VCU Launched Effort to Improve National Ranking

Offers Update on Programs, Activities to be Implemented in 2001

by Lissette Linares
University News Services

Virginia Commonwealth University has launched an ambitious effort designed to move the university by 2006 into the second tier of national universities, as ranked each fall in U.S. News & World Report’s “America’s Best Colleges.” Currently ranked in the third tier, VCU has identified several areas for improvement that are aligned with how the newsmagazine ranks research universities.

"VCU is a Carnegie doctoral research-extensive university with a substantial number of nationally ranked programs and exceptional faculty. It should be listed in the newsmagazine among institutions like it," said Roderick J. McDavis, Ph.D., provost and vice president of academic affairs.

The plan, nicknamed “3 to 2,” was approved by the university’s board of visitors in November.

U.S. News uses both quantitative and qualitative measures to rank colleges and universities nationwide. National universities are evaluated on academic reputation, retention rate, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, graduation rates and alumni giving. VCU already is performing at the second-tier level in several categories, McDavis said.

Academic reputation, accounting for 25 percent of the ranking, is determined by surveying presidents, provosts and deans of admissions at colleges and universities across the nation. These individuals rank institutions based on 14 academic and operational standards, including graduation rates, freshman retention rates, faculty-

Men’s Basketball Unveils High-Tech Advantage

by Mary Beth Alford
University News Services

Thanks to the latest technology, fans and media following the Virginia Commonwealth University Rams can now get all the information they need to follow the men’s basketball team this season in the convenience of a compact disc: The VCU Athletic Department just released its first interactive CD-ROM, “VCU Basketball: The Quickest Access to the Net.” Special features include video and sound highlights of every player since the Rams’ first season in 1968, historical game highlights dating back to the the 1980s and profiles of former Rams who went on to play professionally.

Institutional Performance Agreements Could Tie Funding to Performance

The governor’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education recommended the IPA as a way to hold public institutions accountable for their performance. The IPA also is designed to eliminate inconsistencies in funding higher-education initiatives and programs.

Under the IPA initiative, participating colleges and universities have developed a list of goals or areas for improvement over the next five years, as well as fair measures for determining their success both in preparing students and operating efficiently.

The state will review institutions’ IPAs page 6

College Performance Reviews Approved by SCHEV

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Featured to the left is a rendering of the future entrance to Virginia Commonwealth University’s Cabell library. Renovations to VCU’s libraries are among many efforts implemented to enhance campus facilities as well as services provided to students to increase retention rates. For more information about VCU's retention and enhancement efforts, see page 3.

Campus Renovations
INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT: Plotting the Next Six Years of University Growth

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY and the Virginia Department of Education (the "Department") and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) have entered into the Institutional Performance Agreement (IPA), which has been developed in collaboration with administrators, faculty and staff. The IPA is the major recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education, established by Governor Gilmore and chaired by VCU's rector, Mr. Edward L. Flippen. The IPA is a six-year agreement about the institution's performance expectations and the resources needed to achieve them. Five institutions, including VCU, are participating in the IPA process.

The Department is both a vision and reality. It represents a preserved agreement between VCU and the state about our future contribution to higher education in Virginia and in the nation. It then ensures predictable funding in support of this vision. It is essentially the rationale for both the base funding necessary to carry out our mission and core functions and additional funding needed for new initiatives.

A Strategic Plan for the Future of Virginia Commonwealth University has formed the basis for VCU's six-year plan. The core measures by which VCU's performance will be evaluated include student enrollment; number of degrees awarded; research awards (total dollars); service learning; reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; one-year student retention rates; and management standards.

Academic areas of focus in the next several years include, among others, VCU Life Sciences; the School of Engineering and its Center for Bioelectronics, Biosensors and Biosips; increasing support for undergraduate medical education; the School of Mass Communications; VCU's international profile, particularly through institutional agreements such as that between the School of the Arts and the Qatar Foundation; the enhancement of libraries and academic technology; and graduate education, particularly doctoral programs, as a key component of our national research stature.

Among the most important components of VCU's IPA is the University's continuing ability to support the statewide economic growth and development. Over the last ten years, VCU has been especially successful in these areas. Examples include establishing articulation agreements with Virginia community colleges; launching the VCU-GRTC agreement to provide free bus rides for VCU students; posting the largest enrollment increase since 1965 among the doctoral institutions; adding an out-of-state and international student enrollment goal to our enrollment plan; and launching several initiatives, such as the School of Engineering and the Virginia Biotechnology Research Park, in response to economic-development goals.

All aspects of the University — from accountability management and marketing to dining services and campus safety to student outcomes assessment — have been built into the six-year plan for VCU. It concludes with a review of the funding necessary to support our IPA initiatives.

Like those of other institutions, VCU's funding goals are to ensure contributions on the part of the students, the University and the Commonwealth. Students should pay a fair, but not burdensome, share of the cost of their education. VCU will contribute $86 million in new revenue over the course of the IPA from tuition revenue growth, primarily from out-of-state students.

Through reallocations, VCU will also provide $40 million in support of the research infrastructure and graduate education. The remaining resources needed for our IPA will come from the Commonwealth.

The total value of the operating initiatives in VCU's IPA is $258.3 million over the life of the agreement. Capital initiatives represent $108.1 million for a total value of $466.4 million.

Officials at VCU and the Department of Education are continuing their discussions of VCU's IPA, and we will keep you informed of the final outcome.

In the meantime, Mrs. Trani joins me in wishing you, your families, and your friends a safe and relaxing holiday season. I look forward to joining you in 2001!

EUGENE P. TRANI
President

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

CD-ROM

continued from page 1

"An important initiative of VCU Athletics is to reach more people more effectively, and the CD-ROM is a high-tech, cutting-edge way to accomplish that goal," said Richard Sander, Ph.D., VCU director of athletics. "This is a fresh and dynamic way to introduce a new season of VCU men's basketball to both fans and the media."

Several universities use CD-ROMs in promoting their sports teams. "But VCU stands alone in the fact that all video and production was done on-site. We are lucky to have the advanced equipment needed to produce such an effective tool," said Justin Harris, director of multimedia services for VCU Athletics. Two VCU SportsCenter graduate students — Sunny Aslam and Jimmy Sander — helped Harris, design and produce the volume.

VCU Athletics has distributed the CD-ROM, which also houses a 124-page media guide, to newspapers and broadcast stations throughout Virginia, as well as out-of-state cities where VCU will play games. Copies also have been sent to major sports publications including, Sports Illustrated and ESPN Magazine. Although the National College Athletic Association prohibits colleges from distributing CD-ROMs directly to high-school recruits, VCU coaches and staff will utilize the disc as a tool during the interview and recruiting process.

"VCU Basketball: The Quickest Access to the Net" may be purchased at VCU men's basketball games and at athletic events for $10.

VCU Athletics plans to design and produce CDs for all university sports teams in the next three years.

3 to 2

continued from page 1

on a five-point scale, five representing "distinguished." In the latest U.S. News ranking, VCU's score of 2.9 was consistent with those institutions placing in the upper end of third-tier institutions. The university's goal is to increase this score to a 3.2 or "good" academic reputation.

VCU earned second-tier-level scores in the areas of faculty and financial resources. VCU's "3 to 2" initiative identifies goals and strategies that will improve the university's performance in all seven categories. The plan was developed with input from faculty, staff and students.

"The university community has set some ambitious goals and now we have to begin achieving them," McDavis said. "Within this five-year cycle, the top areas of concentration will be to improve our academic reputation, increase retention and graduation rates, and improve the quality of students attracted to VCU."

Several areas will be addressed during the next year. These highlights include:

ACADEMIC REPUTATION

• Develop a marketing plan for the university.

• Produce a quarterly publication promoting and describing VCU's achievements and research status.

• Implement retention strategies developed by the university's retention committee. The committee was appointed in the fall of 1999 to devise practical solutions to increase the retention rate.

• Establish a degree audit system to track students' progress through their undergraduate programs.

• Enhance campus facilities and improve student services.

• Improve VCU's six-year graduation rate.

• Increase the number of out-of-state students.

• Encourage academic units to hire full-time faculty who have the highest degree in their fields of expertise.

RETENTION AND GRADUATION

STUDENT SELECTIVITY

FACULTY RESOURCES

• Increase the number of full-time faculty hired in all academic units.

• Encourage academic units to hire full-time faculty who have the highest degree in their fields of expertise.
VCU Joins CDC to Create National Poison Hotline

Virginia Poison Center to Join National Telecommunications System

by Michael Ford University News Services

Virginia Commonwealth University's Virginia Poison Center will be among the first poison centers in the United States to participate in a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention initiative to establish a national telecommunication system and single toll-free number for poison centers nationwide.

The Virginia Poison Center's outreach education coordinator, Evelyn Waring, R.N., is working with the national committee designing the marketing and public information for the new national poison number. The VPC will be among the first poison centers to use the new number early in 2001, though it may be as long as a year before the number is in place nationwide.

"The plan is to create one number that can be called from anywhere in the U.S. When you dial the toll-free number, your call will be routed automatically to the poison center for your region," Waring said. "People will receive better service and as the public becomes more familiar with poison center services, we anticipate our volume of calls will increase."

Already averaging 70 calls a day, VPC is part of the Department of Emergency Medicine at VCU's Medical College of Virginia Hospitals. Last year, the 12-member VPC staff handled more than 25,000 calls from a coverage area that includes 2.3 million people and 32 local hospitals. The VPC region stretches from the Eastern Shore westward to Prince Edward County and from Westmoreland County in the Northern Neck southward to the City of Chesapeake.

With the average call lasting five minutes, most calls to the VPC are from the general public, but the center is also a consulting service for medical professionals, with 20 percent of calls coming from physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other health-care providers. Staffers relay vital information about venomous organisms, poisonous plants, household products, environmental toxins, prescription drugs and illegal drugs of abuse. In addition to knowledge about toxins, staffers have information about local medical services throughout its service region.

"We know what ambulance transport facilities are available, how far it is to the closest hospital and what diagnostic and therapeutic capability exists at that facility in every county in our region," Waring said. "This regional expertise is important because timing can be critical. Some toxins may reach peak levels in the body very quickly, so saving time helps save lives."

VPC staffs work efficiently to collect a patient history, reference relevant data and decide if that patient may be treated at home with first aid or requires transportation to a hospital.

The CDC has awarded a grant to the American Association of Poison Control Centers to establish the national telecommunication system. The five-year, $27.6 million grant will be used to establish the toll-free phone number and develop an educational campaign that promotes the new number. The money will also fund grants to poison centers nationwide to add staffing and other resources.

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VCU Enhances Campus Environment, Student Services

In an effort to improve student retention rates, Virginia Commonwealth University has implemented a number of enhancements to campus facilities, as well as services provided to students. Improvements range from construction of a new student apartment complex to increasing the frequency of university shuttle-bus runs. These improvements are part of a universitywide effort to boost VCU's standing from a Tier 3 to a Tier 2 institution in U.S. News & World Report's annual college rankings.

Renovations in the Franklin Street Gym are already completed with the opening of a new student lounge and study space. A computer lab was also recently added to the basement of Hibbs. With the new student lounge, VCU has created a 24-hour study space that encourages student interaction with peers and faculty. A new Life Sciences Building on the corner of Harrison and Cary Streets is scheduled for completion by Fall 2001.

VCU will undergo a renovation beginning this spring. The 18-month project will include an enhancement of the library's entranceway and the addition of an indoor coffee and snack area for students. A similar renovation is planned for the Tompkins-McCaw Library.

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Future Leaders

Consulting Group to Explore VCU's Food Service Needs

Prizes Offered for Feedback from VCU Community

In an effort to provide more and better dining options for the university community, Virginia Commonwealth University hired H. David Porter Associates Inc., a nationally recognized independent food service consulting firm, to assist in examining the services currently offered by VCU Dining Services. The university is exploring opportunities to build new facilities and initiate new food service concepts.

"What we've been hearing from students, faculty and staff is that they are not pleased with the diversity of food offerings currently available on campus," Jez said. Previously, focus groups were conducted to determine desired food services, but Jez said the university now is offering the survey to ensure that more people are given the opportunity to provide feedback.

All respondents will be entered in a drawing to win the following prizes: a TV/MCR, $50, $25 and $10 VCU Bookstore gift certificates.

Surveys should be completed by 5 p.m. Dec. 6. Winners will be drawn the same day and notified by email.
Recreational Sports to Offer Free Trial of Facilities

Virginia Commonwealth University Recreational Sports is offering a seven-day free membership for VCU faculty and staff. The trial membership, available until Jan. 31, provides access to programs and facilities at VCU's Cary Street Recreational Complex, the MCV Campus Recreation & Aquatic Center and the Stuart C. Siegel Center. For details, call 828-6039. VCU Recreational Sports offers fitness classes and personal training. For more information on these programs, call 827-0317. For swimming classes, call 828-6402.

VCU's MCV Women's Healthcare to Offer Weight Loss Class

VCU's MCV Women's HealthCare will offer "Choose to Lose Healthy Eating and Weight Loss Program" on Monday at 7 p.m. from Jan. 15-March 5. The two-hour class will focus on balancing protein, fat and carbohydrates for healthy weight loss. The cost is $175 for the class. A one-hour nutrition consultation also is available for an additional $25. For more information, call 560-8830, ext. 7177. To register, call 560-9065.

Greeting Cards To Benefit Carver Elementary School

Holiday greeting cards designed by Carver Elementary School students now are available at Virginia Commonwealth University bookstores. Proceeds will go to the Carver Elementary School Parent Teacher Association. The cost of the cards is $5 per box.

Student Playwrights Earn National, International Accolades

Several playwrights from VCU's Creative Writing Program recently have received national attention for their literature in competition, production or publication. "Hammurabi 108," a play by Jerrell Nickerson, a graduate student, has been selected as one of three finalists in FirstStage's fourth annual One-Act Playwriting Contest in Los Angeles. A panel of judges will select the winner at a performance at the Actors Theatre in Louisville. Her work, selected from more than 2000 entries, has received staged readings at 1708 Gallery and Bardsele Theatre. "Triple A," also by Parker, has been published in Romanian and English in "Antologia." A copy of the book has been donated to the English department.

VCU alumnus Billy Dowdell's new full-length play, "Full Moon Over Montana," received a staged reading in Bozeman, Montana at the Northwest New Play Festival. It is under consideration for full production for the 2000-01 season.

Advertising Students Gain Hands-on Experience

Design Campaign for Children's Museum of Richmond

by Laura Arbogast and Mary Beth Alford

University News Services

What started as a class field trip to the Children's Museum of Richmond to generate ideas for a hypothetical billboard campaign turned into a hands-on assignment for several Virginia Commonwealth University advertising students. Working in teams, the undergraduate advertising students in Professor Jean Govani's "Advertising Layout and Production" class designed invitations and posters for the museum's "Holiday Fanfare, A Celebration of the Season," displayed at the museum through Dec. 31. Students also helped design exhibits for the event, which educates museum visitors on the cultural and seasonal traditions of Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanzaa. The students used brightly colored symbols from each seasonal exhibit in developing the invitations and posters.

Govani's students were invited to a Nov. 16 sneak preview of "Holiday Fanfare" with museum members, friends and staff. Posters are displayed at the museum, Science Museum of Virginia and Theatre IV. The students' hard work and dedication got them an offer to design posters and invitations for the museum's New Year's Eve party.

"The museum was very pleased with the results of working with the students," Govani said. "Plans are already in the works for another project this spring."

Avoid Overeating During Family, Business Gatherings

MaryJo Sawyer, a registered dietitian at Virginia Commonwealth University's Women's HealthCare at Stony Point recommends strategies to minimize the damage of over-eating over the holidays.

According to Sawyer, revelers should avoid skipping meals prior to attending a catered dinner, cocktail party, office party or family dinner. Instead, eat less food during the day and make lower fat choices prior to the event. Other suggestions include:

- Determine your limits before attending the event. Decide on your rations of drinks or appetizers so you can be more selective at a buffet. For example, have one modest serving of all the foods offered at the dinner, but do not have seconds. Follow up with a small dessert or skip dessert altogether especially if your hunger is satisfied.
- Limit or avoid specific food items like butter on breads or sour cream on potatoes. If you know you're going to have many opportunities to eat a specific food during the holiday season, limit that selection to only two or three encounters and enjoy them each time.
- Cut beverage calories by drinking only low-calorie beverages like diet or club sodas and mineral waters. Eggnog is a holiday favorite, but is especially high in calories. One-half cup of eggnog equals 70 calories, including 10 grams of fat and 96 fat calories. Alcohol supplies calories that can cause weight gain. Moderation is key when managing calories and drinking.

Wind Ensemble

Terry Austin, Ph.D., Virginia Commonwealth University band director and associate professor of music, will direct the Symphonic Wind Ensemble in the Department of Music's annual holiday gala, "Music for the Holidays." The event will be offered at 8 p.m. Dec. 8 in the VCU Performing Arts Center Concert Hall. Tickets are $5 with proceeds benefiting VCU's MCV Hospitality House.

NASA Now Accepting Applications for Student Research Program

by Lissette Linares

University News Services

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration now is accepting applications for the Undergraduate Student Research Program, which offers mentored research experiences at nine participating NASA centers. A 10-week session will be offered during summer 2001 and a 15-week session will be offered during the fall.

Eligible students must be enrolled full-time in an accredited U.S. college or university and be rising juniors or seniors at the end of the spring semester. Students must major or demonstrate coursework concentration in engineering, mathematics, computer science or physical/life sciences.

The application deadline is Jan. 26. Complete program guidelines and a downloadable application are posted at http://education.nasa.gov/srp.
Virginia Commonwealth University's Department of Parking and Transportation has announced the opening of a new Academic Campus parking deck as well as information on holiday service, inclement weather procedures and new monthly subscriber rates.

NEW PARKING LOTS
- Parking and Transportation recently opened a new lot at Harrison and Cary streets. The lot provides 225 spaces for both student and staff parking.
- Also, construction of the new Bow Street Parking Deck, adjacent to the Stuart C. Siegel Center, will begin in fall 2001. The deck will add 440 spaces for subscribers, as well as daily and Siegel Center event parking.

HOLIDAY SHUTTLE SERVICE
- Shuttle services will not be provided during the university's observed holidays, which include Dec. 22, 25, 26 and 29 and Jan. 1-2.

INCLEMENT WEATHER PARKING
- When ice or snow is projected for the Richmond area, Parking and Transportation will close the top levels of all decks. As soon as the snow or snow stops falling, crews will begin clearing lots. When the university closes due to inclement weather, Academic Campus subscribers including faculty, staff and students, may park in the West Main Street or West Broad Street decks.
- On VCU's Medical College of Virginia Campus, subscribers may use either the D or N decks. For details about deck and lot accessibility in cases of inclement weather, call 278-5396.

SUBSCRIBER RATES
- Effective Dec. 1, faculty and staff subscriber fees were adjusted by 3 percent. Fees for Academic Campus subscribers increased by 3 percent while MCV Campus subscriber fees were decreased by 3 percent. The change will begin to equalize campus rates as approved by the board of visitors. The new Academic Campus rates are $48.66 per month. For the MCV Campus, the monthly rates are $55.02. MCV Campus subscribers will see the change reflected in their Dec. 22 paychecks, while Academic Campus subscribers will see the change reflected in their Jan. 1 paychecks.

For more information, visit the VCU Parking and Transportation web site at www.vcu.edu/transportation.html.

VCU Awards CCI Printing Contract

Virginia Commonwealth University has awarded Choice Communications Inc., a five-year contract to print stationery products and handle duplicating and print-to-mail services. CCI has provided VCU with letterhead, envelopes and business cards since 1995 as a subcontractor with Xerox Business Services. CCI holds a print-to-mail contract with responsibility for producing and mailing all university schedules, grades, invoices, account statements and admissions packages.

"We are very excited about the partnership we've created with Choice," said VCU's director of business services Diane Reynolds. "They're really proven themselves in the past. Both the quality of their products and their customer service driven team are outstanding."

The company's master plan includes integrating online ordering, departmental printing and job submittal. Once the plan is phased in over the next year, any university student, faculty, or staff member will be able to perform each of these tasks from the computer desktop. CCI's plan also calls for establishing hard-copy scanning stations throughout the campuses, allowing the VCU community to scan, digitize and submit jobs for production without leaving a copy center.

In partnership with IBM, CCI and VCU will link networks to create a system that can transmit documents from scanning stations and desktops to various copy centers on campus. Automatic billing to departmental accounts, student accounts or credit cards also will be available.

"The Choice team has spent the last several years learning the role that documents play in the university environment. We know that if we focus on understanding our customer and their processes, we can create a solution that can use the power of technology to radically impact the way documents are managed, produced and distributed," said William Cooper Jr., CCI's president and CEO.

2000-01 Inclement Weather Policy Approved by VCU

In preparation for the possible onslaught of inclement weather, Virginia Commonwealth University has approved its inclement weather policy for 2000-01.

- Inclement weather strikes, employees should tune into local radio and television stations for updates on which operating plan is in effect. They also may call the university's weather hotline (VCU employees, 278-1727; or VCU's Medical College of Virginia Hospitals and Physicians, 828-8356 ext. 7669).
- Announcements of state government closings and late openings do not apply to VCU or its MCV Hospitals and Physicians.

Designated employees will be notified in advance by their supervisors or department heads if they are to work their regular shifts during inclement weather. If the university remains open or reopen during inclement weather, approved employee absences will be covered by accrued leave or leave without pay as appropriate. Designated VCU employees who work in MCV Hospitals and Physicians departments must report to work even when VCU is closed.

While MCV Hospitals is always open, hospital and physician clinics may be closed or have a delayed opening during inclement weather. All MCV Hospitals employees are considered essential and are expected to report to work even if hospital clinics close.

However, approved absences will be covered by paid leave or leave without pay as appropriate. If transportation assistance is offered, paid leave will be denied for employees who refuse assistance. MCV Physicians staff should assume that all locations are open during inclement weather unless other announcements are made.

INCLEMENT WEATHER PLANS

Plan 1:
- All day classes at both the Academic and MCV campuses are delayed until a specific time.

Plan 2:
- All day classes at both the Academic and MCV campuses are delayed until a specific time.

- Additional clinic announcements will be made only if clinics are not fully operational.
- Designated employees must report to work at their regular times.
- Separate announcements will be made for evening and Saturday classes.

PERSONNEL WHO WORK OUTSIDE THE DAY SHIFT

All employees on shifts following a closing or late opening must report to work as scheduled unless additional announcements are made for their shifts.

PARKING ASSIGNMENTS

Faculty, staff and students who hold valid parking decals should follow these parking assignments during inclement weather, so parking lots can be cleared:

- Academic Campus: West Broad Street Deck, West Main Street Deck, MCV Campus
- D Deck
- N Deck
Poison Center Offers Tips for Safeguarding Against Accidental Pediatric Poisoning During Holidays

by Michael Ford
University News Services

The things that make the holiday season festive—such as gifts, decorations and visiting friends and family—bring with them the potential for accidental poisoning. Officials with the Virginia Poison Center based at Virginia Commonwealth University's Medical College of Virginia Hospitals point out that even in a home that has been "child-proofed," excited and curious young children could have access to dangerous items.

"Visitors may bring their medications into the house in suitcases and purses that could be left unattended and accessible to a child," said Evelyn Waring, outreach education coordinator at VPC. "Unusual plants and decorations on display, alcoholic beverages served at celebrations and brightly packaged products beneath the tree are potential sources of choking or poisoning, parents should immediately call their regional poison control center. A specialist will assess the situation, advise the appropriate first aid or determine if hospitalization is necessary.

Waring recommends keeping the phone number of your area poison control center by the phone. If you are visiting family or friends in another part of Virginia, get the number of the poison center for that area and keep it handy.

Central and Eastern Virginia are served by the Virginia Poison Center at 1-800-522-6337. Western Virginia is served by the Blue Ridge Poison Center at 1-800-451-1428. Northern Virginia is served by the National Capital Poison Center at 1-202-625-3333.

Seasonal Toxins

POtentially TOXIC:

• Alcohol — Children are at risk for poisoning from even small amounts of ethanol alcohol products, such as cologne, perfumes and after-shave. These popular gifts should not be stored under the Christmas tree. Be aware of the alcohol content of bath products, which can cause poisoning in children who eat more than a small amount.

• Holly — The bright red berries are very attractive to a small child but can cause severe vomiting and diarrhea if more than a few are ingested.

• Medications — Potential for accidental poisoning increases during the holidays when guests bring hampers and purses containing medications. Do not leave bags unattended. Store medications out of children’s reach.

• Mistletoe — Ingestion of more than two of the berries can poison a child.

Potentially Hazardous but Not TOXIC:

• Tinsel and tacks — Typically made of plastic or aluminum, they are not usually poisonous but can cause choking.

• Tree ornaments — Most modern ornaments are made of plastic, glass or styrofoam and are not poisonous. Antique and heirloom ornaments may be covered with lead-containing paints and should not be used in homes with small children. Many ornaments can be a choking hazard if swallowed.

Non-Toxic:

• Poinsettia — Accidental ingestion of this plant has not caused any cases of serious poisoning in children.

• Tree preservatives — Added to the water at the base of the tree, these solutions are typically non-toxic sugar solutions.

IPAS

progress annually and allocate monies for initiatives and programs based on an institution’s progress. The "IPA forces us to talk about performance and outcomes — topics which have not been discussed in great detail in higher education in Virginia," said Roderick J. McDevitt, Ph.D., provost and vice president for academic affairs. "We are confident that VCU can meet its goals if our IPA is funded."

VCU’s plan, approved by the board of visitors in November, outlined a $450 million package to be used for instruction and for the enhancement and renovation of its campuses over the five-year period. McDevitt and Paul Timmreck, senior vice president for finance and administration, oversaw the development of VCU’s IPA.

Among the university’s goals are to improve retention and graduation rates; increase enrollment, particularly of out-of-state students; develop life-sciences programs; create more distance-education courses; increase the research budget to $200 million by 2006 and enhance the undergraduate mass communications program.

VCU recently submitted its IPA to Secretary Bryan. During its 2001 session, the Virginia General Assembly is expected to review the five IPs and decide whether to fund them. The IPs could provide a six-year schedule of budget increases for the five universities.

"Even if IPs are not funded, VCU will use its plan to assess university performance in targeted areas," McDevitt said. "We have a very good strategic plan already in place, but the IPA has added performance measures to that plan and also has enabled us to put a price tag on our initiatives," he added.

Other Virginia institutions to submit IPAs were the University of Virginia, George Mason, Norfolk State and Virginia State universities.

Ophthalmologist Receives National Achievement Award

A Virginia Commonwealth University ophthalmologist recently became the second ophthalmologist in Virginia to receive the Senior Achievement Award from the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

Robert C. Allen, M.D., professor and chair of ophthalmology, was recognized for excellence in original research presentations, instructional courses, and committee leadership in the field of ophthalmology at the AAO meeting in Dallas.

Allen, listed in the national edition of "Best Doctors in America," completed ophthalmology training at Johns Hopkins University, the University of Florida and Harvard University and served on the faculty at Emory University and the University of Virginia. His consultation practice in glaucoma and related diseases encompasses patients in numerous clinical research trials including the NIH-sponsored Advanced Glaucoma Intervention Study.

Allen has given invited lectures in more than 25 countries and written numerous scientific articles and book chapters. He currently holds leadership positions in the American Academy of Ophthalmology, American Glaucoma Society and the Virginia Society of Ophthalmology and is an associate examiner for the American Board of Ophthalmology.

Medicine Faculty Represents VCU at AAMC Conference

The Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine was well represented during the recent 111th Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Annual Meeting in Chicago. VCU presenters at the meeting included:

• John Boothby, director for conference and alternative instruction in continuing medical education.

• Lenore Buckley, M.D., professor of internal medicine.

• Paul Fairman, M.D., professor of internal medicine.

• Margaret Grimes, M.D., associate professor of pathology.

• Carol Hampton, associate dean for faculty and instructional development.

• Dennis Howard, M.D., associate professor of medicine and director of research.

• Gloria Kuhn, D.O., associate professor and director of faculty development in the department of emergency medicine.

• Kathleen O’Kane Kreutzer,

• Laurie Lyckholm, M.D., assistant professor of internal medicine.

• James Messner, M.D., associate dean of medical education.

• Bobby Reynolds, education coordinator of the office of curriculum in the School of Medicine.

• Karen Sanders, M.D., professor of internal medicine.

• Jeanne Schlesinger, director of instructional development.

• Brenda Seago, director of the computer-based instructional laboratory (CIBL).

• Chris Stephens, multimedia developer of the CIBL.

• Caroline Williams, multimedia editor of the CIBL.

Also at the meeting, Aileen Edwards, director of admissions and minority affairs, was named chair-elect of the Southern Region Group on Student Affairs. Paul Mazmanian, M.D., associate dean for continuing medical education, was sworn in as chairman of the Research in Medical Education Conference of the AAMC.

Boothby began his term as president for the Society for Academic Continuing Medical Education. VCU’s Women in Medicine Program received the AAMCs 2000 Women in Medicine Leadership Award.

AAMC is the principal professional organization representing medical schools in North America. More than 3,500 deans, faculty, staff and students participated at the national meeting.

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adjunct ratios, class size, use of campus facilities and classrooms, and debt ratio. "VCU also will establish additional performance measures to assess the quality of our programs. Having already created the IPA document, we’re prepared to develop these measures," Provost Rodenick McDevitt said.

Performance measures will be used to determine areas for improvement as well as to better understand how institutions are using state monies.
Pharmaceutical Student Helps to Educate Consumers on Prescription Drugs

by Mary Beth Alford

University News Services

A n internship opportunity that would enable Bich-Nguyen Nguyen to study direct-to-consumer advertisements intrigued the Virginia Commonwealth University doctoral student last summer. She knew very little about DCAs—those prescription-drug ads found frequently in the mass media. But she quickly learned the Ads might be generating more pharmaceutical sales, but not giving consumers the information needed.

Introduced in 1985, direct-to-consumer ads allow pharmaceutical companies to target medicines directly to consumers. The ads feature a brief summary, usually very technical and often written for doctors and pharmacists.

During her four-month internship with the Consumer Health Information Corp. in McLean, Nguyen focused on educating patients with necessary drug information and possible side effects before receiving a prescription.

"I was shocked to find that many consumers are not getting the information that they need to be active in their medical treatments," said Nguyen, now in her second year of the program. "The brief summary was never intended for consumers," she said. "In fact, studies show that only 31 percent of consumers even bother to read the brief summary. My goal was to explain this fundamental information to my future patients."

For nearly half of her 600-hour internship, Nguyen researched the impact of advertising on newly approved prescription drugs. She found that the 25 top-selling medicines promoted to consumers in 1999 accounted for 40.7 percent of drug spending. Advertising for prescription drugs reached $1.5 billion in 1999, up from $375 million in 1995. In just the first four months of 2000, advertising levels reached $1.8 billion—38 percent more than during the same period last year.

In addition to writing a DCA article that she submitted to medical journals across the country, Nguyen used her research to draft hints for patients to use when hearing of new prescription drugs. Her list includes reviewing ads to identify questions to discuss with a physician and ensuring that patients understand their doctor's advice.

"Since direct-to-consumer advertising provides little beneficial information to patient-consumers, there is an increasing reliance on health-care professionals for advice about their medication," said Thomas Reinders, Pharm.D., associate dean of student affairs for the School of Pharmacy. "Bich has learned the sensitivity of taking technical concepts and translating them into layman's terms without distorting accuracy. This is a vital function of a successful pharmacist."

Nguyen and her family fled from Vietnam when she was 5 years old, relocating in Northern Virginia. "My parents knew that freedom and an education would allow me unlimited opportunities for the future and they wanted to give me those gifts," said Nguyen, who entered VCU as a sophomore with 29 college credits that she earned in advanced high-school classes. "I came to VCU because it was close to home, and because it has one of the top pharmacy schools in the country."

"Bich is a phenomenal young woman and student. She worked very hard for us this summer, and I would definitely hire her after she graduates," said Dorothy Smith, Pharm. D., president of Consumer Health Information Corp. and assistant professor at VCU's School of Pharmacy.

For now, however, Nguyen is focusing on three more years of pharmacy school. "Although I plan to become a pharmacy manager when I finish at VCU, my internship has pleased my interest in the business aspects of pharmacy," she said. "In the long run, I plan to pursue a business management degree and hope to work with a large pharmaceutical company in marketing or as a financial consultant."

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President Trani, Mrs. Lois Trani Make Major Planned Gifts to Massey Cancer Center; Engineering

by Laurel Hayward

Submitted by University Advancement

Dr. Eugene and Mrs. Lois Trani have designated a life insurance benefit worth $700,000 to support the Massey Cancer Center and the School of Engineering. "Lois and I wanted to express our gratitude to Virginia Commonwealth University, which has given us so much over the past decade," said Dr. Trani. "We believe so much in the university, its mission, programs, students and alumni that we wanted to remain a part of VCU long after we are gone."

The Tranis’ gift is a result of Dr. Trani’s participation on the board of directors of Universal Corporation. Universal Corporation allows each director on its board to recommend a corporation donation to his or her selected charitable organization.

"We at VCU’s Massey Cancer Center are extremely grateful for the steadfast support of Dr. and Mrs. Trani," said Gordon Ginder, M.D., director of the Massey Cancer Center. "This leadership commitment is tangible evidence of their strong belief in the important mission of our Center. "$500,000 of the Tranis’ $700,000 benefit will go to support the center’s mission and goals. Mrs. Trani currently serves on the Massey Cancer Center’s Advisory Board and volunteers her time and service to the center’s patient library.

The remainder of the designated life insurance benefit will go to support the School of Engineering. "The Trani’s gift is an extraordinary testament to their dedication and commitment to the School of Engineering," said Robert Maatman, Ph.D., dean of the school. "President Trani had much to do with making the vision of an Engineering School in Central Virginia a reality. It is truly an honor to count the Trantis among the ranks of our most staunch supporters."

"The Tranis’ generosity and support of the university over the past ten years have served as an inspiration to the entire university community as a fantastic example of the power of personal philanthropy," said Peter Wyeth, vice president of University Advancement. "We are indeed fortunate to have such a president who not only is one of VCU’s most enthusiastic advocates and supporters, but as a result of his generosity, one of Richmond’s and the commonwealth’s greatest friends."

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VCU Music Offers 'Music for the Holidays'

Performance Proceeds to Benefit VCU’s MCV Hospitalit House

by Lissette Linares

University News Services

Virginia Commonwealth University's Department of Music once again will ring in the holiday season with its annual gala and benefit, "Music for the Holidays."

Featuring variations of traditional holiday music, the concert will be held at 8 p.m. Dec. 6 at the VCU Performing Arts Center Concert Hall. The festive event will feature performances by:

- Symphonic Wind Ensemble
- Guitar ensembles
- Madrigalist Choral Society
- Brass Ensemble
- Wind Ensemble

The evening will culminate in an audience sing-along led by the Commonwealth Singers, featuring the traditional holiday songs, including Jingle Bells, Joy to the World and other favorites.

A reception and poinsettia sale will be sold after the concert.

The concert will be held at 8 p.m. Dec. 6 at the VCU Performing Arts Center Concert Hall.
Seminars
Dec. 4 — "Massey Cancer Center Research Seminar: ATM, Telomeres and Radiotherapy." Sponsored by Massey Cancer Center. For details, call 828-1880.
Noon/Massey Cancer Center, Room G-120
Noon/Smith Building, Room 216
7:30 a.m/Main Hospital, Room 9-300
Dec. 6 — "Massey Cancer Center Research Seminar: Heritable, Selectable Epiallels at the Myelo Red Color (rl)." Sponsored by Massey Cancer Center. For details, call 828-1880.
Noon/Massey Cancer Center, Room G-120
Dec. 8 — "Bunts-Hakler Lecture: The Emerging Field of Pediatric Andrology." Sponsored by Division of Urology. For details, call 828-5318.
1 p.m/Medical Sciences Building, Room 104, 105
7:30 a.m/Main Hospital, Room 422, 423
Noon/Massey Cancer Center, Room G-120

Workshops
Dec. 4 — "Stress Relief: Academic Success Workshop on Managing Stress." Sponsored by University Counseling Services of the Division of Student Affairs. For details, call 828-6290.
Noon/Student Commons' Forum Room 828
Dec. 4 — "Reservations and Events Workshop." Sponsored by Reservations and Events. For details, call 828-9502.
Noon/Student Commons, Capital B
Dec. 5 — "Stress Relief: Spinning Class with Eric West." Sponsored by Recreational Sports. For details, call 827-4100.
5 p.m/Siegell Center, Multipurpose Room
Dec. 6 — "Compensation Reform for VCU Managers (Phase 1)." Sponsored by the Office of Training and Development. For details, call 828-0179. Cost is $30.
9 a.m/McGuire Hall Annex, Room B-20
Dec. 6 — "Compensation Reform for VCU Managers (Phase 1)." Sponsored by the Office of Training and Development. For details, call 828-0179.
2 p.m/McGuire Hall Annex, Room B-20
Dec. 6 — "Stress Relief: Yoga with Rachel Crawford." Sponsored by Recreational Sports. For details, call 827-4100.
6 p.m/Cary Street Gym, Upstairs
9 a.m/McGuire Hall Annex, Room B-20
Dec. 7 — "Weight Watchers at Work." Sponsored by Employee Health Services and Work/Life Resources. For details, call 828-9502, or E-mail at JHHOW-ELL@vcu.edu.
Noon/Student Commons
Dec. 7 — "Stress Relief: Academic Success Workshop on Managing Stress." Sponsored by University Counseling Services of the Division of Student Affairs. For details, call 828-6290.
3:30 p.m/Student Commons' Forum Room
Dec. 8 — "Pay for Performance at MCV Hospitals." Sponsored by the Office of Training and Development. For details, call 828-0179.
9 a.m/McGuire Hall Annex, Room B-20
Dec. 8 — "Stress Relief Yoga with Rachel Crawford." Sponsored by Recreational Sports. For details, call 827-1100.
12:30 p.m/Siegell Center, Multipurpose Room
Dec. 8 — "Stress Relief Spinning Class with Venus Claybrook." Sponsored by Recreational Sports. For details, call 827-1100.
5:30 p.m/Siegell Center, Multipurpose Room
9 a.m/McGuire Hall Annex, Room B-20
7:30 a.m/Main Hospital, Room 422, 423
Dec. 28 — "Compensation Reform for VCU Managers (Phase 1)." Sponsored by the Office of Training and Development. For details, call 828-0179. Cost is $30.
9 a.m/McGuire Hall Annex, Room B-20
Dec. 21 — "Weight Watchers at Work." Sponsored by Employee Health Services and Work/Life Resources. For details, call 828-9502, or E-mail at JHHOW-ELL@vcu.edu.
Noon/Student Commons

Computer Workshops
The workshops are sponsored by University Computing Services on the Academic Campus. The classes will meet in Cabell Library, Room 320 at 1 p.m. For details, call 828-6650.
Dec. 6 — "ACCESS Macros." 7 p.m/Siegell Center
Dec. 7 — "ACCESS Intermediate." 7 p.m/Siegell Center
Dec. 11 — "ACCESS Advanced." 7 p.m/Siegell Center
Dec. 13 — "ACCESS Security." 7 p.m/Siegell Center

Meating
Dec. 12 — "Quality, Safety, Risk and Credentials Committee." 7 p.m/Siegell Center

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