



Provost's Report to VCU Faculty Senate -- September 5, 2023

Highlights

I'm pleased to share with you the progress that is occurring across VCU.

Rebounding Student Enrollment

Simply stated: This year's class of entering first-year students may just be the biggest in university history.

- We are currently serving 4,612 **first-year students** – including those you may have read about living in the Graduate Hotel, just off campus. VCU's former record is 4,600.
- Overall undergraduate enrollment is trending **1.4% higher than fall 2022**.
- I am excited about the students I will be meeting this year through the **Provost student advisory group**.

This is a good first step but VCU has a ways to go before we have turned the corner. We have to continue on this path.

Repositioning Task Force Proceeds to Phase Two

The [One VCU Academic Repositioning Task Force](#), which consists of faculty and staff members and deans, organized into eight working groups, recently presented their reports signaling the end of the first phase of their work.

They are considering the number of, and the structure of, VCU's academic units in order to offer recommendations designed to:

- Create a pipeline for new, engaging, and exciting degree programs in emerging fields;
- Maximize operational efficiencies and collaboration between programs;
- Facilitate more cross-unit engagement and transdisciplinary research opportunities for faculty; and
- Create new career pathways for preparing students to succeed in a rapidly-changing world.

By tapping into the collective intellect of our faculty and staff, this task force is both the height of shared governance and the launch pad for bold academic innovation.

VCU's Growing Research Profile

VCU's rapidly-growing research enterprise has reached historical heights and is gaining national and global recognition.

- We announced last year that VCU received more than \$400 million in sponsored funding, a 49% increase in just five years and the highest figure in the university's history – we expect to announce even bigger numbers soon.
- That growth is being felt broadly across our campuses. In fact, **research funding increased last year across every single VCU academic unit.**
- In a related note, the **VCU daVinci Center Shift Retail Lab** just earned Fast Company's 2023's Innovation By Design Award for Learning. Winners in other categories include Capital One, Yeti, IBM, and Microsoft – putting VCU among impressive company.

Faculty Excellence

Work will soon begin on a faculty-led taskforce to update **VCU's Promotion & Tenure Policy**, which is currently at least a decade old.

- Our faculty deserve a modern evaluation process that fairly, equitably, and transparently accounts for a wide variety of activities across research, scholarship, pedagogy, service, and other duties and responsibilities faculty members perform. And we should have confidence in the consistent level of excellence that process is demanding across all academic units.
- The task force will consider policies for both tenured and tenure-eligible faculty members and term faculty members.
- Final recommendations are expected by the end of this coming January.

Celebrating VCU Faculty

- [James Ferri, Ph.D.](#), associate chair of the Department of Chemical and Life Sciences Engineering in the College of Engineering, [has been named chair-elect of the National Institute for Pharmaceutical Technology & Education \(NIPTE\)](#) faculty. [NIPTE](#) brings together academic professionals and researchers, industry leaders and other stakeholders to improve how medicines are designed, developed and manufactured to meet patients' needs in the 21st century. VCU Engineering became a member of NIPTE in 2021.
- [Suzanne Ruder, Ph.D.](#), associate chair and professor in the Department of Chemistry in the College of Humanities and Sciences, has been named as a [recipient of the 2023 James Flack Norris Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Teaching of Chemistry by the Northeastern Section of the American Chemical Society](#). Ruder, along with Renée Cole, Ph.D., a chemistry professor at the University of Iowa, and Juliette Lantz, a chemistry professor at Drew University, will receive the award for their work together on the National-Science Foundation-funded Enhancing Learning by Improving Process Skills in STEM (ELIPSS) Project, which focuses on the identification, development, and assessment of process skills — also known as professional skills, practical skills, workplace skills, transferable skills, or soft skills — in undergraduate STEM classrooms.

- [Milos Manic, Ph.D.](#), professor of computer science in the College of Engineering, has been elected by the [National Academy of Inventors](#) to the rank of senior member. The honor recognizes faculty, scientists and administrators who have produced technologies that have brought, or aspire to bring, real impact on the welfare of society. Manic, who is director of VCU's [Cybersecurity Center](#), was one of only three inventors from Virginia included in the academy's 2023 class of senior members.
- [Five Virginia Commonwealth University junior faculty members were recently selected as Blick Scholars](#). This prestigious recognition, which is made possible through The George and Lavinia Blick Research Fund, funds innovative medical research. The Blick Scholars are: [Yana Cen, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor, Department of Medicinal Chemistry, School of Pharmacy; [Peter Hamilton, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor, Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology, School of Medicine; [Anika L. Hines, Ph.D., MPH](#), assistant professor, Department of Health Behavior and Policy, School of Medicine; [Audrey Lafrenaye, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor, Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology, School of Medicine; and [Rebecca Martin, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology, School of Medicine.
- The [VCU Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Fund](#), an internal grant opportunity created in 2022 to support, facilitate and enhance the creation, production and dissemination of arts, humanities and social sciences research, has awarded its second class of grants to 10 faculty members and their projects:
 - [Kai Bosworth, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor of international studies, School of World Studies in the College of Humanities and Sciences, "Protectors of the Subsurface: Knowledge and Imagination of the Underground in Contemporary Public Environmentalism."
 - [Yossera Bouchtia](#), assistant professor of cinema, School of the Arts, "Afri; Unburying a Feminine Deity in North Africa through a Narrative Film."
 - [Jessica Trisko Darden, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor of political science, College of Humanities and Sciences, "Unequal Justice: Women's Accountability for Nazi-Era War Crimes."
 - [Sinclair Emoghene](#), assistant professor of dance and choreography, School of the Arts, "Living Archive: Analysis, Description and Assemblages of African Dance."
 - [Sasha Waters Freyer](#), professor of photography and film, School of the Arts, "GARRY WINOGRAND ARCHIVE 1948-1984."
 - [Katie Logan, Ph.D.](#), associate professor of focused inquiry, University College, and [Gabriel Reich](#), professor of teaching and learning, School of Education, "The Memory Studies Lab."
 - [Bernard Means, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor, School of World Studies in the College of Humanities and Sciences, "An Ice Age 'Monster' Returns to The Peale: An Inclusive Exhibit Featuring Comic Art and Replicated Mastodon Fossils."
 - [Daniel Morales, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor of history, College of Humanities and Sciences, and [Gabriela León-Pérez, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor of sociology, College of Humanities and Sciences, "Latino Virginia."
 - [Lauren Thorson](#), assistant professor of graphic design, School of the Arts, "The Drawing Room."
 - [David Toney](#), assistant professor of theatre and head of undergraduate performance, School of the Arts, "Elysian Fields: What is the Ability of the Black Man to Protect and Support the Black Family in a White Patriarchal Society."

Leadership Updates

- [Hernan Bucheli, Ed.D.](#) began his role as Interim Vice President, Strategic Enrollment Management & Student Success on April 17.
 - [Azim Eskandarian, D.Sc.](#) began his role as Dean, College of Engineering on Aug. 1
 - [Catherine Ingrassia, Ph.D.](#) began her role as Dean, College of Humanities and Sciences on Aug. 4.
 - [Susan M. T. Coombes, Ph.D.](#) began her role as Interim Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence on Aug. 21.
 - [Michael D. Bourgeois, Ph.D.](#) began his role as Associate Vice Provost, Institutional Research & Decision Support on Sept. 1.
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Office of the Provost blog

This summer, the Office of the Provost implemented a new blog to provide a ‘one-stop’ location for information previously shared primarily via bulk email. This blog is public-facing and can be linked to directly or by visiting the [Office of the Provost home page](#). We will continue to send bulk emails that will include a link to pertinent messages within the blog.

The purpose of the blog is two-fold:

1. To provide a single location for all faculty-oriented messages from the provost and senior vice provosts on a variety of topics.
2. To provide staff, students and the general public a single location to learn about topics related to faculty and VCU academics.

There is an option to subscribe to the blog via email. Subscriptions to the blog will ensure notification of all posts, including those not directed to the full faculty.

Recent posts include:

[Special call: Racial literacy courses for AY 2024-25](#)

[Faculty preparation: fall 2023](#)

[Welcome to the Beginning of an Amazing Year!](#)

[New IRDS Leadership](#)

[Ingrassia appointed dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences](#)

Events Calendar

A full list of events and opportunities for faculty is now [online](#).

REGISTER NOW

Wednesday, September 6

3-4 p.m.

W.E. Singleton Center for the
Performing Arts
922 Park Avenue

[RSVP HERE](#)

41st Annual VCU Faculty Convocation

University Award of Excellence

Michael F. Miles, M.D., Ph.D., School of Medicine

Distinguished Scholarship Award

Martin K. Safo, Ph.D., School of Pharmacy

Distinguished Teaching Award

Deborah L. Polo, M.S., College of Humanities and Sciences

Distinguished Service Award

Curtis N. Sessler, M.D., School of Medicine

Outstanding Early Career Faculty Award

Anika L. Hines, Ph.D., M.P.H., School of Population Health

Outstanding Term Faculty Award

Evan M. Sisson, Pharm.D., M.S.H.A., School of Pharmacy

Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Award

Emiola Oyefuga, Ph.D., School of Education

Thursday, September 7

12:00- 1:15 pm

Virtual Only - by Zoom

[REGISTER HERE](#)

CTLE - Conversations on Inclusion Series

Session #1: Tips for Engaging Students Across Teaching Modes

Face-to-face learning is no longer the standard for many university courses. The changing and evolving frameworks of 'how' we learn, 'what' we learn, and 'who' we learn with will support a growth perspective around learning. In this session, faculty will discuss these rapid changes, in order to meet students where they are. We will learn to embrace the changes across multiple learning environments-- online, in-person, and hybrid-- and discuss how to navigate innovative teaching and learning strategies with knowledge, skill, and confidence.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION TO COME (Registration links will be listed in TelegRam)

Tuesday, September 19

9:00 - 1:00 pm

University Student Commons
Richmond Salon I-II

In Person Only

Orientation for Newly Promoted Associate Professors

- Welcome - SVP Faculty Affairs

Sessions

- Next steps as an associate professor
- Planning your career trajectory
- Reflection, networking, lunch

<p>Wednesday, September 20 12:00 -1:30 pm Virtual Only - by zoom</p>	<p>Assistant Professors Monthly Session The Nuts and Bolts of Teaching and Learning</p>
<p>Thursday, September 21 11:00 - 12:00 pm University Student Commons Richmond Salon I-II In Person Only</p>	<p>Department Chair Monthly Forum <i>(open to all department chairs)</i> Meet the Provost Leadership Team</p>
<p>Tuesday, September 26 3:00- 4:15 pm Virtual Only - by Zoom</p>	<p>Discussion of Draft Tool: Gen AI and Teaching and Learning</p>
<p>Wednesday, September 27 10:30 - 12:00 pm Virtual Only - by Zoom</p>	<p>Department Chair Monthly Forum <i>(open to all department chairs)</i> Session: Appreciative Leadership & Creating a Culture of Belonging and Inclusion <i>Sponsored by CoC VCU-ADVANCE</i></p>

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