



2013

Must Do @ VCU


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THE REAL TEAM

Must Do @ VCU

TEAM MEMBERS:

Katherine M. Beck, Coordinator, New Student Programs, University College

Philip “Muzi” Branch, Director, Cultural Programs VCUHS

Tom Diehl, Director, Recreational Sports

Joyce A. Lloyd, Professor and Vice Chair of Education, Human and Molecular Genetics

Claudia Mangum, Director, Business Services, Physical Plant

Yaoying Xu, Associate Professor, School of Education

Project Sponsor: Pamela Lepley, University Relations

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Must Do @ VCU is a set of annual collegial activities that can be performed throughout the year, by everyone in the VCU community, including faculty, staff, students and alumni. These VCU-centered activities are considered to be the things that give VCU its identity. The goal of Must Do @ VCU is to generate a sense of community and of belonging to the University. VCU is a relatively new University and its traditions are therefore not well-established. Must Do @ VCU aims to build on shared experiences as a method to establish VCU culture. The activities are planned such that students would complete all of them before graduation, and staff and faculty would complete them while employed with the university.

PROJECT GOALS: The goals of Must Do @ VCU are to promote shared experiences for the VCU community, establish collaborations between faculty, staff and students, and create VCU ambassadors. Participating in Must Do @ VCU traditions will give faculty, staff and students shared experiences to talk about inside and outside of VCU. Our hope is that this becomes a sustainable tradition and brings together the VCU community of faculty, staff and students, much like it brought together our team. The project has potential to help VCU engage and retain faculty, staff and students, and to make them more familiar with the RVA community.

STRATEGIES:

Initially, the team developed consensus around the goals and strategies of the project. It was important to us to develop a shared leadership approach, driven by making decisions by consensus. We made an extended list of possible Must Do activities, and then narrowed it down to 12 activities that unite the VCU community and will serve to create tradition. Twelve activities would be doable in a year, and only activities that would interest everyone (faculty, staff and students) were chosen for the final list. As part of the process, we reviewed initiatives at peer institutions for best practice and analyzed current VCU culture. It was important to link the Must Do @ VCU project to the goals of the Quest for Distinction, which include engaging students, retaining faculty, and building community engagement. It was helpful to us to consult with our team sponsor, Pam Lepley, VP of University Relations to refine our goals and strategies, based on how they fit with ongoing university initiatives. We then developed strategies to promote the project, the most elaborate of which was to create a book illustrating each activity, month by month. In addition, we have consulted with relevant VCU

departments/offices to improve the concept, and to develop relationships with stewards who could initiate and facilitate the project in 2014.

ACTION STEPS:

1. Research peer institutions and current VCU initiatives related to the Quest for Distinction
2. Assign roles among group based on resources and skills
3. Finalize must-do list by assessing which activities are appropriate for all of the target audiences
4. Assign months to the activities to best compliment weather and scheduling
5. Consult team sponsor regarding tie to current VCU projects (175th anniversary) and sustainability of project
6. Create budget to include pilot project photographs and mock-up of Ram Guide
7. Team members pilot the project and take pictures at “must do” sites
8. Develop Ram Guide book which describes and has photos of the 12 Must Dos, and mock Facebook page and social media presence

OUTCOMES:

We have developed a framework for a sustainable university tradition that values VCU culture and engages the entire VCU community. By piloting the project as a team, we increased our own knowledge of the campus, as well as instilled a greater sense of campus pride in each of us. In addition, the pilot project established the feasibility of taking part in all of these activities within a reasonably short time period and with minimal effort, and as an enjoyable team-building exercise.

SUSTAINABILITY:

Must Do @ VCU has buy in from University Relations, Recreational Sports, and Facilities Services. University Relations will provide advice about a web presence, and Rec Sports and Facilities will provide prizes (see recommendations below). Through our presentation, we hope to solicit interest from other VCU entities such as New Student Programs, Faculty Recruitment/Retention, Staff Senate, and Alumni Relations. These entities could help refine the project and get the word out to their constituents about participating in the activities.

RESOURCES:

Certain resources will be needed to implement the initiative in 2014. There would be costs to print the Ram Guide, but most of the costs would be in effort devoted to the initiative. For example, staff time would be required to:

1. Develop a Must Do @ VCU logo
2. Develop and maintain the website and other social media
3. Advertise the initiative
4. Solicit prizes
5. Select prize winners
6. Update modes of operation as new social media are developed and new activities are recognized as emerging VCU traditions

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Real Team acknowledges that the various university entities will be motivated to participate in the project for different reasons and may be attracted to the project using different mechanisms. The program should be advertised to the VCU community in the VCU TelegRam, on the VCU website, and using the RamGuide we have developed. The hard copy RamGuide may be most useful in advertising the project to staff and faculty, whereas social media may be most likely to elicit student participation. Must Do @ VCU should also be introduced at orientations for new students, staff and faculty. Students may be attracted to participate by prizes for the best or most creative photograph posted on social media, illustrating participation in a particular activity that is highlighted that month. Groups of individuals should be encouraged to participate together in the activities, for example, students in a dorm, an office group, or a class could take pictures doing the activity featured that month, and create a virtual record for the group, as a team-building exercise. An Advisory Council should be established for the project, to include faculty, staff, student and local business representatives, perhaps including a Real Team member(s). The Advisory Council should solicit feedback from faculty, staff and students by way of a survey, in order to assess the positive and negative features of the project in the first year, and thereby, improve upon it in later years. The Advisory Council would also serve as liaisons to promote the project, by representing the shared interests of faculty, staff and students. The project should evolve each year in order to remain relatable to students, in terms of social media, communication tools, etc.

CONCLUSIONS:

Using a consensus approach, the Real Team developed and refined the “Must Do @ VCU” project. Our hope is that this becomes a sustainable tradition and brings together the VCU community of faculty, staff and students, much like it brought together our team. Must Do @ VCU will likely provide students with direct knowledge of essential VCU experiences, and others in the VCU community will be made more aware of emerging traditions at VCU.

PROCESS OBSERVATIONS:

Throughout this process, our team has become more aware of each team member’s strengths and also the collective strengths of our diverse team. We have become increasingly aware of VCU resources and the campus as a whole. Listening skills and leadership ability of each team member has been affected in a positive way.

Must Do @ VCU




THE GRACE E. HARRIS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The Real Team

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Team Sponsor: Pam Lepley

Video

VA Tech



Mary Baldwin College



UNC Greensboro



1838

Must Do @ VCU

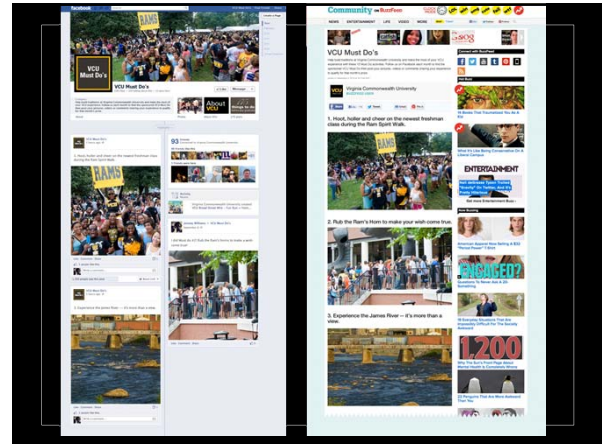
31,752

23,208

166,336

Introducing The 12 Must Dos

[Insert video](#)



Faculty & Staff



Must Do @ VCU

The Ram Guide

Must Do @ VCU

Quest For Distinction

- Theme I.C: Engage Students
- Theme I.D: Retain and Recruit Faculty
- Theme IV: Community Engagement

Must Do @ VCU

Sustainability

- University Relations
 - Branding/Logo
 - Consultation on website & social media

Sustainability

- Development and Alumni Relations
- Division of Student Affairs
- Office of New Student Programs
- Staff Senate
- Faculty Recruitment/Retention

Additional support (prizes) from offices across the university

Must Do @ VCU

What have you done at VCU?

“Knowing is not enough.
We must apply.”

Willing is not enough.
We must do.”

Thomas Edison



Spirit Walk



Egyptian Building



Basketball



Summer Reading



Acknowledgments

Pam Lepley University Relations
Jennifer Carmean
Tristana Trani

Dr. Tim Davey, Faculty Recruitment/Retention
Amy Gray, Alumni Relations
Dr. Chuck Klink, Student Affairs
Dylan Wyco, video production
Alana Robinson, photography
Taylor Parker, Ram Guide

Questions?