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## Every Day a New Discovery: Share History


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**30 Days of Discovery:  
Fascinating Firsts and Distinctive Discoveries from VCU's Past, Present and Future  
Executive Summary**

**Discovery Team B:** Carolyn Hawley, Donna Gilles, Katherine Oliver, Tim Reed, Patricia Wallace (and Jill Wilson *in absentia*)

**Project Description**

“30 Days of Discovery: Fascinating Firsts and Distinctive Discoveries from VCU’s Past, Present and Future” is a web-based product that highlights the discoveries of VCU alumni, faculty, staff and students as well as the many “firsts” accomplished at VCU. Inspired by an awe of our collective history, “30 Days” will expose the little known discoveries (e.g., the existence of hormones) to the well known firsts (e.g., first men’s basketball team to go from the First Four to Final Four!). Using 21<sup>st</sup> century web technology, “30 Days” will educate, entertain, and enlighten.

**Goals**

- Project Goals
  - To educate the greater community about significant discoveries at VCU.
  - To generate interest in VCU Alumni who have “discovered.”
  - To engage the VCU community in the search for other discoveries in our past.
- Group Goals
  - To learn more about the University we serve.
  - To create a “real” product through collaboration in a team setting.
  - To develop lasting relationships that help us reach beyond the “narrow world” of our jobs.

**Conceptual Strategy**

Virginia Commonwealth University is one of three research universities in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Discovery is a key outcome of research in all fields so it seemed appropriate to create a web-based campaign to highlight some of the historical discoveries that have risen from the collective work of VCU faculty, staff, and students. Discovery is also a major element in the “Quest for Distinction: Discovery, Impact, Success.”

The genesis for this idea came from a desire of the team to combine an understanding of the vibrant history of VCU and the marketing impact of the VCU Medical Center “Every Day, A New Discovery” program. The idea of highlighting the discoveries of the past and the numerous “firsts” as a companion and, even perhaps the genesis of those of today, seemed too good to overlook.

The concept is straightforward. Using Alumni Month next April, VCU will launch a website that will highlight 30 discoveries over a 30 day period – “30 Days of Discovery.” Each “Day” would be a “new” discovery or a “first” that rose from the work of committed VCU professionals. The web site would have historical information about the discovery; the faculty, staff, or students involved in the discovery; and, where available, photos, video, links to

publications and resources in the VCU Libraries. The site will allow the viewer to explore topics surrounding the discovery and well as historical information about VCU at the time of the discovery.

An additional element of “30 Days,” would reach beyond those discoveries made at VCU to include those discoveries created by alumni of the university. In this way, we honor those entrepreneurs, researchers, and creators who gained valuable experience through their time at VCU regardless of whether they were faculty or students. The honored have gone out “into the world” to discover new businesses, created enhanced medical procedures, or pushed the boundaries of artistic expression. “30 Days of Discovery” honors our alumni as well.

One of the features of the site will be the “Report a Discovery” form. Similar to the VCU School of Medicine “Share Your Discovery” site, visitors to the 30 Days site would have the opportunity to report about a first or a discovery that they know about or have uncovered in their research about VCU. Firsts and discoveries would be collected over the year and then added to the growing collection of firsts and discoveries available for the site. Eventually, our team would hope to see 30 Days of Discovery become 365 days of discovery where everyday a new first or a new discovery appears on the VCU website.

We created a demo site/blog "VCU Discovery Makers" at [vcudiscovery.tumblr.com](http://vcudiscovery.tumblr.com). Tumblr allows for easy posting of stories, videos, photos, audio and links to the library archives and other relevant content. Posts can be easily shared via twitter, Facebook, etc, as well as within the tumblr sphere - allowing for the site to build an audience via social networking. Within 4 days of the demo creation, the tumblr blog had 5 followers (current students) and 5 "likes" for posts. The "30 Days" site could also be built via WordPress. Daily or weekly emails could be sent to alumni notifying them of new discovery posts, and word could be sent to faculty, staff and students via the TeleGRAM as well as social media sites.

### **Action Steps**

- Initial Mind Map of Basic Premise
- Establish Tasks to Develop Framework for Final Product
- Completed Assigned Tasks
  - Identified and interviewed two “Discovery Makers”
  - Established relationships with VCU Library archivists for researching topics
  - Established relationship with VCU’s Creative Services for future production
  - Created prototype “Discovery” site
  - Regularly met to investigate and narrow concepts for final product.

### **Outcomes**

*"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results." Andrew Carnegie*

This quote captures the essence of Discovery Team B. Over the course of the year, we truly developed as a team. We were interdependent – knowing when to work together and when to work on our own. The group instinctively capitalized on the strengths of each member. The collaborative spirit was always evident each time we met. Everyone

took our assignment with the seriousness deserving of GEHLI. Yet through that collaboration, we found no “big egos.” We each played our role. We each lead when needed and followed when required. In the summer, we lost one of team members but we revised the process and continued forward. Even when she knew she was leaving, she contributed significantly to the project before heading off to “the north.”

Almost as important as the project itself, we took time to learn about each other. We shared who we are and what we face in our work at VCU. In many ways, this may have been the most important outcome. We developed trust in our colleagues which allowed us to work toward a common goal. The quality of our product (which we think is very high!) is directly to our collective work toward a common vision.

### **Process Observations**

- Learning about our “product,” VCU, was powerful and inspiring. This helped us become more committed to the product throughout the process. Forcing us to find some quickly at the beginning was risky but paid off for us because we followed our collective passion.
- Getting “out of our narrow worlds” was equally powerful for us all. We learned about the University both through our research but also through each other. We were able to “get on the balcony” and look down at our roles in the University. This should be emphasized as an intentional outcome of these projects.
- Our sponsor, Dr. Tom Huff, was enthusiastic about our project from the start and offered suggestions and support. It is our hope that he will continue to support the "30 Days" project in the future.
- The summer “recess” was somewhat problematic because, although we met on a couple of occasions, there was a lull in progress as a team. We did, however, continue work on our individual tasks during that time. This is an area of the program that should be considered for review. The September restart to an October finish is a little daunting, and requires a little bit of “relearning”.

### **Recommendations**

The prototype of the “30 Days of Discovery” provides a strong foundation for the complete development of this project. At this point, a research team and a production team could be identified through University Relations/Creative Services. Using the template provided, the University could, with relative ease, expand the four prototyped “Discoveries” into 30 in time for Alumni month. The members of “Discovery Team B” would be willing and able to assist with making this project a reality.

### **Conclusions**

The opportunity to participate in the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute and to develop our Team project allowed us to grow not just individually, or as a team, but as true participating members of the VCU community. While learning about each other and the nuances of the various programs and services of VCU, we identified our own leadership strengths and learned how to capitalize on them. The team building exercise further allowed us to explore our leadership abilities while creating a vibrant product that reinforces our pride and commitment to each other as members of this community.

## 30 Days of Discovery: Fascinating Firsts and Distinctive Discoveries

VCU Discovery Makers  
from our Past, Present, and Future

### Discovery Team B

- Donna Gilles,  
*Partnership for People with Disabilities*
- Carolyn Hawley,  
*School of Allied Health Professions*
- Katherine Oliver,  
*School of Business*
- Timothy Reed,  
*Student Affairs & Enrollment Services*
- Patricia Wallace,  
*Human Resources*
- Jill Wilson,  
*Northwestern Univ. in absentia*

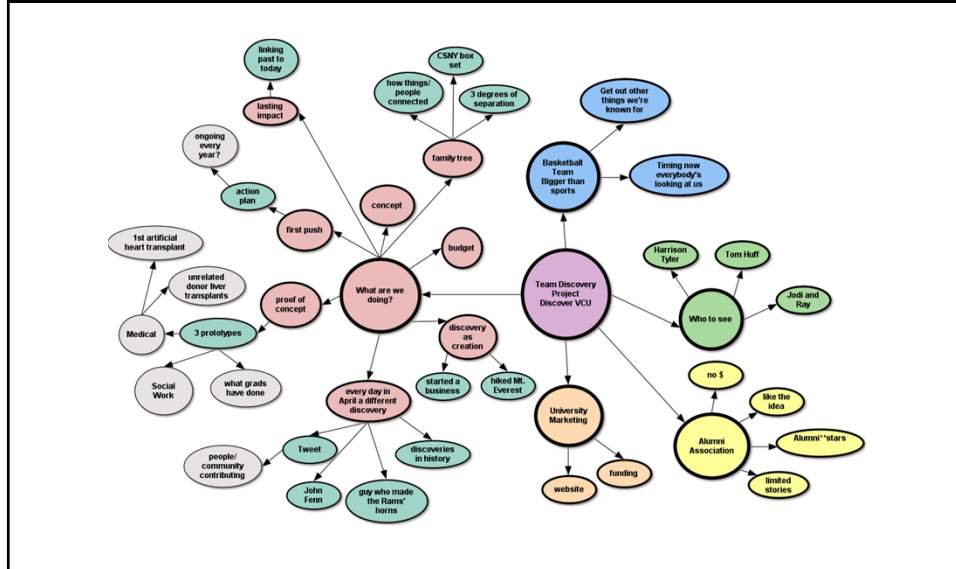
## Do You Know...

- Mr. Michael Jones McKean?  
*Discovered* a device that produces rainbows
- Dr. Everett Evans?  
*First* civilian burn unit in the U.S. was established under his direction
- Dr. Jennifer Johnson?  
*Discovered* how applying Social Network Analysis can benefit the military
- VCU Rams Men's Basketball Team?  
*First* to go "From the First Four to the Final Four"

## Quest for Distinction

- Discovery  
A key outcome of major research institutions is *discovery*.
- Impact  
"30 Days of Discovery" will demonstrate VCU's *impact*
- Success  
Investigate VCU as an institution of "firsts" as *successes*

## Creative Process



## Process

- Created the Mind Map
- Conducted Interviews (archivists, Drs. Harris, Merrick)
- Researched archives
- Surfed the internet for models
- Selected and agreed on examples
- Lost a team member
- Regrouped and built strong relationships
- Played on each other's strengths
- Covered each other in times of intense workloads
- Collaborated on presentation and report
- GOT ON THE BALCONY!



## Activities

- Using Alumni Month, April 2012, highlight accomplishments by alumni and faculty (current and past)
- Tumblr site
- Use existing media vehicles: TelegRAM, Facebook, Twitter, VCU publications
- “Submit a Discovery Maker” can build the database from 30 days to 365 days

## Prototypes and Formats

- <http://vcudiscovery.tumblr.com>
- Static - text only
  - Charles-Edouard Brown-Sequard
  - Michael Jones McKean
- Audio
  - Grace E. Harris
- Video
  - Jason Merrick

# VCU Discovery Makers



8 plays

Grace E. Harris, Ph.D. discovered the power of collaboration and inclusive leadership in her 32 years of service at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Harris was one of the first African-American students enrolled at VCU, graduating from the masters of social work program in 1960. She went on to become the highest-ranking woman and the highest-ranking African-American in VCU's history.

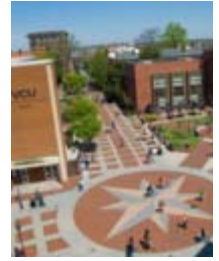
She served as a faculty member, dean, vice provost, provost and vice president for academic affairs, and acting president.

Known for her commitment to excellence and ability to effect positive change in systems, Harris has been a mentor and role model to many. In 1999, the VCU Board of Visitors formed [The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute](#) in her honor.

In this sound clip, Dr. Harris gives her perspective on what makes the institute's [VCU Leadership Development Program](#) a success.

Posted 2 days ago

Tagged: [1960](#), [African-American](#), [discovery](#), [education](#), [leadership](#), [vcu](#), [richmond](#), [virginia](#).



These Virginia Commonwealth University Rams to the horns to make a change the world.

Submit a Discovery

My blog

RSS Feed

Archive

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Charles-Edouard Brown-Segard was reportedly “one of the greatest discover of facts that the world has ever seen.” While a professor at VCU’s Medical College of Virginia in 1855, Brown-Segard conducted work in the basement of the Egyptian Building that led to an internationally acclaimed paper on endocrinology.

According to a new biography, “Brown-Segard identified the sensory pathways in the spinal cord and emphasized functional processes in the integrative actions of the nervous system, thereby anticipating modern concepts of how the brain operates.

He also discovered the function of the nerves that supply the blood vessels and thereby control their caliber, and the associated reflexes that adjust the circulation to bodily needs. He was the first to show that the adrenal glands are essential to life and suggested that other organs have internal secretions. He injected himself with ground-up animal testicles, claiming an invigorating effect, and this approach led to the development of modern hormone replacement therapy.”

READ: Brown-Segard: An Improbable Genius Who Transformed Medicine by Michael J. Amanoff, M.D. (Oxford University Press, 2011)

What is Brown-Segard Syndrome?

Posted 2 weeks ago

2 notes

Tagged: [discovery](#), [mcv](#), [neurology](#), [vcu](#), [richmond](#), [vir](#), [virginia](#).



Michael Jones McKean, artist and VCU assistant professor, discovered how to make a rainbow using collected rainwater, high-powered jet pumps, custom fountain nozzles and sunshine. He is using his discovery to create a public art project above the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha, Nebraska. Twice per day, for 20 minutes each, a rainbow will appear above the building.

According to the project statement, “Although the symbol of a rainbow has been co-opted, politicized, branded and commodified, an actual prismatic rainbow still has an ability to momentarily jolt us from the everyday. It feels hopeful, yearning, optimistic, ghost-like and meaningful. Regardless of whether it is immediately perceived as an artwork, the experience holds the power to connect people through an intangible, shared encounter.”

McKean is the recipient of numerous awards, most recently a Guggenheim Fellowship.

[Visit The Rainbow Project](#)

[McKean's full bio](#)

Posted 2 weeks ago

1 note

Tagged: [art](#), [artist](#), [light](#), [rainbow](#), [sculpture](#), [vcu](#), [richmond](#), [virginia](#).

Jason Merrick, VCU professor of systems modeling and analysis, discovered a method for predicting oil spills - before they happen.

Merrick has worked on projects ranging from assessing maritime oil transportation and ferry system safety, the environmental health of watersheds and optimal replacement policies for rail tracks and machine tools and received grants from the National Science Foundation, the Federal Aviation Administration, the United States Coast Guard, the American Bureau of Shipping, British Petroleum, and Booz Allen Hamilton, amongst others. He has also performed training for Infineon Technologies, Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, and Capital One. He is an associate editor for Decision Analysis and Operations Research and the information officer for the Decision Analysis Society.

[Visit Merrick's Website](#)

Posted 2 weeks ago

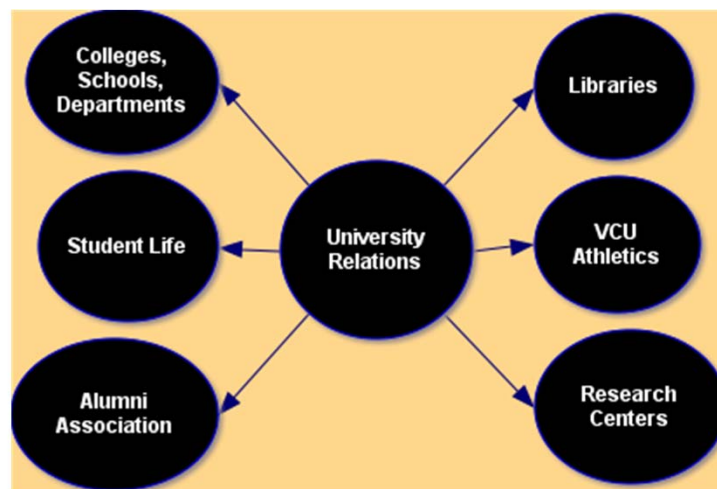
10 notes

Tagged: [VCU](#), [discovery](#), [research](#), [sustainability](#), [richmond](#), [virginia](#).

## Future Development

- On line April 2012
- Student volunteer interdisciplinary team to research advancements
- Expand 30 days to 365 days capitalizing on current unified university campaigns, that will include our collective rich history

## Potential Partners



## Thank You

- Jodi Koste and Ray Bonis, VCU Libraries
- Jason Merrick
- Grace E. Harris
- Tom Huff
- Cynthia Schmidt
- Joe Schilling and Mary Byrnes
- Leaders at GEHLI
- Our mentors, sponsors, and supervisors

## Questions

