

The Commonwealth Times

Free

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CTVCU@hotmail.com
www.commonwealthtimes.com
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Ramz Hall opens doors



Residents voice dissatisfaction with space, cost/ Page 3

Sports

The erasers: Track standouts Davion Lambert and James Frier-son are making names in the VCU record book disappear. / **Page 9**

Spectrum

Here's Johnny: Talk show legend Carson dies. / **Page 11**



Editorials & Letters

A letter from SGA president Khan. / **Page 14**

IN BRIEF

CALENDAR

JAN. 24 THROUGH JAN. 26

Monday, Jan. 24	Tuesday, Jan. 25	Wednesday, Jan. 26
Come show your support for women's rights and help build a stronger community. The Feminist Action Network meets in the University Student Commons room Virginia D from 8 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Call Sarah Francario at 931-9826 for more details.	Need help figuring out how to balance work, play and classes? Join Phi Sigma Sigma as they host a Time Management Workshop in the University Student Commons room Virginia B from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Call Katie Satterwhite at 746-2224 for more details.	Join Alpha Phi Omega and give the gift that could save lives at the APO Blood Drive in the University Student Commons rooms Virginia A, B, C and D from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Call Elizabeth Meade at 748-2170 for more details.

CAMPUS FORECAST



Monday
38/23



Tuesday
45/21



Wednesday
49/35



Thursday
52/28

Compiled from wire reports

Dog plays mother hen for tigers

Authorities in a Chinese zoo have drafted a dog to play surrogate mother to three newborn Siberian tigers at the Shanghai Wild Animal Park. The cubs were abandoned by their mother and in need of a wet nurse when authorities called in the dog, Balu. The first time the 7-year-old canine acted as a tiger's mother was five years ago when a Siberian tiger became too sick to nurse her cubs and the park placed an advertisement for a replacement. Since then Balu has acted as mother for 12 tiger cubs on four occasions. Park spokesman Su Feilong said even though the tiger cubs were bigger than Balu she regarded them as her own children and fed them wholeheartedly.

Add some shine to your desktop

Montblanc, a pen-making company, is offering the Montblanc Boheme Royal – a pen covered in 1,430 diamonds and worth \$1,500. A spokesperson said that the pen is not only stunning to look at, but features a writing system equal to other Montblanc creations. The pen is a cartridge fountain pen and comes with a medium width nib made of platinum plated 18k gold.

Soccer team adopts goldfish

A goldfish that washed onto the field for Carlisle United following a flood has landed a job as the team's mascot. Judy and the

second fish, still awaiting a name, will share the mascot position. Ashleigh Turk, Judy's 4-year-old owner, agreed to donate the fish to Carlisle United. Emma Story, daughter of team owner Fred Story, saved the fish from being stepped on as water was pumped from the field. Story said after the team won its match against Redditch the fans began to say the fish represent the fighting spirit of the team.

Dead woman returns to vote

A Romanian family who believed they buried their daughter two years ago were shocked when she came home to vote. The family from Pildesti addressed local police when their 22-year-old daughter didn't return home in July 2003. After a few days of investigation police found a dead body on a riverbank and family and neighbors identified the body as the missing woman. But after almost two years the woman arrived home by taxi to vote in a poll regarding the revision of the Romanian Constitution. She explained her absence to her family by saying she went to visit a friend in a remote town and found a job there.

Pregnant parachutist

Marija Usova, of Russia, was in the middle of a parachute dive when she felt an enormous pain and went into labor. She had ignored warnings when she decided to arrange the jump because she said she wanted to give her unborn daughter the feeling of flying through the air before being born. Even after

labor started, she managed to control her descent despite coming close to passing out at times and gave birth minutes after landing. Usova said the last words she remembers hearing before waking up in the hospital were "it's a girl." She named her daughter Larisa, the ancient Greek word for seagull.

Bad luck

Billy Gibbons was out walking one day in 2003 when he stumbled upon a chicken near death. He took the chicken in and nursed it back to health, naming it Lucky. A week later, while Gibbons was working in his home, Lucky pecked out five numbers on a calculator that ended up winning Gibbons almost \$2,600. However, Lucky recently met his demise when Gibbons forgot to lock the coop and the chicken was snatched away by a fox.

No waiting room for this man

Pedro Lopez stunned doctors recently by successfully performing surgery on himself. Lopez drained three liters of fluid from his lungs that made his breathing difficult, by pushing a needle up through his abdominal area without anesthesia. Lopez stayed in the hospital for one day after his surgery and then went home to the town of Chenalho, Mexico.

Front cover photo by Pat Kane. Spectrum teaser cutout by Andrew Babb.

The Commonwealth TIMES

Room 1149, T. Edward Temple Building, 901 W. Main St. Richmond, VA 23284-2010

Executive Editor
DEVON MARROW

CTeditor03@yahoo.com

Managing Editor
VACANT

News Co-Editor
KATIE GANTT

ganttkt@vcu.edu

News Co-Editor
JONATHAN ROBBINS

robbinsjs@vcu.edu

Production Chief
RACHEL BLACK

blackrl@mail2.vcu.edu

Graphic Designer
ANDREW BABB

Andrew@toolatetorun.com

Spectrum Editor
JOANNAH NWOKEABIA

jhwokeabia@yahoo.com

Sports Editor
JULIAN BENBOW

Benbowjj@yahoo.com

Photography Editor
PAT KANE

kanepm@vcu.edu

Editorials & Letters Editor
OMAR YACOUBI

yacoubioa@vcu.edu

Business Manager
DAN PRINCE

princedd@vcu.edu

Accounts Manager
CHRISTINE MENDOZA
catchrisjay@hotmail.com

Advertising Director
MORGAN COPELAND
copelandmd@vcu.edu

Advertising Representative
LATASHA EWELL
ewellln@vcu.edu

Office Manager
JUSTIN JOHNS

johnsjp@vcu.edu

Webmaster
THOMAS GEHRING

tagehrin@vcu.edu

Production Manager
MARY FRANKE MILLER

mmiller@rmc.edu

Advertising and Classifieds
ctaddept@gmail.com

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NEWS

Students cite new dorm's elevator among problems

JONATHAN ROBBINS

News Co-Editor

On March 26, 2004 a construction worker tossed a used cigarette away on the job site at 933 W. Broad St. Hours later, fire had damaged much of the area on the 900 block of W. Broad St. and destroyed months of construction work.

On Jan. 15 – after 295 days and much hard work – Ramz Hall opened its doors to both incoming students and mixed feelings.

Ramotalai Coker, a sophomore pre-dental hygiene major, said the apartment was sufficient, but not desirable.

“It’s okay – it’s livable. It’s small, but it’s livable,” Coker said. “I think it’s not worth the price.”

She said that housing representatives told her the building and amenities would be comparable to Ackell Residence Center, but she found the arrangement to be lacking in several areas.

“We don’t have the things they (Ackell) have – we have to provide lighting for ourselves, we have to pay for parking – we don’t have half the space they have.”

Colena Olsen echoed Coker’s sentiments, saying that the building failed to live up to expectations.

“It’s just way too small,” Olsen said. “I’d rather live here than Capital Garage – but I’d rather live in an Ackell two-bedroom than this two-bedroom.”

Larry Mewborn, a senior sports management major, said that even though the living arrangements were small, he liked Ramz Hall so far.

“It’s not as big as Ackell or Broad and Belvidere, but I guess it’s suitable.”

From the perspective of space, Ramz Hall is smaller than both Ackell Residence Center and Broad and Belvidere Apartments – Ackell is the largest of the three, providing 740 square feet of space for a two-bedroom arrangement, while Broad and Belvidere provides 684 square feet and Ramz Hall 653 square feet.

The prices tend to correspond, with the current rates for a 12-month lease for a two-bedroom unit in Ackell costing \$6,504 and the same package in Broad and Belvidere costing \$6,504.

The problem is, that with less space Ramz Hall residents are still paying the same price as Broad and Belvidere residents for a two-bedroom unit. In addition to the space, students in Broad and Belvidere also get certain amenities that Ramz Hall lacks such as a dishwasher, washer and dryer set, computer lab and a game area.

Rachel Maddux, interim director of residential life and housing division of student affairs and enrollment services, explained that part of the problem is the fact that Ramz Hall is being leased from a private developer and it’s harder for the university to control the prices.

“We (VCU) try to absorb as much of the cost as we can without running at a deficit,” she said. “But our first priority is to find on campus – or as close to on campus as possible – housing for our upperclass students.”

Prices and size aren’t the only complaints students have about the new building. Ramz Hall is set up in such a way that a lone elevator is the only way to access anything above the first floor unless there’s an emergency.

In the case of an emergency, or if the elevator breaks down – like it did during the move-in schedule – security can open the stairwells at either end of the building for student use.

Brian Ohlinger, associate vice president of facilities management, said that having one elevator is typical for a building the size of Ramz Hall.

Some students still have worries though.

Coker, the Monday before classes started, said that the elevator breaking down earlier in the day concerned her.

“Classes start tomorrow,” she said, “and I don’t know how that’s going to work because the elevator broke down earlier today.”

Even when the elevators work properly, some students said the time it takes getting up and down is a problem.

Mewborn, who lives on the second floor, said it takes him more than five minutes, including the wait, to get downstairs and eight minutes to come back up. Since even the second floor is only accessible by elevator the stairs aren’t an option, students said.

“You’ve got to leave probably 10 to 15 minutes earlier than you wanted to,” he said.

Maddux said she understood students’ complaints about



Pat Kane

Students crowd around Ramz Hall’s one elevator.

the elevator, but explained the reason the stairs currently aren’t accessible is because of safety.

“The students are right there on Broad St.,” she said. “We have to keep the safety of the students in mind.”

She said that over the next few months Hunter Rauscher, security coordinator, and Jane Firer, Ramz Hall complex manager, will look at the plausibility and safety of putting in stairwell access for residents.

“We are aware that it is a slow elevator,” Maddux said. “And I want students to feel like we are there for them.”

No more waiting room blues?

ALICIA JONES

Staff Writer

Feeling sick?

Beginning this semester, VCU students need to make an appointment before heading to University Student Health Services.

Now, when a student calls ahead of time and explains their individual situation, a nurse triage system goes into effect, allowing workers to determine the needs of the student. If the situation is not a true emergency, students will need to make an appointment to be seen by a health care worker.

The only time a student will be seen as a walk-in at the clinic is in the case of a true emergency.

The good news is that if a student does need an appointment, the new system will

offer same-day openings that can work around a class schedule.

Tisha Smith, a receptionist at the Monroe Park Campus University Health Services office, explained that physicians working that day leave time out during their shift for to fit students’ needs.

“The doctors and nurses that are on-call here have a slot of time every hour that they are not allowed to schedule for emergencies and same-day appointments,” Smith said.

She said that the time slots are usually 15 minutes since that is the estimated time for an average appointment.

Cindy Holmes, assistant director of clinical operations at University Student Health Services, says this new system will streamline the doctor’s visit process for students.

“It will be beneficial for both staff and

students,” she said. “It will be more efficient for the clinic and students won’t have to wait as long.”

Cutting down on wait times is not the only benefit that will come from this new policy.

Lindsey Eades, assistant director of administration for University Health Services, says that the system follows an open-access system that many other universities and family practices utilize.

The open-access system allows students who need to be seen immediately to get the medical attention that they need the same day that they seek it, while other students that have a minor illness or injury, or simply need their annual check-up can be seen after those who have greater needs.

“This is how it is in the real world, because most doctor’s offices you go to, you

have to make an appointment,” she said.

Students are urged to arrive on time to their appointments because those who are late by more than ten minutes will lose their appointment slot.

To make an appointment, students on the Monroe Park campus should call 828-8828 and those on the MCV campus should call 828-9220. If at all possible, it is best to call 24 hours in advance of when you need to be seen.

For medical attention after-hours, students can still call the University Student Health Services office and listen to a pre-recorded message to receive the pager number of the University Student Health Services practitioner on call.

The healthcare worker will immediately return the call and determine the urgency of the student’s medical need.

NEWS

An outstretched hand

VCU officials offer fire victims housing, academic arrangements

KATIE GANTT
News Co-editor

An early morning blaze last month that destroyed two row houses and left two others slightly damaged has left some students taking their fall final exams this semester.

The Dec. 15 fire occurred while students were in the midst of final exams week and left the students scrambling to find food, shelter and a place to study.

Martha Green, assistant to the vice provost for student affairs and enrollment services, said VCU administrators and faculty worked with students to make housing and academic arrangements.

"In some cases, students didn't have anything left," Green said. "Twelve fifty-five was liveable. They had lots of smoke damage in their clothes, so it wasn't as if they had to move. Twelve fifty-one was liveable but they had some smoke damage there also."

Though fire officials said that all the occupants evacuated soon after the fire began, Lt. Alfred Holmes, a worker for Richmond's fire marshal, gave estimates for the damage to the more severely affected homes.

"Twelve fifty-seven's estimated building loss was \$70,000, and estimated content loss was \$20,000," Holmes said. "The estimated loss for 1259 was \$80,000 building loss and a content loss of \$20,000."

VCU administrators offered those affected on-campus housing, but not all students needed it.

"Some students went home, one went to stay with friends," Green said. "Two of them asked us for housing in our residence halls, and we were able to give one of them housing immediately that day. The other one did not ask for it until the 17th. We gave him some choices."

VCU also provided meals for those who needed them.

"We requested meal coupons for them for a couple of meals a day," Green said, "from the day of the fire through the following Monday, when they would have left for the holiday anyway."

Since the fire occurred during exam week, many of the students affected needed to make other arrangements with their schoolwork.

"I talked to each one of these people individually by cell," Green said, "and when they needed it we contacted the professors. I worked very closely with the College of Humanities and Sciences and with the School of Engineering because that's where most of these classes were."

"In some cases, the exams were postponed until spring sometime. In other cases, we got books for them -- either books from faculty members or books from other students -- so they had their books when they needed them," she said. "I asked what they



Pat Kane

More than a month later, clean up continues at 1257 W. Cary St.

needed, and when they told me, we did get what it was that they needed. I did not have a request for any computers."

Although this was a difficult time for most of the occupants, those who were not as badly affected found ways to help those who lost everything.

"One of the ladies whose apartment was

least damaged with the least amount of smoke offered her clothes to the other girls," Green said. "She said, 'I have an abundance of clothes and I am very willing to share them.'"

Even though the aftermath of the fire was stressful for those who lived through it, it did serve to bring some of the victims closer together.

"In the scheme of things, they developed a sense of camaraderie that was in many ways very positive," Green said.

"They were each saying that they would get in touch with the other. They were very pleased for the help that we either provided or offered to provide. In the final analysis, it was a positive experience just to see that in such a difficult time, they were all still concerned about each other and willing to help one another."

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NEWS

Never too old to learn *Students continue education at VCU*

KRYSTAL JONES
Staff Writer

Barb, a 36-year-old mother and wife, longs desperately to go back to school to earn a bachelor's degree.

"I was desperate for love and safety, so instead of waiting for the start of college, I got married at age 19," Barb said. "I worked full time from the day after high school graduation in a variety of manual jobs until landing a job at a local hospital in the file department.

"All during this time, I was trying to follow the path my family expected of me: marry, work, have kids, buy a house. I had wanted to go to school but had always found a reason not to go. No money, kids to raise, husband would feel intimidated since he did not have a degree, it was always something. But now when I listened to my own wants and goals, I decided that a degree having to do with my passion, computers, was what would fill part of the void in me. I signed up for college courses toward a B. A. in technical writing."

Barb is an actual student referenced in the book, "Traditional Degrees for Non-Traditional Students," by Carole Fungaroli.

Many adults feel the same way Barb did. They realize after having a family or getting married that they want to go to college. Studies have shown that non-traditional students tend

to be more focused and do better academically compared to traditional students.

"I always wanted to get a bachelor's degree," said Shirley Hart, a 46-year-old recent graduate. "But kids and marriage got in the way of my essential plan, so when I enrolled in school, I decided to do something for me."

Hart graduated from VCU's bachelor of interdisciplinary studies program with a degree in customer relations in May of 2003. She graduated magna cum laude and received the non-traditional studies achievement award for academic excellence.

Hart said her experience made her more sympathetic towards students. She also did not have a problem finding study partners or students wanting to copy her notes.

Hart said her family was very supportive.

"Me and my son attended VCU at the same time for a year and a half," she said. "I would see him on campus and we would wave at each other. My daughter, on the other hand, loved asking me did I do my homework."

Richard Doran is also a VCU alumnus who decided to go back to school as a non-traditional student.

Doran served as a Marine for 13 years and worked as a narcotics detective in Newport News before deciding, at the age of 40, to go

back to college.

"My wife persuaded me too," said Doran. "She got offered a great job in Richmond, so we moved up here with our son. She always knew I wanted to get a degree and thought this would be the perfect time.

"I called universities in the area and told them what I wanted to do and all of them said we don't offer that here," he said. "When I called VCU, they asked me what I wanted to do, and I told them, and they said, 'No problem.'"

Like Hart, Doran also graduated magna cum laude, but with a degree in foreign policy and a minor in political science.

Doran said that he did not think he had the discipline of going straight to college and credits his military training with helping him become successful as a student.

Both students say they do not have any regrets about going back to school, but they did say that there were some challenges along the way.

Although Doran said he worked hard and had a lot of fun, getting back into school mode was difficult for him.

"Making the adjustment from the 'working' environment to an academic one was hard for me," said Doran.

Even though Hart and Doran have graduated, they have not left VCU.

Doran is a graduate assistant teacher in the history department and hopes to teach foreign



Pat Kane

Shirley Hart graduated from VCU in May 2003.

policy one day.

"I would love to teach for the university's new homeland security department," Doran said.

Hart now works at the student accounting department on campus, and she empathizes with the students who come into the department for assistance.

Based on U.S. Census Bureau projections, the number of non-traditional students ages 25 to 64 will rise significantly by 2015.

Shannon Edwards, a 26-year-old senior political science major, does not feel alone since she has enrolled in school.

"I'm 26 and decided to go back to school a couple of years ago," said Edwards. "There are a lot of people in my classes that are older than me, so I don't feel like a non-traditional student. The older students look out for each other."

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STATE & NATION

2 UCLA professors quit after gun allegedly used in performance

LOS ANGELES — Two tenured art professors have resigned from the University of California, Los Angeles, after the university refused to suspend a graduate student who may have used a gun during a classroom performance art piece.

Chris Burden and Nancy Rubins, internationally known artists who taught at UCLA for more than two decades, filed their retirement papers Dec. 20.

"They feel this was sort of domestic terrorism. There should have been more outrage and a firmer response," said Sarah Watson, a director at a Beverly Hills gallery that represents the couple. "People feared for their lives."

The resignations came after a brief performance on Nov. 29 in which a student simulated Russian roulette by appearing to point a loaded handgun at his head and pull the trigger, a student and law enforcement officials told the Los Angeles Times.

The weapon didn't fire, but the student then left the room

and what sounded like a gunshot was heard outside.

Police said no one was hurt. It was unclear whether the firearm was real.

The performance prompted investigations by university officials into whether any criminal laws or student codes were violated. However, prosecutors decided against filing criminal charges because there was "insufficient evidence to show a gun was discharged or any bullet fired," said Jane Robison, a spokeswoman for the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office.

University officials declined to provide any details about the performance, which took place at a university art studio annex in Culver City.

No action was taken against the student, who was continuing his studies after the dean's office determined that a suspension wasn't warranted. The two professors, who are married, believe the student should have been suspended

while the investigations continued, Watson said.

Burden, 58, oversaw a program that includes performance, installation and video art, while Rubins, 52, taught sculpture.

Burden did performance art before moving into sculpture in the late 1970s. His best-known performance, titled "Shoot," featured an assistant who shot him in the upper arm with a .22-caliber rifle.

Burden's work, however, was different because the audience never felt in jeopardy, while the UCLA performance inspired "genuine fear," Watson said.

Rubins was famous for assemblage pieces composed of parts of scrapped vehicles and appliances.

Watson said the couple was unhappy long before the incident because of budget cuts and bureaucratic constraints. But the university's response to the gun performance was "sort of the last straw," she said.

Reeling from job losses, Virginia city backs pitch for college with big money

JUSTIN POPE
AP Education Writer

MARTINSVILLE, Va. — It's 11 o'clock on a Monday morning, but people are milling about on sidewalks and porches with nowhere to go. Nearby, the textile and furniture factories where many once worked stand idle in fields of weeds.

Before thousands of manufacturing jobs were lost in Martinsville and surrounding Henry County, it hardly mattered that fewer than one in 10 residents has a bachelor's degree. Now, however, companies won't move here and many residents can't find work. Youngsters with promise head elsewhere for college, and aren't inclined to return to a place where unemployment runs a state-high 14 percent.

But Martinsville has one thing going for it that other factory towns don't: a community foundation with \$200 million, and a mission to repair the region's social fabric.

Leaders of the Harvest Foundation, funded by the sale of the community hospital, think the area's best hope for rebirth is an intensive, academically innovative university, mixing the practicality and efficiency of a community college with the rigor of a four-year university.

The "New College of Virginia" they have proposed would let traditional, college-age students and older people with work force experience earn a bachelor's degree in only 28 months. If the state agrees to build and support it, the foundation has pledged \$50 million — enough, it says, to keep tuition as low as \$1,546 per year in an area where per capita income is about \$17,000.

Backers say it's their best bet for transforming the region's economy, and a culture in which higher education has never been a major aspiration.

"The big thing is creating a changing sense of self-value for local people," said George Lester, a businessman whose family ties to the area go back 200 years. He has

pledged an empty former textile factory he owns and \$250,000 to the college upon accreditation. "It's a lifeline, a transition from the 20th century to the 21st century. It's a chance to lead rather than follow."

Despite the challenge grant, getting the new college built may never happen. Previous attempts to lure a university here have failed. Some think backers are being overly optimistic about what such a school could accomplish, and competition over money is already fierce from existing state schools.

Gov. Mark Warner has indicated support for the project, as have the two presumptive nominees in this year's governor's race. But earlier this month, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia declined to endorse it, recommending the General Assembly do more research on how much demand there would be, and whether the college would be the best use of state resources.

If legislators insist on acting, the state education council indicated it favors a counterproposal from Longwood and Old Dominion Universities — public colleges elsewhere in the state — to expand partnerships with the community college a few miles outside Martinsville.

Virginia hasn't created a new university since 1882, the council said, but has been well-served by an efficient strategy of expanding existing universities and building branch campuses. The "2+2" partnership it favored would be already accredited, and would cost the state \$4.9 million per year, compared to \$9 million for the new college.

"Let's try a collaborative approach and see what happens instead of taking millions of dollars and putting it into something that, maybe it will work and maybe it won't," said Longwood President Patricia Cormier.

But the education council acknowledged in its report that at public hearings residents made clear they consider that option inferior, and that the region "deserved" its own

four-year college.

Backers of the new college say they won't be derailed by the council's report. They argue that the existing state university system isn't serving the region. The University of Virginia is highly regarded, but 120 miles away and tough for many here to get into. Other state schools are more accessible, but supporters of the new school say they only draw locals away.

"I don't think they do anything, other than they got two football players from here," said Ronald Carrier, a former president of James Madison University who transformed that school from a backwater teacher's college to a prominent regional university, and who has been hired by the foundation to lead the Martinsville project.

The community college approach, Carrier said, can't accomplish the physical, economic and cultural makeover the area requires.

"Community colleges transform individual lives," says Carrier, 72, whose bluntness earned him both admirers and enemies at JMU. "They do not transform communities." He wants the school highly visible, in the center of town, where it will make a statement about the role of higher education in the life of the community.

Carrier says Martinsville's unusual circumstances require something new, and he says the program could serve as a model for other depopulating regions (Martinsville's population of 15,400 is expected to decline about 3.5 percent by 2010, and surrounding Henry County's more than 6 percent).

The proposal blends onsite and online learning, community service, internships and programs in local schools. The residential component would be housed partly in the now-empty Tultex textile plant near the city center, where 2,500 people once worked. Half the coursework would come from a "core" liberal arts program, the other half would lead to a degree in fields like computer graphics, management and

commercial art. Carrier hopes to enroll the first students in July 2006.

American higher education, Carrier says, has accommodated evolution from seminaries to liberal arts colleges, universities and community colleges. Now, he says, the country needs something more rigorous than a trade school degree, but affordable and without the inefficiencies like idle classrooms, twice-weekly courses and three-day weekends that clearly drove him batty during his tenure leading a traditional four-year college.

But others argue what's really inefficient is starting a college from scratch, rather than restoring recently cut support to established and accredited ones — many of which serve parts of the state where population is growing.

Cormier, the Longwood president, says the proposal is interesting, but simply too risky.

"You can do an accelerated (program) with students who graduated from high school with 4.0s," she said. "It's not so easy with underrepresented students."

Carrier says he can graduate anyone willing to work eight hours a day for 28 months.

Martinsville faced a similar economic crossroads a century ago, when the local tobacco industry collapsed. Then, it remade itself as a textile center, capitalizing on cheap labor and proximity to cotton fields.

This time, college backers say, cheap labor won't save Martinsville's economy. Harvest Foundation Board Chairman Douglas Payne, a local furniture executive, says his company sometimes has openings but even with the labor surplus can't find people with the skills it needs.

Payne says education like the GED programs his company offers utterly transforms workers, giving them not only skills but confidence.

A college, he and others say, could do even more.

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THURSDAY	JAN. 20	CABINISS HALL: 7PM
FRIDAY	JAN. 21	ACKELL RESIDENCE CENTER: 4PM
MONDAY	JAN. 24	BROAD & BELVIDERE: 4PM
TUESDAY	JAN. 25	GLADDING RESIDENCE CENTER: 7PM
WEDNESDAY	JAN. 26	FORUM ROOM-STUDENT COMMONS: 3PM

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VCU
Division of Student Affairs
and Enrollment Services

SPORTS

VCU Men's Track and Field

Indoor Records

55-meter dash: Mustapha Jinadu, 6.32 seconds, 1995
 55-meter hurdles: Steven McDonnough, 7.65, 2002
 60-meter: Mustapha Jinadu, 6.82, 1995
200-meter: James Frierson, 21.43, 2005
 400-meter: Chris Polk, 48.03, 2002
 800-meter: Saeed Basweidan, 1:49.33, 1999
 1,000-meter: Jesus Ortega, 2:22.0, 1994
 1-mile: Jesus Ortega, 4:02.16, 1998
 3,000-meter: Daniel Ndungu, 8:13.01, 2002
 5,000-meter: Des Proctor, 14:23.00, 1992
 1,600-meter Relay: Sean Hunter, Chris Polk, Christian Grossenbacher, Joe Reid; 3:13.98; 2001
 3,200-meter Relay: James Green, Jesus Ortega, Saeed Basweidan, Joe Reid 7:28.34; 1998
 Shuttle Hurdle Relay: Greg Benhase, Desmond Smith, Steve Carroll, Dexter Richardson; 31.20; 1995
 Distance Medley Relay: Chris Polk, Joe Reid, Saeed Basweidan, Jesus Ortega; 9:41.80; 1998
 Shot Put: Tom Johnson, 55-7.75, 1994
Long Jump: Ron Jones, 24-5, 1993
High Jump: Ron Jones, 6-10, 1994
Triple Jump: Davion Lambert, 49-2.5, 2005
 Pole Vault: Bobby Wilson, 15-3, 1997

Outdoor Records

100-meter: Mustapha Jinadu, 10.27, 1995
200-meter: Ron Jones, 20.88, 1993
 400-meter: Shelby Crawley, 46.62, 1996
 800-meter: Jesus Ortega, 1:47.94, 1998
 1,500-meter: Jesus Ortega, 3:42.70, 1998
 3,000-meter Steeplechase: Alberto Vicente, 8:47.00, 2000
 5,000-meter Daniel Ndungu: 14:23.18, 2001
 10,000-meter Daniel Ndungu: 30:43.37, 2001
 110-meter Hurdles: Julian Carter, 14.75, 1997
 400-meter Hurdles: Christian Grossenbacher, 52.47, 2001
 400-meter Relay: Charles Williams, Ron Jones, Shelby Crawley, Mustapha Jinadu; 40.20; 1996
 800-meter Relay: Shelby Crawley, John Sullivan, Mustapha Jinadu, Ron Jones; 1:25.90, 1995
 1,600-meter Relay: Sean Hunter, Chris Polk, Christian Grossenbacher, Joe Reid; 3:11.02; 2001
 3,200-meter Relay: James Green, Saeed Basweidan, Joe Reid, Jesus Ortega; 7:21.66; 1999
 Sprint Medley Relay: Ron Jones, Mustapha Jinadu, Shelby Crawley, Bruce Berger 3:19.82; 1996,
 Distance Medley Relay: Joe Reid, 9:37.78; 1999
 Brandon Morris, Saeed Basweidan, Jesus Ortega
Long Jump: Ron Jones, 25-7.25, 1996
Triple Jump: Ron Jones, 49-7.25, 1994
High Jump: Davion Lambert, 6-8.75, 2004
 Pole Vault: Bobby Wilson, 16-0, 1997
 Shot Put: Tom Johnson, 56-3.75, 1995
 Discus: Tom Johnson, 156-3, 1995
 Javelin: John Alexander, 193-4, 2004
 Hammer: Tom Johnson, 202-7, 1994
 Decathlon: David Norman, 6,663, 1994



Pat Kane

James Frierson and Davion Lambert at a recent indoor practice at the Siegel Center.

Record-breaking stride

Lambert and Frierson shatter school records on path to CAA championship

JULIAN BENBOW
Sports Editor

Former VCU track great Ron Jones has been telling current standout Davion Lambert for a while now that, “he’s back.”

Jones warns Lambert about the comeback he plans to make just in case the 5-foot-6 jumper got any ideas about breaking even one of Jones’ school records.

Jones, of course, was joking, but Lambert has been dead serious about erasing him from the record books.

Jones, now an assistant coach with VCU, was at the Naval Academy on Jan. 15 to see Lambert set a new mark in the triple jump with a leap of 49-1¾ inches. He was also on hand at the Niswonger Invitational at East Tennessee State last Saturday when Lambert stretched the distance even farther—to 49-2½ inches—just in case Jones had any thoughts about coming back and breaking *his* record.

Lambert’s teammate James Frierson was just as sharp over the weekend, shattering former VCU athlete Shelby Crawley’s record in the 200-meter dash by running a 21.43.

Lambert returned the jokes to Jones, but they both knew he wasn’t playing.

“It’s so crazy that he’s my coach and I have to break it,” Lambert said. “But

hey, I’m going to do what I’ve got to do. Records are meant to be broken and that’s what I’m going to do.”

Jones figured it was coming, and said he was actually proud, not only of being the athlete that set the record, but of coaching the athlete that broke the record.

“It’s actually like an honor,” Jones said. “Honestly I’m proud of him. Obviously they were good records, because they were up there for a decade, but it’s time for them to come down.”

Jones said he would be surprised if Lambert didn’t take all of his record by the end of the season.

“He wants the records bad,” Jones said. “And I’m going to prepare him to the best of my knowledge. If he could take me out of all the records then I would be honored.”

If that does happen, Lambert and Frierson will have made an updated millennium edition of the VCU record book. But the pair already has the burden of leading the Rams to a CAA championship.

The team is looking to knock off two-time defending CAA champion William & Mary, after falling short by just 24 points in last year’s conference meet at Sports Backers Stadium.

Lambert said those points have been eating away at him and his teammates since last April.

“It’s pinned on my back right now,” Lambert said. “That number 24 is the number for right now, and William & Mary, that’s the school. Pretty much, that’s what pushes me in all my performances—beating William and Mary.”

First-year assistant coach Jason Smith said that after getting a chance to take a look at the competition, he isn’t worried as much about the Tribe as he is about UNC Wilmington.

“They’re going to be our biggest competition,” Smith said. “After seeing them, I think we compare very well with them. We have some areas where we’re weak. They have some areas where they’re weak. The areas they’re weak in we’re strong in. And the areas we’re weak in they’re strong in. So it all balances out.”

Smith has coached Frierson since he came out of Highland Springs High School in 2003.

Frierson worked for most of the offseason with Smith to shave milliseconds off his times. Smith used the training sessions to take Frierson back by his old school and meet Big Bertha, a “beast” of a hill just minutes away from the school building.

“She gives you the work,” Frierson

TRACK continued on page 10

SPORTS

Upcoming Sports
EVENTS

Men’s basketball

Jan. 26: VCU vs. James Madison at the Stuart C. Siegel Center at 7:30 p.m.
Jan. 29: VCU vs. Old Dominion at the Stuart C. Siegel Center at 4 p.m.
Jan. 31: VCU at James Madison in Harrisonburg, Va. at 7 p.m.

Women’s basketball

Jan. 27: VCU vs. UNC Wilmington at the Stuart C. Siegel Center at 7 p.m.
Jan. 30: VCU at Hofstra in Hempstead, N.Y. at 2 p.m.
Feb. 3: vs. Old Dominion at the Stuart C. Siegel Center at 7 p.m.

Men’s tennis

Jan. 29: VCU vs. Boise State at the Thalhimier Tennis Center at 2 p.m.
Jan. 30: VCU vs. Michigan at the Thalhimier Tennis Center at noon
Feb. 1: VCU vs. Louisiana-Lafayette at the Thalhimier Tennis Center at 4 p.m.

Women’s tennis

Jan. 29: VCU vs. Richmond at the Thalhimier Tennis Center 10 a.m.
Feb. 4-6: VCU 4-1 Invitational at the Thalhimier Tennis Center, all day
Feb. 13: VCU vs. Old Dominion at the Thalhimier Tennis Center 11 a.m.

Men’s track and field

Jan. 28-29: Penn State National Open in State College, Pa.
Feb 4-5: Carolina Classic in Chapel Hill, N.C.
Feb. 5: George Mason in Fairfax

Women’s track and field

Jan. 28-29: Christopher Newport University in Newport News
Feb. 5: North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C.
Feb. 11-12: Virginia Tech in Blacksburg

For more information contact the VCU sports line: 828-7000. VCU sporting events are free to students with a valid student ID.

Doles, George lead Rams to win in OT

From news sources

VCU men’s basketball coach Jeff Capel said recently, that you can never get comfortable on the basketball court—not even against Colonial Athletic Association bottom feeder William & Mary.

The Tribe shot 46.4 percent from the floor in the first half, and drained 52 percent of their second half shots. But the Rams scored seven unanswered points in the last 20 seconds of regulation to force overtime, and then junior forward Nick George hit a clutch jumper with 58 second remaining to give VCU a 79-77 win in front of 1,680 fans at William & Mary Hall.

While the Tribe led for most of the game—by as much as nine in the first half—William & Mary ran cold in the overtime, shooting 1 of 9 from the field and 1 of 5 from three-point range.

The Rams capitalized by jumping ahead 72-71 on a three-point play by senior swingman Michael Doles, who made a layup and hit the ensuing free throw after being fouled by freshman forward Laimis Kisielius 43 seconds into OT.

Freshman guard Nathan Mann hit a three-pointer that made the score 76-75 with 1:31 on the clock, but that was as close as the Tribe would get, as the Rams hit five of their next 10 shots from the charity stripe to hold on.

Nick George hit a game-high 24 points, tying the career-high he set on Nov. 15 in an 82-76 overtime against American win over in the season opener.

Doles dropped a career-high 23 points on the Tribe, two weeks after he set a career-high with 22 points against George Mason and hit 22 the next game against Towson. Doles has reached double digits in scoring in each of the Rams’ past six games.

Corey Cofield led the way for the Tribe, recording his second double double of the season (22 points, 12 rebounds). The sophomore forward hit 6 of 10 from the field, and connected on 10 of his 12 free



File art

Junior forward Nick George tied a career high with 24 points Saturday against William & Mary.

throws.

The loss extends William & Mary’s losing streak to seven games. The Tribe (4-12 overall) is still winless through its seven CAA games. For VCU (5-2, 9-7), the win pushes their road record closer to .500 (4-5) and keeps the Rams in a three-way tie with UNC Wilmington and Drexel for second place in the CAA.

TRACK continued from page 9

“You’re not just running up the hill. You’re doing drills up the hill. You’re working the whole time. You’re really working your behind off.”

But the payoff, Frierson said, was well worth it. Frierson took down the 200-meter mark a week after Lambert etched his name in the school’s record book, and to him it only makes sense.

“As long as you have faith in the work out, it will work. As long as you work hard to better yourself, it will work.”

Even though they’re never in the same events, they figure out ways to compete against each other—like seeing who can qualify for the biggest meets, or in this case, who makes history first.

Last year, Lambert qualified for the Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletes of America before Frierson, which meant that he would have had an entire

hotel room and a couple of queen sized beds to himself.

Lambert joked about it with Frierson of course, but Frierson was serious about joining his roommate at the IC4As.

“You know, *somebody* wanted to come with me,” Lambert said, laughing,

Frierson, who has roomed with Lambert in GRC for the past two years, qualified not too much later and immediately found Lambert and tackled him, just to let him know that his roommate situation wouldn’t be changing.

Lambert said the he connects well with Frierson, and the same goes for the rest of the team. They joke, of course, in workouts and practice, but when it comes to those 24 points they needed to win conference, there’s no playing around.

“Everybody knows what they have to do,” Lambert said. “We had problems

The Tribe will host Towson on Wednesday before traveling for games against George Mason and Hofsta.

VCU returns to the Siegel Center on Wednesday to play James Madison, then the Rams prepare for undefeated Old Dominion on Saturday. The game will be televised by Comcast Sports Network.

earlier in the year where people would joke around too much, but people know now that when it’s time to be serious, we need to get down to the nitty-gritty and do what we need to do.

“When we get to those big meets everybody knows what they need to do, then it’s all jokes and fun after that.”

Lambert said that every member of the track team shares the same goal: a CAA championship. But when asked what he wanted to get out of this season, Paul Henderson said he was shooting for 48 seconds in the 400.

Tylen Hazard said he was looking at 23 feet in the long jump and 45 feet in the triple jump. Brandon Argro said he was eying 23 feet, too. So was Tim Jackson.

What about the conference championship?

They all said, “That’s a given.”

Spectrum

Johnny Carson, 30-year king of late night TV, dead at 79

LYNN ELBER
AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES — Johnny Carson, the "Tonight Show" host who served America a smooth nightcap of celebrity banter, droll comedy and heartland charm for 30 years, died Sunday. He was 79.

"Mr. Carson passed away peacefully early Sunday morning," his nephew, Jeff Sotzing, told The Associated Press. "He was surrounded by his family, whose loss will be immeasurable."

He did not provide further details, but NBC said Carson died of emphysema at his Malibu home.

The boyish-looking Nebraska native with the disarming grin, who survived every attempt to topple him from his late-night talk show throne, was a star who managed never to distance himself from his audience.

His wealth, the adoration of his guests — particularly the many young comics whose careers he launched — the wry tales of multiple divorces: Carson's air of modesty made it all serve to enhance his bedtime intimacy with viewers.

"Heeeeere's Johnny!" was the booming announcement from sidekick Ed McMahon that ushered Carson out to the stage. Then the formula: the topical monologue, the guests, the broadly played skits such as "Carnac the Magnificent."

But America never tired of him; Carson went out on top when he retired in May 1992.

McMahon said Sunday that Carson was "like a brother to me."

"Our 34 years of working together, plus the 12 years since then, created a friendship which was professional, family-like and one of respect and great admiration," McMahon said in a statement. "When we ended our run on 'The Tonight Show' and my professional life continued, whenever a big career decision needed to be made, I always got the OK from 'the boss.'"

Carson's personal life could not match the perfection of his career. Carson was married four times, divorced three. In 1991, one of his three sons, 39-year-old Ricky, was killed in a car accident.

Nearly all of Carson's professional life was spent in television, from his postwar start at Nebraska stations in the late 1940s to his three decades with NBC's "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson."

Carson choose to let "Tonight" stand as his career zenith and his finale, withdrawing into a quiet retirement that suited his private nature and refusing involvement in other show business projects.

In 1993, he explained his absence from the limelight

"I have an ego like anybody else," Carson told The Washington Post, "but I don't need to be stoked by going before the public all the time."

Carson spent his retirement years sailing, traveling and socializing with a few close friends including media mogul Barry Diller and NBC executive Bob Wright. He simply refused to be wooed back on stage.

"I just let the work speak for itself," he told Esquire magazine in 2002.

Carson did find an outlet for his creativity: He wrote short humor pieces for The New Yorker magazine, including "Recently Discovered Childhood Letters to Santa," which purported to give the youthful wish lists of William Buckley, Don Rickles and others.

Carson made his debut as "Tonight" host in October 1962 and quickly won over audiences. He even made headlines with such clever ploys as the 1969 on-show marriage of eccentric singer Tiny Tim to Miss Vicki, which won the show its biggest-ever ratings.

The wedding and other noteworthy moments from the show were collected into a yearly "Tonight" anniversary special.



Johnny Carson

His quickness and his ability to handle an audience were impressive. When his jokes missed their target, the smooth Carson won over a groaning studio audience with a clever look or sly, self-deprecating remark.

Politics provided monologue fodder for him as he skewered lawmakers of every stripe, mirroring the mood of voters. His Watergate jabs at President Nixon were seen as cementing Nixon's fall from office in 1974.

He made presidential history again in July 1988 when he had then-Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton on his show a few days after Clinton came under widespread ridicule for a boring speech at the Democratic National Convention. Clinton traded quips with Carson and played "Summertime" on the saxophone in what was hailed as a stunning comeback.

Competing networks tried a variety of formats and hosts to challenge Carson, but never managed to best "Tonight."

There was the occasional battle with NBC:

CARSON continued to Page 12

Students keep warm, chill out

JOANNAH NWOKEABIA
Spectrum Editor

Around campus, Ugg boots and look-alikes hit the icy pavement, scarves wrap tightly around warm necks and students have a reason to hurry to their cozy classes. Inside the month of January, temperatures in Richmond reached up to 70 degrees. This week, the mercury in the thermometer dipped much lower.

Before the snowflakes began to fall, VCU students were finding ways to deal with the bone-chilling cold and planning how to spend their day off if classes are canceled.

Layering clothing became the students' first line of defense against the chill.

"I wear like three shirts, a hat, gloves, scarf," said Dawn Ingram, a junior psychology major. "Being fashionable is not an issue because I would much rather dress like a marshmallow than trying to be cute and freezing at the same time."

On the contrary, Michelle Mines, a social work major, said fashion comes before warmth. "I'd rather look more fashionable and be a little colder," she said. "But, I will never wear a skirt in the winter."

As one student found out, a fashion trend from the past year also came in handy this winter. Khara Coburin said she counts on her 6-foot-long scarf to keep her warm. Ashley Bacon-Ward, a junior, stocked up on winter accessories.

"I bought gloves, snow boots, hat and a scarf so I'm good," the political science major said.

Winter also exposed some penny-pinching landlords and their disgruntled tenants, some students said. Senior criminal justice major Lindsay Clark said she was concerned about the lack of heating in her apartment.

"We don't have any gas because our landlord's mean, so we have three space heaters in a circle in the living room."

Clark has two more reasons to be concerned of the cold — her pair of pet rats. "I fear for my rats' safety because it's cold," she said, adding that she used to have four rats.

With snow falling the first week of the semester many students already had made plans in case VCU canceled classes. But don't count on Patrick Dean to step into the tub if the flurries stick. The McLean native said he plans on "staying in my pajamas and not showering at all."



Pat Kane

Students cross Main Street before classes were canceled Wednesday.

Debbie Tucker, a senior business major, said she would "stay home, curl up on the couch and watch movies," while Chelsea Lewis, a first-year student, also plans to stay home if school closes.

She, however, is no stranger to snow-related setbacks. Last year her car got stuck in the snow. This year Lewis, who commutes to class, bought a parking pass and splurged on a "winter shopping spree."

In addition to battling wintry weather, students face battles against threats to their health — germs, colds, the flu and other sicknesses. Washing hands using antibacterial soap topped students' list of germ prevention methods. Philesa Paul, a first-year student, drinks herbal tea and other hot beverages.

So what is the most difficult part of the extreme cold this winter? Students' answers ranged from waking up and leaving the coziness of their houses to dealing with painfully chapped lips.

Melody Smith, an English and Latin major, said she dreads getting fat and losing her tan.

Seong Kim, information systems major, said, "The worst thing about it being so cold outside are that I can't smoke outside, my ears hurt and my lips bleed and stuff from being chapped."

Mass Communications 303 class contributed to this story.

Spectrum

CARSON *continued from Page 11*

In 1967, for instance, Carson walked out for several weeks until the network managed to lure him back with a contract that reportedly gave him \$1 million-plus yearly.

In 1980, after more walkout threats, the show was scaled back from 90 minutes to an hour. Carson also eased his schedule by cutting back on his work days; a number of substitute hosts filled in, including Joan Rivers, Jerry Lewis and Jay Leno, Carson's eventual successor.

Rivers was one of the countless comedians whose careers took off after they were on Carson's show. After she rocked the audience with her jokes in that 1965 appearance, he remarked, "God, you're funny. You're going to be a star."

"If Johnny hadn't made the choice to put me on his show, I might still be in Greenwich Village as the oldest living undiscovered female comic," she recalled in an Associated Press interview 20 years later. She tried her own talk show in 1986, quickly becoming one of the many challengers who could not budge Carson.

In the '80s, Carson was reportedly the highest-paid performer in television history with a \$5 million "Tonight" show salary alone. His Carson Productions created and sold pilots to NBC, including "TV's Bloopers and Practical Jokes." Carson himself made occasional cameo appearances on other TV series.

He also performed in Las Vegas and Atlantic City, N.J., and was host of the Academy Awards five times in the '70s and '80s.

Carson's graceful exit from "Tonight" did not avoid a messy, bitter tug-of-war between Leno and fellow comedian David Letterman to take over his throne. Leno took over on May 25, 1992, becoming the fourth man to hold the job after Steve Allen, Jack Paar and Carson. Letterman landed on rival CBS.

Born in Corning, Iowa, and raised in nearby Norfolk, Neb., Carson started his show business career at age 14 as the magician "The Great Carsoni."

After World War II service in the Navy, he took a series of jobs in local radio and TV in Nebraska before starting at KNXT-TV in Los Angeles in 1950.

There he started a sketch comedy show, "Carson's Cellar," which ran from 1951-53 and attracted attention from Hollywood. A staff writing job for "The Red Skelton Show" followed.

The program provided Carson with a lucky break: When Skelton was injured backstage, Carson took the comedian's place in front of the cameras.

Producers tried to find the right program for the up-and-coming comic, trying him out as host of the quiz show "Earn Your Vaca-

tion" (1954), the variety show "The Johnny Carson Show" (1955-56), the game show "Who Do You Trust?" (1957-62).

A few acting roles came Carson's way, including one on "Playhouse 90" in 1957, and he did a pilot in 1960 for a prime-time series, "Johnny Come Lately," that never made it onto a network schedule.

In 1958, Carson sat in for "Tonight Show" host Paar. When Paar left the show four years later, Carson was NBC's choice as his replacement.

After his retirement, Carson took on the role of Malibu-based retiree with apparent ease. An avid tennis fan, he was still playing a vigorous game in his 70s.

He and his wife, Alexis, traveled frequently. The pair met on the Malibu beach in the early 1980s; he was 61 when they married in June 1987, she was in her 30s.

Carson's first wife was his childhood sweetheart, Jody, the mother of his three sons. They married in 1949 and split in 1963. He married Joanne Copeland Carson that same year, but divorced nine years later. His third marriage, to Joanna Holland Carson, took place in 1972. They divorced in 1985.

On the occasion of Carson's 70th birthday, former "Tonight" bandleader Doc Severinsen, who toured with musicians from the show, said he was constantly reminded of Carson's enduring popularity.

"Every place we go people ask 'How is he? Where is he? What is he doing? Tell him how much we miss him.' It doesn't surprise me," Severinsen said.

Carson won a Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, in 1992, with the first President Bush saying, "With decency and style he's made America laugh and think." In 1993, he was celebrated by the prestigious Kennedy Center Honors for career achievement.

His nephew said there will be no memorial service.

Carson's Bio in Brief

- **Born Oct. 23, 1925 in Corning, IA**
- **Married four times**
- **Had three sons**
- **Hosted the "Tonight Show" from 1961 to 1992**
- **Won the Emmy 1975 to 1978 for the Tonight show**
- **Awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1992**
- **Received Kennedy Center Honors Lifetime Achievement Award in 1993**

Concertante play the strings despite inclement weather

LOIE CORBO
Spectrum Writer

Last Saturday evening, Concertante Performed at VCU's Singleton Center for the Performing Arts. Students and concert subscribers braved the ice storm to see the six Julliard alumni play the strings.

Who are Concertante? They are a group of chamber musicians who have won critical acclaim, nationally and internationally.

At Saturday's two-hour concert, they played three pieces: "String sextet from Capriccio, Op. 85" by Richard Strauss, "Verklarte Nacht, Op. 4" by Arnold Schoenberg and "Sextet for Strings in G major, Opus 36." by Johannes Brahms. Each piece was preformed using two violins, two violas and two cellos.

Concertante members Ittai Shapira, and Xiao-Dong Wang played the violin. Sophie Shao and Alexis Pia Gerlach played the cello. Rachel Shapiro and Ara Gregorian played violas for the evening.

Turnout for the concert was rather low Saturday due to the bad weather. Bruce Cauthen, the man in charge that evening,

said, "The hall seats 500, we have 400 subscribers, we keep 50 seats available to students and sell 50 seats to the public."

Of the audience in attendance, there were mostly concert subscribers — people who pay a fee and come to all the shows. Students looking for extra credit also came out.

When six of the best string performers in the world come together you can expect the show to be high quality. Their music was so relaxing. One of the highlights of the performance was Ara Gregorian, whose emotional commitment to the piece was quite intense.

Gregorian said that while performing, "it gets dramatic and crazy." That's one way to put it. At one point in the

second piece Gregorian popped a few bowstrings.

The audience seemed to truly enjoy the performance. English Professor Richard Priebe said the show was "terrific," but was disappointed by its low turnout.

Xiao-Dong Wang, one of the performers, had a more optimistic outlook. "We thought tonight went really well. We were surprised by the turnout because of the ice."

The Concertante concert was part of the Mary Anne Rennolds Chamber Concert Series. More information on the series at <http://www.vcumusic.org>. For more information on the group, log onto <http://www.concertante.com>.

What's the buzz?

The Buzz on the street is "The Trump" and his infamous comb-over married Slovenian model Melania Knauss in Palm Beach, Fla., Saturday. Meanwhile, R&B singer Kelis and her "Milkshake" brought rapper Nas to the alter on Jan. 8. Could rockers Green Day be the new kings of comeback? Green Day's "American Idiot," the group's first album in four years, garnered six Grammy nominations. Tune in Feb. 13 at 8 p.m. to see if they win. In sad news, actor Lamont Bentley, best known as Brandy's sidekick Hakeem on "Moesha," died last Tuesday in a car accident. And that's the buzz.

Happenings

Monday, Jan. 24

What's there to do for free tonight? **Café Diem** has open-mic night. **Potter's Pub and Grille** has karaoke 9:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. For more information, call Potter's Pub at 282-9999, and Café Diem at 353-2500.

Tuesday, Jan. 25

Uncommon Entertainment sponsors a night of games in the Commonwealth Ballroom. Activities include PlayStation 2, poker, spades, board games, cards, music, light refreshments and a chance to win prizes. Free for VCU Students.

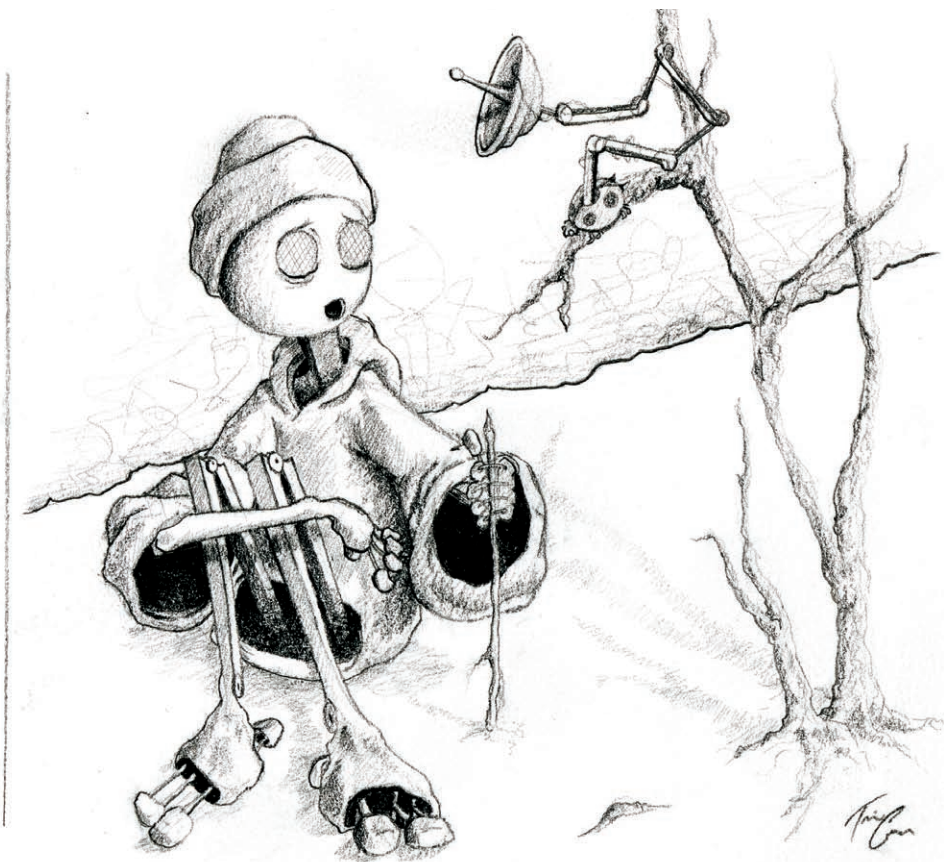
Wednesday, Jan. 26

Watch fraternities compete for the title of Best Chili at VCU and enjoy free food at the **IFC Cook-off**, 5 p.m. at the Commons Plaza.

COMICS

untitled

Taurice Couser



Bot: -but i'm not funny.

Lady Bug: You don't have to be funny. Some things can just be thoughtful.

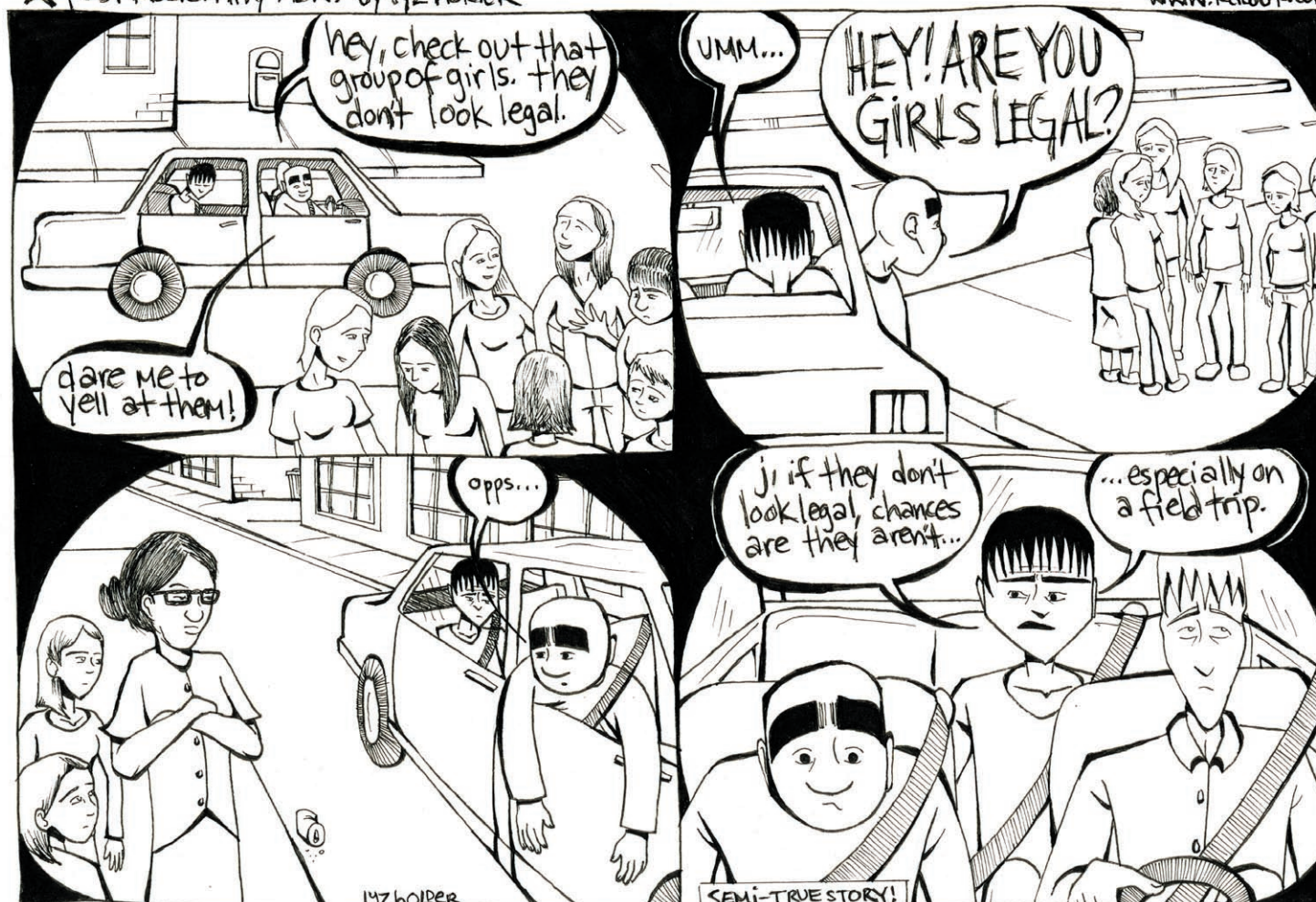
Bot: i guess so.

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EDITORIALS & LETTERS

FROM THE SGA PRESIDENT

A word on textbook prices

BY ZMARAK KHAN

Special to the Commonwealth Times

Members of the VCU Student Body:

I am pleased to welcome you back to the 2005 spring semester at VCU. I hope that you each had an enjoyable and relaxing winter break and are excited to get back into the swing of things.

I am writing today to inform you of a new SGA initiative, namely the creation of www.vcusga.com, a new forum created for VCU students to exchange textbooks. This site allows you to buy and/or sell your books to students just like you, without the middleman (bookstore) making a profit off of you. It simply puts you in touch with other VCU students who are willing to sell and/or buy a particular book.

The idea of this Web site came about as a result of sky-high textbooks costs. Being ripped off at the bookstore has become a norm every semester. College students on average now pay about \$817 per semester for textbooks and supplies.

While legislation is currently pending in the General Assembly to make it easier to get cheaper books, trading books at www.vcusga.com is an alternative method though which VCU students will save hundreds of dollars.

Please be advised that before selling (posting) or buying a book, check with your respective professor that it is the right book and correct edition.

I hope all of you will check out www.vcusga.com and utilize it to save money. I would also like to encourage you to go to www.virginia21.org and sign the petition in support of "Text-book Fairness" legislation.

Thank you and have a great semester.

Best Regards,
Zmarak Khan
Student Body President



BY PHIL MCKENNEY

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

The 2005 Virginia General Assembly has begun and there are already 15 bills to further reduce women's reproductive rights and freedoms. Of course this comes as no surprise given that the Virginia legislature overwhelmingly voted against Roe vs. Wade in 1973 and has since introduced bills every year in attempts to reduce women's access to abortion and contraceptives.

Last year a bill that sought to ban the emergency contraceptives (EC) at state-funded public universities and colleges was narrowly defeated. This year the defeated bill's sponsor, Del. Marshall (R-Prince William), has introduced legislation which would hold universities and colleges liable for any health complications a woman may experience resultant from her use of EC that she received from the student health services. This is a blatant attempt to make reproductive healthcare inaccessible to women by discouraging the distribution of vital contraceptives which prevent unintended pregnancies and millions of abortions every year.

Fortunately, the Birth Control Protection Act will be heard on the Senate floor this year. Senate Bill 456 makes it clear that "contraception does not constitute abortion" in order to ensure that laws that apply to abortion (24 hour waiting period, parental notification and consent, etc.) are not applied to contraception. Can you

imagine going to pick up your birth control and your pharmacists says you have to wait 24 hours to receive them?

For several years, opponents to women's reproductive freedoms and rights have been blurring the lines between abortion and contraception in the General Assembly. Their attempts to restrict women's access to basic birth control cannot go unchallenged. It is time to stand up and speak out for reproductive freedom and set the record straight on birth control as being a legitimate means for family planning.

I invite readers to join VCU VOX and other pro-choice activists at the State Capitol on February 3rd to lobby in support of Senate Bill 456 and against the refusal clause bill and other proposed legislation aimed at restricting women's access to reproductive healthcare. For more information please visit www.ppav.org. Use your voice for choice in 2005 and stand up for women's Rights.

Sincerely,
Sara Duke
VCU VOX

We want to hear from you!

Send your
comments
and letters to
ctvcu@hotmail.com



The Commonwealth TIMES

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The opinion section of The Commonwealth Times is a forum open to the public. Virginia Commonwealth University students, faculty, and administrators are encouraged to submit letters and columns expressing their opinions and concerns. The opinions expressed are those of individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Commonwealth Times or VCU. Editorials represent the institutional opinion of The Commonwealth Times.

We reserve the right to edit all letters for grammar, style and space. Letters should not exceed one single-spaced typed page. Letters must be signed and must include daytime and evening phone numbers.

Please send letters to CTeditor03@yahoo.com, mailing address: P.O. Box 842010, Richmond, VA 23238-2010. Drop box location: Room 1149, T. Edward Temple Building.

THE Commonwealth TIMES

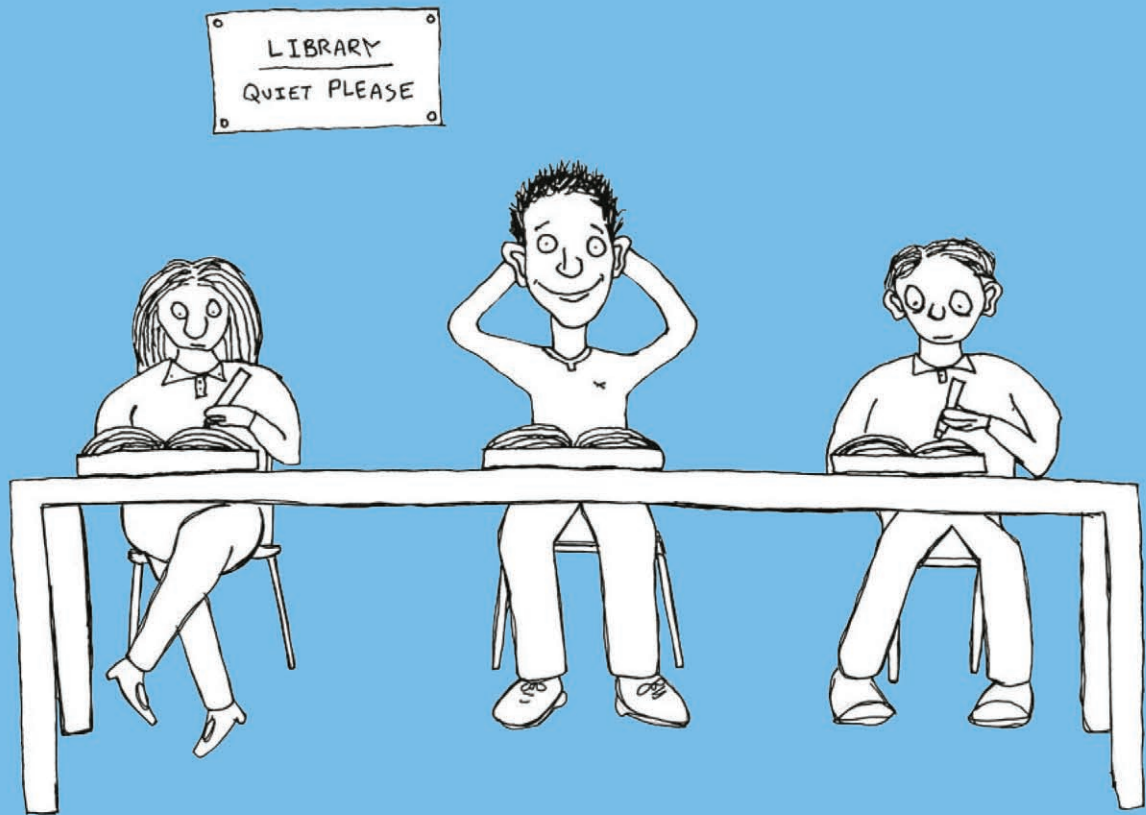
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Your Name Here

**The Commonwealth Times is currently
accepting applications for
the managing editor position
for the spring 2005 semester.**

**This is an elected position
and includes two weeks paid training.**

**If interested, contact Devon Marrow
at 828-1058, CTEditor03@yahoo.com
or stop by Temple Room 1149
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