One of the most gratifying aspects of being a Dean is attending graduation ceremonies and seeing the joy on our students’ faces as they become VCU alumni. Over the past year, 2,631 bright, motivated students received degrees or certificates from the College of Humanities and Sciences, and I am thrilled with the contributions our faculty have made to their future success.

I am equally excited to see the success of our amazing faculty as they educate our students and conduct transformative research that impacts our community and the world around us. Their dedication to our students is remarkable, and their enthusiasm for research, scholarship and teaching, both inside and outside the classroom, is truly inspiring.

None of the stories contained in this report would be possible without the support of VCU and the Richmond community, our more than 52,000 alumni, and numerous friends of the College. A small number of their stories are also included in this report, and on behalf of the entire College of Humanities and Sciences I want to offer my sincere gratitude.

Cordially,
Montserrat Fuentes, Dean
VCU College of Humanities and Sciences
Math Student’s App Seeks to Curb Waste

Tatenda Ndambakuwa, a senior in the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, was a member of the five-person team at the Clinton Global Initiative University at Northeastern University that created the app Wi$er as part of the competition’s challenge to create digital prototypes that would improve or facilitate energy efficiency in metropolitan cities.

Ndambakuwa was one of eight VCU students and alumni who attended the Clinton Global Initiative University, marking the highest number of VCU students and grads to ever attend the annual meeting where students, university representatives, topic experts and celebrities gather to discuss and develop innovative solutions to pressing global challenges.

Story credit: Brian McNeill, University Public Affairs

Doctoral Student Receives Grant To Expand HIV Testing Among African-American Women

Health psychology doctoral student Melanie Moore received a two-year, $69,194 grant to launch a research project aimed at increasing HIV testing among African-American young women.

Moore, who is pursuing her Ph.D. in the Department of Psychology, received the grant from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities in the National Institutes of Health.

“Despite the fact that there is a high rate of undiagnosed HIV infections among young adults, and that high rates of undiagnosed HIV infection lead to increases in HIV transmission to others, very little research has focused on strategies to increase HIV testing,” she said. “I want to change that.”

While this study will collect data from African-American women, Moore said it is the beginning of a series of studies she is planning that will involve developing several tailored messages for specific young adult populations.

“It would be great if college campuses were able to direct more resources toward promoting routine HIV testing among all students, in addition to engaging more resources to promote the importance of preventative health testing among students in general,” Moore said.

Story credit: Brian McNeill, University Public Affairs

As the intellectual lifeblood of VCU, the College of Humanities and Sciences seeks to inspire our students to explore their passions and dreams as individuals, and provide the context to understand their place in the world and connections with others. We encourage our students to explore opportunities, and seek to provide them the tools to pursue these opportunities. The following stories illustrate ways in which our students have pursued their passions in ways that will have a positive impact on the world around us.

Student Success

Renowned Dancer Turns to Biology

Shira Lanyi began her dancing career at age 8, and for 20 years threw herself, mind and body, into the art. She performed as a company dancer for eight seasons with the Richmond Ballet, and spent a year as a soloist for the Israeli Ballet in Tel Aviv before retiring at the peak of her career in 2015.

Lanyi’s retirement came in the wake of her mother’s death from cancer, which she said caused her to re-evaluate her own life. Her farewell performance, “Lift the Fallen,” took place on the Richmond Ballet’s 2015 Road to China tour, and was choreographed by Ma Cong as a tribute to his mother and the grief he felt when she died from cancer.

“It was a really amazing opportunity and experience, because it was this moment right after my mom had passed away and my heart felt very broken, but being back with my friends and being on stage was really healing,” Lanyi said. “I also felt a lot of clarity and that clarity led to my realization that while I would do this for the rest of my life, I know I also want to be a doctor and I don’t have forever. So, I decided to retire and start on my progress towards medicine and medical school.”

Three years later, Lanyi is a senior biology student, just like her mother before her. She is also a member of the Honors College.

“Even though I was always really involved in the ballet world, in the back of my mind I always knew I loved science and I loved the idea of becoming a doctor one day.”

Story credit: Megan Schiffres, College of Humanities and Sciences

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Coping With Social Rejection

Ph.D. candidate Alexandra Martelli conducted live brain scans of people as they were being rejected by peers, and found that participants with higher levels of mindfulness more easily coped with the pain of rejection.

"Social rejection can have a number of negative outcomes both for the rejected person's own health and well-being, as well as their interpersonal relationships," said Martelli, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Psychology and lead author of the study "When Less is More: Mindfulness Predicts Adaptive Affective Responding to Rejection via Reduced Prefrontal Recruitment," published in the journal Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience. "Therefore it is critical that researchers find adaptive ways at responding to social rejection, and mindfulness may be one effective emotion regulation strategy."

Researchers from VCU, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of Kentucky were curious to discover if mindfulness could be a buffer against the distress and pain of social rejection. They ran an experiment in which 40 undergraduate students self-reported their levels of mindfulness, and then were placed in an fMRI scanner. The researchers observed live images of the participants' brain activity as they played a virtual ball-tossing game with what they believed to be two other partners.

For the last third of the game, the participants stopped receiving any ball tosses from the other players, mimicking the conditions of social rejection. After the scanning session, the participants were interviewed about how distressed they were during the game. Participants with higher levels of mindfulness reported less distress from being excluded.

The link between mindfulness and reduced social distress also was seen in the brain imaging, as researchers found there was less activation in the left ventrolateral prefrontal cortex, which is known to assist in the "top-down" inhibitory regulation of both physical and social forms of pain. The study suggests that mindful individuals are not as distressed by social rejection and that mindful individuals appear to successfully regulate distressing emotions by not using effortful, inhibitory processes that suppress their feelings of social pain.

Story credit: Brian McNeill, University Public Affairs.

Faye Belgrave Wins Leadership Award

Faye Belgrave, Ph.D., University Professor in the Department of Psychology, received the 2018 Psychology and AIDS Distinguished Leadership Award from the American Psychological Association.

The award from APA's Ad Hoc Committee on Psychology and AIDS recognizes those who have made significant contributions in the areas of policy/advocacy, research, service or teaching related to issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS.

"It is an honor to be recognized with an award for work I am very passionate about," Belgrave said. "HIV disparities are enormous for African-Americans and I am appreciative of being at a university and department that supports the work we do in HIV prevention."

Belgrave's work is community and intervention focused and attends to aspects of culture to promote well-being among African-American youth. Her recent projects have provided culturally integrated substance abuse, HIV prevention and sex education curriculums to African-American college students and middle school students.

Samy El-Shall Named Outstanding Virginia Scientist

M. Samy El-Shall, Ph.D., Commonwealth Professor and Chair of the Department of Chemistry was one of three researchers named Virginia's Outstanding Scientists for 2018.

El-Shall, the Mary Eugenia Kapp Chair in Chemistry, is internationally known for his work in the fields of clusters and nanoscience, which is key in the area of catalysis for the development of clean transportation fuels and the production of new chemicals for pharmaceutical drugs.

El-Shall was selected for the Virginia Outstanding Scientist award because of his work in the area of nanocatalysis, or the use of nanoparticles to enhance reactions in energy and environmental applications. El-Shall is also known for work that helped shape techniques for efficient solar water desalination and removing heavy metals from polluted water. El-Shall said his entire research group deserved to be recognized.

"I am really honored that I was chosen as a Virginia Outstanding Scientist for 2018. I feel that the members of my research group are being honored and recognized for their talent and dedication to understanding research. I have had the privilege to work with more than 35 graduate students, 75 undergraduates and 25 postdoctoral fellows and visiting researchers in my lab over the past 29 years at VCU. I am grateful to them as well as to my colleagues at VCU for providing many opportunities for excellent research."
Reducing the Infectivity of HIV Using Gold Compounds

Researchers, led by Nicholas Farrell, Ph.D., principal investigator on the experiments and a professor in the Department of Chemistry, have discovered that gold compounds can be effective at reducing the infectivity of HIV in laboratory experiments. The experiments have shown gold compounds may inhibit HIV by binding to an essential zinc-based protein and changing the shape of the protein, which prevents its attachment to DNA and RNA. The zinc-based proteins occur widely in nature and have roles in the progression of many diseases.

“This finding could eventually lead to HIV-fighting therapeutics and open up a new direction in the field of medicinal inorganic chemistry,” Farrell said.

Previous studies from other researchers have shown some anti-HIV activity for gold compounds, which have a long history in medicine and also have been used to specifically treat rheumatoid arthritis. But Farrell’s work elucidating the mechanisms of gold compound and zinc protein interactions suggests new pathways for this action. His research was funded by the National Science Foundation.

Investigating Why Divorce Runs in Families

“Genetics, the Rearing Environment, and the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce: A Swedish National Adoption Study,” published in the journal Psychological Science, analyzed Swedish population registries and found that people who were adopted resembled their biological — but not adoptive — parents and siblings in their histories of divorce.

“Across a series of designs using Swedish national registry data, we found consistent evidence that genetic factors primarily explained the intergenerational transmission of divorce,” said the study’s first author, Jessica Salvatore Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Psychology.

By recognizing the role that genetics plays in the intergenerational transmission of divorce, therapists may be able to better identify more appropriate targets when helping distressed couples, Salvatore said.

We were trying to answer the basic question: Why does divorce run in families?

Over the past fiscal year, the College of Humanities and Sciences (CHS) research and scholarship portfolio continued to thrive. For the third year in a row, research expenditures were over $17M. We also instituted a new program to encourage innovative and transformative research through our Seed and Catalyst Scholarship Awards, funding twenty Seed proposals, supporting investigators from eleven different departments/units and five Catalyst proposals, representing faculty from five different departments/units. Our Humanities Research Center distributed over sixty Research Travel Grants funding projects on a wide variety of topics and also awarded over eighty Conference Travel Grants, enabling VCU faculty working in the humanities to present their work at conferences across the country and the globe.
Faculty and Staff Awards

Every spring the College honors members of our faculty and staff for their tremendous contributions to teaching, research and service. The honorees are nominated by their peers and then selected by a committee of previous awardees. Congratulations to these award winners!

Faculty Awards

- **Elske vP Smith**
  - Distinguished Lecturer
  - Department of Psychology

- **Faye Belgrave**
  - Distinguished Scholar
  - Department of Psychology

- **Andrew Chesnut**
  - Excellence in Scholarship (Math and Sciences)
  - School of World Studies

- **Chris Gough**
  - Excellence in Scholarship (Humanities and Social Sciences)
  - Department of Biology

- **Rivka Swenson**
  - Distinguished Teaching (Math and Sciences)
  - Department of English

- **Deborah Polo**
  - Distinguished Mentoring
  - School of World Studies/Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education

- **Hebing Liu**
  - Distinguished Adjunct
  - Department of Biology

- **Kathryn Murphy-Judy**
  - Distinguished Service
  - School of World Studies/Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education

- **Charlene Crawley**
  - Distinguished Advising
  - Department of Biology

- **Patsy Connors**
  - Dedication Award
  - Dean's Office

- **Douglas Kimemia**
  - Distinguished Teaching (Humanities and Sciences)
  - Political Science

- **Lesley Bullock**
  - Leadership Award
  - Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics

- **Timothy Millican**
  - Impact Award
  - Department of Biology

- **Katherine Belecki**
  - Our Catalyst Award Winner (Funding of up to $20,000)

- **Indika Arachchige**, Chemistry
  - Low-Dimensional SSN Alloys for Low-Cost and High-Efficiency Solar Cells

- **Rima Franklin**, Biology
  - Impact of Urbanization on the Prevalence and Diversity of Antibiotic Resistance Bacteria in the James River

- **George Munro**, History
  - Kinovski: From Gulag to Thriving City

- **Christopher Stevenson**, Anthropology
  - The Hydration Dating of Ancient Otrosunal Artifacts by Laser Induced Breakdown Spectroscopy

- **Dace Svikis**, Psychology
  - Relapse Prevention: Setting the stage for a randomized clinical trial of a computer-delivered intervention (CBT4CBT) in a residential sample of women with substance use disorders (SUDs)

- **Christine Shaw**, Sociology
  - Entrepreneurial Culture and Learning in the Modern Economy

- **William Eggleston**, Biology
  - Molecular analysis of loss of canalization and habituation in maize

- **G. Antonio Espinoza**, History
  - Civilizers of the People: The Teachers of Lima, 1821 – c. 1921

- **Robert Godwin-Jones**, World Studies
  - Reframing the Grimm Fairy Tales

- **Jeanne Gudyk**, Robertson School
  - #Social4Health: Promoting College Student Social and Mental Wellbeing using Social Media

- **Catherine Ingrassia**, English
  - Woman, Authorship, and Failure

- **Karen Kester**, Biology
  - Save the wasps! Maintaining productive collaborations and nurturing future funding opportunities

- **Douglas Kinemia**, Political Science
  - Organizational Culture and Ethical Practices Among NGOs in Kenya

- **Brendan Means**, World Studies
  - Digital Ice Age Mastodon and Mammoth Skeletal

- **Brooke Newman**, History
  - Subjects of the Crown: Slavery, Emancipation and the British Monarchy, 1780 – 1860

- **Terry Oglet**, English
  - The Shaping of Mark Twain's Literary Immortality

- **Joseph Reiner**, Physics
  - Zeptoliter pH sensing from metallic cluster ligand dynamics

- **Suzanne Ruder**, Chemistry
  - Analysis of representational competency in students’ understanding of organic chemistry

- **Brandi Summers**, African American Studies
  - Black in Place: The Spatial Aesthetics of Race in a Post-Chocolate City

- **Scott Vrana**, Psychology

- **Sarah Williams**, Forensic Science
  - Utility of optical tweezers for cell separation of forensic evidence

- **Desian Ye**, Physics
  - Development of Ion Source with Nanofabricated Nanotip Arrays for Ambient Mass Spectrometry

- **Our Seed Award Winners (Funding of up to $5,000)**

- **Katherine Belecki**, Chemistry
  - Immobilization of an Engineered Biocatalyst

- **Lesley Bullock**, Biology
  - Using DNA barcoding to measure diet variation of a riparian consumer

- **Victor Chen**, Sociology
  - Entrepreneurial Culture and Learning in the Modern Economy

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  - “A Witness of My Time”: Visual Arts, AIDS, and the Archive

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Staff Awards

- **Customer Service Award**
  - Frances Lynch
  - Robertson School of Media and Culture

- **Leadership Award**
  - Michelle Carpenter
  - Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics

- **Impact Award**
  - Timothy Millican
  - Department of Biology

- **Dedication Award**
  - Patsy Connors
  - Dean's Office
One of the pillars of the College's mission statement is to propel scientific research and scholarship to improve the human condition, cure and treat diseases, and promote healthy environments. As the liberal arts and teaching center of VCU and the largest source of grant indirect funds on the Monroe Park Campus, the success of the faculty of the College of Humanities and Sciences is critical to VCU's mission to become a top research public university. Our faculty bring both distinction to the College and the university.

Maryanne Collinson, Ph.D., (pictured, top left) was appointed by the President and the Board of Visitors as the John B. Fenn Professor in Chemistry. The John B. Fenn Professorship is awarded to faculty with a focus on analytical chemistry. She also received the 2017 American Chemical Society-Va Section Distinguished Scholar Award in Analytical Chemistry.

Bethany Coston, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, recently received a $50,000, year-long grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to study bisexual and non-monosexual women, their experiences of intimate partner, dating, and sexual violence, and their access to culturally competent health care.

Tessie Cottom, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology, was named the 2017 Distinguished Feminist Activist by Sociologists for Women in Society. The award is given to a member who consistently tries to improve lives of women in society through sociology. She was also ranked on the 2018 RHSU Edu-Scholar Public Influence Rankings as one of 200 scholars in the US who are "doing the most to shape educational practice and policy."

Tom Eisenberg, Ph.D., Professor in the Department of Psychology and Director, Center for the Study of Tobacco Products (pictured, center left), was named a Highly Cited Researcher for 2017 by Web of Science, Clarivate Analytics. The Highly Cited Researcher designation is awarded to researchers whose work ranks among the top 1% of that cited in their respective fields for the most recent 11 years, earning the mark of exceptional impact.

Samy El Shall, Ph.D., was appointed by the President and the Board of Visitors as the Mary Eugenia Kapp Chair in Chemistry. This award honors Kapp, the first chairperson of the department, who guided the department through its formative years.

Nae Hagivara, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology, received a four-year, $1.7 million grant from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease in the National Institutes of Health. Her study on physicians' communication behaviors and the outcomes of black patients with type 2 diabetes is also being supported by the School of Medicine.

Heather Jones, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology (pictured, bottom left), received a $1.1 million grant to increase the number of psychology doctoral students who provide behavioral health care to underserved youth, Latinx immigrants and refugees in Richmond. The US Health Resources and Services Administration awarded the four-year grant to Heather for The VCU Primary Care Psychology Training Collaborative: Expanding Services with Underserved Youth, Latinx Immigrants, and Refugees.

Shiv Khanna, Ph.D., Commonwealth Professor and Chair in the Department of Physics (pictured, top right), was honored with the Hind Rattan Award for his numerous contributions to the advancement of science. This award is one of the highest Indian diaspora awards given to non-residents of India. Khanna will receive his award in January at the NRI Welfare Society of India annual congress on the day before India's Republic Day. Along with colleagues, he has proposed the concept of "superatoms" that extend the periodic chart to a third dimension and could lead to novel materials with tunable properties and potential for applications in numerous areas.

Sonja Livingston, MFA, MS.Ed, Assistant Professor in the Department of English, recently won the VanderMay Nonfiction Prize from Ruminate Magazine for her essay, Like This, We Begin: An Essay in Two Photographs.

Marcus Messner, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Robertson School of Media and Culture, was honored with the University’s Distinguished Teaching Award at VCU’s 35th Annual Faculty Convocation in August of 2017.

Anita Nadal, MLA, Assistant Professor in the School of World Studies, was recently honored at VCU’s Annual Presidential Awards for Community Multicultural Enrichment (PACME) Awards with the Reise-Melton award, which is given for contributions to cross-cultural relations. The PACME Awards honor individuals who have made significant contributions toward enhancing VCU’s commitment to diversity, excellence and inclusion.

Brooke Newman, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Department of History (pictured below, center), received the Georgian Papers Program Fellowship to conduct research at the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle. Brooke will be digitizing and analyzing original private papers within the British royal collection. Some of these manuscripts include documents such as letters, diaries, maps and prints from King George III, as well as Kings George I, George II, George IV and William IV.

Matteo Pangallo, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Department of English, won the Best Essay on Theatre History in 2015–2016 Convocation in August of 2017.

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Ravi Perry, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science (pictured below, right), was selected as an Emerging Scholar by Diverse: Issues in Higher Education. He was one of fifteen honored this year, for his research focused on issues facing African-Americans in the US. According to the publication, this honor goes to professors that have distinguished themselves in their various academic disciplines and are actively working to make our society more equitable and just.

John Powers, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Department of History, received the Roy G. Neville Prize in Bibliography or Biography from the Chemical Heritage Foundation for his book, Inventing Chemistry: Herman Boerhaave and the Reform of the Chemical Arts. The Neville Prize recognizes an outstanding monograph or biography in the areas of the chemical and molecular sciences, and is meant to encourage emulation, inspire achievement, and promote public understanding of modern sciences, industries and economies.

Jessica Salvatore, Ph.D, Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology, was a recipient of the 2018 Research Society on Alcoholism (RSA) Early Career Investigator Award.

Zowelani Segpell, Ph.D, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology (pictured below, left), was the recipient of an American Educational Research Association (AERA) Congressional Fellowship for 2017-18.

Scott Sherman, MA, Associate Professor in the Robertson School of Media and Culture, was named Ad Person of the Year by the Advertising Club of Richmond. 
Offenders Write Their Way Out

Whitney Ligon, a Richmond resident who has struggled with addiction since she was a teenager, was arrested last fall and charged with two misdemeanors and a felony. The Richmond Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office gave her a choice: Serve time in jail or attend a new, experimental Virginia Commonwealth University class focused on reading, writing and healing through self-reflection and self-discovery.

“I thought it was the strangest thing I’d ever heard,” Ligon said. “You take a college course and it’s a writing class and your charges get dropped completely? I love writing. I’ve always loved writing. So I said absolutely.”

Ligon is one of nine low-level, nonviolent offenders who were diverted from jail to take part in a new program called Writing Your Way Out: A Criminal Justice Diversion Program, which is a partnership between VCU, the VCU College of Humanities and Sciences and Richmond’s Office of the Commonwealth’s Attorney.

Instead of being locked behind bars, Ligon and the other eight diverted students are taking English 366: Writing and Social Change this spring alongside 10 VCU students.

“We’re hoping that the (participants) can move from one stage of their life, or one mindset or lifestyle, into something that they want that’s better for them,” said David Coogan, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of English who is teaching the class. “Arguably, that’ll be better for everybody because when everybody we’re hoping that the [participants] can move from one stage of their life, or one mindset or lifestyle, into something that they want that’s better for them, ‘asthma capital’ or ‘most challenging place to live in the U.S. with asthma,’ according to Everhart. Research has shown that children living in urban centers, such as Richmond, experience worse asthma outcomes. This grant will provide a comprehensive, community-based asthma care program for those children at highest risk for poor asthma outcomes.”

The Richmond City Health District and its partners will implement the one-year program for elementary age children that will coordinate asthma care across four sectors — the family, home, community and medical care. Children and their families will participate in a randomized clinical trial that includes a 12-month follow-up period to assess the impact of the program on child asthma outcomes.

“Pediatric asthma is manageable, but it is not curable.”

Robin Everhart, Principal Investigator

“Using a community-based participatory research approach, RVA Breathes was developed with feedback from Richmond City parents and children with asthma,” Everhart said. “Families spoke with us over the course of a year in a needs-assessment grant (U34 HL130759; Everhart, PI) and were instrumental in shaping RVA Breathes into the program it is today. I would like to thank them for their hard work and their investment in improving the lives of children with asthma.”

Psychology Professor Robin Everhart has received a $5.8 million grant that aims to improve the overall health and well-being of children with asthma in Richmond.

The six-year grant, “RVA Breathes: A Richmond City Collaboration to Reduce Pediatric Asthma Disparities,” was awarded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health to Robin S. Everhart, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology.

Helping Children Breathe

The program will involve family-based asthma self-management education delivered by community health workers with the Institute for Public Health Innovation, home environmental remediation with Richmond City Health District’s Healthy Homes Initiative; and a school nurse component, with elementary schools in the Richmond Public Schools.

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Story credit: Brian McNell, University Public Affairs

David Coogan and program participant Jennifer Lee at the graduation ceremony.

Dean Fuentes, David Coogan and VCU students visit the City Jail to meet with David Coogan speaks at the program graduation (above).

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Italian Language students show their Ram Pride with Fashion majors from VCUArts in Florence, Italy.

Study abroad course learning Zulu history and culture in Ulundi, South Africa.

Rams in the Judean desert.

Students in the School of World Studies participate in archeological digs in Tel Lachish, Israel in July of 2017.

Jamaican children practice life-saving techniques taught by VCU students.

Students raft Idaho's Lower Salmon River after taking Natural History of the Salmon River Watershed, led by Dan Carr, assistant professor of Biology, part of VCU’s River of No Return series of classes.

Exploring the world is the most effective way to truly understand it. The College of Humanities and Sciences emphasizes experiential learning as an instructional tool and a way to allow students to discover avenues and career paths they might otherwise never have considered.
Our Graduate Programs

The College of Humanities and Sciences offers graduate programs across a breadth of disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, behavioral sciences, and physical sciences. Our exceptional faculty guide students in addressing society’s 21st century challenges with a focus on the development of knowledge through scientific investigations, scholarly contributions and creative works. Distinction in our programs is supported by an emphasis on positive mentoring relationships between faculty and students, enhancing an appreciation for the importance of the cross fertilization of ideas and interdisciplinary approaches. A belief in the critical importance of diverse ideas from a diverse group of faculty and students drives our vision of excellence for our graduate programs.
The College of Humanities and Sciences has over 52,000 alumni throughout the United States and around the world. Our alumni are proudly represented in hundreds of industries and organizations that impact a changing world. Here are a few highlights of alumni who received recognition in 2017-18 for their professional and personal achievements, and/or made contributions to our community.

Iris Harrell (M.Ed. ’75/E) and her wife, Ann Benson (pictured below, left), wanted to make a gift to VCU that had a lasting impact on a student pursuing a degree in the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies. By making a $1,000,000 provision in their estate plans, they will create the Harrell Benson Scholarship, which will provide funding for students with demonstrated financial need pursuing a major or minor in the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies. Preference shall be given to students who are the first in their family to attend college. “Knowing about the progressive work happening at VCU, coupled with our belief in the next generation inspired us to make this important commitment.”

Keyanna Conner, Ph.D. (Ph.D. Chemistry ’15/H&S) (pictured below, center), was appointed Secretary of Administration for the Commonwealth of Virginia, overseeing the Department of General Services, the Department of Human Resource Management, the Compensation Board and the Virginia Information Technologies Agency.

Alumni Anne M. Cooper-Chen, Ph.D. (M.S. Mass Communications ’79/H&S), Amy T. Rose, M.D. (B.S. Chemistry ’84/H&S), and Peter J. Zucker, Ph.D. (M.S. Counseling Psychology ’81/H&S), were recognized for their remarkable professional achievements.

Pahul Hanjra (B.A. Philosophy ’16/H&S, B.S. Chemistry ’16/H&S) (pictured below, right) was awarded participation in the Fulbright U.S. Student Program and worked as part of a team seeking to understand the links between obesity and cancer on a molecular level in the Cellular Networks Group in the Department of Biomedical Science at the University of Bergen.

To read more stories about the impact of College of Humanities and Sciences alumni, visit has.vcu.edu/alumni.

Baldacci Gives Back

Bestselling novelist and Virginia Commonwealth University alumnus David Baldacci and his wife, Michelle, made a $1.1 million gift to VCU’s College of Humanities and Sciences that created a fund to provide students with a variety of experiential learning opportunities and also established a scholarship for political science students.

“Our continuing partnership with VCU is incredibly meaningful to us both,” said David Baldacci. “The endowed fund and endowed scholarship will provide direct support to any university’s most important asset: its students. We look forward to helping VCU students in achieving their full potential as students and in their endeavors after graduation.”

David Baldacci, who received a bachelor’s degree in political science from VCU in 1983 and a law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1986, has published 34 novels for adults, all of which have been national and international bestsellers, and several of which have been adapted for film and television. His novels are published in more than 45 languages and in more than 80 countries, with more than 130 million worldwide sales. He has also published six novels for younger readers.

As part of the Baldacci’s gift, $1 million created the Baldacci Student Experiential Learning Endowed Fund, which grants academically promising and hardworking students of diverse areas of study and diverse backgrounds with financial support so they can pursue internships, conferences, research, domestic or study abroad, and social entrepreneurship opportunities.

Awards from the Baldacci Student Experiential Learning Endowed Fund began in the spring of 2018 and are available to selected applicants who are rising juniors or rising seniors, in good academic standing, and pursuing a degree in the College of Humanities and Sciences.

Thanks to the Baldacci Fund, 12 inaugural students were given the opportunity to travel, research, and learn outside of the classroom and the VCU campus. Lisa Day (pictured right) is one of the 2018 recipients. Day, an anthropology and history double major, will travel to South Africa to study paleoanthropology and human evolution.

Story credit: Brian McNeill, University Public Affairs
The VCU College of Humanities and Sciences Advisory Board is composed of alumni and friends who represent our array of disciplines and have made a commitment to advocate for the VCU College of Humanities and Sciences, our faculty and students.

The Advisory Board endorses the College’s 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.

Advisory Board members introduce the Dean to government and non-government organizations, businesses, and corporations that may have philanthropic or sponsored research interests as well as make connections to employers who have the willingness to work with our undergraduate and graduate students through internships, traineeships, or other experiential learning opportunities.

The Advisory Board also helps the Dean shine a light on particular needs that may be addressed with philanthropic support. Advisory Board members commit to making a personally meaningful gift to the College of Humanities and Sciences inaugural capital campaign. Advisory Board members also secure support and make friends by hosting friends at events, large and small, with the goal to promote the priorities of the College.

This year the Advisory Board took a tour of the Monroe Park Campus labs and classroom spaces, visited with faculty and students to learn about their experiences through research, teaching, learning on and off campus.

For more information about ways you can contribute toward the College’s priorities and/or Advisory Board activity, please contact Caitlin Hanbury at cshanbury@vcu.edu or (804) 827-0862.

Our Advisory Board

Christine Browning
Cardiologist
Cardiovascular Associates of Virginia

Jasmine Gore
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Our Schools, Departments, & Programs

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Biology
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English
Forensic Science
Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies
History
Interdisciplinary Science
Kinesiology and Health Sciences
Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education
Mathematics and Applied Mathematics
Military Science and Leadership
Philosophy
Physics
Political Science
Psychology
Science, Technology, and Society
Sociology
Statistical Sciences and Operations Research

Our Chartered Research Centers
Center for Cultural Experiences in Prevention
Center for the Study of Tobacco Products
Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development
Humanities Research Center