VCU Community Engagement Institute 2019

Tuesday, May 14

8:00 am  Registration, Coffee, & Mingling
8:15 am  Welcome Remarks – Cathy Howard
8:30 am  Keynote Address, “Community-Engaged Research and the Opioid Epidemic”
  Gerry Moeller, C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Distinguished Chair in Clinical and Translational Research: Addiction Science
  Community-academic partnerships, done well, can move the needle on society’s most challenging issues. This keynote address will focus on one of the most pressing challenges today, the opioid epidemic. In it, Dr. Moeller will outline the impact of the drug overdose epidemic on communities in Virginia and explore ways community-academic partnerships might help to address it, including community engaged strategies for reducing drug overdose deaths and the potential for community-engaged research to target the opioid and overdose epidemic.

9:30 am  BREAK
9:45 am  21st Century Community Engagement
  Lynn Pelco, Associate Vice Provost for Community Engagement
  The higher education landscape is changing, and universities of the future may bear little resemblance to the institutions that have existed for the past 100 years. This session will help participants understand the intersections between a changing higher education landscape and community engagement. Participants will explore new models for organizing academic work (i.e., teaching, research, and service) in ways that promote student success and address community-identified needs.

11:15 am  Community-Academic Partnership Spotlight #1*
  Cameron Carter & Robin Rio, RVA Street Singers

11:30 am  LUNCH
12:30 pm  Refocus & Reflect
  Gypsy Denzine, Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

12:45 pm  Intro to Community-Engaged Research and Service Learning
  Tracey Gendron, Associate Professor, Gerontology
  Meghan Gough, Associate Professor, Urban and Regional Planning
  Katie Elliott & Lynn Pelco, VCU Service-Learning Office
  The purpose of this workshop is to provide participants with an introduction of community-engaged research (CEnR) and service-learning (SL) at VCU. University partners will be encouraged to think of the three traditional aspects of academic work (research, teaching, and service) as doors they can open to collaborate with community partners in an integrated portfolio of scholarship. Community partners will be encouraged to consider how community initiatives align with the academic aspects of research, teaching, and service.

2:15 pm  Community-Academic Partnership Spotlight #2*
  Natalie Pennywell, Site Director, Health Hub at 25th

2:30 pm  REFRESHMENT BREAK
2:45 pm  Community Engagement: From Informing to Empowering
  Alicia Aroche & Chimere Miles, Engaging Richmond
  This workshop reviews best practices of communicating about the work of community-academic partnerships. Participants will hear real world examples of how community-engaged work has been broadcast on national and local levels, including a recent study conducted by Engaging Richmond and funded by the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation.

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4:15 pm  Community-Engaged Research/Service Learning Breakout
This session offers participants the opportunity to receive shoulder-to-shoulder guidance from community-engaged instructors and scholars right here at VCU.

5:00 pm  Adjourn

Wednesday, May 15

8:00 am  Registration, Coffee, & Mingling

8:15 am  Community-Engaged Scholarship & Student Learning Lightning Talks
Learn from six VCU Community Engagement Scholars in these three-minute "lightning talks" about aspects of community engagement and hear how community partnerships have enhanced their teaching and scholarship.

8:30 am  Inclusive Collaboration
Jen Early, Project Manager, VCU Health System
This session introduces foundational concepts related to diversity and inclusion in community-academic engagement and applies these concepts to the early stages of initiating and stewarding partnerships for community-engaged teaching and research.

10:30 am  BREAK

10:45 am  Initiating & Sustaining Community-Academic Partnerships
Erin Burke Brown, Director, VCU ASpiRE
This workshop presents “5 Simple Steps” for initiating and sustaining community-academic partnerships. Participants will move through the 5 steps to consider the unique aspects of community-academic partnerships, the importance of deliberate and intentional conversations to find mutual benefit, and knowing when/if to end the partnership.

12:15 pm  LUNCH

1:15 pm  Refocus & Reflect

1:30 pm  Community-Academic Partnership Spotlight #3 & #4*
Pam Parsons & Greg Ford, Richmond Health and Wellness Program
Steve Fong & Jeremy Hoffman, Richmond OpenAir Project

2:15 pm  REFRESHMENT BREAK

2:30 pm  Community Engagement Hackathon
Matthew Vechinski, Focused Inquiry
Katie Elliott & Lynn Pelco, VCU Service-Learning Office
As a final wrap-up, we will “hack” traditional research and teaching projects to make them more community-engaged. This hands-on workshop invites participants to apply principles of human-centered design and iterative design processes to a framework for community engagement. Participants will leave with concrete ideas, inspired to take action.

4:45 pm  Certificates awarded to all two-day participants

5:00 pm  Adjourn

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*Community-Academic Partnership Spotlights throughout the event give participants opportunities to hear about the exciting work being done in and around Richmond by community-academic partners.

**Keynote**

**Dr. F. Gerard Moeller**

Gerry Moeller is the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Distinguished Chair in Clinical and Translational Research: Addiction Science, as well as the Director of Addiction Medicine and Director of the VCU Institute for Drug and Alcohol Studies. He is professor and division chair of Addiction Psychiatry in the Department of Psychiatry and holds appointments in the departments of Pharmacology and Toxicology and Neurology. With a clinical background in treatment of addictions and related behavioral disorders, Dr. Moeller’s research background focuses on impulse control as a key factor in these disorders. This approach is useful for studying other conditions in which impulsivity plays a role, such as traumatic brain injury, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and binge eating.

**Spotlights**

**Community-Academic Partnership: RVA Street Singers**

RVA Street Singers is a community choir for people affected by homelessness and allies in the Greater Richmond Region and is intended to foster social engagement through participatory singing, while promoting physical, mental, and musical development. Originating within a cross-disciplinary “Music and Social Justice” service-learning course at VCU, students interested in social justice-oriented work gain valuable out-of-classroom experience supporting marginalized populations while contributing to the musical, social, and organizational needs of the program. In addition, RVA Street Singers builds students’ cultural competency skills among participating students and deepens their understanding and critical analysis of factors impacting people experiencing homelessness.

**Cameron Carter**

Cameron D. Carter, MSW, is the co-founder and Community Engagement Director for the RVA Street Singers and an Assistant Professor in Teaching in the VCU School of Social Work. Carter is passionate about creating unique opportunities for students to engage with the community in meaningful ways and truly appreciates the interdisciplinary design of this experience.

**Robin Rio**

Robin Rio, MA, MT-BC, is the Music Director for the RVA Street Singers, and adjunct faculty in the VCU Music Department. Rio is owner of Rio Music Therapy, a private practice providing music therapy for wellness. She is emeritus professor of music therapy at Arizona State University, and was recently published in Frontiers in Medicine, a community-based music therapy support group for people with Alzheimer’s and their caregivers.
Community-Academic Partnership: Health Hub at 25th

The VCU Health Hub at 25th, located at the intersection of Nine Mile Road and North 25th Street, is a community engagement initiative led by VCU and VCU Health System that supports their shared vision of enhancing health and well-being. Interdisciplinary teams of VCU faculty and students will offer programs at the center, including health screenings, nutrition counseling, behavioral health support, chronic disease management and health education. In addition to offering screenings and counseling, the VCU Health Hub at 25th will connect residents with community providers and help with care coordination, as well as provide access to space for community events, fitness activities and educational programs.

Natalie Pennywell

Natalie Pennywell currently works as the Site Director for VCU’s Center for Urban Communities, Health Hub at 25th. Before joining VCU, Pennywell worked as the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Division of Community Nutrition in the Virginia Department of Health, which includes the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (VA WIC Program), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). She has also previously worked as a Community Health Educator for the Virginia Department of Health, Crater Health District, and was the founding coordinator and one of the first mangers of the Healthy Living and Learning Center in the Petersburg Public Library. She is the immediate past Chair of the Regional Coalition Against Alcohol, Nicotine, and Underage Drug Use (CAAN-DUU); served as a central representative on the Virginia HIV Planning Group Members (CHPG); sits on the board of the Great Richmond American Heart Association as the Mission Committee Chair and Virginia Advocacy Committee Liaison; and sits on various organizations’ and coalitions’ boards and leadership teams.

Community-Academic Partnership: Richmond Health and Wellness Program

The Richmond Health and Wellness Program emerged from a collaboration between VCU and Dominion Place, an urban low-income housing community with 249 residents that provides Section 8 Vouchers for qualifying residents. RWHP was established as an innovative model, involving an interprofessional team led by nursing and pharmacy, to provide on-site wellness and care coordination, for residents aging in place. Many of the issues impacting the daily lives of the individuals are centered around the social determinants of health. Building on a partnership of community members, housing providers, and academia, the RHWP began in 2012 with initial funding of $16,000 from the VCU Council for Community Engagement and a participatory commitment from the VCU health science schools. RHWP currently operates an onsite wellness program one-half or one day a week in each of five housing buildings with activities geared toward improving health status and addressing underlying social determinants of health. During clinic sessions, students and faculty from several health professions schools and programs (Nursing, Pharmacy, Medicine, Social Work, Occupational Therapy, Psychology) meet with residents to discuss and understand their health or social concerns.

Pam Parsons

Pamela Parsons, Ph.D., GNP-BC, is the Judith B. Collins and Joseph M. Teefey Distinguished Professor and Director of Practice and Community Engagement for the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing. She is a Distinguished Practitioner and Fellow in the National Academies of Practice and Nursing Academy. She has served...
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as the Project Director for the Richmond Health and Wellness program. Parsons is Co-Director for the VCU Institute of Inclusion, Inquiry and Innovations Health and Wellness in Aging Populations Core. She serves as an expert consultant with the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Housing with Supportive Services Demonstration Project and was a 2017 Richmond Memorial Health Foundation Health and Equity Fellow, joining community leaders from across the Richmond region to assist with developing strategies to address health equity.

Community-Academic Partnership: Richmond OpenAir Project

This collaboration between VCU’s College of Engineering and the Science Museum of Virginia studies how variations in the urban environment impact quality of life. Previously, the project identified air temperature variation across Richmond and found correlations to incidences of heat-related illness. The current project aims to build and deploy air pollution monitoring systems to evaluate air quality across Richmond. Three different sensor systems are being validated against established Department of Environmental Quality measurements, and placement of monitoring sites is being considered to include geospatial and socio-economic factors.

Stephen Fong

Dr. Stephen S. Fong is an associate professor in Chemical and Life Science Engineering who received his Ph.D. in Bioengineering from UC-San Diego. He supervises the Systems Biological Engineering Lab that focuses on metabolic engineering of microorganisms and SustainLab that focuses on community-oriented sustainability problems.

Jeremy Hoffman

Dr. Jeremy Hoffman is a Climate and Earth Science Specialist at the Science Museum of Virginia who received his PhD in Geology from Oregon State University with a specialization in paleoclimatology. In his role at the SMV, he develops educational material, fosters scientific communication, and builds research collaborations. Hoffman is the central organizer of the Richmond Urban Heat Island Consortium.

Presenters

Lynn E. Pelco

Dr. Lynn Pelco serves as the associate vice provost for community engagement in the VCU Division of Community Engagement. She oversees the VCU Service-Learning Office and holds a joint faculty appointment as professor in the VCU School of Education. Pelco has held a number of clinical and faculty positions, including professor of school psychology at the College of William & Mary, lecturer at the University of South Australia, assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the Pennsylvania State University School of Medicine and school psychologist in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. In 2018 Pelco received the Outstanding Leader in Experiential Education: Higher Education Award from the National Society for Experiential Education.
Gypsy Denzine
Dr. Gypsy Denzine, senior vice provost for faculty affairs, joined Virginia Commonwealth University August 6, 2018. Prior to coming to VCU, she served as dean of the College of Education and Human Services at West Virginia University. Initially, Denzine joined WVU as associate provost for community engagement and outreach.

Tracey Gendron
Tracey Gendron is the Interim Chair and an Associate Professor in the Department of Gerontology in the College of Health Professions at Virginia Commonwealth University. Gendron has a MS in Gerontology, an MS in Psychology and a PhD in Developmental Psychology. She teaches several graduate and undergraduate service-based courses including grant writing, research methods and biology of aging. Gendron takes an all-inclusive approach to teaching about aging, particularly highlighting those understudied and underrepresented groups that are at increased risk of negative health outcomes based on discrimination. Her research is focused on the language, expression and perpetuation of ageism, aging, anxiety, and gerontophobia. Her personal and professional goal is to raise awareness of how deeply embedded ageism is within all cultures and settings.

Meghan Gough
Meghan Z. Gough, PhD, is a community-engaged scholar, teacher and learner focused on civic capacity building and planning for more livable and equitable communities through civic engagement, partnerships and collaborative decision-making. In her role as Associate Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at Virginia Commonwealth University, Gough’s teaching and research examine the importance of local knowledge and asset-based approaches in urban planning and policymaking. Her most recent work investigates the roles and responsibilities of anchor institutions – particularly universities and public gardens – as partners in co-creating opportunities for community strengthening and serving the public good.

Katie Elliott
Katie Elliott, MA, joined the Division of Community Engagement in January 2015 as the associate director of the Office of Service Learning. In that capacity, she focuses on supporting strong community-academic partnerships, building faculty development infrastructure, and creating community-engaged students. She manages the Service-Learning Teaching Assistants program, a community-engaged leadership program that supports students as peer educators for service-learning classes. Elliott has more than a decade of experience in higher education, primarily emphasizing student success and learning support. She has administrated learning support units at two universities and taught courses on composition, writing theory, and teaching pedagogy, many of them service-learning courses. She has previously served as the associate director of the Writing Center at the University of Kansas, as a writer and editor for the University of Chicago, and as the coordinator of the VCU Writing Center and a member of the University College faculty.
Engaging Richmond

Engaging Richmond is a partnership between community members and researchers from VCU and is based in Richmond’s East End. Since the project’s inception in 2011, the members of the Engaging Richmond team have used mixed-methods research to explore the social and environmental factors that influence health.

Alicia Aroche

Alicia Aroche currently serves as a research associate for community engagement and a member of the Engaging Richmond community-academic partnership at the Center on Society and Health at VCU. As part of the Engaging Richmond team, she has participated in research studies around parent engagement, volunteerism and civic engagement, community development and other social determinants of health. Previously, Alicia served as communications and community engagement advocate for Bridging Richmond, a cradle-to-career regional collaborative. Aroche has introduced her experience in storytelling into her role with the Center, using qualitative and quantitative data. Her media and communications background includes work as a story analyst with an Emmy-Award winning actor, producer and writer in feature film and television. In 2016, a short feature that she wrote, directed and produced, “Empty Chair,” was accepted into festivals in New York City, Atlanta; screened as a public performance in Montreal, Quebec, and won best-animated short at the Atlanta Underground Film Festival. Since 2017, she has served as an international affiliate with the Center for Oral History and Digital Storytelling at Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec Canada. She is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University with a bachelor’s degree in Mass Communications and a master’s degree in Education.

Chimere Miles

Chimere Miles is a resident of the East End Community and founding member of Engaging Richmond when the group formed in 2011. Miles is passionate about opportunities for children and has volunteered with many groups and organizations, including Richmond Public Schools Early Head Start/Head Start as the Policy Council Chairperson, the Richmond Public School Truancy Committee, and Richmond Promise Neighborhood. She also serves as a facilitator and trainer for mental health first aid, and has trained over 400 residents and organizational representatives in mental health first aid. Miles also serves as a community outreach coordinator at Paul Development Center and has worked with the Strengthening Families Program. Miles has an Associate’s Degree in Allied Health and Science, and her previous work experience includes patient care work and medical administrative duties.

Jen Early

Jen Early, MSHA, RN, is a change catalyst with a reputation for producing results. She has over a decade of community health experience and is a highly requested presenter, trainer, facilitator, and consultant in the areas of organizational and professional development, community engagement and knowledge co-creation and translation in academic health systems. Her training and experience give her unique expertise in optimizing organizational structure to produce change and enhance organizational, employee, and community outcomes. Early currently serves as a project manager of the VCU Health System.

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Erin Burke Brown
Erin Burke Brown, PhD, joined VCU’s Division of Community Engagement in 2008 as the coordinator of the AmeriCorps and America Reads Programs. In that role she recruited, trained, and supervised up to 80 members who served as tutors and mentors to elementary students reading below grade. In 2011, she became the assistant director of service-learning and then promoted to associate director of service-learning, supporting service-learning faculty, students and community partners in the development of quality courses that integrate meaningful service experiences into the academic curriculum. In 2015, Brown was named director of VCU ASPiRE, providing leadership and oversight for all operations of the program, its staff and curriculum. Brown has more than 10 years of experience working in community engagement. Prior to her current role, she worked at a local nonprofit with children of incarcerated parents. She also participated in the Teach for America program where she served as a 5th grade teacher in Baton Rouge, La. Brown’s research and teaching interests include service-learning, inclusion and diversity, community partnerships and university student development.

Matthew Vechinski
Matthew James Vechinski, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Focused Inquiry. He primarily teaches process- and project-based research and writing courses to VCU undergraduates of all majors. He has taught service-learning courses for the past five years, and his community partnerships largely focus on opportunities to impart technology skills and technological solutions to underserved communities in Richmond affected by the digital divide. Interdisciplinary student groups in Vechinski’s classes create projects for partners that apply their course learning and address community needs that students identify through empathy and reflection on service. Vechinski encourages students to regard themselves as designers for social change by applying concepts and methodologies from design thinking and social innovation. He stresses sustainability, co-design, prototyping, and asset-based community development in his approaches. Most recently, he created and taught a course for the VCU Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies (UNIV 391, “Interdisciplinary Social Innovation: Designing Social Change”) emphasizing leadership development and project management. Vechinski was selected to be a Service-Learning Faculty Fellow for 2019–2020.