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RAMSWay Safe Path

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RAMSWay

TEAM MEMBERS

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Project Sponsor: John Venuti, Chief of Police, VCU Police Department

PROJECT ABSTRACT

RAMSWay promotes safety for students, faculty, staff, and visitors with a series of safe walkways connecting key locations, such as classroom buildings, gyms, libraries, residence halls, and parking decks, on Virginia Commonwealth University's sprawling urban campus. RAMSWay paths are designed to be consistent with the theoretical framework referred to as CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design). CPTED suggests that altering the physical design of communities or areas in which people congregate can deter criminal activity. CPTED-compliant landscaping and lighting, security features (e.g., cameras, ERTs phones), and increased police presence on the paths promote the sense of safety. Further, increased foot traffic provides safety in numbers, consistent with VCU's current Bystander Intervention initiative. VCU branded RAMSWay aluminum signs will designate walkways on both the Monroe Park and MCV campuses, showing pedestrians a preferred route. When traveling on RAMSWay, members of the VCU community will have more opportunities to interface with VCU Police, pass by ERTs phones, and share the route with fellow students, faculty, and staff. By using the path, we all help do our part to promote safety on our campus.

Existing organizations and communication platforms, such as VCU University Relations, Student Government Association, VCU Mobile and LiveSafe, will promote the use of RAMSWay to the VCU community. RAMSWay will be executed in coordination with VCU Police and VCU Facilities.

QUEST FOR DISTINCTION

RAMSWay supports Quest Theme I: Goals A and D. Theme I states that VCU will become a leader among national research universities in providing all students with high-quality learning/living experiences focused on inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global environment. Goals A and D focus specifically on recruitment and retention of talented and diverse students, faculty, staff, and leadership. An unsafe environment compromises student learning, success, and satisfaction and can negatively impact VCU's capacity to attract and keep students, faculty and staff. RAMSWay aims to not only increase security for those who utilize the safe path, but also foster a greater sense of safety on campus, thereby contributing to the high-quality living, learning, and work environment necessary to recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff in our VCU community.

PROJECT GOALS

1. Designate a Safe Path on both the Monroe Park and MCV campuses: Constituents on both the Monroe Park and MCV campuses consistently express concerns about personal safety after dark to the Chief of VCU Police and the Dean of Student Affairs. Safety is an important dimension in supporting recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, and students, and in promoting visitors to the campus and Richmond. Commitment of VCU resources to create,

maintain, and patrol a “safe path” communicates the University’s focus on safety for students, faculty/staff, and visitors. Therefore, this project aims to collaborate with the VCU Police, the Division of Student Affairs, student government organizations on both campuses, VCU Facilities and Maintenance, and the City of Richmond (where appropriate) to identify and designate RAMSWay paths on each campus with adequate lighting, greenery maintenance, and increased police presence.

2. Develop a Communications Plan to inform constituents about RAMSWay: Students, faculty, staff, and visitors need to be made aware of RAMSWay so that it will become the primary walking/biking route on campus. This aspect of the project will involve collaboration with the VCU Police Public Information Officer and VCU Public Relations to articulate a clear message of the intentions of the safe path, the route of the safe path, and other personal safety practices that should be used in conjunction with the safe path. Further, an advertising plan will be developed to support print, digital, and other communications necessary to disseminate information about the safe path to the VCU community.

PROJECT STRATEGIES

Team Marshmallow consistently functioned in a collaborative consensus manner, in which each member was actively encouraged to share ideas and opinions. Through this process we proposed project ideas, discussed the merits and limitations of each and, by group consensus, selected the initial proposal. Discussions with critical stakeholders (Dean of Student Affairs, Dr. Reuben Rodriguez; VCU Facilities Management Department) led to a shift in focus and refinement of the original plan, which was followed by a review of similar projects at other universities. A needs assessment was conducted, using campus safety data, input from the SGA, and a convenience sample of Emerging Leaders Program participants. Additionally, feedback was solicited in face-to-face meetings and email communication with major stakeholders and potential project partners, including VCU Police, Admissions, Residence Life, Creative Services, and the LiveSafe Safety App developers. Based on their combined input and a review of cost, feasibility and stakeholder interest, the project was further refined. Finally, potential funding sources were identified, with an effort to leverage those who expressed particular interest in the project (VCU Police Department, VCU SGA, LiveSafe). Creation of a logic model (see Appendix) helped to clarify the scope and sequence of the project, as well as development of short-, medium-, and long-range goals.

ACTION STEPS

To develop RAMSWay and prepare for its implementation, the team:

- Met with key stakeholders (VCU Facilities Management Department, VCU Police Department, Student Affairs, Admissions) across campus to review project ideas; feedback from stakeholders guided specification of a final project aligned with university needs.
- Secured funding sources from stakeholders.
- Identified units across campus (VCU Facilities Management Department, VCU Police Department, Student Affairs, Admissions, Residence Life, Creative Services, SGA) to collaborate with in developing and implementing the project.
- Solicited feedback from students, Student Government Associations, VCU Police Department, and Student Affairs on specific path routes and incorporated feedback into path routes.
- Designed aluminum path markers in collaboration with Creative Services and Live Safe development team.
- Developed marketing videos in collaboration with VCU Police Department and the President’s Office.

To fully implement RAMSWay, the following action steps are required:

- Finalize and produce path markers in collaboration with Creative Services and Life Safe.
- Install path markers through collaboration with and between facilities and City of Richmond.
- Publish campus maps that include the highlighted RAMSWay paths. Customize police deployment to provide additional coverage on paths.
- Communicate RAMSWay to new students during Ram Camp and Welcome Week and have students walk the paths with program leaders.
- Communicate RAMSWay to students, faculty, and staff through existing communication channels (e.g., TelegRAM, student organizations, social media).
- Communicate RAMSWay to prospective students and visitors through admissions and self-guided tours.
- Integrate RAMSWay in the LiveSafe app.
- Evaluate inputs and outcomes of RAMSWay as articulated in the logic model.

OUTCOMES

1. Enhanced perceptions of personal safety on both campuses:
   This project will help recruit and retain students and faculty by enhancing both the perceived and actual safety of VCU's campuses. Increasing the perceived safety of VCU will aid in recruitment of potential applicants, or their parents, who may come with preconceived notions of Richmond as a high-crime area.
2. Reduced crimes of opportunity on campus:
   A safe path has the potential to reduce the number of crimes of opportunity on campus. Specifically, the safe path will be maintained with appropriate lighting, low landscaping, clear signage, and increased police presence.
3. Increased awareness of good safety habits:
   The communications plan and associated advertisements of RAMSWay will reinforce good safety habits: choosing a well-lit route, walking with others, carrying pepper spray, use of LiveSafe app, etc. An indirect outcome of RAMSWay is safety habits that transfer to other settings off of campus.

SUSTAINABILITY

There are three main groups responsible for sustaining the project:
VCU Police Department (VCUPD): Chief Venuti has voiced his support of the project and noted that he is willing to assign patrols based on the designated safe path(s) and to allow his Public Information Officer to consult with our group on communications. Further emphasizing his commitment to this project, VCUPD has devoted resources for the creation of promotional materials (i.e. video production).

VCU Facilities Management Department: The stated mission of FMD is to provide "cost effective and efficient planning, design, construction and maintenance services throughout Virginia Commonwealth University." Specifically, Mary Cox, Director of Planning and Design, has expressed enthusiasm for the project. We will continue to work with FMD to determine sign placement in accordance with VCU and Richmond City standards.

VCU Student Affairs and Student Government: VCU's SGA on the Monroe Park Campus has expressed interest in creating a "safe path" to both Chief Venuti and Dr. Rodriguez, SGA advisor and Dean of Student Affairs. Student government organizations on both campuses would be critical to disseminating information about the project to the student body. SGA will serve as a tremendous resource in ensuring the continue promotion and re-assessment of the path moving forward.

FINANCING AND RESOURCES

RAMSWay is a relatively inexpensive safety initiative. The project utilizes existing infrastructure (ERTS phones, security cameras, CPTED design), communication channels (Welcome Week, campus tours, LiveSafe, Telegram), and human resources (custom deployment of police officers, not additional officers). In addition, the developers of the LiveSafe app have expressed interest in modifying the app to show a safe path through campus for all clients, not only VCU. The main cost of the project is designing, printing, and installing signs to mark the path. RAMSWay proposes 2 signs per path over 20 blocks, affixed to existing signposts.

Project Budget

	Item Description	Justification	Cost
1.	40 double-sided signs	Signs to mark RAMSWay	$2,700
2.	40 hardware kits	To secure signs to existing posts	$1,100
3.	Installation fee	Contract to install signs on existing posts	$1,650
4.	Design fee	VCU University Relations sign design	$150
5.	Maintenance	Vandalism; modifications to the route	Variable
Total			$5,600

RECOMMENDATIONS

Key considerations in project rollout:

1. Find funding to design, print, and install signs on RAMSWay paths,
2. Share information about the paths with students, faculty, and staff through existing channels such as Welcome Week, Residential Life, Admissions, Telegram, and student government and student organizations,
3. Remind students that the paths are a place for increased police visibility, not a place for increased enforcement,
4. VCU's campus, and the city around it, are constantly changing; new and repurposed buildings, changes in traffic patterns, and new public transportation options will affect safety needs and perceptions,
5. Evaluate the success of the path in the next VCU Safety Survey.

FINAL PITCH

RAMSWay creates a tremendous opportunity to address student concerns while building community and pride at VCU. According to the most recent VCU safety survey results, the majority of respondents feel unsafe walking in surrounding areas, in parking lots/garages, and while waiting for transportation after dark. In addition, the majority of MCV respondents reported feeling unsafe after dark walking to classes, walking to residence halls, and being on campus. RAMSWay will aim not only to increase security for those who utilize its path, but also foster a greater sense of safety around campus. Students who feel safe walking through campus are more likely to access resources, get involved, and focus on academics.

RAMSWay has the support of President Rao, VCU Police Chief John Venuti and Dean of Students Reuban Rodriguez; who all recognize that without a safe and secure environment, student learning, success and satisfaction is compromised.

RAMSWay will encourage use of the paths, therein promoting a culture of responsibility for the safety and well-being of the VCU community. By using the paths, we all help do our part to promote safety on our campus.

APPENDIX A: Summary of Fall 2014 Safety Survey Data

Day versus dark

The majority of the VCU community, on both campuses, reported feeling "safe" during the day in all the situations asked about on the survey. Similar percentages were reported for both MCV and MPC.

- The majority of the VCU community, regardless of primary campus, reported feeling "safe" after dark for the following situations: Being in Bathrooms in Campus Buildings, Being in a Classroom, Being in Residence Hall Rooms, Being inside a Campus Building, and Working in the Library late at night.
- There were three after dark situations during which the majority of respondents, regardless of campus, indicated they felt UNSAFE: Walking in the surrounding community, Being in parking lots/garages, and Waiting for public transportation.
- Across all the situations after dark a higher percentage of MPC respondents reported feeling safe, than MCV respondents.

Areas where more police presence is needed

Of those VCU Community Members who feel more police presence is needed:

- 1 in 4 report an increase in police presence is "needed between parking lots and campus".
- 1 in 5 reporting "areas surrounding campus".
- Over a third reported more police presence is needed from 8pm to 11pm.

Where more lighting is needed

The majority of VCU Community Members "strongly agree" (10%) or "agree" (65%) that there is adequate lighting on VCU campuses.

- 1 out of 4 feel more lighting is need on "walkways on campus" (25%) or "on the perimeter of campus" (24%), of those respondents who don't feel there is adequate lighting.
- The majority of VCU Community Members "strongly agree"(13%) or "agree"(70%) that there are enough ERTs located on VCU campuses.
- Right around a 5th of respondents who don't feel there is adequate ERTs feel more are needed on "walkways on campus" (16%), "parking decks" (17%), and "on the perimeter of campus" (21%).

Where more ERTs phones are needed

Some differences exist between campuses as to where more lighting and ERTs are needed.

- Both MCV and MPC campuses have "perimeter of campus" and "walkways" listed as the top two areas where more lighting is needed.
- Campuses differ in the third area listed as needing more lighting, with MCV reports "parking lots"and MPC reporting "alleys on campus".
- Again both MCV and MPC campuses have "perimeter of campus"in the top areas where more ERTs are needed.
- MCV reports "parking lots"and "parking decks" as needing more ERTs, while MPC mentions only "parking decks" at the top of the list.

Key findings of note

Ninety-six percent of VCU Community members, the highest percentage to date, reported feeling "very safe" or "safe" on VCU's campus in the fall semester of 2014.

In addition, a steady increase in feelings of safety can be seen across all situations after dark and have stayed the same or increased for most situations during the day. The exception to "during the day" was in the Spring 2014, when there was a decrease in feeling of safety during the day on MCV campus for both "being in classroom" and "being in residence hall".

Though the percentage of those reporting they feel safe in different situations is increasing, it is important to note that there are still situations where the majority of respondents report they feel unsafe. Across both campuses the majority of respondents feel UNSAFE walking in surrounding areas, in parking lots/garages, and while waiting for transportation after dark. In addition, the majority of MCV respondents reported feeling UNSAFE after dark walking to classes, walking to residence halls, and being on campus.

Overall, a higher percentage of MPC campus members report feeling safe alone in the different situations, especially after dark, than do MCV campus members.

When asked the times and places where more officer presence is needed, similar answers were found by campus. Evening, from 8pm to 11pm, was the top time mentioned by members on both campuses as needing more officer presence, followed by late evening, from 11pm to 2am and early evening, 5pm to 8pm. The highest percentage community members on both campuses indicate more police presence is needed between parking lots and campus buildings, followed by on the borders of campus and the areas surrounding campus.

The top three crimes witnessed on campus, are the same as those witnessed near campus. Most of the crimes witnessed were "property crimes" (near campus 51%, on campus 43%), followed by "personal/violent crimes" (near campus 35%, on campus 30%) and "hit and runs" (near campus 28%, on campus 28%).

Though a significantly lower percentage, it is important to note that over 10% respondents reported being a victim of "personal violent crime" (near campus 12%, on campus 14%).

Thirteen respondents reported witnessing sexual crimes (11 near campus and 2 on campus), and 7 respondents reported being a victim of a sexual crime (5 near campus and 2 on campus).

APPENDIX B: University Safe Path Models Reviewed

http://www.uky.edu/Police/catspath/
Cat's Path was developed at the University of Kentucky in 2005, as part of the university's targeted efforts to reduce violence against women; the master plan includes subsequent expansion. The recommended walking routes connect key buildings across the central campus, and are delineated with signage and Wildcat paw print ground logos. Increased UK Police presence is provided in foot patrols and special police golf carts. A pdf of the map is available on the UK website.

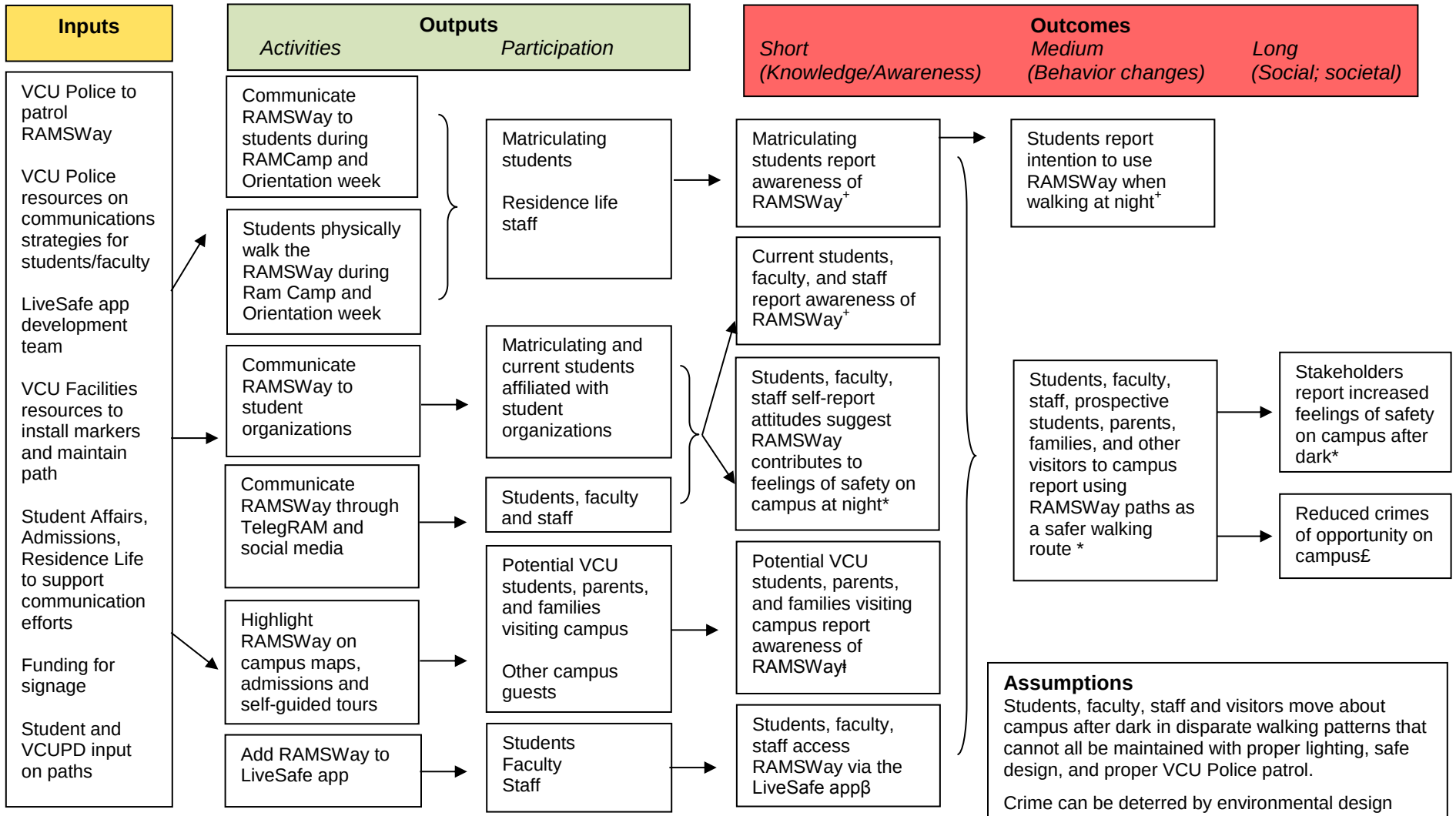
http://police.berkeley.edu/nightmap.pdf
The University of California at Berkeley publishes an online pdf map of recommended nighttime walking routes on their website. The online description specifically recognizes that, though the university encourages use of other night safety services (such as free van transport), there may be times when individuals need other options. Thus, well-lighted, well-traveled paths, outlined on the map, are recommended.

http://www.pf.uq.edu.au/unisafe/paths.html
Two safe paths are delineated for the dual campuses of the University of Australia at Queensland. In the context of personal responsibility for safety, the university community is reminded that some campus thoroughfares are safer than others. Thus, "[t]he best advice is to keep to well-beaten tracks during darkness," where more pedestrians, police patrols and better lighting exist. Safe path maps are available in pdf version on the university's website.

APPENDIX C: RAMSWay Logic Model

Context: Students, faculty, and staff report feeling unsafe when walking on both campuses, particularly after dark. VCU Police reports staff coverage can patrol designated well-traveled areas to promote safe walking routes.

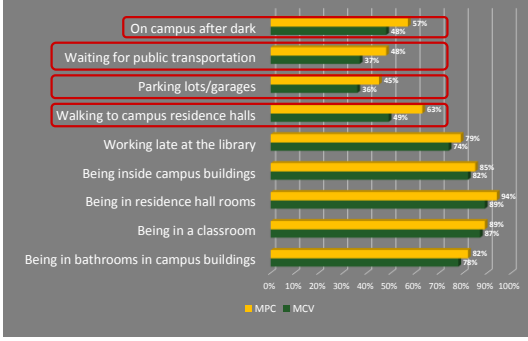
[+]Reported on Orientation Evaluation*Reported on VCU Campus Safety Survey; ǂReported on Admissions evaluations; βMeasured using LiveSafe statistics; £VCU Police statistics



96.5%

of VCU Community members reported feeling “very safe” or “safe” on VCU’s campus in the spring semester of 2015

FEELINGS OF SAFETY ON CAMPUS AFTER DARK



I feel less safe at night...

There are a lot of blind corners back there...

I went through the back alley...

As long as I see people around, I feel safe.

If I needed help, I don't know if anyone would hear me...

I would like to see more police officers walking during the night.

TEAM MEMBERS

- Stephen Barkley, VCU Libraries
- Beth Heller, VCU Center for Psychological Services and Development
- Libby McDaniel, VCU Libraries
- Kelechi (K.C.) Ogbonna, School of Pharmacy
- Kendall Plageman, Division of Student Affairs
- Angie Wetzel, School of Education

RAMSWay

Project Goals

- **Goal I:** Designate paths on both the Monroe Park and MCV campuses
- **Goal 2:** Develop a communications plan to inform constituents about the paths

RAMSWay

Alignment with Quest

- **Theme I:** Become a leader among national research universities in providing all students with high-quality learning/living experiences focused on inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global environment.

UNDERSTANDING VCU NEEDS

- Dr. Reuben Rodriguez, Dean of Student Affairs
- Facilities Management Department
- Chief John Venuti, VCU Police
- Emerging Leaders Program
- Student Government Associations
- Campus safety data
- Admissions
- Residential Life & Housing
- University Relations
- LiveSafe developers

TEAM UP WITH A SPONSOR

"This could be a game changer for VCU"

REFINE CONCEPT

Students
- Emerging Leaders
- SGA

Police Department
- Chief Venuti
- LiveSafe

Office of Admissions
- Parents
- Campus Tours

PRODUCE AND INSTALL PATH MARKERS

- Design by University Relations
- Similar material and size to parking signs
- Install on existing lamp posts or sign posts

COMMUNICATE

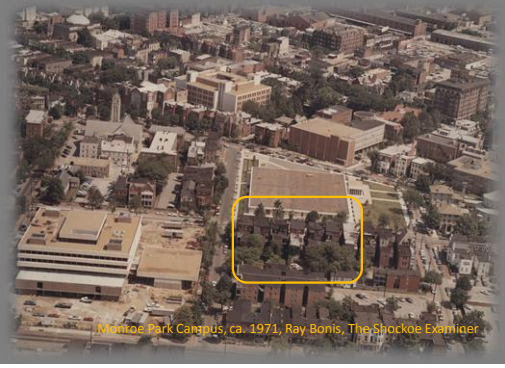
- NEW STUDENTS
  - Welcome Week
  - RAM CAMP
  - Walk the Path
- EXISTING CHANNELS
  - Student Organizations
  - Social Media
  - TelegRAM
  - Video
- COMMUNITY OUTREACH
  - Admissions
  - Campus Tours

LiveSafe

COST TO IMPLEMENT

Design and print 40 signs	$2,700
Hardware kits	$1,100
Installation	$1,650
Maintenance	Variable
A safer campus	Priceless

SUSTAINABILITY



Monroe Park Campus, ca. 1971, Ray Bonis, The Shockoe Examiner

1. **Enhance perceptions of personal safety**
2. **Reduce crimes of opportunity on campus**
3. **Increase awareness of good safety habits**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Reuben Rodriguez, Associate Vice Provost and Dean of Student Affairs
- Tom Klug, Bill Buckman, Bob Saydlowski, Danny Woodward, University Relations
- Robin McLeod, Joe Kuttenkuler, VCU Marketing
- Samier Mansur, LiveSafe
- Rodney the Ram
- Student Government Associations
- Student Media Center
- Emerging Leaders Program students
- Hailey Smith and David Withers
- Corey Byers, Officer Frederic Wiggins, VCU Police
- President Michael Rao
- Chief John Venuti, VCU Police