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# Making Connections Through a Virtual Community

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# Making Connections Through a Virtual Community

## Team Members

Joe Borzelleca, Joy Bressler, Deborah Brock, Nell Chennault, Jason Noble. Team Sponsor: Ms. Sue Ann Messmer

## Project Description

We feel there is a need for opportunities for clinical and administrative faculties to connect with students in a way that can fit into the very busy schedules of both students and faculty/staff. Our plan is to use the Student Portal currently being developed by the Office of Academic Technology. There, one click would connect students to faculty/staff profiles where the student could query topics of interest and then email selected faculty and staff. To start the process, volunteer faculty and staff would create a profile of their professional and personal interests. The student would access this database through a key-word search of the faculty/staff profiles. This project fits in well the following VCU goals and initiatives: Student Centered University, connections between the two campuses, and increased student, staff, and faculty retention.

## Project Goals

1. Give faculty and staff opportunities to connect with students outside their department.
2. Give students a sense of belonging to the larger VCU and Richmond community
3. Assist students with day-to-day personal and academic challenges

## Strategies:

- Bring together student service and technology administrators who would have a stake in the project.
- Keep it Simple – for sustainability and development
- Make it digital – a communication preference of the Millennium Generation

## Action Steps:

1. Conducted informal student interest survey, both campuses, to find out areas of interest and potential use.
2. Consulted with VCU Web services about different technical models.
3. Informally consulted with Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, Jon Steingass.
4. Consulted with Sue Anne Messmer, who offered the web design services of Creative Services.
5. Brainstormed on categories to include in the database.
6. Discussed and determined strategies to respect faculty time constraints for participation, such as log off, email only contact, etc.

### Outcomes

- Attempted to have a meeting of the following stake holders, but the meeting was impossible to fit into schedules.
- Potential Name: VCU Connections, VCUmmunity
- Sample database and interface screens

### Recommendations

- Our project should be incorporated into the VCU Portal.
- We feel that the service should be administered by Student Affairs, First Year Student Services; Office of Undergraduate Advising of the College of Humanities and Sciences; or VCU Web Services.
- Start small, with faculty and staff of College of Humanities and Sciences and Grace Harris Leadership Alumni. Promote to first year students.