Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP) Program

School of Allied Health Professions
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Welcome to Doctoral Education from a Distance

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“VCU’s DNAP curriculum best matched my interest in advancing safe patient care and developing professional leadership skills. The course work included multiple patient safety initiatives including an evaluation of OR systems to reduce medical error. An exploration of healthcare ethics and policy issues present in today’s changing healthcare environment was enlightening. Each course prepared me for my AANA leadership roles as Region Director and Vice President. Finally, I appreciated the interaction of face-to-face classroom time and distance learning. The Richmond classroom instruction and home-based, self-directed distance program requirements provided positive input from faculty and support of fellow classmates while maintaining an active career.”

Janice J. Izlar, DNAP, CRNA  
AANA President 2012-2013

Disclaimer: Any opinions expressed reflect those of VCU and its graduates and do not represent an endorsement by AANA or any other entity so named.

“The DNAP Program in the Department of Nurse Anesthesia at Virginia Commonwealth University affords graduate students a unique learning environment. Graduate students maximize networking opportunities as they work alongside one another during the on-campus sessions yet enjoy a high degree of flexibility by utilizing distance learning technologies to complete course requirements once they return back home.”

Michael D. Fallacaro, DNS, CRNA  
Professor & Chair  
Department of Nurse Anesthesia

“Our program invites talented and diverse students to take a more scholarly approach to the specialty of nurse anesthesia. The program offers coursework to foster success in research, teaching, and leadership. Its hybrid design balances distance-based as well as traditional classroom experiences so graduate students do not have to interrupt careers or move families to pursue doctoral education. A wide range of faculty experience and enthusiasm promotes excellence in teaching, research, and mentoring.”

Suzanne M. Wright, PhD, CRNA  
Associate Professor & Director of Doctoral Education  
Department of Nurse Anesthesia

“The DNAP program afforded me the opportunity to investigate best practices in regional anesthesia, my area of interest. With the support and resources of the faculty and department, not only was I able to expand upon and improve my own practice, but I also developed a learning program to assist other anesthetists. As a graduate of this program, it is very satisfying to know that my degree is helping me educate colleagues and future anesthetists.”

Christian R. Falyar, DNAP, CRNA  
Assistant Professor & Assistant Director of Doctoral Education  
Department of Nurse Anesthesia

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The Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice Program

OVERVIEW
The Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice Program (DNAP), Department of Nurse Anesthesia, offers Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) an opportunity to earn a practice oriented doctoral degree. The program focuses specifically on the nurse anesthesia specialty and builds upon applicants’ previous education and experiences. The DNAP prepares CRNAs to assume leadership positions in education and management through a curriculum concentration focused on patient safety. Studies in human factors, quality assessment and improvement, health care systems and organizations, leadership, policy making, best evidence practice, and adult education round out this unique and dynamic program of study. Structured as either a one-, two-, or three-year course of study, the program is designed to meet the critical need for doctoral prepared CRNAs.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS
The goal of the DNAP is to provide nurse anesthetists with advanced knowledge and skills so they may assume leadership positions in teaching, professional practice, research and health care policy upon graduation. The program emphasizes both an interdisciplinary and multimedia focus, drawing from resources across the School of Allied Health Professions and Virginia Commonwealth University.

The objective of the program is to produce scholars and healthcare leaders who, by the completion of the program, will:
- Apply physiological, safety, and organizational theories to promote patient safety, enhance quality care, and improve nurse anesthesia practice.
- Analyze and synthesize relevant scientific literature and apply results to improve nurse anesthesia practice and patient care outcomes in a culturally sensitive manner.
- Communicate effectively with patients, families, the public, and other health professionals.
- Demonstrate leadership skills to meet the challenges of increasingly complex health care and educational environments impacting nurse anesthetists.
- Develop effective strategies for managing ethical dilemmas inherent in anesthesia patient care and the workplace.
- Employ teaching and learning principles for the nurse anesthetist in educating and counseling individuals, families, students in training, and groups.
- Demonstrate nurse anesthesia scholarship through presentations, publications, leadership activities, and collaboration with other disciplines.
- Utilize technology and information systems to analyze, manage, and present data.

PROGRAM ADMISSION
Admission to the program, which is open to nurse anesthetists with well-articulated career goals in the health care system, is limited and competitive. Applicants to the program must meet the following admission criteria, including:
1. A graduate degree from an accredited university
2. Graduation from a nurse anesthesia educational program accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs
3. Certification by the National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists
4. Recertification by the National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (if applicable)
5. Current and unencumbered licensure as a registered nurse and advanced practice nurse
6. A cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale
7. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test within five years of application

Christine Zambricki, DNAP, CRNA, FAAN is the Senior Director of Federal Affairs Strategies for the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, working primarily in the AANA Federal Government Affairs Office in Washington DC. A CRNA for more than 30 years and the 2001 recipient of the AANAs prestigious Agatha Hodgins Award, Zambricki received her master’s and bachelor’s degrees in nurse anesthesia from Wayne State University in Detroit, and her bachelor’s degree in nursing from Michigan State University in East Lansing.

A past president of the AANA, Zambricki’s work with health care policy related to anesthesia practice is well documented. Closely aligned with regulatory matters, Zambricki served as chair of the Michigan Board of Nursing, chair of the Governor’s Task Force on Specialty Nursing, and as a member of the The Joint Commission Professional and Technical Advisory Committee. “The hybrid format was a perfect fit for me allowing for networking opportunities and time with faculty while on-campus, yet a high degree of flexibility while learning from home.”

Dr. Zambricki completed the program in just one year; a significant accomplishment given a multitude of other commitments. “Everyone was just very supportive, knowledgeable, and understanding of the other aspects of my life,” she says of the faculty and administration. “I was challenged and found the coursework to directly relate to my professional practice.”

Dr. Zambricki also recognized the positive impact of meeting with fellow graduate students from around the country. “When you talk with other health care professionals who may have walked a walk different from yours, it really opens your eyes and inspires solutions to practice problems.”

Make it real.
Bring your passion, your family and your career together.
As a new registered nurse working at a long-term care facility, Faresha Sims, DNAP, CRNA became curious about practicing at the advanced level. She made an arrangement to meet and speak with a nurse anesthetist who described his work with an overwhelming level of enthusiasm. As Sims listened to her mentor reflect on the responsibilities and rewards of becoming a nurse anesthetist, she made a decision and developed a plan to become a CRNA.

Sims first step was to join the nursing staff of the cardiothoracic unit at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, NC. As she advanced to the critical care unit, she realized just how much information there was to learn. She seized the opportunities to absorb as much knowledge as possible in order to provide high quality patient care and excellent customer service. She obtained certifications in advanced cardiac and pediatric life support and assigned herself some of the most challenging patients. Her desire was to not just become a CRNA, but to become the best CRNA.

In 2010, Sims applied to the master of science in nurse anesthesia (MSNA) program at Virginia Commonwealth University upon high recommendation from her nursing supervisor. “I was thrilled to receive my acceptance letter from VCU. With this, I knew I was about to be challenged more than perhaps at any other time in my life. I was confident in my commitment to the program and in the faculty’s commitment to me.”

After three successful months in the master’s program, Sims enrolled in the combined MSNA-DNAP program to begin her doctoral work. “When I started taking doctoral classes, I wondered how I would add just one more thing to my already overwhelming schedule. Because the doctoral coursework was added to the curriculum using distance technology, I was able complete most of my coursework on-line. This allowed me to focus on my studies without the additional stress of having to meet frequently on-campus for my classes”, say Sims.

In early 2013, Sims realized her dream of becoming a CRNA and earned her Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice degree in May of that same year. “I am blessed to have had opportunities in my life and fortunate to have recognized them as such. I believe hard work, kindness, compassion, and some degree of grace can empower you to do great things.”

Make it real.
Empower yourself to do great things.

8. Personal statement including:
• Reasons for seeking this educational opportunity
• Career goals and how this degree will aid in that process
• Prior life/work experience that will contribute to ones success in the program
• Potential areas of interest for the capstone project

9. Completed graduate school on-line application

10. Three professional references

11. Personal interview (by invitation)

Enrollment is open to qualified persons without regard to race, age, color, national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, political affiliation or disability. Admission requirements are in compliance with all applicable federal and state statutes, orders and regulations, and University guidelines.

Before submitting an application, the applicant should recognize the demanding nature of the program and the time commitment involved. Attendance at on-campus sessions at the beginning and end of each semester is mandatory; prospective students should plan accordingly. Completion of the DNAP Program will require commitment, hard work, and the ability to manage time effectively.

ADMISSION PROCEDURES
Prospective students should access the VCU Graduate School website (http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/admission/), then click on the “Apply Now” option. VCU’s self-managed graduate application process requires the applicant to collect and submit all supporting materials.

Supporting materials are required to be mailed directly to the Graduate School (P.O. Box 843051, Richmond, VA 23284-3051) including:
• A $50 nonrefundable application fee, submitted by check or money order and made payable to VCU. Applications cannot be processed until this fee has been received
• Application submittal signature page (printed from website)
• Application for Virginia in-state tuition (if applicable)
• Official transcripts for all degrees received from an accredited college or university. Transcripts must be received in sealed envelopes signed across the seals by official university or college registrars
• Official Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores taken within the last five years.
Additional materials to be mailed directly to the Department of Nurse Anesthesia, VCU (Director of Doctoral Education, PO Box 982238, Richmond, VA 23298-0233) include:

- Three letters of professional recommendation
- A curriculum vitae
- A written essay that describes reasons for seeking the DNAP degree and how the degree will contribute to the achievement of career goals, prior life and work experience that will contribute to success in the program, and potential areas of interest for the capstone project.

Materials sent to the graduate school for processing will be forwarded to the DNAP Program Director. Once received, the application is reviewed for completeness. Applicants with incomplete files will be contacted regarding the missing materials. Once all materials are received, the completed application will be reviewed by the Admissions Committee. Applicants will be notified by the Program Director and the Dean of the Graduate School regarding the admission decision and the deadline for acceptance of the offer.

CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

The curriculum is designed to take one-, two-, or three-years to complete. Students are eligible to begin work on their capstone projects after successful completion of the first (Fall) semester. Graduate students are encouraged to contemplate their intended scholarship when applying to the program. Each academic semester is composed of both on- and off-campus components. On-campus sessions, scheduled annually during August, January, and May will employ a traditional mix of educational techniques (e.g., lectures, seminars, guest speakers, discussion groups, and assigned reading). The on-campus sessions run from 3 to 6 days, depending on the curricular plan; attendance is required at all on-campus sessions. The DNAP on-campus schedules are made available to graduate students nearly one year in advance for planning purposes. During the off-campus component, graduate students address course requirements employing a variety of innovative educational technologies (e.g., computer conferencing, computer-aided instruction, webcasts, discussion boards, and programmed instructional material) as well as assigned readings facilitating the completion of various assignments and projects.

Three-Year Curriculum

Year 1
Fall: DNAP 701 Human Factors and Patient Safety for Nurse Anesthetists 3 credit hours
DNAP 789 Nurse Anesthesia Professional Practice 3 credit hours
ALHP 708 Ethics and Health Care 3 credit hours
ALHP 760 Biostatistical Methods for Health Related Sciences 3 credit hours
Spring: DNAP 702 Nurse Anesthesia Patient Safety Seminar 4 credit hours
DNAP 703 Health Services Delivery Systems 3 credit hours
Summer: DNAP 712 Leadership in Nurse Anesthesia Education 3 credit hours
DNAP 789 Nurse Anesthesia Professional Practice 3 credit hours
Year 2
Fall: ALHP 760 Biostatistical Methods for Health Related Sciences 3 credit hours
DNAP 789 Nurse Anesthesia Capstone Project 2 credit hours
Spring: DNAP 711 Policy and Practice for Nurse Anesthetists 3 credit hours
DNAP 799 Nurse Anesthesia Capstone Project 2 credit hours
Summer: DNAP 799 Nurse Anesthesia Professional Practice 3 credit hours
DNAP 799 Nurse Anesthesia Capstone Project 2 credit hours

The program curriculum consists of a total of 33 credit hours. Graduate students complete 6 credits of course work from the VCU School of Allied Health Professions, PhD in Health Related Sciences (HRS) Program and 27 credits in nurse anesthesia, including a 6-credit practicum (DNAP 789) and 6-credit capstone project (DNAP 799). The one-, two-, and three-year curricula are listed below:

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

DNAP 701 Human Factors and Patient Safety for Nurse Anesthetists

Explores the theoretical basis of human error, patient safety, and quality assurance in health care. Introduces a systems approach to error investigation and analysis. Integrates concepts of teamwork, crisis management, simulation, and monitoring systems in anesthesia practice.

DNAP 702 Nurse Anesthesia Patient Safety Seminar

Focuses on analysis of adverse events from a systems perspective, use of multidisciplinary teams to solve management problems, and constructive techniques for communicating with patients, families, and health care providers who are involved in medical errors.

DNAP 703 Health Services Delivery Systems

Examines the structure and function of the US health care delivery system, the concepts and processes of health and illness, the institutional and individual providers of health services and related theory. Focuses on interdisciplinary care. Emphasizes meeting the unique needs of ethnically and culturally diverse populations.

DNAP 711 Policy and Practice for Nurse Anesthetists

Examines governmental and non-governmental issues that influence nurse anesthesia practice. Focus is on development of skills that contribute to leadership and personal effectiveness in implementing change in nurse anesthesia and health care. Emphasizes interdisciplinary relationships between CRNAs, nurses, physicians, administrators, policy makers, and other key stakeholders.

DNAP 712 Leadership in Nurse Anesthesia Education

Examines principles of teaching and learning applicable to the anesthesia didactic and clinical environment. Presents strategies in teacher/learner communication, presentation development and strategies, curriculum design, and methods of evaluation pertinent to nurse anesthesia education.

DNAP 789 Nurse Anesthesia Professional Practice

Emphasizes analysis and evaluation of experiential learning through the use of critical thinking skills and reflection. Explores concepts of competency and expertise. Focuses on methods of determining best clinical practices through identification of problems, review and systematic evaluation of current research, and consideration of economic and other factors that may impact patient outcomes.

DNAP 799 Nurse Anesthesia Capstone Project

Focuses on identification of relevant clinical issues, formulation of answerable questions, and examination of the research evidence that can answer the question. Students implement and evaluate a clinical project and disseminate the results through a presentation or manuscript.
Charles (Dale) Stevenson, CRNA M.Ed., joined the DNAP program in 2012 at age 77, while working as owner and chief nurse anesthetist at Complete Anesthesia Care in Waxahachie, TX. Dale earned his diploma in nurse anesthesia at St. Joseph Hospital in Fort Worth, TX in 1974, and his bachelor’s and master’s degrees at North Texas State University in 1957 and 1962, respectively. Stevenson has an extensive history of serving in the United States Air Force, retiring as Major in 1993.

Stevenson sought out the doctoral program at VCU because he wanted to make a contribution to the education of nurse anesthetists. He looked to VCU because of the experience of the faculty, the quality of the distance technology, and the reputation of the department. “I was motivated to enroll in the DNAP program after hearing about it as an attendee at one of the department’s NAFA [continuing education] meetings. VCU’s DNAP program was my first choice because of its national reputation; I see this as evidence of my commitment to our specialty and to my patients”, Stevenson says.

In 1980 at age 58, Stevenson was deployed as a nurse anesthetist in Germany during Operation Desert Storm wrapping up a 17 year career in the US Air Force. “I believe that if a person keeps his or her mind and body active and productive, he or she can make a meaningful contribution to society and feel good about what has been accomplished. For nearly four decades, I have maintained a successful anesthesia practice. At this point in my professional career, I would like to share my experience and knowledge with the next generation of nurse anesthetists. The DNAP degree will best position me for this,” says Stevenson.

Stevenson also finds himself looking forward to the DNAP on-campus sessions. “He travels from Texas to Virginia each August, January and May and feels it is time well spent. “There is a broad demographic group in my cohort of graduate students. All have walked a different path in life and have so many experiences to share and I am inspired to share mine.”

ALHP 708 Ethics and Health Care

Applies the principles of biomedical and health care ethics to develop a more informed understanding of ethical decision-making in the formulation of health care policy, as well as within the clinical environment. Focuses on utilizing and searching biomedical ethics literature; current issues in biomedical ethics; the discipline and process of ethical reflection; and case consultation.

ALHP 709 Biostatistical Methods for Health Related Sciences

Examines basic concepts and techniques of statistical methods, including the collection and display of information, data analysis, and statistical measures; variation, sampling, and sampling distributions; point estimation, confidence intervals, tests of hypotheses for one and two sample problems; principles of one-factor experimental design, one-way analysis of variance, and multiple comparisons; and correlation and regression analysis.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

The DNAP Program culminates in the successful completion of a capstone project, which is intended to demonstrate integration and synthesis of concepts and experiences learned throughout the program. With the guidance of a 2-person faculty advisory committee, students develop a project on a topic of interest relevant to clinical or professional practice, education, or leadership. The focus of the capstone project is the application of best evidence to improve patient safety through practice. Students are encouraged to be creative in identifying problems and suggesting solutions.

The project should (a) reveal the student’s ability to analyze, interpret, and synthesize information; (b) demonstrate the student’s knowledge of the literature relating to the project and acknowledge prior scholarship on which the project is built; (c) describe the methods and procedures used; (d) present results in a sequential and logical manner; and (e) display the student’s ability to discuss fully and coherently the meaning of the results.

The capstone project differs from a thesis or research dissertation in that it does not contribute new knowledge to a field, but applies existing knowledge to real-life situations with a purpose to improve outcomes. Research in the context of a capstone project typically involves examining and applying the scientific literature rather than designing a study based on qualitative or quantitative methodology. Some capstone projects, however, may involve traditional research and will require IRB approval.

PROGRAM COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS

After admission to the DNAP Program, the student must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 in all course work completed at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice degree is awarded after (1) the minimum 33 credit hours of coursework are satisfactorily completed; (2) the graduate student possesses certification as a registered nurse anesthetist; and (3) a capstone project is completed and evaluated.

COURSE TRANSFER OR WAIVER

Course Transfer: A maximum of 25% of the program coursework other than research may be transferred from another VCU program or outside institution and applied toward the DNAP course requirements. Courses taken as requirements for a previously earned degree are not transferable (see graduate school policy).

Course Waiver: Students may also request waiver of a required course if an equivalent course was previously taken and successfully completed. If approved, another course of equal or greater credit must be substituted for the waived course in order to fulfill the requisite credit hours needed for degree completion (see graduate school policy).

Transfer and/or waiver credit is given at the discretion of the Director of Doctoral Education after review of the course syllabus and consultation with appropriate course instructors and is subject to University approval.
FINANCIAL INFORMATION
Tuition and fees are established by the University’s Board of Visitors and are commonly made public in May of each year. The current tuition and fee schedule for the MCV Campus is available on the VCU Student Accounting website (www.enrollment.vcu.edu/accounting/). In addition to the University tuition and standard fees, students should budget for the following expenses:

DNAP Program Fee: A per semester fee of $200 per credit or $1,750/semester (full-time) will be assessed.

Personal Computer: Each student should have access to a personal computer and reliable internet service.

Textbooks and Computer Software: The cost of textbooks, readers, and software varies by semester and averages approximately $150-$250/semester.

Travel, subsistence and lodging during on-campus sessions: The average cost of nightly lodging for a single room in the downtown Richmond area varies. DNAP Program administrators can provide suggestions for accommodations. A limited amount of financial aid is available through the program. Students interested in receiving information on financial aid should contact.

VCU Director of Financial Aid
MCV Campus
Box 980244
Richmond, Virginia 23298-0244
(804) 828-2702

CONTACT INFORMATION
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smwright@vcu.edu
http://www.sahp.vcu.edu/nrsa

The administrative offices for the program are located on the Medical College of Virginia Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University, at 1200 East Broad Street, West Hospital, Second Floor, South Wing.

The Department of Nurse Anesthesia at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is located on the Medical College of Virginia Campus of VCU in the “City of Monuments”, Richmond, Virginia. Ranked as a best graduate nurse anesthesia program in the nation by US News and World Report, the Department is one of nine in the School of Allied Health Professions. The nurse anesthesia program at VCU received a 10-year accreditation by the Council on Accreditation in May 2011.

The mission of the Department of Nurse Anesthesia to provide learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to work as part of an interprofessional team serving the public through the delivery of safe, cost efficient, quality anesthesia services, as well as develop leaders and scholars who will advance the specialty of nurse anesthesia through research, scholarship, and public service. The Department achieves its mission by establishing an environment that values excellence, stimulates creativity, and recognizes achievement.

Master of Science in Nurse Anesthesia
First organized in 1969, the Department of Nurse Anesthesia has a long and proud heritage of educating high quality professional nurse anesthetists. The Department was first in the nation to offer a post-baccalaureate Master’s Degree in Nurse Anesthesia (MSNA) over 50 years ago. Ten nurse anesthesia faculty (seven holding doctoral degrees), work in concert with over 50 adjunct faculty, 4 staff members and 35 clinical affiliated training sites to offer a 73 credit hour 7 semester program of study. The nurse anesthesia program of study is offered on four campuses: Richmond, Virginia; Abingdon Virginia; Roanoke Virginia; and Northern Virginia, employing synchronous and asynchronous distance learning technologies.

Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice
The Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP) Program was approved by the State Council on Higher Education for Virginia and the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) in 2006 as an innovative practice doctorate. The DNAP is offered in two formats: A 33-credit post-masters program for CRNAs who wish to expand their knowledge in the areas of patient safety, evidence-based practice, education, and leadership. An optional combined degree program (MSNA-DNAP) is available for students matriculating in the master’s program.

The Center for Research in Human Simulation (CRHS) is dedicated to integrating simulation into our graduate curriculum to advance the art and science of anesthesia and to improve patient safety. Through simulated learning, graduate students become resilient and reliable, confident and competent as they experience high-fidelity clinical scenarios under the guidance of swift feedback. Here, they learn to manage unfolding and unexpected events. The center was established in 1998 and supports research in the areas of human simulation, education, human error, performance improvement, and patient safety.

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Academic Environment

VCU AT A GLANCE
Virginia Commonwealth University is a major, urban public research university with national and international rankings in sponsored research. Located in downtown Richmond, the state capital of Virginia, VCU enrolls more than 31,000 students in 222 degree and certificate programs in the arts, sciences and humanities. Sixty-six of the programs are unique in Virginia, many of them crossing the disciplines of VCU’s 13 schools and one college. MDV Hospitals and the health sciences schools of Virginia Commonwealth University compose the VCU Medical Center, one of the nation’s leading academic medical centers. The Medical Center campus is located near the financial, governmental and shopping areas of downtown Richmond. The Monroe Park campus is located two miles west in Richmond’s historic Fan District.

VCU is an extraordinary institution, and we invite you to become part of our exciting student body.

ABOUT RICHMOND
VCU’s location in historic Richmond affords its students the benefits of living in one of the South’s most cosmopolitan cities. Richmond, which has served as the capital of Virginia since 1779, is located on both sides of the beautiful James River. The city is perfect for outdoor enthusiasts of all types, boasting one of the largest river park systems in the nation. It is located only a couple of hours from both the sparkling beaches of the Atlantic Ocean and the majestic mountains of the Blue Ridge.

Having established itself as the business, cultural and recreational hub of the State, Richmond is hometown to many Fortune 500 companies. Richmonders can enjoy a wide variety of cultural and sports activities, including the Richmond Ballet, the Richmond Symphony, outstanding museums such as the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Nascar racing at the Richmond International Raceway, and minor league baseball with the Richmond Flying Squirrels at the Diamond.