A Few Words From Our Dean

The mission of the College of Humanities and Sciences is to serve as the intellectual “heart and soul” of VCU and the wider community. We strive to inspire our students to explore their passions, and provide the context to understand their place in the world and connections with others. We conduct research that addresses an array of technological, health-related, and societal problems, as well as providing profound insights and reflections of what it means to be human and humane.

My mission is to create a clear path to the College’s future by expanding and refining our strategic vision and aims and creating an environment where our students, faculty, and staff can fulfill their potential. I am dedicated to increasing pathways to entrepreneurship for our students, and supporting our faculty in their research and scholarship.

In this annual report you will read about some of the strides we have made over the past year, including our Big Ideas Initiative, which will promote interdisciplinary research and teaching. You will also read about our efforts to substantially increase the number of full-time student advisers in order to help our students plan their educations more strategically and improve our graduation rates. In addition, over the past year we have made significant progress on our plan to build a new STEM building and home for the College, increased our support for research, and increased salaries for term and adjunct faculty.

Even as we worked to create an environment for success in the College, our faculty, students, alumni were hard at work accomplishing great things. Many of their honors and achievements are described in this report. I am inspired on a daily basis by the passion and dedication I see around me.

The involvement of noted alumni such as David Baldacci and Harold and Laura Greer are another source of inspiration. Their generous support of our mission creates opportunities for students and faculty that would not otherwise be possible, and I am extremely grateful.

I am proud of everything that we have achieved over the past year in the College of Humanities and Sciences, and after reading this report I trust that you will agree that we are truly the intellectual heart and soul of VCU.

Cordially,
Montse Fuentes
Dean

The Liberal Arts Core of VCU

As the liberal arts and sciences intellectual core of the university, The College of Humanities and Sciences aspires to construct a foundation for our students on which they will build rich and deeply meaningful lives and careers.

The core of that foundation is to increase the intellectual capacity of our students for critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, oral and written communication, cultural fluency, global awareness, and a deep knowledge of each student’s chosen discipline. Mastery of a broad range of intellectual and cultural content lends crucial perspective to decision-making, and serves our students well as they pursue their careers.

Recent history has shown that today’s college graduates are likely to have multiple careers. The critical thinking and communication skills provided by a liberal arts education will be essential as our students become alumni and have to negotiate the constantly evolving landscape of jobs and technological innovation.

Big Ideas Create Interdisciplinary Opportunities

In the fall of 2016 the College was given an opportunity by the Provost’s office to develop new, dynamic initiatives through the addition of eight new faculty lines. In order to identify areas where the College could make a genuine impact through cutting-edge, interdisciplinary research we surveyed our faculty for their “Big Ideas” — new and synergistic research opportunities that could bring the College recognition, distinction, and create opportunities for experiential learning, community engagement, or curriculum development. Our newly formed Research Advisory Council selected 15 of the proposals based on their potential for impact and distinction through research and integration with education and community engagement to submit a more detailed proposal following a specific set of guidelines.

The final proposals were reviewed by the Research Advisory Council, and three were selected for their potential to create experiential learning experiences for students, promote interdisciplinary collaboration and research, and promote community engagement. The three proposals are: Migration Studies: Focus Latin America, Big Data Science, and LGBTQ Studies at VCU: Research, Teaching, Community.

Migration Studies: Focus Latin America will add faculty in the departments of History, Sociology, and Kinesiology and Health Sciences, and the School of World Studies, and will raise the College’s visibility as a center of research and expertise on Latin America and Latinos/Latinas in the US. Big Data Science will leverage the huge amount of data already being collected by various academic units at VCU, in particular in the fields of biomedical research and environmental science. LGBTQ Studies at VCU: Research, Teaching, Community will advance VCU’s goal of integrating the rigorous investigation of diversity in all its forms into the College’s curriculum, research profile, and community engagement efforts. The addition of three faculty committed to the examination of LGBTQ Studies in the departments of Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies, Sociology, and History will position VCU to become a national leader in this field.
Our Strategic Plan 2025

Pathways for Transformation, the College’s strategic plan, was approved by our faculty in January of 2015. In early 2017 Dean Fuentes asked Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Strategic Initiatives, Ed Acevedo, to begin the process of creating a new strategic plan to support the goals of the University’s updated strategic plan, Quest 2025: Together We Transform, to be introduced in 2018.

In March of 2017, Dr. Acevedo and Dean’s Fellow and Assistant Professor of Sociology, Meredith Katz, began the process of gathering feedback from the faculty and staff on the College’s Mission, Vision, and Core Values. Based on feedback from the faculty and staff, our Mission, Vision and Core Values were refined and approved in April of 2017 to emphasize our commitment to increasing student success and supporting VCU’s R1: Highest Research Activity designation in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

The College is now in the process of developing goals with measurable benchmarks for success to be included in our new Strategic Plan.

Supporting Student Success

One of the goals described in our current Strategic Plan is to increase the number of full-time advisers in the College in order to enhance student performance and retention. We began the process in 2017 of adding 20 new full-time advisers. We also created and filled the positions of Director of Advising for the Sciences and Director of Advising for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Our long-term goal is to achieve a student to adviser ratio of 300:1, with all individual units at 350:1 or better, which meets the standards set by National Academic Advising Association (NACADA).

The success of our underrepresented and at-risk student populations remains a priority for the College. In 2017 we established an African American Male Student Advocacy and Mentoring Committee, an Hispanic/LatinX Student Advocacy and Mentoring Team, and assembled a College alumni mentoring team to support at-risk students.

In addition, the College continued to focus on improving our graduation and retention rates, and created numerous additional service learning and experiential learning opportunities for our students.

Our Advisory Board

Our Advisory Board endorses our commitment to the liberal arts and to the intellectual and academic success of our diverse student body; our commitment to research and discovery that advances knowledge, inspires creativity, and improves quality of life; and the global engagement of students, faculty and staff who transform lives and communities. Our Advisory Board members also open doors with industry and community leaders and build relationships with stakeholders who can transform our College.

Christine Browning*
Cardiologist, Cardiovascular Associates of Virginia

Jasmine Gore*
Vice-mayor, City of Hopewell, VA

Bill Mattox*
Senior Vice President, Colliers International

Kathy Thomasson Mercer*
Secretary of the Commonwealth, State of Virginia

Christopher Moore*
Author and Photojournalist

Vijay laxmi “Viju” Singh*
Engineer (Retired)

Joanne Smith, Ph.D.*
President, Oconaluftee Community College

John West
President and Chief Executive Officer, Chaise Incorporated (Retired)

Peter Zucker, Ph.D.*
Co-founder, Stars Behavioral Health Group

*Alumnus/Alumna of VCU

Research Awards Increase by 25%

The past fiscal year was a transformative time for the College of Humanities and Sciences under the leadership of Associate Dean of Research, Scott Gronert. Research expenditures for fiscal year 2017 increased by over 26% compared to FY16. This represents $21.8 million dollars of investment in research in the college, from a combination of federal, state, and independent funding sources. The Departments of Psychology and Biology each had multiple research faculty with over half a million dollars in grant expenditures in FY17. Thomas Eisenberg, Ph.D., Professor of Health Psychology and Director of the Center for the Study of Tobacco Products, had the largest research portfolio, with over $4M in expenditures funded by the National Institutes of Health. Plans are being developed to add additional pre-award support and additional support for our doctoral programs in FY18.

Cottom’s Books Receive National Acclaim

Tressie Cottom (Sociology) was co-editor of two volumes on technological change, inequality and institutions: Digital Societies (2016, UK, Bristol Policy Press) and For-Profit Universities: The Shifting Landscape of Marketized Higher Education (2017, Palgrave MacMillan).

Her third book Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy (2017, The New Press) has received national and international acclaim. Dr. Cottom appeared on The Daily Show with Trevor Noah and her public scholarship has appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, NPR’s Fresh Air, The Daily Show, Slate, and The Atlantic to name a few. She is also well-known on Twitter, where she has over 56,000 followers.

Daugherty Awarded NEH Grant

Brian Daugherty (History) was awarded a one year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the history of school desegregation in Virginia. The grant, The Long Road from Brown: School Desegregation in Virginia, is part of the NEH’s Landmarks of American History and Culture Workshops for School Teachers program, which provides K-12 teachers with workshops that use historic sites to address central themes and issues in American history, government, literature, art, music and related subjects in the humanities.

Faculty and Staff Awards

The following members of our faculty were selected by a committee of previous honorees to receive our Outstanding Faculty Awards for 2017:

Eluke V.P. Smith Distinguished Lecturer
Judyth Twigg
Department of Political Science

Distinguished Scholar
Karen Rader
Department of History

Excellence in Scholarship (Math and Science)
Indika Arachchige
Department of Chemistry

Excellence in Scholarship (Humanities and Social Sciences)
Tressie Cottom
Department of Sociology

Distinguished Teaching (Math and Science)
Linda Zyzniewski
Department of Psychology

Distinguished Teaching (Humanities and Social Sciences)
William Newmann
Department of Political Science

Distinguished Service
Christopher Saladino
Department of Political Science

Distinguished Advising
Lyndsay Durham
Department of Forensic Science

Distinguished Adjunct (Math and Sciences)
Joshua Kruger
Department of Forensic Science

Distinguished Adjunct (Social Sciences)
Eric King
Department of Political Science

Distinguished Mentoring
Wendy Kliever
Department of Psychology

Staff Awards:

Customer Service Award
Corey Martin
Department of Psychology

Leadership Award
Andrea Moreau
Department of Chemistry

Impact Award
John Hutton
Dean’s Office

Dedication Award
Stephanie Millican
Department of Biology
Faculty Honors and Recognition

Faye Belgrave (Psychology) was promoted to University Professor by the VCU Board of Visitors.

Cliff Edwards (School of World Studies) was honored at the December 2016 University Commencement ceremony with VCU’s Presidential Medallion. He was recognized for his 40 years at VCU. His many achievements include developing our religious studies program. He has also received the VCU Excellence in Teaching Award and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, Outstanding Faculty Award. The Presidential Medallion, established in 1984, recognizes individuals for their extraordinary achievement in learning and commitment to the mission of VCU.

M. Samy El-Shell (Chemistry) was the winner of VCU’s University Award of Excellence announced by President Michael Rao at the University’s 34th annual Opening Faculty Address and Convocation. (Picture Below)

Mary Beth Heller (Psychology) along with Dr. Donna Gibson (VCU School of Education), helped the City of Richmond Department of Fire and Emergency Services start up a peer-support network. This will help fellow firefighters and emergency responders help their colleagues who struggle with dealing with trauma and other challenges they might face while on the job. Both Dr. Heller and Dr. Gibson led a 2-day training session at the fire department’s headquarters. Nationally, one out of every five firefighters and paramedics have post-traumatic stress disorder.

Chiwo I’Anson (African American Studies) became a featured voice on NPR stations across the country. He is one of NPR’s two voices of underwriting, reaching 30 million listeners weekly. (Picture Right)

J. Randy Koch (Psychology) was selected as the 2016 National Institute on Drug Abuse International Program Excellence in Mentoring Award winner. Recipients of the award demonstrate exceptional guidance to help NIDA fellows achieve research independence and are leaders in the institute’s efforts to develop an international community of scientists who exchange information and collaborate on drug abuse research nationally, regionally, and globally.

Paul Perrin (Psychology) received the Samuel M. Turner Early Career Award for Distinguished Contributions to Diversity in Clinical Psychology. This award is conferred annually to an early career psychologist who has made exemplary contributions to diversity within the field.

Karen Rader (History) was named recipient of the Media Ecology Association’s 2016 Lewis Mumford Award for Outstanding Scholarship in the Ecology of Technologies for her book, Life on Display: Revolutionizing U.S. Museums of Science and Natural History in the Twentieth Century, written with Victoria Cain of Northeastern University.

Tal Simmons (Chair, Forensic Science) worked with Amnesty International to investigate atrocities committed in Nigeria and South Sudan. In her written report for Amnesty International, she provided the investigators with the victims’ likely ages and sex. Dr. Simmons is a forensic anthropologist and an expert in postmortem interval estimation — estimating time-since-death.

Gregory Smithers (History) won gold in the multicultural (nonfiction) book category of the 2017 Independent Publisher Book Awards for his book, The Cherokee Diaspora: An Indigenous History of Migration, Resettlement, and Identity. The Independent Publisher Book Awards honor the year’s best independently published titles from around the world. His book previously won the Historical Book Award from the North Carolina Society of Historians and the Award of Excellence in Scholarship from the East Tennessee Historical Society. It was also a finalist for the 2016 Oklahoma Book Award, Nonfiction.

Al Farrell (Psychology) was promoted to Commonwealth Professor by the VCU Board of Visitors.

Montse Fuentes (Dean, College of Humanities and Sciences/Statistical Science and Operations Research) was named a recipient of the 2017 Distinguished Achievement Medal for the American Statistical Association’s Section on Statistics and the Environment. The Distinguished Achievement Medals of the ASA Section on Statistics and the Environment (ENVR) highlight and recognize outstanding contributions to the development of methods, issues, concepts, applications, and initiatives of environmental statistics.

Sarah Golding (Biology) was the winner of the Outstanding Term Faculty Award, announced by President Michael Rao at the University’s 34th annual Opening Faculty Address and Convocation on August 23rd, 2016.

Ronald Evans (Kinesiology and Health Sciences) was named a Fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine, recognizing his professional achievement and competence in the related disciplines of sports medicine via education, published works, and professional practice. ACSM advances and integrates knowledge and competence in the related disciplines of sports medicine and fitness education for Virginia, Outstanding Faculty Award. ACSM advances and integrates knowledge and competence in the related disciplines of sports medicine and fitness education.
Student Achievements

Four of VCU’s eleven 2016 Student Fulbright Scholars were from the College, Maya Chesley (Biology/World Studies), Erin Coggins (World Studies), Shannon Lanibb (Sociology) and Charles Penis (History) were selected for the prestigious program and will participate in the international exchange program. Students are selected based on academic merit and leadership potential.

Nour Al Ghrwati (Psychology) was awarded one of only four American Psychological Association (APA) Scholar Awards from Division 54 (Society of Pediatric Psychology). In addition to receiving a monetary award, Nour will be involved in special networking and mentoring events at the APA convention this summer and will be featured in “Progress Notes,” the newsletter for Div. 54.

Theresa Dinh (School of World Studies) and Sarah Sweeney (Political Science) have both been named recipients of a Boren Scholarship from the National Security Education Program. These scholarships support students who want to further their education and research in less commonly taught languages. Dinh will be studying human trafficking in Ho Chi Minh City and Vietnam. Sweeney will be heading to Thailand to research sustainable development.

SaraRose Martin (Robertson School) was awarded the Agnes Cooke Scholarship from the Virginia Press Women Foundation. SaraRose was honored at the spring conference of Virginia Professional Communicators. The VPW Foundation awards scholarships every year to deserving Virginia college students pursuing careers in communications. Martin is studying print and online journalism with a minor in political science.

Maria Vera (Biology) recently traveled to Costa Rica this past summer with the National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates program to conduct research on Toucans. Her group built artificial nests to monitor toucans preying on eggs. The team's study, “Toucans descend to the forest floor to consume the eggs of ground-nesting birds,” was published in the March edition of the journal Food Webs.

Student’s Startup Aims to Halt Famine, Food Insecurity in Africa

Tatenda Ndambukuwa (Mathematics/Physics) co-founded Dbuntu, a start-up through VCU’s Venture Creation University that is developing an app to allow African farmers to upload data about their livestock and crop management. Growing up in Zimbabwe she remembers facing the country’s food crisis in 2008 with her family. The first beta version of the app is set to roll out in Uganda this coming December. In April, the app was a finalist at Smith College’s 5th Annual Draper Competition for Collegiate Women Entrepreneurs and in March it won the Stumburg Venture Competition at Trinity University. “We have the technology and systems in place that can bring efficiency to food production. It is unacceptable that people should be going hungry,” she said. “So we are trying to just bring that technology to the ground and help make [the food production system] more efficient.”

Our Graduate Programs

**Biology**
- Biology, Master of Science

**Chemistry**
- Chemical Biology, Doctor of Philosophy
  - Concentration in biochemistry
  - Concentration in biology
  - Concentration in biology of cancer
  - Concentration in bioorganic chemistry

- Chemistry, Doctor of Philosophy
  - Concentration in chemical physics
- Chemistry, Master of Science
  - With Fudan University (dual degree)
- Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, Doctor of Philosophy

**English**
- Creative Writing, Master of Fine Arts
  - Concentration in dual genre
  - Concentration in fiction
  - Concentration in poetry
- English, Master of Arts
  - Concentration in research
- Media, Art, and Text, Doctor of Philosophy

**Forensic Science**
- Forensic Science, Master of Science
  - Concentration in forensic biology
  - Concentration in forensic chemistry/drugs and toxicology
  - Concentration in forensic chemistry/trace
  - Concentration in forensic physical analysis

**Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies**
- Post-baccalaureate Graduate Certificate

**History**
- History, Master of Arts

**Kinesiology and Health Sciences**
- Health and Movement Sciences, Master of Science
  - Concentration in exercise science
- Rehabilitation and Movement Science, Doctor of Philosophy
  - Concentration in exercise physiology
  - Concentration in neuromusculoskeletal dynamics

**Mathematics and Applied Mathematics**
- Mathematical Sciences, Master of Science
  - Concentration in applied mathematics
  - Concentration in mathematics
- Systems Modeling and Analysis, Doctor of Philosophy

**Physics**
- Physics and Applied Physics, Master of Science
  - Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Physics (B.S.) to master’s

**Political Science**
- Accelerated Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Master of Public Administration

**Psychology**
- Clinical Psychology, Doctor of Philosophy
  - Concentration in behavioral medicine
  - Concentration in clinical child
- Counseling Psychology, Doctor of Philosophy
- Health Psychology, Doctor of Philosophy
- Psychology, Doctor of Philosophy
  - Concentration in biopsychology
  - Concentration in developmental psychology
  - Concentration in social psychology

**Robertson School of Media and Culture**
- Mass Communications, Master of Science
  - Integrated PR and advertising
  - Multimedia journalism
  - Strategic public relations
- Media, Art, and Text, Doctor of Philosophy

**Sociology**
- Sociology, Master of Science

**Statistical Sciences and Operations Research**
- Mathematical Sciences, Master of Science
  - Concentration in operations research
  - Concentration in statistics
- Systems Modeling and Analysis, Doctor of Philosophy

**College of Humanities and Sciences**
- Post-baccalaureate Graduate Certificate in Applied Social Research
Alumni Highlights

The College of Humanities and Sciences has over 50,000 alumni throughout the United States and in numerous countries around the world. Our alumni are proudly represented in hundreds of industries and organizations that impact a changing world. The following are just a few of our many alumni who received recognition in 2016-17 for their professional and personal achievements:

Jacquelyne Causey (B.S. Mass Communications, ’16) landed a coveted internship at the international news outlet, Al Jazeera, and later was awarded a six-month fellowship to keep creating for Al Jazeera. Her main project was a documentary called, “The Ban.” The film explored the effects of the Trump administration’s recent travel ban and told the story of one specific family who was directly impacted. Aside from her work on “The Ban” during her fellowship at Al Jazeera, Jacquelyne also worked on eight additional films, receiving production assistant credit on each of them.

In 2016, VCU Alumni honored four alumni from the College in their 10 Under 10 awards. Congratulations to Sudharshana Apte, Ph.D. (M.S. Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, ’11; Ph.D. Systems Modeling and Analysis, ’14), Terrell Brown (B.S. Mass Communications ’09), Daniel “Danny” L. Plaugher (B.A. Political Science, ’06) and Kevin Powers (B.A. English, ’08). The awards honor alumni who earned their first VCU degree within the past 10 years and who have, enjoyed remarkable professional success, made important contributions to their community and who loyally supported the university.

Dr. Jennifer Wells Orr (B.S. Biology, ’89; M.D. Medicine ’93) was a finalist for the 2017 North Carolina Doctor of the Year award as part of NC Doctors’ Day. She is a beloved OB-GYN dedicated to improving women’s health, and makes it a priority to work in appointments for patients who continue to want to see her – even when they’ve moved to other states or overseas. She relocated to Morehead City in 2010 and opened GirlTalk & Gynecology.

Michelle Turner (B.S. Psychology, ’93) was honored at VCU Alumni’s Volunteer Service Awards, celebrated biennially, to honor alumni who have worked with particular devotion to serve the VCU community. Michelle is the winner of the Eugene H. and Rosalia C. Hunt Alumni Pride Award, awarded to a graduate who has shown outstanding service in one of VCU Alumni’s constituent organizations.

Dr. Harold Greer Jr. Distinguished Professorship in Latin American History. The Greer’s gift is the largest single gift ever to the College from living donors. The gift provides for a new faculty member with an appointment in the Department of History.

Dr. and Mrs. Greer have previously endowed the Harold and Laura Greer Scholarship, awarded to an outstanding undergraduate history major who has completed at least two courses in Latin American history.

Dr. Greer recalls “I loved teaching at VCU and the opportunities VCU provided for wonderful students, many of whom were the first in their families to go to college. I was and am acutely aware of the costs to students — the hard work and hardships that many endure — in pursuit of their education.”

Our Dean’s Society

One priority for fiscal year 2016 was to increase the amount of funds available to sponsor and underwrite unique academic events, increase support for faculty travel and development, and pursue unexpected opportunities that are not reflected in our annual budget. In order to give donors the opportunity to fund these special projects, the College established the Dean’s Society in the spring of 2017. The Dean’s Society is a community of benefactors who support the vision for the College with an annual leadership gift of $1,000 or more. These unrestricted funds provide the College more flexibility to host academic events and offer our faculty much-needed support.

Our website, has.vcu.edu/alumni, has more details.

Diversity in the College

In our Strategic Plan, one of the four resonant values we identified for the Humanities and Sciences is the importance of a dynamic and inclusive learning and working environment in which individuals of differing intellectual perspectives, life experiences, and cultural backgrounds are welcomed, valued, and supported. Such embracing of diversity in all of its forms is a foundation of a strong liberal education and prepares students to be successful in a continually diversifying society.

The ethnic makeup of our students in Fall 2017 was as follows:

- American Indian / Alaskan: 0.3%
- Asian: 12.0%
- Black / African American: 19.6%
- Hawaiian / Pacific Islander: 0.1%
- Hispanic / Latino: 8.4%
- International: 5.3%
- Two or More Races: 5.9%
- Unknown: 2.1%
- White / Caucasian: 46.4%

The gender makeup of the student population in the College of Humanities and Sciences for FY17 was as follows:

- Male: 37.6%
- Female: 61.4%
- Unknown: 1.0%

Our Mission

The mission of the College of Humanities and Sciences is to serve as the intellectual “heart and soul” of our institution and wider community. The College of Humanities and Sciences:

Prepares lifelong learners to participate actively as engaged and responsible citizens.

Propels scientific research and scholarship to improve the human condition, cure and treat diseases, and promote healthy environments.

Grounds us in our history, critically examines our present human condition, and empowers students to create more equitable local and global communities.

Provides communities with a passionate and creative workforce that serves as a powerful engine for economic development and innovative solutions to problems.