President
Trani Gives
Budget Update

Editor's Note: The following update on the state's 2001-02 fiscal year budget was sent out electronically to all VCU faculty and staff by President Eugene F. Trani, Ph.D., on March 9. Additional updates will be provided as information becomes available.

Ge. Jim Gilmore announced that Virginia's higher education institutions will be subject to reductions in their state general fund operating budgets. Please note that the current moratorium on general fund capital projects for colleges and universities remains in effect.

Secretary of Education Bryant also has written to institutions indicating that the temporary freezes on hiring and discretionary spending have been lifted. The VCU Health System, of course, was exempted from these budget conditions. In particular, we are optimistic that funding for indigent care will be preserved. This is certainly good news for VCU and the VCU Health System.

We will continue to keep you apprised of this situation, but please do not hesitate to contact either Paul W. Timmreck, senior vice president for finance and administration (828-6116), Dr. Hermes Kontos, CEO for the VCU Health System and vice president for health sciences (828-9771), or me if you have any questions or comments.

See President's Column on page 2 for more budget details.

Poll Finds Consumer Confidence Mixed in Virginia

Second Poll Shows Most Virginians Have Computer and Internet Access

A recent Commonwealth Poll conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University's Commonwealth Poll, found Virginians are relatively pessimistic about national business conditions but more upbeat when it comes to the state economy and their own personal. The study was conducted with 707 adults in Virginia with a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percent.

Overall, the poll shows that there is a lot of uncertainty over the state of the economy. "There are many indications that the economy has been slowing downward naturally," said Gary Funk, Ph.D., director of the Commonwealth Poll, page 7.

6 VCU Students Sign Early Contracts with Infineon

by Mike Frontiero
University News Services

Many students spend their senior year worrying about finding a good job after graduation, but not James Welsh. The chemical engineering major from Petosky, Michigan, is one of 16 VCU students hired by Infineon Technologies Richmond before their upcoming May graduation.

For Welsh, opportunity knocked before the fall semester ended. "I didn't expect to get an offer in November," he said. "It was a big relief."

Welsh will start his new job as a process engineer three days after graduation.

Infineon Technologies Richmond, formerly known as White Oak Semiconductor, recently launched a major expansion of its semiconductor factory in Henrico County. The company plans to hire at least 500 people this year and has said it will employ more students from VCU than any other school in the nation.

"We're pleased with VCU's performance or we wouldn't be hiring so many of their students," said Henry Becker, president of Infineon Richmond. Thirteen of the 16 students hired by Infineon come from VCU's School of Engineering.

Electrical engineering major Shruti Maneck of Richmond was attracted to Infineon's work in microchip fabrication. She too has peace of mind as graduation day approaches.

"It feels good to have a job already lined up before I graduate," said Maneck, who will become a parametrics engineer.

For chemical engineering major Bradford Crosby, receiving an attractive offer to work for Infineon before he graduates speaks volumes about the Engineering School's reputation.

"When you compete for these jobs against students at schools like MIT and North Carolina State University and beat them out, it feels gratifying," said Crosby, who co-founded an engineering consulting firm with some of his fellow students. "It was definitely worth my while to come to VCU."

Infineon is one of many high-tech companies competing for VCU students. Elec-

See INFINEON page 2

Guest Artists Offer Guidance, Reality to Theater Students

by Suzanne Horsley
University News Services

"What are you feeling right now? What do you want your character to accomplish?" These questions echoed off the wooden floors and ceiling beams of the acting studio as Randle Mell, an accomplished Broadway and film actor, dug into a student's psyche to give a prepared monologue new life.

"I feel frustrated, angry and sad," he said, his eyes shut tight as Mell peppered him with more questions, intent on helping him discover the emotions that he needed to truly identify with his character. The other students leaned forward in their chairs, as if directing their energy to help their classmate focus.

This scene was replayed in eight VCU acting classes as Mell and his wife, Oscar-nominated actress Mary McDonnell, taught classes and visited with students at Theatre VCU Guest Artists, March 5-8.

David Leong, MFA, chairmain of the Theatre Department, has previously worked with both actors and invited them to teach for one week at VCU.

"All top-notch theater training programs bring in notable theater artists to inspire and encourage the students," said Leong. "With Dr. Trani's support, our department now joins the elite group of university theater training programs that offer this service to students. Having worked with both Mary McDonnell and Randy Mell, I knew their professional credentials and interest in teaching would complement the mission of Theatre VCU. They are also generous and giving people, and that makes the experience more rewarding."

McDonnell is perhaps best known for her performances in "Passion Fish" (Best Actress nomination) and "Dances with Wolves" (Best Supporting Actress nomination). She has also had roles in "Sneakers," "Grand Canyon," "Blue Chips," "Tiger Warsaw," "Matewan" and "Independence Day."

On television, she starred in the CBS series "High Society" and in TNT's "The American Clock." Her stage credits include the Broadway productions of "Summer Smoke" and "The Heidi Chronicles." She made her New York theater debut in Sam Shepard's Pulitzer-prize winning "Buried Child," and in 1981 received an Obie for her performance in Emily Mann's "Still Life." Her next project is a pilot for a television show starring Tom Selleck and Patrick Dempsey titled "Chestrum Hill."

Mell has appeared on Broadway in "Macbeth," "Noises Off" and "Rainmaker." His off-Broadway credits include "The Cradle
The recent budget impasse between the Governor and the General Assembly has greatly altered the presidents’ expectations of prospects for making significant progress on adequate funding for the documented needs of our public system of higher education.

We are fortunate that the Governor no longer requires Virginia public colleges and universities to reduce their state operating budgets and that the temporary freezes on hiring and discretionary spending have been lifted. The VCU Health System also has been exempt from the Governor’s executive order on behalf of balancing the state budget. Most importantly, we continue to expect that funding for indigent care will remain in place.

At this writing, however, the current moratorium on general fund capital projects not under contract remains in effect. The major impact on VCU is that the authorized $1.9 million in Phase One renovations to our libraries remains on hold.

On March 13, I joined my colleagues to discuss the long-term impact of the Governor’s executive order before the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Education. Operating budgets for higher education are already underfunded by 10 percent, or about $200 million a year. This situation is particularly critical now when we must respond to new workforce requirements as well as absorb an estimated 43,000 more students during this decade. It is urgent that the Governor and the General Assembly address this shortfall in a timely and systematic fashion, or Virginia’s colleges and universities will fall farther behind.

Higher Education made great strides toward this long-term need through its two-year study of operating budgets of Virginia’s public colleges and universities. We now have a uniform yardstick with which to measure our progress. But we cannot lose sight of our most pressing priorities: an adequate funding base, faculty salaries at a level competitive with our peer institutions, and funding for student financial assistance to ensure access and affordability.

The fiscal year 2001 budget provided VCU and other institutions with some state funds to support base-funding adequacy, chiefly on behalf of increasing enrollments. This is just the beginning; Virginia’s presidents will continue to work with the administration and the General Assembly continuing to address the funding needs that are critical to maintaining the excellence of Virginia’s colleges and universities.

Eugene P. Trani
President

FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK

State Budget Outlook

The Sonia Vlahcevic Concert Hall in the VCU Performing Arts Center will be dedicated on March 25. Renowned Vlahcevic, M.D., former VCU chief of gastroenterology, established this legacy in honor of his wife, Sonia Vlahcevic, Ph.D., a music professor at VCU for 35 years. She teaches piano, music theory and analysis and coordinates the graduate program. The dedication ceremony will begin at 4 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center. Speakers for the event include VCU President Eugene P. Trani, Ph.D., School of the Arts Dean Richard Toiscan, Ph.D., Department of Music Acting Chair John Guthmiller, Ph.D., and Andrej Vlahcevic. The dedication will feature internationally proclaimed concert pianist John Browning.

The Sonia Vlahcevic Concert Hall Dedication

"When you are teaching, you’re brought back into an environment that is familiar. It is like stepping back into your roots, and that is a good reminder for me."

INFINEON

continued from page 1

Triological engineering major Nicholas Balderson of Newport News also had offers from IBM and Motorola, but said Infineon made a more attractive offer. "VCU is an excellent school and I had an excellent major," said Balderson, who will become a product engineer. "We are quite happy with the tremendous acceptance of our soon-to-be graduate engineers," said Robert J. Mattauch, Ph.D., engineering school dean. "VCU’s engineering school was created in part to support local economic development. The fact that we have placed such a high number of new engineers with local industry indicates that we are doing just our job."

Many more VCU engineering students have accepted high-tech jobs in other states at IBM, Hewlett-Packard, The Carpenter Co., Honeywell, Motorola, Virginia Power, Dominion Semiconductor, Philips Morris and Infineon. This year’s graduating students will secure similar salaries.

UniverCity News
Volume 29 Number 15
Melissa Jones
Editor/Director
of (Student) New Media
Pamela Cho Lippincott
Donna C. Gregory
Students

UniverCity News is published biweekly 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 submit news releases to Pamela Cho, VCU, 23284-2036. For additional information, call 826-8124.

The deadline for the April 27 edition of UniverCity News is March 23.

Submissions to UniverCity News can be mailed to P.O. Box 969001, Fairfax 22030-0001, or e-mailed to pcho@vcu.edu. Photographs and letters are also welcome.

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action University
To attend all film screenings and the official reception, the public may purchase a VIP Friends of the Festival pass for $35, $25 for students. A $75 VIP pass includes admission to the gala and dinner. Tickets for individual screenings may be purchased for $6 at the door.

For more information, call the VCU French Film Festival Hotline at 287-0210 or visit www.french-film.vcu.edu. For ticket and pass information, call 357-FILM.

Calendar of Events and Screenings

A pre-festival screening of "Prince du Pacifique" (Prince of the Pacific), produced and starring world-renowned actor Thierry Lhermitte, will be presented by Peter Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., at 7 p.m. March 30.

- Actress Claire Keim will present "Le Roi Danse," (The Dancing King) which traces Louis XIV's rise to power and influence with line arts, at 9 p.m. on March 30.

- "Le Createur" (The Creator), directed by and starring Albert Dupontel will be screened at midnight on March 30. The title character, God, is played by Terry Jones of Monty Python fame.

- With the U.S. looking closely at the Mad Cow disease situation in Europe, director Philippe Muyly and actor Mehdi Orteisberg will answer questions following his timely film, "La Vache et le President" (The Cow and the President), at 9 a.m. March 31, sponsored by Radio Disney. The cow itself will also be available before the film.

- After the standing ovation for his "Les enfants du marais" (Children of the Marshland) at last year's festival, Jean Becker has decided to come to Richmond to present his latest comedy "Un Crime au Paradis" (A Crime in Paradise) starring Josiane Balasko and Jacques Villaret at 11:45 a.m. March 31.

- Director and author Jose Giovanni, known for his story "Le trou," rendered famous by Jacques Becker in 1950, retraces the roots of his father, once a Richmond resident, in "Mon Pere" (My Father) at 2 p.m. March 31. Giovanni and actor Bruno Cremer, Vincent Lecouer and Nicolas Abraham will present this world premier screening.

- Actress Claire Keim, director Pierre-Olivier Scotto and producer Thierry de Ganay will present the world premier showing of "Le Roman de Lulu" ("Roman and Lulu"), adapted from David Decca's award-winning play at 4:30 p.m. March 31. A series of eight short films presented by France's up-and-coming young directors will be shown at midnight March 31.

- Director Nathan Miller, actress Anne Brochet and producer Annie Miller will present "La Chambre des Magiciennes" (Of Women and Magic), shot entirely with digital cameras, at 5:30 p.m. April 1.

- After debuting in the Director's Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival in 2000, the film "Lumumba" is being showcased at VCU's festival at 11:30 a.m. April 1. Director Raoul Peck will present this factual depiction of the rise and mysterious execution of Patrice Lumumba, Congo's first Prime minister.

- Actor Albert Dupontel will present "La Maladie desSachs" (Dr. Sachs' Illness) at 2:10 p.m. April 1. The film addresses the suffering, anxiety and frustrations that confront a busy country doctor.

- Comedian Elie Semoun and director/actor Patrick Bruel will present Bruel's recent film "Deuxieme vie" (A Second Life) at 4:30 p.m. April 1. The comedy tells the tale of a man who crashes his car and wakes up sixteen years into the future to a life and family he knows nothing about.
VCU Nursing Faculty Honored as Women of the Year

VCU Nursing School will be well represented when the YWCA presents the recipients of the 2001 Outstanding Women Awards at its annual luncheon. Two faculty, JoAnne K. Allen, Ed.D., R.N., associate professor of maternal-child nursing, and Rosalyn S. Hobson, Ph.D., associate clinical assistant professor, are among the honorees being recognized for their achievements. For 21 years, the YWCA has recognized 10 women of Greater Richmond who have made significant contributions to the community through their professional achievements or volunteer efforts. The awards cover 10 categories, including the arts, business, community service, education, government/policy, health/science, human relations, law, and religion and voluntershistry.

Henry, director of the School of Nursing's Community Nursing Organization and Theresa Thomas, professor of nursing, has been selected as the honoree in health/science. "Awards recognize Henry's work with the CNO, which includes developing partnerships between the school of nursing, agencies and the community to address the health needs of the public. Henry also serves as director of VCU's Office of Health and Policy Research, where she functions as liaison to professional and governmental agencies for the medical campus. It's an honor to be considered among the women in this group, who've made so many contributions," Henry said. "Personally, I feel it's the most outstanding award I've received because the broader community is recognizing the contributions nurses make through the Community Nursing Organization."

As the honoree for voluntersm, Dunn, a pediatric nurse practitioner, provides consultation services to health and human service organizations in addition to her adjunct clinical faculty appointment. "I've been volunteering at Richmond health and human service organizations, as a pediatric nurse practitioner, grant writer and fundraiser since 1994. Dunn has been a working with other School of Nursing faculty to meet uninsured needs of clients at St. Joseph's Villa. She and fellow SOS faculty member Sandy Graves established weekly clinics on the campus that evolved into a volunteer-staffed clinic. By 1997, this effort led to the development of the Craig Health Center, which provides health services to many Villa clients and other uninsured and medically underserved residents of north Richmond. This recognition is an opportunity to give some publicity to the non-profit organizations that I've volunteered over the years." Dunn said. "I'm very flattered that they're recognizing me and I hope it reflects back on those organizations."

The luncheon is scheduled for 12 p.m. March 30 at the Marriott Hotel.

VCU Engineering Professor Wins National Teaching Award

Just four years into her tenure at VCU's School of Engineering, assistant professor Rosalyn S. Hobson, Ph.D., has received a national award for excellence in teaching and encouraging minorities to pursue high-tech careers.

Hobson, who started at VCU as an adjunct professor in 1986 and advanced to assistant professor one year later, was named Educator of the Year by the National Society of Black Engineers — a student and professional organization with more than 10,000 members worldwide. It's a major honor," said Hobson, who traveled to the NSBE's annual convention in Indianapolis March 16 to pick up the award. "It feels really fortunate to have been recognized by my peers, and to have this happen very early in my career really means a lot.

Hobson was one of several thousand minority science and engineering professors across the nation who competed for the annual award. The award is given to teachers who hold a master's degree or higher, a managerial or assistant professor level position, and demonstrate an encouraging environment for African Americans to pursue careers in engineering and science.

The award also recognizes Hobson for her popularity among students and her ability to get them excited about what she is teaching. "I really care about the students that I teach," Hobson said. "I want them to walk away with the knowledge and the skills that I think they should have as young engineers. I think a good educator is someone who cares about the students and what they are truly learning."

Candidates for the award were required to have a letter of nomination from their dean and three letters of recommendation from other faculty, industry representatives, or co-workers. The winner is selected by a special selection committee at the NSBE's headquarters in Alexandria, Va.

As one of the founders of VCU's electrical engineering program, Hobson has a voice in all departmental decisions. "I was the second person hired by my past chair in the department," Hobson said. "When the electrical engineering department began, there were only three of us. Now that we have more faculty, I can relinquish some of the hats I wore and can concentrate on my research and lab work."

Hobson, who earned her Ph.D. in control theory, neural networks and signal processing in 1996, is director of the engineering school's Neural Network Applications Laboratory. She also served as faculty adviser to the Society of Women Engineers and founding adviser of the NSBE's VCU chapter.
VCU Dance to Host ‘The Concerts Divide’

Program Showcases First Collaboration of Dance Greats Molissa Fenley and Bebe Miller

by Valerie Jeremijenko
VCU Dance

VCU’s Department of Dance and Choreography will host the Richmond premiere of “The Concerts Divide,” the first collaboration between dance greats Molissa Fenley and Bebe Miller, on March 30 at the Grace Street Theater. This performance will feature solos by both women, including Miller’s acclaimed solo Rhythms Studies, as well as a collaborative improvisation that crosses the “continental divide” of their choreographic approaches. “The Concerts Divide” will be presented at the culmination of Miller’s three-week residency at VCU.

“Exciting collaborations are the catalysts for innovation,” said Martha Curtis, chair of VCU’s Department of Dance and Choreography. “These two extraordinary artists, coming together here in Richmond, will provide audiences with a rare dance event while giving VCU arts students an inspiring model of collaborative interaction.”

Bebe Miller has been creating dances for 20 years either as a solo artist with the Bebe Miller Company since 1985 or in collaboration with other artists. The Bebe Miller Company has performed more than 250 engagements since its creation, including commissions by Brooklyn Academy of Music, NEXT WAVE Festival, City Center Theater, The Joyce Theater, Wexner Center for the Arts, Walker Art Center, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, Bates Dance Festival, Dance Theater Workshop and Dancing in the Streets. Miller’s was the first American company to perform in South Africa and maintains a dialogue with the South African dance community. She has created works for the Oregon Ballet Theater, the Boston Ballet, the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, the Phoenix Dance Company in England, Grupo Experimental de Danza Contemporanea in Martinique and SBRT, the National Dance Company of Eritrea. She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York Foundation for the Arts; two Bessie Awards — the prestigious New York Dance and Performance Award named for dance teacher Bessie Schönberg; a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship; and an American Choreographer’s Award. Miller also will conduct a three-week residency at the Department of Dance and Choreography.

Fenley was an artist-in-residence at the Harkness Ballet Foundation from 1984–86, and an artist-in-residence at the Dia Center for the Arts from 1996 to 1996. Since 1988 she has concentrated on creating and performing solo works, including “State of Darkness” (1988), for which she received one of her two Bessie New York Dance and Performance Awards. She also was awarded a Beards Fund Fellowship, a CAPS grant, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, and eight NEA Choreographer Fellowships. She has created dances for the Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, the Ohio Ballet, the Australian Dance Theater, the Deutsch Oper Ballet of Berlin and for the National Ballet School of Canada. “Latitude,” a work choreographed specifically for the Dia Center for the Arts’ Web site, can be accessed at www.diacontroller.org/fenley.

General admission for the performance is $15 and free to VCU students with a valid ID. For tickets, call the VCU Dance Box Office at 828-2020.

More than 70 high-school teams from the United States and Brazil competed in the NASA Langley VCU School of Engineering FIRST Robotics Competition held March 8-10 at the Stuart C. Siegel Center. VCU was one of 13 sites across the country that hosted a total of 1025 teams during regional competitions. Working with corporate and university engineers, students had six weeks to design, build, program and test a remote- and computer-controlled robot for competition using the same supplies and software as their competitors.

Robotics Competition

The FIRST Robotics Competition National Championship will be held in April at Walt Disney World’s Epcot Center in Orlando, Fla.
VCU Libraries Lectures to Highlight Thomas Jefferson

Lectures to Explore Historical Background of One of Country’s Founding Fathers

by Suzanne Horsley
University News Services

What does an essay on architecture and a 1,500-pound cheese have in common? Two upcoming lectures hosted by VCU Libraries will tie these two seemingly unrelated objects to one of our country’s founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson.

Melvin Urofsky, Ph.D., director of the doctoral program at VCU’s Center for Public Policy, will present his lecture, “Saving Mr. Jefferson’s House: The Levy’s and Monticello, A Drama in Five Acts,” at 5 p.m. on March 29.

Urofsky’s presentation is the 16th Annual Brown-Lyons Lecture, co-sponsored each year by the VCU Center for Judaic Studies and the VCU Friends of the Library.

His lecture will examine the little known history of the Levy family and their ties to Jefferson’s Monticello. Commemorating Uriah P. Levy, the first Jewish American to obtain that rank in the U.S. Navy, purchased Jefferson’s “essay on architecture” in 1836. It remained in the Levy family for nearly 90 years, weathering the Civil War, legal battles and even an attempt by the government to purchase it before it was sold to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation in 1923.

Sponsored by the James Branch Cabell Library Associates, historic novelist Sheri Holman will present “The Economy of Bodies: Dissecting History in the Novels of Sheri Holman.” at 4 p.m. on April 1. Holman will discuss two of her novels, “A Stolen Tongue” and “The Dress Lodger,” and her upcoming novel “Mammoth Cheese.”

Scheduled for publication next year, “Mammoth Cheese” is set in contemporary Virginia, and explores the grizzly history that it is

Both lectures will be held in the School of Engineering Auditorium, and are free and open to the public.

For additional information or to arrange special accommodations, contact Melinda Gates at 828-1108.

VCU Mini-Medical School Explores Future of Medicine, Health Care

by Lissette Linares
University News Services

Medical and technological advances that may lead to the treatment of a previously untreatable disease or extends human life. VCU’s Mini-Medical School series, “Research at VCU — A Glimpse of the Cutting Edge,” will explore the future of medicine and the health and life sciences.

The adult-education lecture series, featuring information on the latest scientific research and clinical medicine, will be offered on Wednesdays, from 7-9 p.m., through April 18, at the Science Museum of Virginia, 2300 W. Broad St.

Lectures will include:
• On March 21, RICHARD P. WENZEL, M.D., professor and chair of VCU’s Department of Internal Medicine, will present “Sepsis.”
• JOELINE WIDOL, M.D., associate professor of human genetics and director of the Massey Cancer Center’s Transgenic Mouse Core Facility, will present “Genetically Engineered Models of Human Disease” on March 28.
• The April 4 lecture will feature “New Anticancer Drugs: A Case History From the Chemistry Laboratory to the Clinic,” led by NICHOLAS FARRELL, M.D., a VCU chemistry professor.
• On April 11, NANCY L. MCCAIN, M.D., associate professor of the School of Nursing’s Department of Adult Health, will present “Exploring Mind-Body Connections in Health and Illness.”
• LAWRENCE B. SCHWARTZ, M.D., professor of internal medicine and chair of the Division of Rheumatology, Allergy and Immunology, will close the series April 18 with “Mast Cells, From Bench to Bedside.”

Now in its 10th year, the VCU Mini-Medical School allows participants to receive understandable biomedical information in a relaxed, but highly informative environment.

The goal of the series is to provide participants with information that will help them make more educated decisions regarding health care management and public policy pertaining to science and technology. The VCU Mini-Medical School is sponsored by VCU, the Science Museum of Virginia and the Annabelle R. Jenkins Foundation. The lecture series is free and open to the public. Registration is required. To register, call 864-1400 and press 2.

Art History Department to Sponsor New Scholars, New Idea Symposium

by Donna Gregory
University News Services

VCU’s Department of Art History will sponsor the Tenth Annual New Scholars/New Ideas Symposium on March 23-24 at the Grace Street Theater.

Internationally known art historian Albert Boime, Ph.D., professor of art history at UCLA, will deliver the 2001 Maurice Bonds Lecture in Art History on March 23 at 6 p.m. The title of his keynote lecture is “Belshazzar’s Feast and the Millennial Visions of John Martin and Washington Allston.” A reception will follow.

A renowned specialist in 19th century European art, Boime has written several books and articles, and has lectured extensively on French painting and culture throughout the world. In addition, he has held several national and international fellowships, including the Guggenheim, the Rome prize and the Regents Fellow for the Smithsonian Institution.

The symposium continues on March 24 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. when current and recent graduate students from art history programs nationwide present research papers on various art history topics. The 2001 roster includes students from VCU, the University of Arizona, Boston University and Concordia University in Montreal, Canada.

The continuing success of the New Scholars/New Idea Symposium stems from the fact that it is organized primarily by graduate students in our program,” said James Farmer, Ph.D., associate professor of art history and faculty chair of the symposium.

“The symposium offers a venue for our own graduate students to present their work in a professional, scholarly atmosphere. They receive immediate response and feedback from academic peers and professionals outside of our department,” said Farmer.

All symposium events are free and open to the public. For more information, call 828-2784.

Virginia Commonwealth University’s Muslim Students Association hosted an open house at the University Student Commons earlier this month to celebrate the end of Hajj, the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca. The event featured Muslim foods and a short film produced by ABC correspondent Michael Wolfe entitled “The Hajj: An American’s Journey to Mecca.” VCU President Rizwan Ahmed led a discussion on the origins of Hajj and its importance to Muslims.
VCU to Host Free Seminar on Colon Cancer

by Erin Lucero
University News Services

VCU’s Massey Cancer Center will hold a free seminar focusing on colon cancer from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. on March 27 at the Jewish Community Center, 5403 Monument Ave.

Health-care providers as well as colon cancer survivors, will discuss early detection and diagnosis, genetic risk factors and advances in treatment. The American Cancer Society designated March as Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. According to the ACS, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer among men and women in the U.S. This year, more than 98,200 new cases of colon cancer will be diagnosed and an estimated 48,000 people will die from the disease.

The seminar offered by VCU’s Massey Cancer Center as part of an ongoing educational series on cancer topics. The public is invited to attend. For more information, call 828-8709.

Dental School Auxiliary Helps Staffers in Need

by Laura Arbogast
University News Services

When Mike Barclay, a staff member in VCU’s School of Dentistry, was diagnosed with cancer last September, the Dental School Auxiliary immediately extended their support to his family.

During Barclay’s four months of therapy, the DSA held a Thanksgiving fundraising lunch and collected more than $4,000 from dental school staff, students and faculty to help with expenses and donated more than eight months in leave-time from staff and faculty. It was the best gift they could give their friend and colleague who has since passed away.

The DSA was formed in 1982 as a group of dental staffers that gathered to welcome new employees and help assimilate them to the school. However, over the past 18 years it has evolved into an important support system for dental school staff members and students during times of need.

“When we first began meeting, members would mention their friends in the school who were experiencing personal difficulties,” said Margaret Poland, grants specialist in the School of Dentistry. “We realized that many staffers and students could use some help.”

The DSA is now composed of a board of 15 dental staff members who continually raise money through luncheons, raffles and other events. Proceeds from these events are used for purposes ranging from a student whose wife was waiting for a heart transplant to fixing a staff member’s air conditioner.

“Everyone in the school is always willing to pitch in,” Poland says. “Especially when we do an event specifically for someone.”

In 1994, the DSA provided financial assistance to a dental staff member who wanted to reunite with his family. With the group’s help, he was able to buy a plane ticket and visit his family in the Philippines. The following year, when a staff member’s house caught fire, the DSA immediately helped him begin rebuilding.

“We always keep the situation and any aid we give confidential, unless the family says otherwise,” said Debbie Doyle, executive administrative assistant in oral surgery. “We are not looking for recognition or praise; we just try to look out for each other.”

Ranked 37th out of 100 college teams nationwide, VCU’s women’s tennis team has been keeping the campus courts occupied as they practice for upcoming matches. Here, VCU freshman players Ana Dumitrascu, left, and Sylva Urickova, center, practice with Martina Nedeleva, a junior, who is ranked as the number six college player in the country. The women’s tennis team spent last week practicing during a Spring Break trip to California.

COMMONWEALTH POLL continued from page 1

Commonwealth Poll. “Expectations on Virginia’s economy are especially important right now because of the ongoing controversy over the car tax relief.”

National trends have shown a decline in consumer confidence over the last several months with a noticeable dip in February. Virginians are evenly divided (by 32 to 35 percent) over whether national business conditions will be good or bad in the coming year.

Virginians are more optimistic about economic conditions closer to home. Half expect the Virginia economy to be good next year, compared to just 22 percent who are pessimistic. Residents there are evenly divided over whether the Virginia economy will be good next year, compared to just 22 percent who are optimistic.

Many Virginians expect to do well with personal finances, with 41 percent expecting their personal finances to get better next year. Just 8 percent expect to do worse and the majority (51 percent) expect to do about the same.

Many economists feel consumer confidence can affect economic conditions,” Funk said.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES HELP BRIDGE DIGITAL DIVIDE

A second poll conducted found that more than three-quarters of Virginians (77 percent) use a computer. Of these, 92 percent% also have access to the Internet. The Commonwealth Poll was conducted with 767 adults in Virginia with a margin of error is +/- 4 percent.

Computer use in Virginia is on par with or slightly higher than nationwide trends. For example, a national survey conducted Feb. 14-19 by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that 72 percent of the nation uses a computer and 60 percent of the nation “go on-line to access the Internet.” 71 percent of Virginians report having access to the Internet.

Some groups are more likely to have access to computers, and consequently the Internet, than others. The digital divide is particularly noticeable between rich and poor, black and white, and men and women. 96 percent of those with incomes over $50,000 use a computer whereas only 57 percent of those making under $35K do so. Workforce participation brings more opportunities to use computers — especially in white-collar jobs. The Commonwealth Poll finds that access to computers is more common among those who are employed full-time. Differences in computer use between men and women are largely due to differences in rates of employment. Women who are employed full-time are equally likely to use computers as men, but only 56 percent of women who are not employed full-time use a computer.

“One of the most surprising things from this poll is to see the gender gap in computer use between men and women and then to see how employment opportunities can help bridge that digital divide,” Funk said.

Fifty-eight percent of those with Internet access report having gone on-line to shop or make purchases. Younger adults aged 25-44 are particularly likely to have shopped on-line. Sixty-four percent of those aged 25-44 have purchased items on-line compared to just 28 percent of those 65 and over. That bodes well for some retailers who expect continued use of on-line shopping options as the computer-savvy generations dominate the population.

Further information is available on request from the Director of the Commonwealth Poll, De Curly Funk, at 827 1430 or culfr@vcu.edu. More information on the Commonwealth Poll can be found at www.vcu.edu/commonwealthpoll/
Peptide Deformylase as a Target.” Sponsored by the Department of Chemistry. For details, call 828-1298.
4 p.m./Oliver Hall’s Kapp Lecture Hall
March 22—“Physiology Seminar: G Protein-Dependent Signaling by Attila Naturler;te: Peptide Cleavage Receptor.” Sponsored by the Department of Physiology. For details, call 828-9756.
4 p.m./Sanger Hall, Room 3-016
March 22—“OMSA Diversity Lecture Series.” Sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs. For details, call 828-6672.
7 p.m./Student Commons’ Forum Room
March 24—“Otolaryngology for the Non-Otolaryngologist.” Sponsored by the Department of Otolaryngology. Cost is $50. For details, call 828-2795.
8 a.m./Holiday Inn Kroger Select, Pators E and F
March 25—“Birds in the Middle East.” Sponsored by the Department of Biology. For details, call 828-1362.
4 p.m./Life Sciences Building, Room 201
March 27—“Nucleic Acid Transport in Mammalian Cells.” Sponsored by the School of Pharmacy. For details, call 828-4328.
Noon/Smith Building, Room 216
March 27—“OMSA Diversity Lecture Series: In Memory of Dr. Howard McCoy.” Sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs and the School of Business. For details, call 828-6672.
7 p.m./Student Commons’ Forum Room
Noon/Grant House Parlor Rooms
3 p.m./Student Commons, Commonwealth Ballroom
March 28—“Chemistry Department Seminar.” Sponsored by the Department of Chemistry. For details, call 828-1298.
4 p.m./Location TBD
March 28—“Mini-Medical School: Genetically Engineered Models of Human Disease.” Sponsored by the Department of Toxicology and the Science Museum of Virginia. For details, call 814-1400.
7 p.m./Science Museum of Virginia’s Edyl IMAX Dome
March 29—“Benefits Seminar on Retirement.” Sponsored by the Office of Training and Development. For details, call 828-3571.
8 a.m./Student Commons, Commonwealth A and B
March 29—“Retirement Planning.” Sponsored by the Office of Training and Development. For details, call 815-0179.
9 a.m./Student Commons, Commonwealth A and B
March 29—“Pushing the Limits with Nanoliter-Volume NMR Spectroscopy.” Sponsored by the Department of Chemistry. For details, call 828-1295.
4 p.m./Oliver Hall’s Kapp Lecture Hall
March 29—“Standards of Learning.” Sponsored by Employee Health Services and Work/Life Resources. For details, call 828-1598.
Noon/Student Commons, Capital B
March 29—“Experimental Biology.” Sponsored by the Department of Physiology. For details, call 828-0736.
4 p.m./Sanger Hall, Room 3-016
5 p.m./Engineering Auditorium
4 p.m./School of Engineering Auditorium
WORKSHOPS
3 p.m./Student Commons, Career Center
March 22—“Weight Watchers Weight Loss Program.” Sponsored by Employee Health Services and Work/Life Resources. For details, call 828-9001, or E-mail jrhodell@vcu.edu.
11:45 a.m./Student Commons, Theater
March 22—“Academic Success: How to Use APA and MLA.” Sponsored by University Counseling Services of the Division of Student Affairs. For details, call 828-6200.
10:30 a.m./Student Commons, Theater
March 26—“Academic Success: Navigating the Academic Student And Professor Relationship.” Sponsored by University Counseling Services of the Division of Student Affairs. For details, call 828-6200.
3:30 p.m./Student Commons, Theater
April 4—“Excel Intermediate.” Sponsored by University Computing Services on the Medical Campus. Pre-registration via the web is required. For details, and online registration, visit www.pubinfo.vcu.edu/training/t/. 8:30 a.m./Sanger Hall, Room 3-048
March 29—“Career Connections Orientation.” Sponsored by the Career Center. For details, call 828-1645.
11 a.m./Student Commons, Career Center
March 29—“Weight Watchers Weight Loss Program.” Sponsored by Employee Health Services and Work/Life Resources. For details, call 828-9001, or E-mail jrhodell@vcu.edu.
11:45 a.m./Student Commons
March 29—“Academic Success: Navigating the Academic Student And Professor Relationship.” Sponsored by University Counseling Services of the Division of Student Affairs. For details, call 828-6200.
3:30 p.m./Student Commons, Theater
March 29—“Career Connections Orientation.” Sponsored by the Career Center. For details, call 828-1645.
3 p.m./Student Commons, Career Center
March 29—“Being a Leader When You Are Not the Boss.” Sponsored by the Office of Training and Development. Cost is $45. For details, call 828-0179.
9 a.m./McGuire Hall Annex, Room B20
March 28—“Job Search Strategies.” Sponsored by the Career Center. For details, call 828-1645.
5:30 p.m./Business Building, Room 4115
March 29—“Access Beginner.” Sponsored by University Computing Services on the Medical Campus. Pre-registration via the web is required. For details, and online registration, visit www.pubinfo.vcu.edu/training/t/. 8:30 a.m./Sanger Hall, Room 3-048
March 29—“Career Connections Orientation.” Sponsored by the Career Center. For details, call 828-1645.
11 a.m./Student Commons, Career Center
March 29—“Weight Watchers Weight Loss Program.” Sponsored by Employee Health Services and Work/Life Resources. For details, call 828-9001, or E-mail jrhodell@vcu.edu.
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CONFERENCES
March 23—“Southeastern Renaissance Conference.” Sponsored by the Department of English. For details, call 828-1331.
1 p.m./School of Engineering, Auditorium
March 24—“Southeastern Renaissance Conference.” Sponsored by the Department of English. For details, call 828-1331.
9 a.m./School of Engineering, Auditorium
EVENTS
March 22—Off-Campus Housing Fair. Sponsored by Commons and Activities. For details, call 828-6500.
10 a.m./Student Commons, Commonwealth Ballroom
SPORTS
Baseball
March 27—VCU vs. Virginia Tech
7 p.m./The Diamond
March 30—VCU vs. George Mason University
7 p.m./The Diamond
March 31—VCU vs. George Mason University
4 p.m./The Diamond
April 4—VCU vs. George Mason University
1 p.m./The Diamond
Men’s Tennis
April 1—VCU vs. Clemson University
4 p.m./Thalhimer Tennis Center
Students experienced a little taste of Mardi Gras in VCU’S Student Commons on March 6. Candy and beads were tossed from the balcony and interesting Mardi Gras facts were displayed across the Commons. Students listened to a live blues band as they made stylish masks and ate chicken jambalaya served with red beans, rice and cornbread. King cakes, a Louisiana pastry filled with strawberries or cream, were a hit with students. Traditionally, a plastic baby is baked inside each king cake and whoever receives the piece with the baby has the luck of throwing the next big Mardi Gras party!