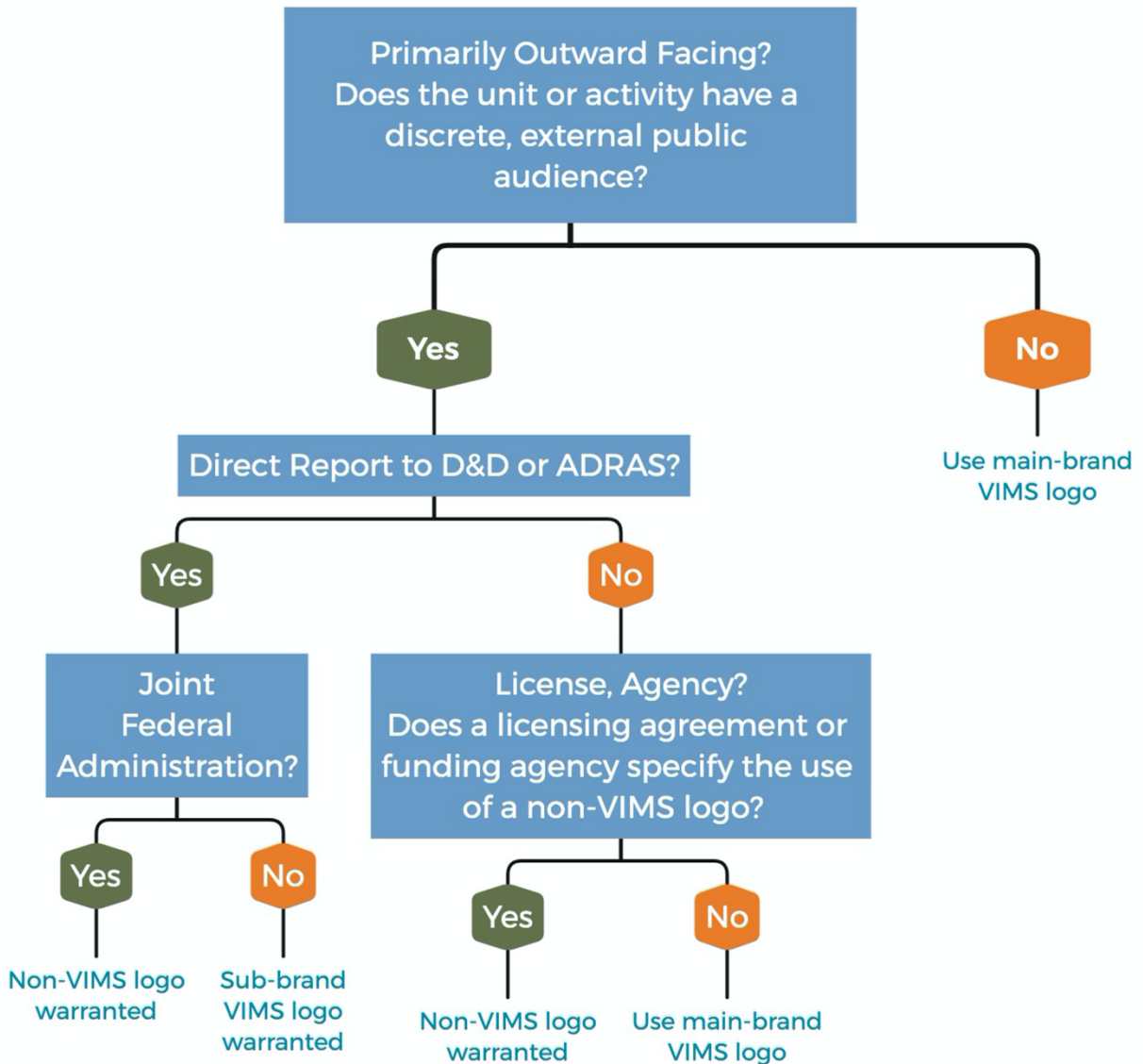
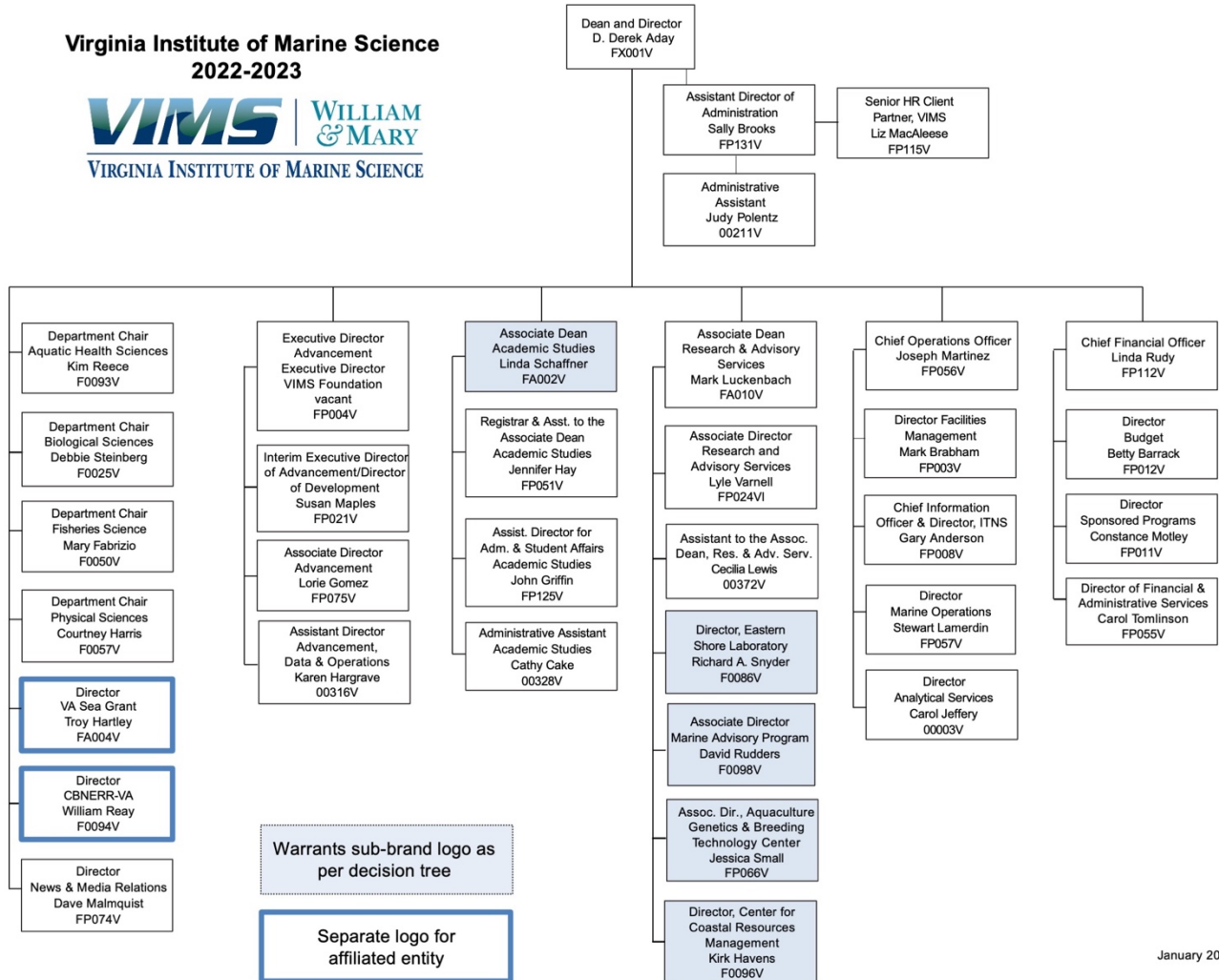


Figure 5: A decision tree to guide sub-brand logo decisions at VIMS.

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Figure 6: VIMS administrative organization chart, with units that warrant a sub-brand or separate logo indicated.



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## Proposed W&M Licensed SMS Merchandise



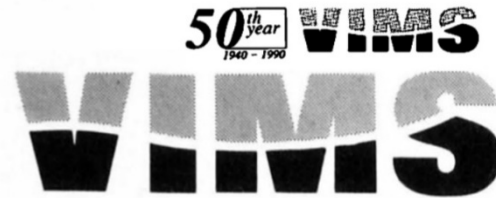
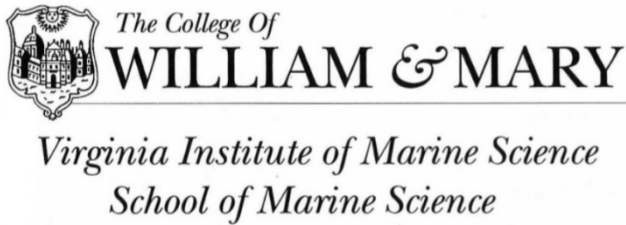
Figure 7: SMS logo lockup for use on merchandise sold from official main campus venues.

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# VIMS Logo History



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# VIMS Logo Timeline

