Working Together. Changing Lives
VCU is closing the book on its strategic plan, *Quest for Distinction*, and is about to launch a new strategic plan. When *Quest for Distinction* was launched with one of its major themes stated as “VCU will become a national model for community engagement,” the Division had a unique charge to provide the support and direction for the university to reach this aspirational goal. Community engagement is interwoven throughout the tripartite mission of the university – its teaching and learning; its research and creative expression; and its service and outreach. To be successful, it is dependent upon the establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships with many different community-based organizations.

As you will read in this impact report, VCU, and the Division, has much to celebrate in reaching a place of national distinction in community engagement. This recognition was apparent as VCU served as host for the 2018 summer conference for the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities and The Democracy Collaborative. Representatives from over 100 campuses gathered to learn from and with VCU.

We have moved beyond counting experiences to demonstrating that these experiences contribute to the success of our students, faculty and community. We know that students, who participate in service-learning and the ASPIRE living-learning program, are more likely to be retained and graduate on time. We know that faculty who pursue community-engaged research are successful in publishing their work for their discipline and for the community partners who benefit from their findings – and they can be promoted for this scholarship. We know that segments of our community, local and international, have changed as a result of collaborations with VCU.

It is extremely gratifying for the staff of the Division of Community Engagement to work in tandem with faculty, students and staff from across the many VCU academic and academic support units to bring community engagement to national prominence. We are poised to take this work to the next level as we continue the journey, in partnership with our community, to tackle the pressing challenges and opportunities that face our nation and world.

We invite you to join us.

Sincerely,

Catherine W. Howard, Ph.D.
Vice provost, Division of Community Engagement
Associate professor, Department of Psychology
On June 25, educational leaders from 100 campuses across the nation came to Richmond to witness VCU’s accomplishments and explore how universities can strengthen their communities and the democracy of this nation.

The visiting leaders are members of two national organizations, the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) and The Democracy Collaborative (TDC) Anchor Dashboard Cohort, convening at VCU for a conference examining the topic of “Creative Placemaking for Healthy Communities.” University leaders in economic and community engagement explored partnerships engaged in the arts, health, and innovation. Through presentations, interactive sessions and tours with community partners, participants gained new insights into how universities as key anchor institutions can leverage interdisciplinary strategies to address complex social and economic challenges facing our communities. VCU President Dr. Michael Rao was featured on a panel discussion, “Presidential Perspectives: Universities, Place-development and Creative Placemaking.”

Catherine Howard, Ph.D, VCU vice provost of community engagement, serves as chair of the executive council for APLU’s Council for Engagement and Outreach. In that capacity, she served as co-chair of the conference, along with Eric Barron, Ph.D, president of Penn State and chair of APLU’s Commission on Innovation, Competitiveness and Economic Prosperity.

An anchor mission is a university’s commitment to intentionally apply its place-based economic power and human capital in partnership with community to mutually benefit the long-term well-being of both. Over the past two years, The Annie E. Casey Foundation has supported six campuses, including VCU’s, to be an anchor cohort with the charge to create a framework that will put the anchor mission into practice. At the conference, 26 additional campuses joined their quest.

Held in partnership with the Democracy Collaborative, a research institute focused on developing strategies for a more democratic economy, the meeting also included themed immersion tours in Richmond that provided a deep look at issues in the city and highlighted VCU’s local partnerships on topics ranging from research innovations to public art, trust and racial reconciliation.

WHAT IS AN ANCHOR MISSION?

Joining 30 other colleges and universities across the United States, VCU was selected as an inaugural member of the Higher Education Anchor Mission Initiative (HEAMI), a national collaboration designed to develop and share new strategies for deploying higher education’s intellectual and place-based resources to enhance the economic and social well-being of the communities they serve.

Higher education institutions like VCU are anchor institutions: local economic engines and mission-driven organizations inextricably linked to the long-term well-being of their local communities and uniquely positioned and incentivized to play a more active role in supporting the local economy. By intentionally implementing an anchor framework, the whole university, including the business and administrative divisions, will be able to better serve its public mission. The Higher Education Anchor Mission Initiative will provide a national platform to accelerate this important work.

The Higher Education Anchor Mission Initiative is a joint project of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU), a national organization dedicated to connecting urban universities and their partners, and The Democracy Collaborative (TDC), a national research institute developing strategies for a more democratic economy, and is supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. According to Ted Howard, TDC President, “colleges and universities in the US collectively employ over 4 million people, spend over $43 billion each year, and hold over half a trillion dollars in their endowments, which means their potential impact as community wealth building anchor institutions is enormous.”
PARTNERSHIP AIDING LOW-INCOME SENIORS IS 2018 CURRENTS OF CHANGE WINNER

The Richmond Health and Wellness Program, a collaboration involving 20 community and university partners, received the overall Currents of Change Award at VCU’s annual celebration of community partnerships hosted by the Division of Community Engagement.

The Richmond Health and Wellness Program, which was launched in 2012, currently operates in five apartment buildings designed for low-income seniors in the urban Richmond area. The program serves more than 500 older and disabled adults, emphasizing health assessments, access to care, medication management, mental and behavioral health counseling, chronic disease monitoring, and care coordination.

At the celebration held in May, Catherine Howard, Ph.D., vice provost of the Division of Community Engagement, highlighted projects that align with the DCE’s mission statement and its focus on “university-community partnerships that generate innovative solutions to societal challenges and prepare the engaged citizens of tomorrow.”

The celebration also was an opportunity to honor a host of VCU students for their community engagement work, including those students who had served this year with AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps VISTA and the Peace Corps. In addition, Kevin Allison, Ph.D., senior executive director of strategy and presidential administration, announced that Nauje Jones had become the first VCU student to receive a Newman Civic Fellowship, which recognizes community-committed students and provides them with training and resources for pursuing solutions for challenges facing communities. The Campus Compact, a national coalition of more than 1,000 colleges and universities, provides the fellowship.

ADDITIONAL CURRENTS OF CHANGE AWARD WINNERS

The Virginia Oyster Shell Recycling Program was honored for Exemplary Partnership in Outreach. The program takes shells destined for the trash and returns them to the Chesapeake Bay to help restore wild oyster populations, improve water quality and provide new fish habitat.

The Evergreen Cemetery Project was honored for Exemplary Partnership in Teaching. The senior capstone class taught by Kathryn Howell, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Center for Urban and Regional Analysis in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, works with the nonprofit Enrichmond Foundation to develop a master plan for the historic Evergreen Cemetery.

The VCU LaunchPAD (Preparing Academics for Discourse) was honored for Exemplary Partnership, Student Initiated. A student organization, VCU LaunchPAD provides School of Education doctoral students with a peer-support network, as well as various professional development workshops, seminars and events focused on writing for academic publication, reviewing research manuscripts and an overall introduction to scholarly activities.

The VCU Council for Community Engagement highlights and celebrates partnerships that benefit students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community partners on local, state, regional, national and global levels.

For more information or to nominate a partnership, visit community.vcu.edu/council/currents-of-change-award.
Service-learning is a course-based educational experience in which students participate in organized service activities that address community-identified needs. In addition to service, students complete guided reflections that increase their understanding of course content and build a sense of civic responsibility.

A growing body of research supports the notion that participation in experiential high-impact educational practices like service-learning has been consistently shown to correlate with higher levels of student engagement and increased graduation rates.

Through their service-learning classes, students move outside the classroom to apply what they are learning to community issues in Richmond and beyond, and many service-learning students continue to volunteer within the community long after their service-learning class ends.

**Service-Learning Stats for 2017-18**

- **3,931** students were enrolled in service-learning courses.
- **218** service-learning class sections were offered, providing VCU students with engaged learning opportunities.

**Graduation and Retention**

VCU service-learning undergraduate students have an average three-year retention rate of **83** percent, compared to 70 percent for non-service-learning students. **72** percent will graduate in five years or less, compared to 62 percent of non-service-learning students.

**Diversity**

Underrepresented and diverse student groups are well represented in VCU service-learning classes. In 2017-18, **37** percent of VCU service-learning undergraduate students were from underrepresented minority groups.

**Quality of Education**

According to the National Survey of Student Engagement, VCU students who take service-learning courses benefit from increased faculty-student interactions and have more opportunities for integrative and reflective learning than VCU students who do not take service-learning courses.
STUDENTS SUCCEEDING IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A paper article by rising senior **Christine Hilbert** was published in the VA Engage Journal. The article, “Technology Literacy and Senior Citizens: Online Communication, Privacy and Phone Scams,” stemmed from Hilbert’s experiences at an assisted-living facility as a service-learning student in Matthew Vechinski’s UNIV 200 course in Fall 2017. She continued her involvement with the class and community partner as a Service-Learning Teaching Assistant in Spring 2018.

**Jamal Brooks,** ’18, a social work major and Service-Learning Teaching Assistant (SLTA), received the VCU School of Social Work’s School of Social Work Service & Leadership Award for demonstrating leadership and service to the school, the university and the community. Brooks served as a SLTA for VCU School of Social Work Assistant Professor Allison Ryals’ social justice service-learning class.

Five ASpiRE students were recognized for their academic and service records as part of the annual **Business Services Scholarship Awards**, representing ten percent of all recipients awarded. They received more than $30,000 in scholarships. Additionally, ASpiRE international graduate student and ASpiRE community fellow Sombo Muzata-Chunda received $5,000.

On April 28, **84 students were recognized for successfully finishing the ASpiRE program.** The students were joined by a cadre of friends and family members in the packed Richmond Salons of the Student Commons. The students heard a keynote from former ASpiRE co-curricular coordinator, Grady Hart. To commemorate the 5th cohort of completing students, special awards were presented to a completing student (Anna Hopkins, ’18), young alumnus (Margaret vonVoyrs-Norton, ’15) and community partner (Art for the Journey).

ASpiRE’S IMPACT

Academic Scholars Program in Real Environments (ASpiRE) enriches and deepens students’ understanding of their capacity to create positive change in communities through coursework, co-curricular experiences and a vibrant residential environment. Through long-term, sustainable partnerships, more than 650 students have Made it Real by participating in VCU ASpiRE.

Participants in VCU ASpiRE combine direct service to the community, learning opportunities and workshops and residential activities to form a well-rounded living-learning experience. Students volunteer with 30 sustained community partners, addressing issues related to education and workforce development, health and wellness, accessible and affordable housing, environmental sustainability and community-building.

**Total current number of ASpiRE students:** 190
**Total number of community service hours:** 9,195
**Total number of co-curricular events:** 260
**Sustained Partnerships for 2017-2018:** 30
Bridging Richmond is leading a new initiative, “Graduate RVA,” focused on increasing postsecondary attainment in the Richmond region. By convening a growing partnership team that includes representatives from VCU, John Tyler Community College and Reynolds Community College, Bridging Richmond aims to increase the number of adults in the region with at least an associate's degree. Through a joint degree reclamation strategy focused on reverse transferring, Graduate RVA is helping students in the region who have earned some college credits fulfill the requirements of an associate's degree through the combination of credits received at community college and VCU.

An additional integral component of ASpiRE is the program’s goal of recruiting and retaining a diverse group of students who will graduate from the university equipped to meet the challenges of the next phase of their life. To date, 214 students who completed the program have graduated from VCU. Data from the Office of Planning and Decision Support demonstrates that the program is inclusive of under-represented minorities (1), Pell recipients* (2), and first generation students at higher levels than the general population. The program is truly interdisciplinary, with more than 30 majors represented among participants. Additionally, preliminary research has shown that students in ASpiRE graduate at higher levels than similar VCU students not participating in the program (3).

A primary factor for the program’s student success is its ability to make a large, urban university feel like a small and intimate community. Students are supported by program staff who serve as success coaches to smaller groups of students, providing wrap-around support to ensure their mental, physical and academic well-being.

Bridging Richmond received $325,000 grant funding from the Lumina & Kresge Foundations to support the Graduate RVA partnership and postsecondary attainment work within the Richmond region.

BRIDGING RICHMOND LEADS EFFORT TO INCREASE POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT

with some college but no degree. Additionally, students pursuing bachelor’s degrees who have their associate's degrees are better positioned for paid internships and higher paying jobs to offset the costs of tuition.

• **enhancing regional partnerships.** Inter-collegiate partnerships and reverse transfer agreements improve and advance existing partnerships within the regions. All students within the region benefit from coordinated support and collaboration between higher education institutions.

Additionally, residents in the region who have stopped-out from either a two- or four-year institution of higher education will also benefit from the reverse transfer initiative through targeted outreach and engagement led by Bridging Richmond and the Graduate RVA partnership team.

Bridging Richmond received $325,000 grant funding from the Lumina & Kresge Foundations to support the Graduate RVA partnership and postsecondary attainment work within the Richmond region.
In the fall of 2013, Joann Richardson, currently the department chair and associate professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Sciences in the College of Humanities and Sciences, received a $1,000 grant from the VCU Service-Learning office. She had an idea to implement an international community engagement program in rural Jamaica that would elevate her students’ learning in community health promotion and impact people’s health in an underserved community. But she needed support to get her idea off the ground.

“Without that seed money to travel to the country and explore the feasibility of developing and conducting this work, it would have remained an idea or a dream,” Richardson said. “I believe it is imperative for faculty to be able to first engage with the community before involving students to determine if the setting/environment, the needs, the attitudes and the overall receptivity are positive to conduct community-engaged work.”

The first group of students traveled to Jamaica during spring break in 2015. Now, more than three years later, 81 students have participated in the trips, serving more than 5,000 people in Negril and surrounding areas.

Students in a variety of majors, including kinesiology and health sciences, biology, kinetic imaging, nursing, sociology and anthropology, take Richardson’s HPEX 391 Jamaica: Community Health Promotion service-learning course. Working with community partners, Richardson and her students provide health promotion and health education activities, addressing topics in schools that include personal hygiene, dental health, physical activity, nutrition and goal setting. They also hold health fairs at several community sites and conduct health screenings like blood pressure, glucose, body mass index and vision checks. Information and education about physical activity, nutrition, stress management, sexual health and STI/HIV prevention is also provided.

Since the program’s launch, Richardson and her students have worked with 35 community partners, including local schools, hospitals and community-based organizations. Many organizations now have a longstanding relationship with VCU. The Public Hospital of Savanna La Mar is one of the original partnerships established during Richardson’s first trip. Part of the outreach effort with the hospital includes home visits to people who are homebound, elderly or do not have transportation. The overwhelming majority of the people the group visits have hypertension or type 2 diabetes.
“It has been very impactful for the students and for me as the leader when we conduct the home visits, and we ask when was the last time they had their blood pressure or glucose checked, and the response is ‘when you were here the last time,’” Richardson said. “This demonstrates to us that our services are needed and very much appreciated as clients enthusiastically greet us, welcome us into their homes and thank us for coming back.”

Richardson said that her students are involved in all phases of the process, from collecting donations to distribute in Jamaica, to designing educational materials and props, to conducting the health promotion/education activities.

“Students’ positive perceptions of themselves, as well as the world, are literally transformed through this program,” Richardson said. “The maturity and growth in such a short span of time reportedly amazes the students and gives them clarity and focus, not only regarding future career pursuits but also influences them to include service in their life’s activities regardless of their future profession.”

Heather Adams, ’18, a recent graduate from the Department of Kinesiology and Health Sciences, was one of the 12 students who participated in the most recent trip this past June. Adams has also previously traveled with the program during Spring Break 2018.

Adams said her experiences in Jamaica helped reinforce her love of working with children, while also helping her discover a love for working in public health. Her career goals include becoming a pediatric physical therapist, working with children who need prosthetics in the U.S. and with underserved populations abroad.

“That one step outside of your comfort zone can change the direction of your entire life,” Adams said. “Working in communities with a different culture than your own really broadens your view of the world, and it makes you reflect on who you are as a person and who you want to be.”

In 2017-18, $20,426 in service-learning grants supported innovative, community-engaged teaching, and 122 faculty taught designated service-learning courses.
What is a partnership?

The Division of Community Engagement sets the standard for the university community in helping to educate and model the principles of effective university-community partnerships:

1. To value and respect the knowledge and expertise that exists within communities.
2. To support collaborative university-community partnerships built on trust and reciprocity.
3. To seek out, engage, and value diverse perspectives and experiences that forge practical and innovative solutions.
4. To advance and disseminate new knowledge and best practices through community engaged scholarship.

2017-18 HIGHLIGHTS OF FACULTY TRAINING AND SUPPORT

The annual Service-Learning faculty development workshop was held Feb. 9, 2018 in partnership with the University of Richmond Bonner Center for Civic Engagement and was opened statewide this year for the first time. The workshop focused on developing students’ professional identities and skills through service-learning and drew 46 engaged faculty and administrators from 14 institutions across the state.

The Service-Learning Office conducted an in-depth Community Partner Impact Assessment to better understand how service-learning impacts community partner organizations and to identify ways to better meet community partners’ needs and address their concerns. Results strongly indicated a desire for more partnership development. To help facilitate this, the Service-Learning Office initiated a series of Partnership Development Workshops, which brought together teams of faculty and community partners for guided conversations and action planning. Fifteen partnership teams—a total of 36 attendees—participated in the face-to-face discussions in February.

As part of a goal to incubate new national resources for civic learning and engagement, DCE staff developed and launched an open-access ‘Introduction to Community Engagement’ course curriculum. Associate director Katie Elliott and assistant director Amanda Hall presented the curriculum at the 2018 Gulf South Summit, and the curriculum website has had more than 3,000 views in the semester since it went live.
LEADING SCHOLARSHIP IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Faculty and staff within the Division of Community Engagement are some of the leading scholars in the country surrounding community engagement. By maintaining a steady presence at national community engagement conferences, other scholars throughout the country recognize and look to VCU for guidance and thought leadership in this area.

Through Scholars Compass, VCU’s publishing platform for the intellectual output of the university’s academic, research and administrative communities, DCE scholarship is accessible all over the world.

View DCE scholarship at scholarscompass.vcu.edu/community.

- **79** papers
- **Five years** of accessible papers and presentations from Community Engagement Institutes
- **15** papers on community-engaged research
- Papers have been downloaded **14,360** times, with **6,567** of them in the last year alone.

Catherine Howard Receives President’s Award of Excellence

Catherine Howard, Ph.D., vice provost, Division of Community Engagement, received the President’s Award of Excellence at the 46th annual service awards reception held Oct. 4. The award is the highest honor the university can bestow upon staff and A&P faculty, and it recognizes one exceptional person for their contributions to VCU or VCU Health throughout their career.

The event featured remarks from VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D., Faculty Senate President Scott Street, Ph.D., and Staff Senate President Lauren Katchuk.

“What I love about VCU — and therefore what I love about all of you, because you are VCU — is that you are committed to doing those difficult things that very few others are willing to do,” Rao said in welcoming remarks. “You are always thinking ahead about what this university needs to be, about what Richmond needs to be — and can be — going forward. Thank you for what you are doing.”
• Four ASPiRE students presented at regional conferences. Sravya Dhavala, ’19 and Daniel Ruiz, ’19 presented at the annual William and Mary Active Citizens Conference on the topic of mass incarceration with more than 50 undergraduates from across the East Coast in attendance. Jacob Sexton, ’18 and Naziirah Vines, ’18 presented at the Virginia Volunteerism Conference on the topic of effectively working with millennials as volunteers and employees to an audience of 25 community members from across the state.

• ASPiRE student, Nauje Jones, ’18 was selected as VCU’s inaugural Newman Civic Fellow. One fellow is nominated by each university participating in Campus Compact. Students are selected based on their service and academic record as well as their ability to serve as a leader among their peers in community engagement. Jones will spend next academic year learning best practices for community engagement and implementing programming to assist ASPiRE students and Residential Life and Housing. She will also attend a national conference in Boston with fellows from across the country.

• Lobs & Lessons received a USTA grant to pilot a new program called Girls Rule the Court. The $1,500 grant allowed MFYC to offer the program to 11, 6th grade girls from Peter Paul Development Center (PPDC) at no cost. The 8-week program was focused on self-esteem and body image, and concluded with a culminating project the girls selected, designed and delivered to younger girls at PPDC.

LUMINA FOUNDATION DESIGNATES RICHMOND AS TALENT HUB

Lumina Foundation has named Richmond as one of 17 communities across the country designated as a Talent Hub, which comes with a $350,000 grant. Richmond earned this new designation by meeting rigorous standards for creating environments that attract, retain and cultivate talent, particularly among today’s students, many of whom are people of color, the first in their families to go to college, and from low-income households.

Bridging Richmond, a cradle-to-career partnership, will lead Richmond’s effort. VCU founded the Bridging Richmond partnership in 2009 and has provided an administrative home in the Office of the Provost and Division of Community Engagement since 2012. Jason Smith, Ph.D., executive director for Bridging Richmond, convened United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg, John Tyler Community College, Reynolds Community College and VCU to develop Richmond’s Talent Hub application and work plan. The partners will collaborate to accelerate regional credential attainment by establishing data-sharing agreements and implementing targeted interventions to support adults with some postsecondary experience but no credential.

“Educational attainment is an important component of the success of families and individuals in our region,” said James Taylor, president and CEO of United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg and co-chair of Bridging Richmond. “I am excited about the Talent Hub designation and I look forward to working with regional partners to continue this critical work in the years ahead.”

SCHOLARSHIP AND RECOGNITION HIGHLIGHTS OF 2017-18

• VCU is the host of the VA Engage Network through 2018, under the leadership of chair Lynn Pelco, Ph.D, associate vice provost of community engagement. The VA Engage Network is a volunteer organization that brings together individuals who are working to expand community and civic engagement on the campuses of Virginia colleges and universities.

The network publishes the VA Engage Journal, which promotes engaged scholarship by undergraduate, professional, and graduate students. The journal provides a forum for students to publish research studies, reflection essays and reviews of current literature and engagement practice.

VA Engage also hosts a fall meeting for community-engaged administrators and faculty and collaborates with The College of William & Mary of offer the annual Active Citizens Conference for students.

For more information, visit vaengage.com.
COMMUNITY IMPACT

COMMUNITY JOINS FORCES TO BUILD MUCH-NEEDED PLAYGROUND IN JACKSON WARD

In November, more than 300 volunteers, including more than 50 students, faculty and staff from VCU, elected to devote their day to building a playground from scratch at Abner Clay Park in Jackson Ward.

Kaboom!, a national nonprofit that helps communities build playgrounds, spearheaded the project and oversaw the space’s striking transformation. The Jackson Ward neighborhood and its children participated in the planning process, including helping to determine the featured equipment.

Tito Luna, neighborhood outreach director in VCU’s Division of Community Engagement, said the simple but powerful purpose of the project served as motivation for the volunteers and helped inspire such a large group to participate from VCU and elsewhere.

“It was really about helping kids play,” said Luna, who helped organize the VCU contingent. “For most of us, it took us back to our own childhoods and wanting to have a safe place to have fun and play and just be a kid.”

COMMUNITY IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS OF 2017-18

• ASPiRE students have continued their work with the East End Cemetery for the fifth year. The East End Collaboratory, a unique partnership between the cemetery, VCU and the University of Richmond has connected students, faculty members and volunteers in their efforts to improve the historic site. The community came together for a kickoff event on Sept. 9 and continued to work throughout the year, clearing the land, marking forgotten headstones and assisting with the development of websites to tell the story of the cemeteries.

• The Mary and Frances Youth Center received the Sports Bakers RVA Award for being “active RVA certified.” Sports Backers launched Active RVA in 2012 to improve the quality of life in the Richmond Region through active living. An Active RVA-Certified Workplace adopts, supports and engages physical activity as part of their company’s culture, supporting employees to maximize their health and wellness through regular physical activity.

• Seven second-year ASPiRE students participated in a special Community Studies course that met weekly with about a dozen peer mentors from the Healing Place, a residential addiction recovery program located in south Richmond. All of the participants read Dreamland: The True Tale of America’s Opiate Epidemic, the 2017 VCU Common Book. During the hour-long class at the Healing Place each Tuesday afternoon, the participants discussed the book and the opiate epidemic, along with related issues of substance misuse, addiction and recovery and drug policy.

Did you know?

Service-learning students provided 78,620 hours of service in the 2017-18 academic year.
MARY AND FRANCES YOUTH CENTER PROVIDES IMPACTFUL YOUTH PROGRAMMING

This Fall, the Mary and Frances Youth Center will celebrate 10 years of impact on Richmond-area youth. The Center’s vision is to be a regional leader in university-community collaboration for positive youth development and accomplishes this by providing programming and training to enhance the lives of youth in the Richmond metro area.

In 2017-18, the MFYC:

• Provided 39 weeks of programming, serving 837 youth, representing seven cities and counties in the greater Richmond region.

• Provided 77 scholarships, 94% awarded to summer programs.

• Engaged the support of 204 volunteers who gave 1,899 hours of their time.

• Increased number of youth programs by 25%.

• Served 14 program partners, welcoming four new ones.

SAVE-THE-DATE

The one night you can’t lose on the court!

Oct. 6, 2018 from 6 to 8:30 p.m.

Join us for an evening of celebration, recognition and support of youth programming. The evening will highlight the Mary and Frances Youth Center’s 10th anniversary and Richmond Tennis Association’s new youth initiatives.

We will recognize three dynamic champions who have supported the development of youth tennis programming through their contributions to the success of the Mary and Frances Youth Center and Richmond Tennis Association’s mission.

Learn more at mfyc.vcu.edu.

“When VCU ASPIRE students arrive at St. Mary’s Woods each week to assist in the creation of art projects with seniors living with dementia, something magical happens for both. The seniors often become mentors for the students, changing the way the students see aging and dementia, while the students become both trusted guides and genuine friends with the seniors. This intergenerational experience leaves all involved, including the staff at St. Mary’s, with a sense of growth and hopefulness about the future. It is beautiful to witness. The impact that Opening Minds Through Art (OMA) has on the community would not be possible without the dedication and altruism of VCU ASPIRE.”

— Cindy Paulin, deputy executive officer, Art for the Journey (Opening Minds Through Art)
2017-18 Highlights

- 29 agencies and 47 sites completed the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) process, which helps out-of-school time programs assess operations, create improvement plans and improve quality through staff training and technical assistance, impacting 4,000+ youth.

- $115,000 in grants supported Richmond YPQI’s continuous improvement process for 30 youth serving agencies.

- A related effort is the development of a centralized process to address the safety of youth on campus. VCU launched its youth protection policy, Safety and Protection of Minors, in July 2016. The policy, which was created through a working group chaired by the Division of Community Engagement and the Integrity and Compliance Office, brings consistency to the ways that youth-oriented programs are organized across the university and makes clear to organizers the requirements they must follow to host youth activities. The ultimate goal is that all youth are safe on campus and that parents/guardians can be confident that VCU programs follow the highest standards.

MFYC HELPS SHINE LIGHT ON SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAMS WHILE PROVIDING KEY RESOURCES TO ORGANIZERS

Two new efforts led by the Mary and Frances Youth Center are making it simpler both for university officials organizing programs to understand their responsibilities and how they fit under the university umbrella and for interested members of the public who are seeking fun camps and other youth programs.

The public-facing effort is a centralized listing of VCU summer youth programs. The list marks the first time that the university’s myriad youth programs have been available in one place. Now, instead of hunting through individual program pages in search of a good fit for their kids, parents can simply use the centralized list to research their choices.

Through the list, they will find activities to match any interest, ranging from animation and orchestra to dental hygiene careers and chemistry research.

VCU offers a plethora of engaging youth activities during both summer and the school year, and now we’ve made summer opportunities accessible to the community,” said Tina Carter, director of the Mary and Frances Youth Center.

A related effort is the development of a centralized process to address the safety of youth on campus. VCU launched its youth protection policy, Safety and Protection of Minors, in July 2016. The policy, which was created through a working group chaired by the Division of Community Engagement and the Integrity and Compliance Office, brings consistency to the ways that youth-oriented programs are organized across the university and makes clear to organizers the requirements they must follow to host youth activities. The ultimate goal is that all youth are safe on campus and that parents/guardians can be confident that VCU programs follow the highest standards.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INSTITUTE BRINGS TOGETHER COMMUNITY TO SOLVE CHALLENGES

Each year, the Division of Community Engagement hosts its annual Community Engagement Institute. The Institute brings together those who share a commitment to solving today’s grand challenges through community-academic partnerships. This free, two-day event provides faculty members, community partners and graduate students the opportunity to build a fundamental understanding of the principles of community engagement in the 21st century.

The 2018 Community Engagement Institute (#CEI2018) was held May 15 and 16 at VCU’s ASPIRE Building. Each day, more than 40 participants representing VCU faculty, staff, students and community partners from across 20 VCU departments and schools came together to focus on skill-building and networking opportunities in service-learning, community-engaged research and university-community partnerships. Attendees reported increased understanding of how to integrate community engagement with research, and teaching; improve their partnerships; and how to include community partners in a range of academic activities.

One community partner stated: "I could not believe this was free! Coming from a smaller organization, it is great to have affordable options for personal and professional development.”

2017-18 Highlights

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- $115,000 in grants supported Richmond YPQI’s continuous improvement process for 30 youth serving agencies.

- VCU’s Safety and Protection of Minors policy supported 57 youth programs on campus, helping VCU maintain a safe and supportive environment for all individuals in the university community, particularly minors who participate in VCU programs. 846 individuals were trained on youth safety and protection.

- ASPIRE launched the use of new volunteer management database, GivePulse. The system allows students to sign up for activities and track their service hours. GivePulse is also being piloted by the University of Richmond and spurred regional dialogues on collaboration and working with community partners effectively.
VCU: A national model for community engagement and regional impact

Community Engagement involves mutually-beneficial partnerships that impact our teaching and learning, our scholarship and our outreach efforts that strive to improve the human condition and support the public good at home and abroad.

As outlined in VCU’s Quest for Distinction, the Division of Community Engagement is leading the university as a national model for community engagement and regional impact. VCU is one of only 54 universities to be designated by the Carnegie Foundation as “Community Engaged” with “Very High Research Activity.”

Contact us
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VISION
VCU is a community of engaged citizens, working together, changing lives.

DCE MISSION
The VCU Division of Community Engagement mobilizes university-community partnerships that generate innovative solutions to societal challenges and prepares the engaged citizens of tomorrow.