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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 513

Offered March 5, 2012

*Commending Grace Edmondson Harris.*

Patrons—McClellan, Alexander, BaCote, Carr, Dance, Herring, Hope, Howell, A.T., James, Keam, Lopez, Loupassi, McQuinn, Morrissey, Sickles, Spruill, Surovell, Torian, Tyler, Ward and Ware, O.

WHEREAS, Grace Edmondson Harris, a trailblazing educator whose many contributions impact thousands of students, played a pivotal and influential role in the emergence of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) as a preeminent institution of higher education in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, a native of Halifax whose parents and grandparents were college graduates, Grace Harris was raised to make education a top priority; as a student at Hampton Institute, she discovered her life's calling—to help improve the lives of those around her—and switched her major from mathematics to sociology; and

WHEREAS, Grace Harris earned master's and doctoral degrees in sociology from the University of Virginia; she also earned a master's degree in social work from Richmond Professional Institute, the predecessor to VCU, and studied at Boston University's School of Social Work; and

WHEREAS, since Grace Harris became an assistant professor in the School of Social Work at VCU in 1967, her contributions have been immense; she was an inspiring and focused leader during a period of tremendous growth for the school and she stressed the importance of making education available to everyone; and

WHEREAS, during her time at VCU, Grace Harris served as professor, director of student affairs, dean of the School of Social Work, provost, and vice president of academic affairs; in 1995 and in 1998, she served as acting president of the university; and

WHEREAS, Grace Harris' accomplishments and achievements include guiding the School of Social Work through a time of significant change, spearheading VCU's first-ever long-range strategic plan, helping plan for a new School of Engineering, and facilitating significant improvements for VCU's female and minority students; and

WHEREAS, Grace Harris exemplifies the characteristics of a true leader by exceeding expectations, looking ahead, and focusing on what can be accomplished with optimism and determination; she takes great pride in her name, Grace, and works to incorporate charity, beneficence, and concern for humanity in her daily efforts; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of her numerous contributions, Grace Harris, who is a distinguished professor in the Center for Public Policy, has been awarded the VCU Presidential Medallion, the Presidential Award for Community Multicultural Enrichment, and the Riese-Mellon Award; and

WHEREAS, in 2007 VCU dedicated the building that formerly housed the School of Business in honor of Grace Harris, and the university further honored her when the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute was established at her retirement; and

WHEREAS, both Virginia Union University and the University of Richmond have granted honorary doctoral degrees to Grace Harris, and she has served on the board of trustees at the University of Richmond; and

WHEREAS, the Richmond Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women recognized Grace Harris as Educator of the Year, and in 1997 she received the Dominion Strong Men and Women Excellence in Leadership Award; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend an outstanding educator and leader in the Commonwealth, Grace Edmondson Harris; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Grace Edmondson Harris as an expression of the General Assembly's respect and admiration for her many accomplishments and her commitment to the Commonwealth and its citizens.

INTRODUCED

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