Federal OHRP Lifts Restrictions on Human Subjects Research at VCU

by Melissa Jones
and Erin Lucero
University News Services

The federal Office for Human Research Protections has lifted its restrictions on human subjects research at Virginia Commonwealth University.

In a letter dated Dec. 15 from OHRP, formerly the Office for Protection from Research Risks (OPRR), university officials learned that OHRP has closed its compliance evaluation of the university's human-subjects research. As a result, the university is no longer required to submit quarterly progress reports to OHRP.

Michael A. Carome, M.D., director of the Division of Compliance Oversight at OHRP, credited VCU President Eugene P. Trani, Ph.D., and Roy Pickens, Ph.D., associate vice president for research, for their leadership in VCU's "markedly enhanced research system.

"VCU's research program is stronger than ever," said Dr. Trani, who established and guided an IRB Task Force to oversee the OHRP page 2.

Governor Provides $25 Million for VCU Health System

Also Proposes Additional Funding for Salaries and Capital Projects

by Erin Lucero
University News Services

At a news conference held at Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Engineering in December, Gov. Jim Gilmore announced his proposed amendments to the Commonwealth's budget. His proposal included $25.1 million in funding to the VCU Health System in support of its unreimbursed indigent care costs.

This is the second year that Gov. Gilmore has moved to provide the VCU Health System with 100 percent of its costs for delivering health care to patients who cannot afford to pay," said Dr. Eugene P. Trani, VCU president.

"The governor made a similar recommendation last year," and with the support of the General Assembly—the health system received this funding for the first time in the hospital's history. We're very pleased that the governor has once again seen the importance of providing this essential funding. Without these funds, our academic medical center would be in serious financial jeopardy.

The VCU Health System is the primary provider of care to indigent patients both in the Richmond area and throughout the commonwealth. It is estimated that in the 2001-2002 fiscal year, VCU served approximately 40,000 patients both in the Richmond area and throughout the commonwealth.

Assessment Shows Modest Statewide Improvement in Environmental Conditions

VCU Index Available Online, Now Includes County Analysis

by Lissette Linares
University News Services

A statewide assessment indicates that while a slow, general improvement is seen in Virginia's environmental conditions continues and validates the past 25 years of federal and state environmental actions, some areas reveal no significant improvement.

The 2000 Virginia Environmental Quality Index, released in December by Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Environmental Studies includes, for the first time, environmental data and index scores for every county in Virginia.

The overall trend of the VEQI suggests that environmental conditions in Virginia have improved gradually since 1985, said Andy Lacarello, M.L.S./M.P.H., assistant director of the Center for Environmental Studies and leader of the VEQI research team. "We should continue to pay attention to air quality, surface water quality, toxic releases and wetland losses however, as the population in Virginia continues to increase."

Greg Garman, Ph.D., director of the VEQI page 2.
VEQI
continued from page 1

the building of the university’s IRB system. The VCU administrators, faculty and staff have worked efficiently and effectively to meet our research goals, and we are very proud of the outcome.”

Pickers and Lisa Ballance, administrative director of the VCU Clinical Trials Institute, have led the effort to respond to OHRP concerns over the university’s Institutional Review Board system and to re-build the university’s system for human subjects research. Carome also credited VCU for its role in the re-building of the university’s IRB system. VCU, Carome said, has provided professional and administrative staff that support the VCU IRBs; and improved minutes of IRB meetings that “now clearly document high-quality, detailed and substantive reviews of research protocols that reflect the IRBs’ understanding of important ethical issues and regulatory requirements related to the protection of human subjects.”

OHRP action fully restores VCU’s Multi- Project Assurance, which is the formal, binding agreement in which an institution promises to comply with applicable regulations governing research with human subjects. Approval of the MPA, which is granted by OHRP, is necessary for an institution’s investigators to conduct research with human subjects.

“I am pleased that OHRP has lifted its restrictions less than a year after they were initially imposed. The process took less time than we had estimated and that is evidence of the tremendous research team we have at VCU.”

BUDGET
continued from page 1

2002-03. The state’s budget will provide about $25 million in unreimbursed care to indigent patients.

The governor’s proposed $25.1 million in funding for the health system represents an increase over the 2000-2001 fiscal year, in which the health system received an additional $22.0 million in support of unreimbursed indigent care services. Gilmore’s budget proposal also included funding for state-wide college campus improvements, tuition assistance, enrollment growth and faculty salary increases. Items of interest to VCU include:

COMPENSATION – The governor’s budget recommendations for 2000-01 include a 1.5 percent salary increase for teaching and research faculty to keep their salaries at the 60th percentile of the university’s peers. The governor also recommends an average increase of 3.5 percent for administrative, graduate teaching assistants, part-time faculty, and classified employees. Funding is also provided to cover the costs of performance-based salary adjustments and awards made to classified employees. Finally, the governor has proposed a reduction in the percent-of-salary contribution rate for faculty who participate in optional retirement plans from 10.4 percent to 9.4 percent.


EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT SAVINGS – The governor’s budget recommendations extend productivity savings to higher education institutions. Reductions of $250,333 (general funds) have been recommended for 2000-01, and reductions of $1.6 million (general funds) have been recommended for 2001-02. The savings are to be achieved through management actions such as improved business practices, technology enhancements, operations efficiencies, or other cost-containment measures. The Governor’s budget cuts the freeze on resident undergraduate tuition increases.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE – The governor’s budget includes an additional $1.4 million in general funds for VCU in order to begin meeting 100 percent of “true need.” This increase represents about one-third of the requirement to fully fund “true need” at VCU.

CAPITAL OUTLAY – The governor has recommended funding for the following capital projects through the issuance of 9% revenue bonds:

• $6 million for the renovation of West Hospital;
• $1.8 million for classroom renovation in the Business Building;
• $1.6 million for classroom renovation in Hibbs Building;
• $1.0 million for Phase II renovations of the Tompkins-McCaw and Cabell libraries;
• $900,000 for the renovation of George B. Johnston Auditorium; and
• $6.4 million for maintenance reserve projects.

Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of the information in this publication. However, the University of Virginia and its employees assume no responsibility for errors or omissions or for any consequences from the application of the information contained herein. UniverCity News is produced by University News Services for the Virginia Commonwealth University community. Opinions expressed in UniverCity News are those of the author and not necessarily those of VCU. Please direct questions to UniverCity News, Box 62060, Richmond, VA 23284-0606. For additional information, call 804-982-9414.

The deadline for the January issue of UniverCity News is January 12

Submissions to UniverCity News can be emailed to Box 62060, faxed to 804-982-3915, or mailed to: University News Services, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 62060, Richmond, VA 23284-0606. For additional information, call 804-982-9414.

An Equal Opportunity/Gender Action University
VCU President Named to Board of Qatar Foundation

Virginia Commonwealth University President Eugene P. Trani, Ph.D., recently was named to the Board of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. The Qatar Foundation is a partner with VCU in the Shaqab College of Design Arts in Doha, Qatar.

"I am honored to join the Board of the Qatar Foundation," said Dr. Trani. "The Shaqab College of Design Arts has made tremendous progress in its mission to provide design programs for women, and I look forward to many more opportunities for collaborative relationships between VCU and the foundation."

The Qatar Foundation and VCU's School of the Arts in 1998 partnered to create a four-year institution specializing in design and the arts. Shaqab College is the first of four specialized Qatar Foundation colleges to be established with the participation of major U.S. universities. The other areas include pre-engineering, petroleum engineering and business. The school's programs, taught primarily by VCU faculty, offers bachelor of fine arts curricula in fashion design and communication arts and design and interior design.

At the February 2000 board of visitors meeting, VCU will recommend the approval of a formal degree program at the Shaqab College as well as the establishment of the school as a VCU branch campus.

Children's Heart Center Lab Gains Triple Accreditation

One of Only Five U.S. Sites to Achieve Selective Certification

by Michael Ford
University News Services

Virginia Commonwealth University's Children's Heart Center Noninvasive Laboratory has earned national accreditation in pediatric-transesophageal, pediatric-transthoracic, and fetal echocardiography from the Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Echocardiography Laboratories (ICEAL). The VCU lab is now among just five U.S. sites — and the only one east of the Mississippi River — to be accredited in all three areas of pediatric-echocardiography.

The Children's Heart Center Noninvasive Laboratory, part of VCU's Medical College of Virginia Hospitals, is the only pediatric laboratory at an academic medical center in the Mid-Atlantic region, which includes Virginia, North Carolina, West Virginia, Maryland, Kentucky and Washington, D.C. to earn ICEAL accreditation for its quality patient care and diagnostic testing in pediatric echocardiography. This complex imaging technique uses high-frequency sound waves to produce ultrasound images of the heart, so physicians can assess its structure and blood flow. The Children's Heart Center laboratory also is the only site in the region to have earned accreditation in fetal echocardiography, a technique that identifies congenital heart diseases in the unborn child.

ICEAL's accreditation reflects high standards of training, experience and continuing education for all physicians and sonographers. Accredited labs meet written standards for laboratory safety, patient confidentiality and quality assurance. These labs also must comply in areas of examination data archiving, interpretation, reports and records, in addition to requirements for its physical layout, safety and equipment maintenance.

VCU's triple accreditation assures quality of care to patients and their families. "As a patient, or parent of a patient, the accreditation guarantees that you are at a laboratory that's really at the top of technique, education and quality of imaging," said Mary T. Donofrio, M.D., assistant professor of pediatric cardiology and director of perinatal cardiology and the Noninvasive Laboratory. "Parents can be assured their child is having a test performed in a laboratory that has achieved excellence." Based in Columbia, Md., ICEAL is a national organization that provides a method for echocardiography laboratories to evaluate and demonstrate the level of patient care they provide.

Volunteers Sought for FIRST Robotics Competition

Once again, robots will invade Virginia Commonwealth University's Stuart C. Siegel Center March 8-10 for the NASA Langley/VCU School of Engineering FIRST Robotics Competition. This action-packed event includes 69 high school teams from all over the country, as well as from Brazil.

Volunteers are needed for various tasks including crowd and robot traffic control, hospitality and field support. For more technically oriented individuals, there are positions such as robot inspector, pit tech support and field power controller. For more information, contact Patty Cook, event coordinator, at 804-828-0880 or 784-4986.

Petera Appointed to VCU's Board

Former VCU Business Major to Help Guide Future of University

by Donna Gregory
University News Services

Virginia Commonwealth University alumna Anne Petera is returning to University life. This time, the former VCU business major will be helping to guide the future of her alma mater as a member of the board of visitors.

Gov. Jim Gilmore appointed Petera, currently secretary of the Commonwealth, to VCU's board on Dec. 22.

As secretary of the Commonwealth, Petera serves as a member of the Governor's Cabinet, assists in making appointments to Virginia's boards and commissions, and helps select deputy secretaries and agency heads.

Petera also is vice-chair of the Governor's Commission for Tourism, Travel and Recreation, and has performed numerous volunteer hours for charitable organizations, such as Easter Seals, the Heart Fund, the United Way and two youth Little League teams.

The Virginia Manufacturers Association donated $3,000 to the NASA Langley/Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Engineering for use in the upcoming FIRST Robotics Competition to be held at the Stuart C. Siegel Center March 9-10. Students from 69 high schools across the country, as well as Brazil will participate.

Justin Jordan and Carroll Ellis II, two students of Richmond Community High School team, discussed with Professor and Engineering Dean, Robert J. Mattucci, Ph.D., how they designed, fabricated and tested their robot for competition last year.
Nominations Sought for PACME Awards

VCU President Eugene P. Trani, Ph.D., is requesting nominations from the university community for VCU's Presidential Awards for Community Multicultural Enrichment.

The awards honor individuals who have made significant contributions toward enhancing VCU's commitment to diversity. Four separate awards recognize students, faculty, classified and hourly staff and administrators. Each recipient will receive a cash award of $500. The Riese-Melton Award recipient will be chosen from among the PACME winners for their contribution to cross-cultural relations and will receive an additional $250 award. Nomination forms are available at www.students.vcu.edu/pacme/ and are due Feb. 12. For more information, call 828-6672.

Recreational Sports Offers Free Membership

The Department of Recreational Sports, in conjunction with Virginia Commonwealth University's Human Resources Division, will offer a one-month trial membership free of charge to new university and VCU Health System employees and their spouses. For more information, call 828-6039.

The Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities Receives Grant for Consortium

The Virginia Department of Education recently awarded the Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities a $282,000 grant to develop a statewide consortium for teachers of children with severe disabilities. Other partners in this consortium include George Mason University, Lynchburg College, Norfolk State University and the University of Virginia.

The five universities will work with VDOE to design and offer a set of courses, including field work, that will lead to teacher licensure in severe disabilities. The program will utilize traditional and nontraditional methods of course delivery. For details, call Stacy Dymond at 828-3719.

School of Education's Center for School-Community Collaboration Receives Grant

The VCU School of Education's Center for School-Community Collaboration recently was awarded a $44,928 grant from the Virginia Department of Education to support its violence prevention work. The grant will enable the center to provide additional regional School Safety Workshops on Bullying Prevention this spring.

Weight Watchers at Work to Begin Spring Series

Weight Watchers at Work Spring 2001 Series will begin on Jan. 11 at noon in the University Student Commons. The cost is $149 for 14 weeks.

Meetings will take place Jan.11, 18, and 25, Feb. 1, 8, 15, and 22, March 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29, and April 5, 11, and 29. The program is sponsored by Employee Health Services and Work/Life Resources. For details, call 828-0502.

VCU’s Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute to Introduce Yearly Leadership Participants

Virginia Commonwealth University's Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute will present the VCU Leadership Development Program's inaugural class at 9 a.m., Jan. 11 at the Richmond Marriott.

A 10-month program, the VCU Leadership Development Program, will train and develop VCU leaders to assume leadership positions within the university.

The program stresses the improvement of leadership skills, behaviors, competencies and practices through the acquisition of knowledge, professional skill, development and feedback. Participants also gain a state and national perspective of higher education issues and university operations.

Candidates, who may be nominated from all facets of the university, must exhibit the desire to pursue a leadership role in the university, and/or the VCU Health System, and the commitment to develop further leadership skills and abilities. They also must hold a position of leadership at the university with significant responsibilities at the university, and represent a diversity of gender, race or ethnicity.

The VCU Leadership Development Program is one of several programs offered through the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute. The institute was established in 1999 by the board of visitors in honor of Grace E. Harris, Ph.D., former provost and vice president for academic affairs, for her 32 years as an accomplished leader with the university.

Project Management Institute Provides Grant to Support VCU Business Students

The Central Virginia chapter of the Project Management Institute has awarded Virginia Commonwealth University $10,000 to support project-management students in the School of Business. VCU will match the grant funds, which will cover tuition and fees.

By enrolling in "Introduction to Project Management" and "Organizational Leadership and Project Management," honor students pursuing a project-management career can compete for a two-year merit scholarship beginning their junior year at VCU.

"The School of Business welcomes the opportunity to create a working relationship with PMI through the Central Virginia chapter, as we redesign the management degree program," said R. Jon Ackley, Ph.D., associate professor of management.

After several years of offering project-management professional workshops that teach local businesses, universities and associations about the fairly new profession of project management, the local PMI chapter selected VCU for its first university grant.

"We look forward to a long-term relationship with VCU and the School of Business to enhance project-management awareness in the Richmond area," said John Byrne, vice president of finance for PMI's Central Virginia chapter.

Verizon Donations Benefit Programs at VCU

Verizon Information Systems is continuing to support literacy in Virginia, recently making two donations that will benefit reading programs at Virginia Commonwealth University.

In December, Verizon awarded a two-year, $50,000 grant to the School of Education's Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center. The award will be used to develop the EZ Community Links project, an easy-to-use online resource developed for Richmond-area adults with limited literacy and technology skills. The EZ Community Links Web site will develop interest and understanding of the Internet by directing users to needed resources such as employment opportunities, education developments and business and community information.

Verizon also made a $10,000 donation to Books For Babies, a project organized by the Richmond Area Reading Council and benefiting newborns at VCU's Medical College of Virginia Hospitals. The program provides infants with their first book and now mothers with information about the importance of early reading experiences. Thanks to Verizon's donations, $27,500 over the past three years, Books For Babies has been able to increase their distribution of literacy packets from 100 to 900 deliveries a year.

by LAURA ARBOGAST
**Richmond Area to be Site of National Study on Public Defibrillators**

*by Erin Lucero*

**University News Services**

Richmond will be one of 24 cities in the United States and Canada to participate in a federally-funded study to evaluate whether placing automated external defibrillators in public places can increase survival among people suffering from cardiac arrest.

About 250,000 Americans die each year of cardiac arrest, which is usually caused by a heart rhythm disturbance. Automated external defibrillators, or AEDs, shock the heart back into a normal rhythm. Recent studies have shown that survival can increase dramatically with the use of AEDs that have been placed in specific sites like casinos and airplanes.

"The chance of surviving cardiac arrest drops 10 percent with each minute that passes without a defibrillator shocking the heart back into a normal rhythm," said Mary Ann Peberdy, M.D., a cardiologist at Virginia Commonwealth University's Medical College of Virginia Hospitals. "In the U.S., that translates to only one to three percent of people surviving. By placing AEDs in key public areas and training volunteers in their use, we hope to dramatically reduce the time it takes to get help to people in cardiac arrest."

The new study will evaluate the impact of widespread placement of AEDs in public areas like shopping malls, golf courses, fitness centers, office buildings and housing communities. Peberdy, who serves as the study's principal investigator for the Richmond area, hopes to enroll at least 20 sites around the community in the study.

Peberdy and her colleagues, who will work with each participating site to develop its medical emergency response system and to train volunteers in CPR and the use of AEDs, will compare sites with and without the devices. Only half of the sites that enroll in the study will randomly assign to receive AEDs. All sites will receive enhanced training for a cardiac emergency and will be closely linked to their local emergency medical system.

In accordance with Food and Drug Administration policies governing studies that involve emergency research, anyone who has a cardiac arrest at one of the study locations will be enrolled into the study. Because people in cardiac arrest are unable to consent to or decline participation in the study, VCU researchers held free community meetings in December that provided information about the study and allowed opportunity for public comment. The public was invited to attend the meetings, which were held at three different sites in Richmond, Henrico and Chesterfield.

The study is funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute and the American Heart Association. Twenty-four U.S. cities and Canada are participating in the study, including Chicago, Seattle and Washington, D.C.Individuals who cannot attend the meetings but who have comments or concerns are invited to contact Peberdy by phone at 828-4889 or by mail at 2525 Seventh Ave., PO. Box 980204, Richmond, VA 23298-1518. Individuals also may contact David Forster with the Western Institutional Review Board at (509) 562-4790 or by mail at 2525 Seventh Ave., SW, Olympia, Wash., 98502-3010.

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**New Treatment for Hepatitis C**

*by Erin Lucero*

**University News Services**

A Virginia Commonwealth University researcher reports in a study that the drug peginterferon alfa-2a, also referred to as Pegassys, is superior to other forms of interferon in the treatment of patients with chronic hepatitis C virus infection. Interferon, alone or in combination, is the only effective therapy for chronic hepatitis C.

Interferon was unique in that only patients with advanced liver disease, those with advanced fibrosis and cirrhosis, were treated.

"Hepatitis C patients — both in the early stages of the disease and those with cirrhosis — are in dire need of more effective treatments," said Mitchell L. Shiffman, M.D., medical director of VCU's Hepatology-Liver Transplant Program and the study's lead U.S. investigator. "This study clearly demonstrates that Pegassys is superior to standard forms of interferon in the treatment of chronic hepatitis C."

Pegassys was developed by attacking a non-toxic compound called PEG to the interferon. This alters the interferon drug so that it lasts longer in the body, has fewer side effects and at the same time is more effective against the hepatitis C virus. Standard interferon is administered three times weekly. Pegassys needs to be administered only once weekly.

Published in the Dec. 7 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the study involved 271 patients and 22 U.S., Canadian and Australian medical centers, including VCU's Medical College of Virginia Hospitals. Compared to many previous studies of patients with chronic hepatitis C, this study was unique in that only patients with advanced liver disease, those with advanced fibrosis and cirrhosis, were treated.

"Hepatitis C patients — both in the early stages of the disease and those with cirrhosis — are in dire need of more effective treatments," said Mitchell L. Shiffman, M.D., medical director of VCU's Hepatology-Liver Transplant Program and the study's lead U.S. investigator. "This study clearly demonstrates that Pegassys is superior to standard forms of interferon in the treatment of chronic hepatitis C."

In this study, 30 percent of patients with advanced liver disease treated with Pegassys lost all evidence of hepatitis C virus, compared to 6 percent of patients treated with standard interferon alfa-2a. Patients are considered to be virus-free or have a sustained viral clearance when the virus doesn't return after drug treatments stop. In this study, patients were treated for 48 weeks with Pegassys and followed for an additional 24 weeks after the treatment ended.

"The first priority is to eradicate the virus. However, the findings in this study also demonstrate that Pegassys is beneficial to a large number of patients in whom sustained viral clearance was not attained," Shiffman said. "What we've learned is that it may be possible for patients to show an improvement in the liver disease following treatment with Pegassys even if this treatment did not get rid of the virus."

Patients in the study randomly received either Pegassys weekly or interferon alfa-2a three times weekly. Researchers conducted liver biopsies on participants both before and after the treatment. The results showed that when they were not virus-free, 54 percent of patients treated with Pegassys showed improvement in underlying liver damage, compared to 31 percent of patients treated with standard interferon.

Hepatitis C is a blood-borne infectious disease of the liver and the leading cause of cirrhosis and liver cancer. It is also the primary reason for liver transplantation in the United States. An estimated 2.7 million Americans are chronically infected with the virus, with about 35,000 new infections reported each year.
Paul Wehman, Ph.D., director of the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center at Virginia Commonwealth University, has been named one of the past millennium's most influential persons in the field of special education. Wehman was recognized for his unique contributions in the area of supported employment and promoting work opportunities for people with severe disabilities.

Wehman and 54 others, including Helen Keller and former President John F. Kennedy, were named in the journal Remedial and Special Education. Since the early 1990s Wehman has pioneered the development of supported employment for people with disabilities and has been the principal investigator of more than $20 million in federal grants awarded to VCU. He serves as editor-in-chief of the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation and has written extensively on issues such as special education and the transition from school to adulthood for people with disabilities.

Wehman has received numerous awards for his work, including the Distinguished Service Award from the President's Committee on Employment for Persons with Disabilities in 1992. He also was named the Mary Switzer Fellow for the National Rehabilitation Association in 1988.

Paul Wehman

### VCU Professor Named American Academy Fellow

**Title:** VCU Professor Named American Academy Fellow

**Source:** University News Services

**Date:** January 8, 2001

**Content:**

Wehman Among the Most Influential Persons in Field of Special Education

by Laura Arbogast

University News Services

Paul Wehman, Ph.D., professor of biology, has been elected vice president of the Virginia Society of Ornithology. The organization has a statewide membership of more than 100 people, who are interested in the fields of biology and conservation.

Wehman, Ph.D., professor of education and director of the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute, was one of two people honored nationally by the "Jews For America’s Graduate" program. Wehman also was selected by the American Association of School Administrators to receive the "Distinguished Service Award," which will be presented to him at the national conference in Orlando in February.

**People in the News**

**Charles Alem**, Ph.D., professor of biology, has been elected vice president of the Virginia Society of Ornithology. The organization has a statewide membership of more than 100 people, who are interested in the fields of biology and conservation.

**Milt Shaw**, Ph.D., professor of education and director of the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute, was one of two people honored nationally by the "Jews For America’s Graduate" program. Wehman also was selected by the American Association of School Administrators to receive the "Distinguished Service Award," which will be presented to him at the national conference in Orlando in February.

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**Kristi Lewis**, education coordinator for the Lead Poisoning Prevention Project at the Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities, presented "Developing and Implementing Training on Lead Poisoning for Primary Health Care Providers" during a conference in Atlanta involving the Center for Disease Control, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. She also displayed a poster titled, "Partnership for Lead Poisoning Prevention Education," that addressed outcomes associated with a recent Virginia Department of Health media campaign, "Make Your Home a Lead Safe Zone.

**Rashed Alkharrobi**, Ph.D., assistant professor of foreign languages, recently presented "Palmares: African Diaspora and Cinematic Discourse in Carlos Diegues’ ‘Quilombo’ at ‘African Diasporas in the Ancient and New World: Consciousness and Immigration.’" Held in Paris, the conference was sponsored by the Institut Charles V and Université Paris 7 - Dennis Diderot.

**The National Deafness and Other Communication Disorders Advisory Council of the National Institutes of Health awarded Dr. Wehman the "Alvin E. Shall" award.** Ph.D., interim chair and associate professor in the Department of Physical Therapy, was named vice president of the American Academy of Physical Therapy Research.

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**The National Deafness and Other Communication Disorders Advisory Council of the National Institutes of Health awarded Dr. Wehman the "Alvin E. Shall" award.** Ph.D., interim chair and associate professor in the Department of Physical Therapy, was named vice president of the American Academy of Physical Therapy Research.

**People in the News**

**Charles Alem**, Ph.D., professor of biology, has been elected vice president of the Virginia Society of Ornithology. The organization has a statewide membership of more than 100 people, who are interested in the fields of biology and conservation.

**Milt Shaw**, Ph.D., professor of education and director of the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute, was one of two people honored nationally by the "Jews For America’s Graduate" program. Wehman also was selected by the American Association of School Administrators to receive the "Distinguished Service Award," which will be presented to him at the national conference in Orlando in February.

**Daniel M. Laskey**, D.D.S., professor and chairman of oral and maxillofacial surgery, recently co-authored and published an article, "Temporomandibular Disorders: Moving from a Dentally Based to a Medically Based Model" in the Journal of Dental Research.

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Patients Should Determine Best Test for Colorectal Cancer

VCU Writer Says Accuracy Is Only One Consideration in NEJM Editorial

by Michael Ford
University News Services

Allowing patients to choose the colorectal cancer screening test they favor — as opposed to what insurers or health-care providers dictate — is preferable, a Virginia Commonwealth University physician said in a Nov. 30 editorial in The New England Journal of Medicine.

"Allowing patients to select the tests they prefer may do more good — as long as they choose something — than whatever is gained with a 'preferred' test," wrote Steven H. Woolf, M.D., M.P.H., professor and coordinator of research in VCU's Department of Family Practice.

Woolf's editorial accompanies a federally funded study by Jack S. Mandel, M.D., vice president of Exponent, a research company in Menlo Park, Calif., and researchers from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

Mandel's study found that a simple and seldom-used screening test might help prevent people from getting colon cancer.

This test studies stool samples for traces of blood, a possible sign of cancerous or benign polyps that could lead to colorectal cancer if not removed.

In Mandel's study, rates for colon cancer dropped by as much as 20 percent, among patients who used the test.

Woolf's editorial concedes that colonoscopy, or whole-bowel screening, is the most accurate test and is favored by professional groups. But Woolf pointed out that three other tests — fecal occult-blood screening; sigmoidoscopy, an exam of the distal bowel; and barium enema, whole-bowel screening — still have advocates who consider each superior.

All things considered, Woolf said the benefits of any test must be weighed against the potential harms. With bleeding and perforation occurring in only 10 to 30 patients per thousand examinations, colonoscopy and sigmoidoscopy are considered safe tests.

But, the death rate from colorectal cancer is 1.5 per 1,000 in patients ages 50-54 years, so the number of persons harmed by screenings could offset those who benefit, according to the VCU writer.

"For most patients, adverse effects that are more subtle than bleeding and perforation — but far more common — influence test preferences," Woolf wrote. "These include the discomfort, embarrassment, and inconvenience associated with bowel preparation and the examination itself; anxiety and other negative consequences from having received positive results; and harms resulting from false positive results.

How often these occur depends on the test and clinical setting, but how much they matter depends on the individual patient."

Woolf said people's views about which test is best are also influenced by other factors, such as the quality of evidence that lives are saved, the magnitude of benefit, and cost-effectiveness and that these priorities differ depending on who is making the decision.

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Music Professor Named Finalist in International Composition Competition

Laura Arbogast
University News Services

Hailed as one of America's most promising young composers by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, Virginia Commonwealth University professor Peter Knell, Ph.D., has been selected as one of three finalists in the Centara Corporation New Music Festival International Composition Competition. Knell's orchestral piece "Virvatulli" will be performed by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra during the nine-day festival in Winnipeg, Canada.

The competition, open to composers of all ages and nationalities, selects outstanding orchestral pieces that have been performed throughout the world. Knell's "Virvatulli" previously won second prize at the 1998 Fourth International Witold Lutoslawski Composers Competition in Poland.

Only 30 years old, Knell already has composed five mature orchestral works, all winning national and international competitions, as well as several chamber, solo and vocal works. Knell also has been an active performer, serving as conductor of the chorus of the Fontainebleau Conservatory in France and as principal double bass in the Princeton University and University of Texas New Music ensembles. He has been awarded commissions from the Oakland East Symphony, the Dale Warland Singers and the Virginia Music Teachers Association.

Knell has worked with some of the most prominent American and European composers of the 20th century, and cites Austrian composers Johannes Brahms and Alban Berg as the major influences on his work. In his fourth year at VCU, Knell currently serves as the coordinator of music composition and is using his experience to help students achieve their own dreams as composers and musicians. For example, former VCU student Raphael Hernandez, recently received the Broadcast Music Inc. Composer Award for a piece he wrote while working with Knell. "This is a major national award for a young composer," said Knell, who received the same award in 1996.

Knell holds a doctorate in composition from the University of Texas, a master's degree in composition from the Julliard School and a bachelor's degree in music from Princeton University. He has received various national and international awards including a Fulbright Fellowship, two ASCAP Foundation Morton Gould Young Composers Awards and first prize in the Omaha Symphony Guild International New Music Competition.

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Children of all ages stared wide-eyed at a scene that was a mixture of hard work and modern technology with a little bit of magic thrown in. Thanks to the Virginia Central Division of the Atlantic Coast Gaugers, the pediatric unit of VCU's MCV Hospitals was transformed into a train station of sorts. In a display measuring 10 feet by 14 feet, model trains raced around the track with lights flashing and horns blaring. On side tracks, workers washed railroad cars, loaded barrels and logs and watched cows wander around a holding pen. A portable train display depicting a carnival scene was taken from room to room for patients who weren't able to visit the larger layout.

Some of the toy trains were antiques, made over 50 years ago, and others were built as recently as this year. The Atlantic Coast S Gaugers, a toy train club that began three years ago in Richmond, looks for opportunities to operate their trains in non-traditional venues and reach a wider audience, especially children.
**SEMINAR**

| Jan. 10 | "Healthy Eating After the Holidays." Sponsored by Work/Life Resources. For details, call 828-1858. Noon/VMI Building, 3rd Floor Conference Room |

**WORKSHOPS**

| Jan. 10 | "The Art of Negotiation." 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 |
| Jan. 11 | "Compensation Reform for VCU Managers (Phase II)." Sponsored by the Office of Training and Development. For details, call 828-0179. 9 a.m./McGuire Hall Annex, Room B-20 |
| Jan. 11 | "Compensation Reform for VCU Managers (Phase II)." Sponsored by the Office of Training and Development. For details, call 828-0179. 2 p.m./McGuire Hall Annex, Room B-20 |
| Jan. 17 | "Stress Management." Sponsored by the Office of Training and Development. For details, call 828-0179. 9 a.m./McGuire Hall Annex, Room B-20 |
| Jan. 18 | "Standards of Conduct for MCVH Managers." Sponsored by the Office of Training and Development. For more information, call 828-0179. 8:30 a.m./McGuire Hall Annex, Room B-20 |

**PERFORMANCE**

| Jan. 8 | "Grace Street Chamber Players." Sponsored by the Department of Music. For details, call 828-1166. 8 p.m./Performing Arts Center, Concert Hall |

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**SPORTS**

| Jan. 10 | VCU vs. George Mason University 7:30 p.m./Siegel Center |
| Jan. 14 | VCU vs. James Madison University 7:30 p.m./Siegel Center |
| Jan. 14 | VCU vs. George Mason University 7 p.m./Siegel Center |
| Jan. 21 | VCU vs. James Madison University 2 p.m./Siegel Center |

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**CMA Offers African Art Bazaar**

A s a preview to Black History Month activities, the Center for Multicultural Activity, located in the University Commons, will host an African Bazaar from noon to 5 p.m. on Jan. 25. The bazaar will feature African sculpture, woodcarvings, paintings, jewelry and more. Simon Muyoki, president of the African Bazaar, will be on hand to discuss the artworks. Select items will be available for purchase. For details, call the CMA at 827-1294.

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**Winter Exhibitions to Be Featured at Anderson Gallery**

*Contributed by Sheilagh Greenwood, Anderson Gallery*


"We wanted to produce an exhibition that blended the best of sculpture with computer technology and engineering," said Amy Moorefield, the Anderson Gallery's assistant director and exhibition co-curator. "Jim Campbell's work, which is highly intelligent and extremely innovative, accomplishes that objective.

Campbell, who works three days a week as an engineer in Silicon Valley, believes that art and technology feed each other. Using photographs, lights, personal heartbeat and body rhythms, custom electronics and LCD material, video cameras and projectors, he creates innovative installations that encourage viewer participation. He calls his art "a search for truth more than a search for beauty," and describes his exhibits as "interactive between the viewer and themselves."

"Often the criticism of artwork using hi-tech technology is that the artwork has little or no content, or that it's a trick or an interesting device, but that it's not art or that it's bad art. This is not the case in Campbell's work," said Bob Kapustof, VCU associate professor of kinetic imagery and exhibition co-curator. "Campbell blends technology, metaphor, memory and perception beautifully. He makes very unique digital sculptures."

Born in Chicago, Campbell received degrees in both mathematics and engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass. He has exhibited nationally and internationally, and his work is collected by major museums and art centers around the world. The VCU exhibition marks the first time the San Francisco-based artist's work has been showcased in Virginia. The Anderson Gallery's second new show, "A Century of Innovative Book Design," is a travelling exhibition from the Myers School of Art at the University of Akron, Ohio. Curated by Christopher Hoot, a UA associate professor of art and graphic design, the hands-on exhibition focuses on mass-produced publications rather than limited editions or one-of-a-kind artist's books. "The power and beauty of finely designed books stand the test of time and speak to the collaboration of each generation's writers and artists," said Ted Potter, Anderson Gallery director. "This is not only an engaging exhibition, it is a road map that tracks this journey during the 20th century."

The exhibition shows book design in a wide cultural context and highlights innovations in text and image presentation, use of materials, historic impact and the application of new technologies.

Titles include: "The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer" by William Morris; "A Tale of Two Cities" by Charles Dickens; "The Alphabet and Elements of Lettering" by Frederic W. Goudy; and "Jazz" by Henri Matisse. The exhibition includes more than 100 books arranged in "reading room" displays that are suggestive of art movements of the last century.

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**Love Lights**

The holiday sale of Love Lights successfully ended on Dec. 31. Proceeds from the sale benefited the Krystal Dawn Endowment for Music Therapy, honoring former patient Krystal Dawn Christenbury, who died after a 15-year battle with spinal meningitis. In June 1999, her mother, Barbara, established the endowment to provide a full-time music therapist for VCU Health System patients of all ages. Love Lights tags were purchased by patients and guests to honor someone special in their lives. Mrs. Lois Tran, left, arranges the cards on the tree that was displayed in the hospital's main lobby. She was chair of this year's committee.