



# VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Community Engagement | Service-Learning

## Service-Learning Annual Report 2015-2016

DEEPENING LEARNING. APPLYING KNOWLEDGE. IMPROVING COMMUNITIES.



## Director's Message



Lynn E. Pelco, Ph.D.

Associate Vice Provost for Community Engagement  
Director, VCU Service-Learning Office

### About Service-Learning

Service-Learning is a high-impact educational practice that engages students in organized service activities and guided reflection.

The service activities benefit the community and enhance the academic curriculum of the participating students.

### Vision

To become a leader in the development of mindful and engaged citizens who contribute to a more just and humane world.

### Mission

To deepen our understanding of civic responsibility and enhance our capacity to act as locally responsive and globally aware citizens.

### Learn More

For more information, visit [servicelearning.vcu.edu](http://servicelearning.vcu.edu).

### Deepening learning. Applying knowledge. Improving communities.

Service-learning is flourishing at Virginia Commonwealth University! In 2015-2016 alone, more than 3,600 VCU students took at least one service-learning class as a part of their undergraduate or graduate degree program.

Each of these 3,600 students worked together with classmates, faculty instructors and community members for a minimum of 20 hours, applying what they have learned in the classroom to address critical problems in our communities.

The stories we feature in this year's annual report attest to the transformative power of service-learning. But the power of service-learning is also borne out in a growing body of research evidence.

This past year, I had the privilege of collaborating with colleagues from the VCU Office of Planning and Decision Support to study the impacts of service-learning class participation on student success outcomes. Institutional data clearly demonstrated that service-learning at VCU is a high-impact educational practice.

Underrepresented and diverse student groups are well represented in VCU service-learning classes, students who participate in service-learning are retained and graduated at higher rates than students who do

not take service-learning classes, and service-learning students report significantly higher levels of faculty-student interaction and integrative learning than do students who have not taken service-learning.

It has been my great privilege this past year to support the work of VCU's amazing service-learning faculty instructors and their students.

For more information about service-learning, contact Lynn Pelco at [lepelco@vcu.edu](mailto:lepelco@vcu.edu) or (804) 827-8215.

Lynn E. Pelco, Ph.D.  
Associate Vice Provost for Community Engagement  
Director, VCU Service-Learning Office

**3,635**  
**STUDENTS**

were enrolled in service-learning courses (approximately).

**106**  
**INSTRUCTORS**

taught designated service-learning courses.

**105**  
distinct **courses** and  
**200**

**sections** provided students with diverse selection of service-learning courses.

## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Allie Reckendorf, assistant professor, Political Science



During 2015-2016, the Service-Learning Office provided \$2,000 in funding to support Reckendorf's intersession and spring semester service-learning courses, which provided students from across VCU the opportunity to learn about strategy and modern campaigning from national political leaders and insiders.

In January, 27 VCU students traveled to New Hampshire during winter break to get a firsthand look at the presidential primary. Funding from the Service-Learning Office was used to offset transportation costs and to purchase Slidermetrix software that allows students to track public reaction to political ads and debates in real-time.

Read more about service-learning funding opportunities and Reckendorf's work at <http://bit.ly/2aGwN6B>.

“ **This project is designed to combat the low-voter turnout of students at VCU by holding a series of events aimed at educating and mobilizing students during the upcoming presidential primary season.** ”



## COURSE SPOTLIGHT

TEDU 311: Teacher Education Secondary Practicum



VCU service-learning students in the VCU School of Education's TEDU 311: Teacher Education Secondary Practicum participate in a “nested” service-learning program with three Richmond City and Henrico County middle schools — Albert Hill Middle School, Lucille Brown Middle School and Fairfield Middle School.

The “model within a model” allows VCU education students to participate in service-learning by guiding middle school students through service-learning projects. Projects have included school gardens; student government elections; school beautification; science lab renovations; book development and communications to the school board; veterans service projects; a map mural project; homelessness awareness; and schoolwide recycling.

Originally conceived by Professor Kurt Stemhagen, associate professor in the VCU School of Education, the course is now taught by VCU education Ph.D. candidate Amanda Hall and has gained funding through an external donor to add another graduate assistant.

View the video at [https://youtu.be/1YDZPP\\_EySw](https://youtu.be/1YDZPP_EySw).

# 42

**service-learning  
teaching assistants**

supported service-learning courses.

# 113

More than  
community partnerships were  
strengthened and sustained through  
service-learning courses.

# 12

 service-learning  
**projects**

# 13

**community  
partners**

were supported through  
Service-Learning Office  
funding avenues.

# COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

MoB+Storefront



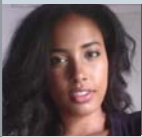
From transforming an underused parking lot into a bike-in outdoor movie theater to developing a wrap to protect a water tower near Broad Street and the Boulevard, students in VCUArts faculty Kristin Caskey, John Malinoski and Camden Whitehead's service-learning courses hosted at the MoB design lab help realize the potential of design to shape the City of Richmond.

Working with community partner the Storefront for Community Design, Richmond's non-profit design assistance center, VCU students, fellows and faculty improve the quality of design in the city by facilitating access to design and planning resources.

"This is a class that runs like a design studio in the real world," Caskey said. "I think as far as a big dream, we

would love to have this become a place where students graduate from the nation's top school of arts and design and stay in Richmond to become designers by having fellowships where they really serve the city."

Learn more at [middleofbroad.com](http://middleofbroad.com) and [storefrontrichmond.org](http://storefrontrichmond.org). Photo credit: Style Weekly.



## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Maya Chesley '15

Maya Chesley, '15, a biology and Spanish major from Chesapeake, Virginia, was awarded a 2016 Fulbright Scholarship. Chesley was the first Service-Learning Teaching Assistant placed with an international course.

As a student, Chesley took two service-learning courses in Córdoba, Spain, with Anita Nadal, assistant professor of Spanish in the VCU School of World Studies. The courses, "Hispanic Immigrants in the U.S." and "Immigration in Spain," allowed Chesley to work with Gypsies and African immigrant populations in local hospitals and community farms.

For her Fulbright studies, Chesley will travel to Panama to teach English and will work on a journal to chronicle the relationship between city residents and nature. Sponsored by the United States Department of State, the Fulbright Program aims to increase mutual understanding between the U.S. and other countries, through the exchange of persons, knowledge and skills.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/2b9GQHg>.

“My experience as an SLTA was crucial to my Fulbright application. I learned how to become better integrated in a different community and to address the cultural needs of a group, become comfortable in a foreign country and be serious about the work that I do.”

**72,320**  
service hours

were provided by  
service-learning students.



**\$11,678**

was granted to 12 project awards.

**\$7,985**

in travel grants supported six  
faculty members' conference  
presentations on their  
service-learning research.