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FREE

INSIDE

4 News
VCU
welcomes
the class
of 2010

9 Sports
Fall sports preview

Spectrum
Rachel Leyco Band
rocks the Bleu Bistro

Bioethical Issue

The term "theory" in science is reserved for those ideas that scientists have found to be all-encompassing because they are based on data collected in a number of different fields. Evolution is a scientific theory. So is the cell theory, which says that all organisms are composed of cells, and so is the atomic theory, which says that all matter is composed of atoms. No one argues that schools should teach alternatives to the cell theory or the atomic theory. Yet, confusion reigns over the use of the expression "the theory of evolution."

No wonder most scientists in our country are dismayed when state legislatures or school boards rule that teachers must put forward a variety of "theories" on the origin of life, including one that runs contrary to the mass of data that supports the theory of evolution.

An organization in California called the Institute for Creation Research advocates that students be taught an "intelligent-design theory," which states that DNA could never have arisen without the involvement of a designer. That gaps in the fossil record mean that

Evolution
a Small

Textbook controversy

McGraw-Hill pulls passage
at request of biology
department | Page 3

essentials of
Biology



The Commonwealth Times
has a new look!

ata 217
uniformitarianism 219
original structure 226

student press of Virginia Commonwealth University



Opinion
23
Should Gray die?
Death penalty debated



Briefs

Thursday



Friday



Saturday



Sunday



IN THE NEWS

Compiled from wire reports

WORLD

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — A previously unknown Palestinian group released the first video Wednesday of two kidnapped Fox News journalists and demanded that Muslim prisoners in U.S. jails be released within 72 hours in exchange for the men. In the video, correspondent Steve Centanni and cameraman Olaf Wiig appeared to be in good health.

LONDON — On Wednesday British authorities extended the time nine suspects in the alleged plot to blow up U.S.-bound commercial flights can be kept in custody without charges filed against them. Another suspect was expected to face a custody hearing Thursday, while an 11th person was released without charge.

Police said the suspects who have not been charged could be kept in custody until Aug. 30, giving police more time to quiz them about the plot they said involved liquid-based explosives.

second-degree kidnapping and sexual assault of a child. He remained in a Los Angeles jail Wednesday afternoon awaiting transfer to Colorado, where JonBenet Ramsey was killed in her Boulder home in December 1996.

Karr told reporters in Thailand last week that he was present when JonBenet died and that her death was an accident. He did not specifically say he killed her, and Boulder prosecutors have not disclosed their evidence against him.

Karr's family has insisted he was in Alabama during the Christmas week that JonBenet was killed.

Karr agreed Tuesday not to fight extradition to Colorado. In a court appearance, his expression changed only once when he slowly closed his eyes as the judge recited the count of first-degree murder that Boulder prosecutors included in his arrest warrant.

Karr "has been portrayed by the media as of late as being mentally unstable, attention-seeking, unwell, mentally unwell. And he is none of those things," attorney Jamie Harmon said.

to the children. Four-year-old Ruby Harvey and her 9-year-old sister Stella suffered torture. They were bound, stabbed, beaten with a claw hammer, their throats cut and their bodies set ablaze.

And for that, a jury decided Tuesday, Ricky Jovan Gray deserves nothing less than death.

Gray, 29, was convicted last week of capital murder in the random New Year's Day slayings of the girls and their parents, musician Bryan Harvey, 49, and his wife, Kathryn, 39.

Gray slaughtered the family to steal a computer, a wedding ring and a basket of cookies during a bloody crime spree that left four others dead and another man maimed.

The jury recommended death for killing the girls and life sentences for three other capital murder convictions related to the killing of Bryan Harvey and the family as a whole.

The jury's decision took 12 1/2 hours of deliberation over two days; formal sentencing is scheduled for Oct. 23.

The trial left most in the courtroom looking drained. And the judge herself fought back tears as she addressed the jury after receiving their decision.

"I know this has probably been the most difficult thing you've ever done," Circuit Judge Beverly Snukals told the jurors, her voice choked with emotion.

NATIONAL

LOS ANGELES — John Mark Karr faces counts of first-degree murder, first-degree kidnapping,

LOCAL

RICHMOND, Va. — In the end, it all came down

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TEXTBOOK

controversy

Professor leaves VCU after criticizing book

GAYLAND HETHCOAT
News Co-Editor

Students looking for former adjunct professor of biology Jim Sparks will not find him this year on campus.

After lodging complaints this summer to the VCU Department of Biology and university administration regarding the new Biology 101 textbook, Sylvia S. Mader's "Essentials of Biology," Sparks' professorship was vacated.

But it appears the university considered his objections to the book, which concerned its handling—or lack of handling—of the origins of life and a reference the author made to the Institute for Creation Research, whose online stated mission is to "spearhead biblical creationism's defense against the godless and compromising dogma of evolutionary humanism."

McGraw-Hill Education has omitted the reference to the Institute from the books VCU bought, said Tom Stanton, a representative of the publishing company. Biology faculty requested the omission, he said.

Sparks contended the reference to the organization because it lacked the scientific legitimacy to merit mention in a biology textbook, he said. In the original version of the book, the Christian organization is said to promote intelligent design, which many proponents claim is a secular theory.

The book's failure to address other hypotheses of the origins of life, mainly abiogenesis, exogenesis and evolutionary creationism—coupled with the ICR reference—suggested creationist leanings, he said. Sparks called biblical creationism a false conjecture because it states Earth is 7,000 to 10,000 years old when radiometric dating has determined Earth is actually about 4.5 billion years old.

Sparks cited 12 religious colleges and universities, including Southern Virginia University, Oral Roberts University and Methodist College in North Carolina that use "Essentials of Biology" in their

biology curriculum.

The origins-of-life hypotheses are prerequisites to understanding evolution, to which the book devotes three entire chapters and is mentioned in some context in six others, said Sparks, a former VCU graduate student.

He said the book omits a very important topic: "the simplest question in all of biology: how did life originate?"

Robert Holsworth, dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences, rejected Sparks' assertions, describing them as "patently absurd."

Holsworth called Sparks' claim that "Essentials of Biology" was written for a religious audience a "guilt-by-association argument." The fact that religious schools use the book attests to McGraw-Hill's intent to create a textbook for a wide audience, secular or otherwise, he said.

The biology department adopted "Essentials of Biology" because of the assignments and supplemental material that came with it, he said, not because of its stance on creationism.

Jill Reid, a biology professor, served on the textbook-selection committee. She agreed with Holsworth's reasoning, saying the textbook's supplements appealed to the committee.

The book's online study tool, the Assessment, Review, and Instruction System, especially attracted committee members, Reid said.

"This is what made it stand out above the others," she said.

ARIS' interactive online assignments, which professors formulate, will increase Bio 101 students' comprehension in a course that usually consists of 200 to 300 students per class, she said. To the benefit of professors, she added, the assignments are computer-graded and -recorded. These factors make ARIS what she called a "win-win situation."

Holsworth pointed out that Sparks served on the textbook committee and initially cast his support for the book before rebuking it. It is normal

"Our biology department is absolutely united in its commitment to teaching modern biological science."

— Robert Holsworth



Cynthia K. Merchant photo

Cashier Lauren Bradshaw rings up a copy of the new Biology 101 textbook.

Glossary of terms

abiogenesis — life can form from non-life under suitable conditions.

exogenesis — life originated from somewhere else in the universe before transferring to Earth.

evolutionary creationism — some or all religious understanding of God and creation are compatible with some or all human understanding of biological evolution.

biblical creationism — God created all organisms on Earth as explained in the Book of Genesis.

intelligent design — an intelligent designer or event best explains certain biological features.

TEXTBOOK continued to Page 6

VCU welcomes the Class of 2010

SHEENA JEFFERS
News Co-Editor

Take a deep breaths and relax. VCU's Move-In 2006 has come to a complete stop. Well, at least deflated to a dull roar.

Over the weekend 3,550 freshmen with their families flooded the streets moving into on-campus housing facilities.

How did VCU pull it off so much smoother than previous years? And with so much style?

"Beginning on Friday, Aug. 18, and ending on Sunday, Aug. 20, at 7 p.m., the total was 872 cups of joe," said Jane Firer, assistant director for administration and the mastermind behind the move-in.

Firer began planning nine months ago.

Officials used a color-coded traffic-control system to maintain a steady flow. Families received parking passes to hang from their rearview mirrors designating which loading zones and long-term parking decks were reserved for them. Each family had 30 minutes to unload their children's belongings, and then parking officials asked them to move



their vehicles or face the wrath of the tow trucks on standby.

Greeters, the smiling faces in sunshine yellow shirts, waited on sidewalks as new cars pulled up to unload. About 70 greeters moved rugs, posters, refrigerators, coffee cups and Wal-Mart bags from vehicles from 7 a.m. until the last family left the loading zone.

Resident assistants, the hyper cheerleaders in aqua-blue shirts, had key distribution, elevator rotation and line management rocking and rolling. Residents signed in electronically with their social security number or last name, received a room and mailbox key and were welcomed to their new home.

The RAs had a special-

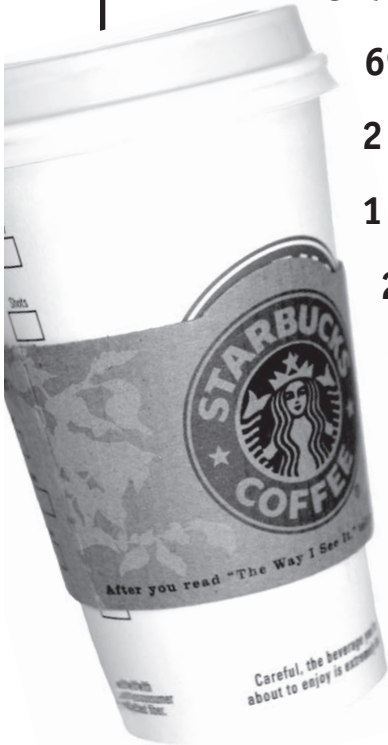
ized cheer customized for Move-In, which Firer taught them. And no, it cannot be purchased on iTunes.

Security guards, in their apple-red shirts, blended to perfection their job as rule enforcers and instruction givers. Guards pointed to Wal-Marts, restaurants, 7-Elevens and VCU buildings as equally as they explained housing guidelines to hundreds of residents and parents throughout the day. Their "Swipe your card, show the guard" policy is essential to keeping residents safe, and they spent the day educating residents on this policy of entering the building as well as signing in friends.

And then there were the entertainers. The clown on stilts was not VCU's next Nick George, but a hired entertainer booked to make the residents and parents smile. A former Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey performer, the clown performer was joined by two balloon artists, one magician — Jonathan Austin, whom Firer booked in advance — two DJs and two massage therapists.

In a way, the move-in was a festival. With the multiple colored shirts, the free food and the music, VCU brought its class of 2010 in with style.

Recipe for a successful move-in



- 827 cups of coffee
- 69 greeters
- 2 balloon artists
- 1 magician
- 2 DJs
- 1 stilt walker
- 2 massage therapists
- 100+ resident assistants
- 12 police officers (and numerous others on patrol)

- 1 mist tent
- 144 Snickers bars
- 1 mechanical bull
- 3 inflatables



- Complimentary snacks from VCU Catering Services
- Free flavored ice from APB
- Demonstrations on fire safety
- 8,000+ bottles of water





Dorm floors become 'villages'

GAYLAND HETHCOAT

News Co-Editor

As new students in a new location, many freshmen wonder how they will meet peers who share their interests, outlooks and hobbies.

To make the search easier for them, this semester the Department of Residential Life and Housing and the University College have implemented the VCU Residential Village Program in Rhoads and Johnson halls. Categorized by academic or personal interests, the 10 villages will feature academic and social activities throughout the year that will connect the approximate-

ly 400 participants to VCU, said Tim Coffey, coordinator of Residence Education for Rhoads and Brandt halls.

The RV program's initiatives include study groups, field trips, student-faculty dinners and the RV Speaker and Success series, the latter of which are open to all VCU students. The speaker series will involve visitors who speak on issues related to each village, and the success series will consist of programs that cover a diversity of topics, ranging from academic advising to sexual health awareness.

"A lot of what students learn is outside of the classroom," Coffey said. Residential Life and Housing wants to bring the classroom into the dormitories, he said.

In addition to establishing a sense of community among students, the RV program aims to improve VCU's retention rate, said senior international studies major Veronica Tessler, one of the program's two Residential Village Assistants. The logic

is that the program will help students develop support systems that persist and aid them throughout their college careers, she added.

To track the new program's level of success, Residential Life and Housing will look to see if early alert

The Villages

Johnson Hall

The Artists' Colony

Studio or Performing Arts

Rhoads Hall

Biosphere

Biology or Forensic Science

Caverns of the Mind

Psychology

Community Action

Community Service

Discovery Zone

Exploring several majors

Inquiring Minds

Any major

Media Central

Mass Communications

Rams' Club

Health, Sports and Fitness

Successful Surroundings

College Success Program

Teachers' Lounge

Early & Elementary Education



Cynthia K. Merchant

Residential Village Assistant Veronica Tessler (right) gives helpful tips to first-year resident Caitlyn Cusati.

notices of "D" and "F" grades decrease and will use survey instruments to compare students in villages and those who are not, Coffey said.

Tessler said much about the villages remains to be seen.

"It's definitely going to be challenging because it's the first year," she said. "The way I run the programming will set some sort of standard for what's to follow."

Liz Burns, a freshman in the Inquiring Minds village in Rhoads Hall, said her village, which is open to any

major, will offer her the opportunity to meet different kinds of people. She said she looks forward to sharing a class with the other students in her village, a feature that all of the villages share.

"It's nice to know everyone on my floor will be taking the same English class as me," said Burns, an undeclared major who is interested in political science.

Therein lies the result the RV Program and the rest of the university seek, Coffey said: "to make a university of 30,000 feel smaller."

Attention, thrill seekers

SHEENA JEFFERS

New Co-Editor

Busch Gardens Europe announced a new coaster for thrill seekers. Since the beginning of July, BGE promoted the ride with an advertising campaign of billboards announcing, "Like Nothing Else in the World." But that was it; there was no information, and no way to guess what they were up to.

Until now. BGE revealed their mystery in the making: Griffon, "the world's tallest and

only floorless dive coaster," Cindy Sarko and Diane Centeno said in a press release. It is scheduled to make its debut late spring 2007.

Riders will travel 205 feet in

the air and then plunge 90 degrees at more than 75 miles per hour. The 10-person floorless coaster car will glide through two Immelman loops (a loop and roll occurring simultaneously), a 130-foot dive and a water feature with a viewing platform for those who would rather watch than ride.

Rollercoaster lovers have waited for a new arrival at Busch Gardens since the last addition of Apollo's Chariot in 1999. The 3,108-foot coaster will be located in the park's French village.



THIS JUST IN



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News

TEXTBOOK continued from Page 3

and healthy, he said, for faculty on such committees to discuss and debate the nuances of their book choices before making selections.

"There's always the question of 'Did you leave this out, did you leave that out?'" Holsworth said. He added that he observes daily such analysis at VCU.

Sparks acknowledged his original consent, saying he rubber-stamped the rest of the committee's decision to adopt "Essentials of Biology" because he assumed it met appropriate university standards. Later in the summer, while he was preparing a syllabus for his scheduled fall Bio 101 class, he studied the book more closely, he said, and then decided the book was inadequate.

Sparks said his purpose for overturning his approval of "Essentials of Biology" was not to focus on the book's minutiae but to ensure that non-science majors have thorough exposure to biology's major, albeit controversial, topics.

Non-science majors impact society much more than science majors do, he said. While many science majors go on to work in laboratories and isolated research settings, he added, non-science majors tend to hold positions that require them to make important political, economic and cultural decisions. Therefore, the latter group must be as informed as possible, he said.

When sophomore Jessica Robertson discovered Sparks had first OK'd "Essentials of Biology" before protesting it, her attitude, which was originally sympathetic toward her former professor, shifted, she said.

"It changes things," she said. "He should have done his homework and then voted for or against it."

But professors do have freedom of expression, Robertson said.

"Professors should have every right to disagree with decisions," she said. "They shouldn't have fear of their jobs being terminated for voicing their opinions."

Still, Holsworth said Sparks was not terminated. Although the details of

Sparks' employment are confidential, Holsworth said Sparks was hired on an as-needed basis and he simply was not needed any longer.

The dean said he does not mean to discredit Sparks by countering his claims, but it is his duty to protect the biology department—and VCU's—integrity. Sparks' criticisms could potentially damage the university's students and faculty, Holsworth said.

Reid said that Sparks' over-emphasis on a textbook and his neglect for the role of the professor undermines his argumentation. Although she said the origins of life is important, she continued that non-science majors can never learn all of biology's major topics in a single-semester introductory course.

She explained that this is the reason why the biology department sought to replace the last Bio 101 textbook, George B. Johnson's "The Living World." It contained more details than a course could cover in one semester, and it was more expensive.

Reid described "Essentials of Biology" as an "essentials" textbook, not an "all-encompassing" one.

Senior Ryan Friedberg, Sparks' supplemental instructor for his spring Bio 101 class, made similar points as Reid.

"Every textbook has its flaws and cannot cover all aspects of introductory biology in the depth that some may want," he said, adding, however, that he believes "Essentials of Biology" is a poorly written book because it lacks appropriate coverage of concepts like the origins of life.

After leaving Richmond earlier this month, Sparks relocated to West Virginia, where he now works as a freelance ecologist. He said he continues to believe that a creationist influence exists in the biology department, however insisting his quarrel with VCU administration has not embittered him.

"I'm not a victim," he said. "Sometimes there is a price to pay for doing the right thing."

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News

Q: How do you feel about Ricky Javon Gray's death penalty sentence in the Harvey family murder trial?

A:

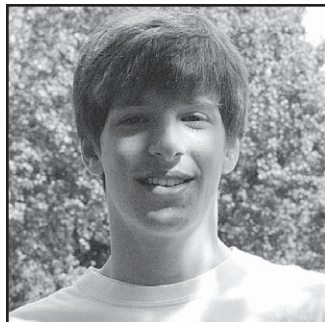
"I have different views on it. He should pay for what he did. The way he did it is unimaginable."

Déja Robinson, sophomore
Mass Communications



"I feel he should not be getting the death penalty because life in prison is definitely more inhumane. And people who kill children like that should be treated worse."

Harris Lazarus, sophomore
Accounting



"For such a vicious and violent crime, I think the sentence was appropriate. I know you can't take a life for a life, but at the same time, this was sick and twisted."

Sonya Rymaruk, sophomore
Nursing



"I really don't believe in the death penalty. Rotting in jail, having to live the rest of his life suffering the consequences is justice enough."

Christina Robinson, sophomore
Nursing



"I'm not really for the death penalty but he did destroy a family. At the same time it is a good alternative because we don't want a crazy person being supported by taxpayers."

Michael Pineda, freshman
Business



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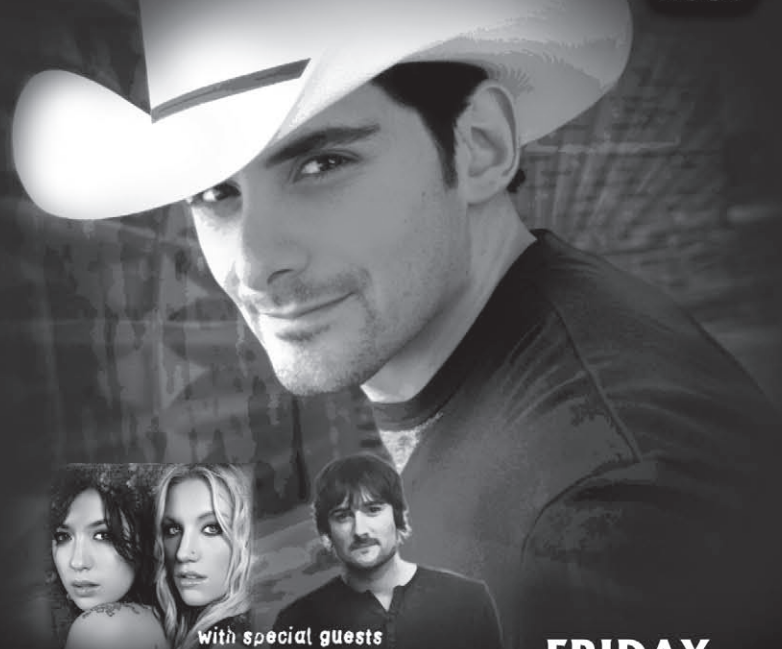
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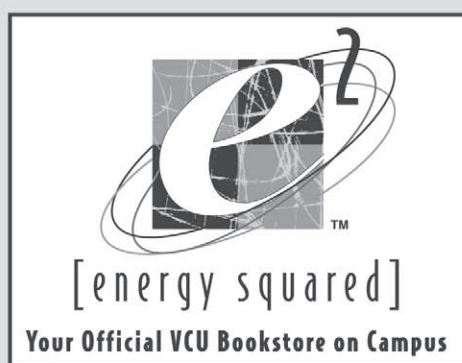


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Sports

In Brief

Women's soccer

The VCU women's soccer team suffered a loss at the feet of Virginia Tech's freshman Emily Jukich last Saturday. She put her point on the board during the 71st minute, when the ball got loose from Leigh Anthony (Fredericksburg/W.T. Woodson H.S.).

The game ran relatively evenly while Tech slightly outnumbered VCU with 11-13 shots and each team managed four shots on goal. Tech's Mary Elizabeth Newton shot an impressive five shots during the game, and the Rams fouled up considerably more than Virginia Tech, with 10-6 fouls.

Volleyball

The volleyball team, 2005 CAA champions, held a scrimmage match Sunday night, in order to tweak performance and brush up on positions. The black and gold teams were arranged in such a way that the scores between the two remained close and competitive all throughout the practice game.

The teammates appear to share a sense of unity and have a good connection with Coach James Finley. Finley, a first-year coach, was very involved, and after each play, the players would turn their heads to meet eyes with him, waiting for his approving nods, or instructions on how to improve their game.

Senior outside hitter Ludmila Francescatto (Fraiburgo, Brazil) was the first team All-CAA last fall and the MVP of the CAA Tournament in 2005; she will return to lead the Rams again this year.

Also returning as an outside hitter, sophomore Ana Luiza Bernardes de Borja (Florianopolis, Brazil) will be playing alongside of Senior middle blocker Melissa Peterson (Ganado, Arizona).

VCU's volleyball team will be opening the 2006 season at the Duke Invitational in Durham, North Carolina, on August 25 and 26.

— *Compiled from CT resources*

Hey, you.

Wanna write for sports? The CT is looking for committed, enthusiastic sports writers for the spring semester. E-mail sports@commonwealthtimes.com

VCU fall sports preview

JAMES K. GALLOWAY
Sports Editor

Field hockey

The field hockey team will begin their season in the Connecticut Huskies Classic in Storrs, Conn. on Aug 26 at Conn. The next day, they'll be playing Monmouth in the second game.

Laura Baker (Kent, England), a sophomore goalkeeper, is returning to the Rams after helping Britain attain a silver medal at the European Junior Nations Field Hockey Championship.

Coach Shelley Behrens signed eight new players to the team, saying, "This is the best overall American recruiting class we have had here with the VCU field hockey program."

Her eight fresh recruits are Ashley Ashton, Cheryl Hart, Lindsay Jones, Rachel Krumm, Amy Rush, Lindsay Shacklette, Vicky Smith and Rebecca Sullivan.

Of the notable recruits, it's worth checking out Cheryl Hart (Stafford/Colonial Forge H.S.), leading scorer in the Commonwealth Region, with 25 goals. Rachel Krumm (Norfolk, VA/Granby H.S.) is another player bringing

potential to the team, having been selected to the USA Field Hockey National Futures Olympic Development Tournament. Also noteworthy is Lindsay Shacklette (Fredericksburg/Stafford H.S.), considered the best player in the state of Virginia as of 2005, and is an Amateur Athletic Union Junior Olympian.

Volleyball

After his first year coaching in Division I, James Finley exhibits optimism in regards to the team after giving them their best season in longer than a decade last year, dominating the conference title, and deflowering the Rams with an NCAA penetration.

The VCU volleyball team will begin its season in Durham, N.C., at the Duke Invitational over the weekend of Aug. 25 and 26. Friday they go up against Gardner-Webb, and on Saturday they will go head-to-head with Marquette and Duke.

Men's soccer

The men's soccer team, voted fourth in the CAA preseason poll, will kick off the season hosting Alabama



A&M at the Nike/Alltel Classic this weekend at the Sports Backers Stadium. Their next opponent will be Stetson Hall at the tail-end of the weekend, on Aug. 27.

The team has won the last three regular-season titles in the CAA, and for the past three years made it into the NCAA as one of the five schools to be a national seed. Head Coach Tim O'Sullivan has high hopes for the Rams who graduated two players into the MLS.

Women's soccer

Women's soccer will begin their season at the Florida

Atlantic Tournament during the weekend of Aug. 25 and 27. While in Boca Raton, Fla., they will play Stetson first on Friday, and then hosts Florida Atlantic on Sunday.

Wife and husband co-head coaches Denise Schilte-Brown and Chris Brown are returning eight starters from last season's team who advanced to the second round of the NCAA Tournament for the first time in school history. For the past two seasons, the women's soccer team won the Colonial Athletic Association regular-season title. The team was rated fourth in the mid-Atlantic region and top of the CAA.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Women's Soccer

Florida Atlantic Tournament
Boca Raton, Fl.

Fri. Aug. 25
vs. Stetson, 5 p.m.

Sun. Aug. 27
at Florida Atlantic

Wed. Aug. 30
at Virginia, 7 p.m.

Volleyball

Duke Invitational
Durham, N.C.

Friday Aug. 25
vs. Gardner-Webb,
4:30 p.m.

Sat. Aug. 26
vs. Marquette, noon
at Duke, 7 p.m.

Men's Soccer

Nike/Alltel Classic
SportsBackers Stadium (Home)

Fri. Aug. 25
vs. Alabama A&M,
8 p.m.

Sun. Aug. 27
vs. Seton Hall,
3:30 p.m.

Field Hockey

Connecticut Huskies Classic
Storrs, Conn.

Sat. Aug. 26
at Connecticut,
11:30 a.m.

Sun. Aug. 27
vs. Monmouth, 2 p.m.



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Men's soccer

Rams split pair of exhibition games at home

VCU's **Matthijs Maruanaya** (file photo)

JAMES K. GALLOWAY
Sports Editor

VCU's soccer team split its pair of opening exhibition games. On Aug. 16, they beat nearby Longwood University 2-1 at VCU's Sports Backers stadium. Both of VCU's points were scored with free kicks after the Lancers put in a loose ball for the first point of the match.

Three days later, the team went on to play Virginia with different results. Virginia's bench players produced more than VCU's group of starters. With the Nike/Alltel Classic knocking on the door this weekend, the men's soccer team needs to close the immense gap between Virginia if they want to be a good team this

season. A 0-3 loss to U.Va will be VCU's warning shot before kicking off the coming season.

The game was relatively uneventful on the side of the Rams, but the numbers spoke volumes in terms of the Cavaliers' statistics.

Virginia subbed in a second lineup who worked together gathering points and assists. The Rams substituted five players, who were unproductive and just couldn't be compared to either the starting or bench set of the Cavaliers.

Nico Colaluca snuck a shot by the goalkeeper on his free kick by the 15th minute of the game, and in the second half, the opposition's bench rotation scored their other two goals.

Thanks to a pass from

Virginia teammate Neil Barlow, Sean Hinkle, a substitute player, scored the second point of the game from 12 yards out near the corner on the 50th minute. His shot slid the ball into the top left corner of the goal.

Eighteen minutes later, the Cavaliers scored their third and final point off Matt Ayotte's head – Chris Tierney popped a cross up into the box so that Ayotte could head-butt it in, securing a shutout victory for U.Va. Both Tierney and Ayotte were bench players.

By the end of the game, VCU was behind 11-5 shots, shooting four of those five in the first half, then found themselves at a disadvantage on corner kicks,

failing to shoot any, while U.Va. shot four, converting one of them.

Looking at last season, the soccer team's shot percentage suffered; VCU, on average, was taking many more shots per game than the opposition, and getting fewer assists, all the while lowering the all-important goals-shot attempts stat – shooting far more goals and making less on average.

The split from the exhibitions may have been just what the Rams needed to get their act together before the start of the season, so long as they learned from their mistakes last weekend, and make the best of next weekend.



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Spectrum

For more information about the band, their CD or concert dates, check out <http://www.rlband.com>.

Tune in to WVCW.org for the encore of an interview with the band on Docile Tones, Tuesday, August 29, from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.



LEFT: John O'Donnell sets the beat at Bleu Bistro. BELOW: Rachel Leyco (bottom) and Scott Harris strike up another tune.

Pat Kane photos



THE BLEU BISTRO

The Bleu Bistro is a cozy restaurant and bar off Qui-occasin Road near Regency Square Mall. Spacious and with an elegant décor, it offers a variety of drinks in addition to meals that can be either fancy for special occasions or good for a relaxing night with friends. The prices are reasonable, and the hours make it practically open all the time. The staff is consistently at hand to keep tables clean, and there is barely a wait for drinks and food. With both indoor and outdoor seating, it's a great spot for weekend jazz, an anniversary or just some place to wind down from the week.

RACHEL LEYCO BAND blows up the Bleu Bistro

KATIE PUGH
Spectrum Editor

Their bassist is an ancient Icelandic warrior of massive status. Their drummer? A stunt-performing climber with a penchant for Aerosmith. And the lead singer and guitarist is a Filipino goddess with a siren's song and a heart of gold.

Actually, hyperbole aside, the Rachel Leyco Band is a great act to see live.

Made up of Rachel, John and Scott – who is actually not from Iceland at all, despite countless questions to the Web site about it – the Rachel Leyco Band has been one of Richmond's local favorites since its debut in 2000. When Rachel was only 18, the band was named one of the Richmond Times-Dispatch's top five musical acts in Richmond.

The Bleu Bistro drew a good weekend turnout for the band's performance as they played pieces from their 13-track album, "Something Human," released in May 2004. They also performed unreleased tracks such as "Come Away With Me," which will be featured

on their new album slated for the fall. The band also excited the bar with covers of lively numbers such as "Video Killed the Radio Star," "Leaving on a Jet Plane" and "Walk Like an Egyptian."

It is hard to find a band that seems to truly enjoy itself like the Rachel Leyco Band. Their exciting stage presence is only outmatched by their enjoyment with doing what they do – creating music. Between sets, they were ready to have fun at the bar, relaxing and having a good time with the audience.

The Rachel Leyco Band's music is vivid with energy, and it keeps you from sitting still. It's so hard to find a band that is actually good and holds onto really valuable messages without sounding too saccharine sweet or overwhelmingly positive. Its great tempo and pumping instruments fit well into a pop-pish genre without fitting the band with a label. Quite the contrary, the Rachel Leyco Band keeps its music original and uniquely theirs.

For an exciting show with great music, the Rachel Leyco Band will not disappoint.



PostSecret: confessions of an international phenomenon

SHEENA JEFFERS
News Co-Editor

Right now, in a quiet, suburban home in Germantown, Md., one man holds the world's secrets. He's not hired by the FBI or a peeping neighbor; he's a husband and small business owner who receives hundreds of secrets in his mailbox daily.

Frank Warren, 42, had an idea for a community art project in November 2004. He took 3,000 self-addressed postcards with instructions of the project and passed them out at Metro stations, art galleries, bookstores and hid them between the pages of public library books.

The rules were simple: the secret must be true, and it had to be something never told to anyone before.

The postcards began to trickle in, and Warren had enough to present his project at Artomatic, an arts festival held in Washington, D.C.

However, the trickle of secret postcards never stopped. It became more of a steady flow and then in strength and size similar to a tidal wave.

"You can never get too much mail," Warren said in a telephone interview. He says his mailwoman does not hate him, but there are a few employees of the postal service cursing his name.

As the postcards kept pouring in, Warren created a Web site, PostSecret.com, which is now one of the world's top 10 blogs, according to Technorati, a Web service tracking thousands of blogs.

The secrets are sent in from around the world and deal with the pains and joys of growing up, family, religion, sex, loneliness, love, inspiration, desperation and... Well, the list is endless. These postcards are illustrations of real

experiences, and they are a tiny glimpse into people's innermost thoughts, fears and secret desires.

"A lot of other blogs are just writing, but this is a more creative way to show how people are feeling," said Jenni Jones, a junior nursing student. "It gives me an inside to other people's lives. I like to see if I carry the same secrets. I always look at it on Sunday."

Warren's idea for the project was his realization of individuals hiding secrets from not only others, but from themselves as well.

"It takes a lot of courage to share a secret," Warren said. "It's powerful that so many people can share so much of themselves with a stranger and with themselves. It helps them, and it helps others."

Warren believes strongly in protecting his project. He continuously turns down sizable monetary offers of people asking to advertise on his Web site. "If I wanted to turn PostSecret into a profit-making venture, I could easily do that by putting advertising on it, but I want to protect its integrity."

PostSecret.com certainly has the numbers that advertisers yearn for. Three million visitors a month and around 200,000 page uploads every Sunday, the day the Web site is updated with new secrets.

However, PostSecret.com has made a slight income. In the All-American Rejects music video, "Dirty Little Secret," the postcards featured both held up and covering the wall behind the band were all from PostSecret.

However, instead of being paid royalties for the postcards, Warren asked for a \$2,000 donation to Hopeline, a suicide prevention charity where Warren is a veteran volunteer of three years. Throughout all of PostSecret's work since its creation, it has raised \$30,000 for Hopeline.

With the Web site off and running – or, rather, soaring – Warren decided to take the project down another avenue.

"Postsecret: Extraordinary Confessions From Ordinary Lives" was released November 29, 2005, in bookstores, and the book began selling in shocking numbers. The book ranks 40th in Amazon's book sales. Also, The Observer in the U.K. publishes one postcard every Sunday in their newspaper.

What began as a simple art community project has Warren traveling all over the world speaking about these postcards or "graphic haiku" as he calls them.

Warren will release the next PostSecret book, "My Secret," on Oct. 24. He said the newest book will feature "never-before-seen secrets from young people, from high school to college."

From PostSecret.com

Create your 4-by-6-inch postcards out of any mailable material. If you want to share two or more secrets, use multiple postcards. Put your complete secret and image on one side of the postcard.

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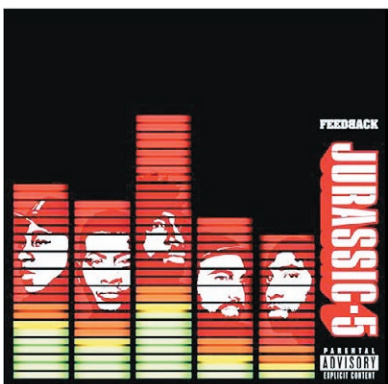




Eagles of Death Metal “Death By Sexy”

The moniker Eagles of Death Metal is completely false for a band with the groovy melodies and sleazy yet power-charged guitar riffs that are presented on “Death By Sexy.” Too playful to really be dangerous, even the most misogynist cuts, such as the AC/DC nod “Poor Doggie,” are leavened with humor. The churning, panting “I Gotta Feeling (Just Nineteen)” is almost romantic in the way it idealizes a casual hookup. “Death By Sexy” puts the fun – and sex – back in rock.

Recommended if you like: Queens of the Stone Age, Louis XIV and AC/DC.

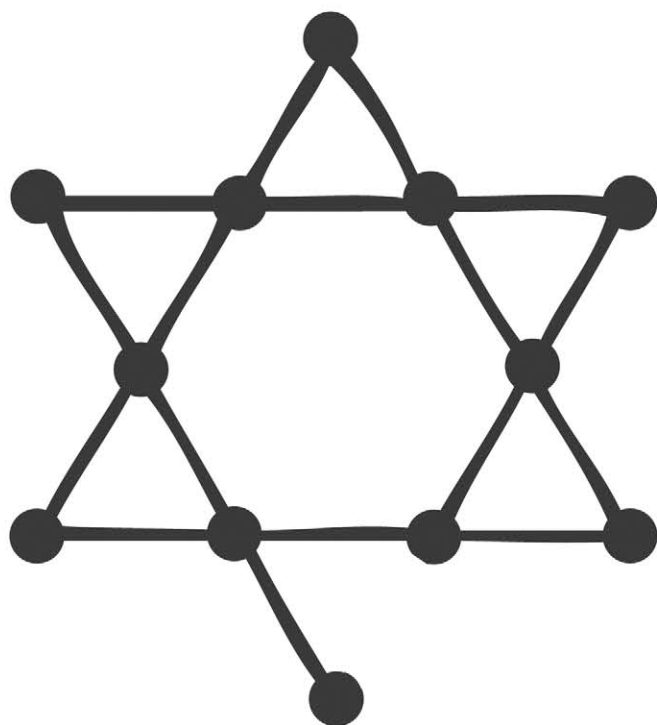


Jurassic 5 “Feedback”

JAM WILLIAMS
Spectrum Writer

Jurassic 5's Akil, Zaakir, Mark 7even, DJ Nu-Mark, and Chali 2na bring out guest appearances from Mos Def, Brick & Lace and the Dave Matthews Band for their fourth album, “Feedback.” What's truly remarkable is how often J5 manages to fuse its values with music that doesn't sound out-of-place in 2006. This has never been more obvious nor so successful as on the brilliant “Radio,” which starts off with a revisit of Rob Base & DJ E-Z Rock's “It Takes Two.” The lyrics tell of the band's schooling in hip-hop's fundamentals and attempts to show why rap's history is vital to the future of music. Another bright spot is “Canto De Ossahna,” a surprising instrumental for the end of the album.

Recommended if you like: Blackalicious, Atmosphere and De La Soul.



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Cynthia K. Merchant photo



VCU workers wait outside Walmart for the next bus going back to campus.

A night out on the town, WAL-MART STYLE

RYAN FARR
Spectrum Writer

Hundreds of VCU students packed into the University Student Commons Tuesday night to hang out, be entertained by professional magicians and then abruptly leave as VCU's First Year Student Services bussed approximately 700 students to Wal-Mart to stock up on school supplies, groceries and dorm room accessories as part of Welcome Week. Armed with special coupons for 10 percent off one item, the swarm of mostly freshmen took over the store's aisles for several hours until midnight.

Around 8:30 p.m. the Student Transition, Advising and Registration team, who corralled the massive line and checked VCU IDs, unleashed the flood of eager shoppers onto

six charter buses. They were then whisked for free to the Forest Hill Wal-Mart, which many transportation-challenged students found rather helpful.

"I don't have a car, so this makes it a lot easier," said Mahelet Tilaye, a 19-year-old sophomore. "I did it last year, too. It's a great opportunity. It just gets a little stuffed on the way back because everyone has their bags."

Before getting to Wal-Mart in the first place, the majority of the crowd couldn't fit onto the first 300-passenger group out of the Commons. Those remaining waited in style, playing games like ZAP with STAR orientation assistants, picking cards for magic tricks and receiving hand-made balloon creations.

Wal-Mart and VCU coordinated the event for the third straight year, this

time upping the number of buses from four to six. The store also opened nine extra VCU-only checkout lanes and kept many daytime options open until closing, including McDonald's, Regal Nails, Woodforest National Bank, the Vision Center, the pharmacy and layaway for large items.

The Richmond Police Department also visited to talk about crime prevention, while Wal-Mart even had a table handing out free cakes in school colors.

"The first year I think we had, like, 500 students. Last year we had 1,200, and we weren't planning on those 1,200," said Mike Gignac, store manager. "This year I think we've done a better job than we have in the past. I just hope we achieve — and overachieve — the students' expectations."

WAL-MART continued on Page 17



Cynthia K. Merchant photo

Friends Krissey Fox (left), Michele Grossman (middle) and Shannon Sullivan (right) shop for facial products.

WAL-MART, continued from Page 16

With such large hordes making the trek from the dorms, the trip turned into a social event for many in attendance. Students could enjoy rap music pumped through the buses or take part in the loud chatter of new acquaintances.

“It’s a social thing. I came because all the other girls on my hall were going,” said Amanda Martinson, a freshman engineering major.

While purchases of the night ranged from towels and DVDs to chips, salsa and reclining chairs, Martinson wasn’t gunning for any items to buy. “I want to put a

red streak in my hair at the salon. Something funky.”

According to one cashier, the most common sales of the night were electronics, printer cables, power surge cords and school supplies. The priciest purchases seen were a Video iPod and an Xbox 360.

“It was really exciting, because all of us were here, and we were all in a rush to get everything we need,” said freshman and biology major Denise Ramos after buying Doritos, a shower caddy and plastic kitchen utensils. “It was fun. You know, it’s Wal-Mart. Who doesn’t like Wal-Mart?”



Cynthia K. Merchant photo

Buses pick up VCU students on the corner of Cherry and Main St.



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Pizza From Scratch

Bill Lemmond

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AND I'M SORRY; THE REST, ESPECIALLY THE CATS, NOT EVEN I CAN TELL APART. (I'M A ROOKIE.) 12 AUG 2006
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Opinion

In Brief

'Macaca'

U.S. Senate incumbent George Felix Allen, R-Va., must be asking himself how he could ever have uttered such a word. The word, "Macaca," was addressed to a 20-year-old senior attending the University of Virginia, born in Virginia but of Indian descent. The U.Va. student was a volunteer for the rival campaign of former Reagan Defense Secretary James Webb who had been charged with following Allen around with a video camera, a common campaign tactic.

Whatever excuse or apology Allen offers, it doesn't quiet the concern of what kind of mind could have come up with such a comment. (Similar questions surround Mel Gibson's comments a few weeks ago, but at least he was under the influence of alcohol.) Even without the video camera, Allen should have known that the words of a politician are always watched.

The shame is that Allen's comments reflect not only on himself and his campaign, but on the commonwealth of Virginia as a whole.

Editorial Cartoon | Andrew Babb



Your Turn *Letters to the Editor*



Pluto's demotion to asteroid

I have recently become aware that some astronomers are considering demoting the planet Pluto to a designation of mere asteroid, and I am wondering if these individuals are aware of the potential consequences of such a step. Were this change approved and implemented, it would mean the destruction of a long-standing scholastic tradition, as well as the undermining of the most basic element in the learning of interplanetary astronomy all over the English-speaking world.

I am referring, of course, to the mnemonic device "My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pickles," which is used by students everywhere to remember the names of the nine planets in order. If Pluto were no longer to be considered a planet, then what exactly would our very educated mother serve nine of? Nine anchovy-stuffed pretzels? Nine boiled rutabagas? Nine what?

I'm sure I don't need to point out the fact that neither science nor proper English composition standards can easily tolerate such a mystery. Indeed, science is in the business of eliminat-

ing such things. (Never mind the fact that it will never succeed. Just look at particle physics – the more they dig, the more mystery they find.) Even if our learned scholars disagree over whether it's a good idea to reduce life's perennial questions to mere equations and numbers, surely they can agree that astronomy students don't need to have

If Pluto were no longer to be considered a planet, then what exactly would our very educated mother serve nine of?

more mysteries heaped on top of, "I wonder how much of chapter 13 the old coot will put on the midterm?" and "I wonder if I solved the equation for that eccentric orbit correctly on the last quiz?"

I'm sure that posterity would extend its everlasting appreciation to these astronomers if the proposed change were changed. Instead of demoting Pluto to asteroid status, instead pro-

mote Neptune to dead star. That way there would be far less confusion for everybody, because we would still know, as we have from time immemorial, that we are having pickles for dinner, since the *P* for Pluto would still be there – just not how many of them, since the *nine* from Neptune would be absent.

The question of how many, however, is not as important an issue grammatically, astronomically or gastronomically. Plus this alternate arrangement would still accomplish the real goal of the proposed change, which is to reduce the number of planets from nine to the number of slices in a large pepperoni pizza – exactly eight. And when it comes out of the oven, I want first dibs on the biggest slice.

Sincerely,
Peter LaBorde
Richmond, Virginia

Editor's note: Pluto's planetary status has been put into question by the discovery of other bodies in the outer solar system. As of press time, the International Astronomical Union is expected to take a final vote on the matter later today.

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Supporting off-campus students

WILLIAM HUSZAR
Opinion Writer

As we enter the new semester, much of VCU's student body returns not living in a dorm but in apartments leased by scores of companies and private individuals throughout the city. Most students have already signed leases by this time. However, many landlords and the properties they rent out might not be all they seem to be, and those students might have little knowledge on how to fight back when an agreement turns sour. VCU should engage in greater efforts to connect students with trustworthy renters and make information on tenant rights more available, as well as support those students in cases where serious issues arise.

Many students at VCU end up living off campus, either because they could not get into student housing or because they find

dorm life too confining. Roughly three-fourths of VCU's student body lives off campus, according to U.S. News and World Report, especially in the immediate area around the Monroe Park Campus. Many students will be finding themselves renting for the first time, and with such a critical and financially important decision being placed in the hands of students, any errors in leasing agreements or sudden issues with their residences could make their time at VCU more stressful than it should be. VCU should initiate an effort to tally landlords who operate properties that have been trouble for students in the past. A Web site where students could rate renters or document particular issues would be a boon to others looking to live off campus. With a few clicks, someone could discover a landlord might not fix their appliances in a timely manner or a

property might not have well-maintained utilities. Rather than having to entangle themselves in a court of law after they have signed a lease, a student could simply keep away from the bad renters with such a service.

Even a student who attends the Off-Campus Housing Fair and reads the student manual thoroughly might not understand all of their options when it comes to living off campus. The university should operate a program to provide legal guidance and support exclusively for students. VCU is what brings so much business to the many renters in the area, and the knowledge that any wrongdoing could mean an encounter with your local billion-dollar institution might make slumlords think twice before they do anything outside the law to a VCU attendee.

VCU certainly thinks students should be held responsible for what they

do off campus. The student-conduct policy applies to students residing in large rental areas such as the Fan. Shouldn't the school, likewise, be concerned with what businesses and individuals do to its students in the area? If VCU wishes to extend an umbrella of responsibility over students and make them accountable for their behavior in the university area and the city, it should be more open in providing services and information to reduce the vulnerability of students as well. The university may not have the capability to house all of its students, but it should do its best to ensure that those students who live off campus in the city of Richmond are treated fairly.

> On the Web

The Virginia Residential Landlord Tenant Act
<http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/consumers/f-landlord.html>

The failure of the death penalty

JOSEPH STANLEY
Opinion Writer

Ricky Javon Gray was given two death sentences yesterday as well as three counts of life without parole. To those that don't recognize the name, Gray is the New Year's Day killer of the Harvey family, a crime that sent shock waves through the entire Richmond community. The verdict was not surprising. However, I can't help but ask if this case of the death penalty working as intended doesn't still underscore one of the many reasons state-sponsored execution should be abolished.

Before I continue, make no mistake. I feel Gray is a man without humanity and easily one of the most deserving convicts of the death penalty. But

looking at his court statements, it is apparent the thought of dying for his crimes never crossed his mind. And a deterrent can only deter when criminals actually consider the consequences.

In fact, there has not been a single credible study that has ever established the death penalty as any more of a deterrent than life in prison. Moreover, numerous studies have actually shown that countries with the death penalty have a higher violent crime rate. While this could obviously be attributed to a number of factors, countries that have done away with a death penalty have routinely seen violent crimes decrease. Canada has seen a 40 percent decrease in its murder rate since abolishing capital punishment in 1976.

Perhaps even more disheartening is the fact that where you are convicted, depending on your race, gender and socio-economic status, you are more likely to be tried as well as convicted of the death penalty. And if you can't afford a lawyer, your chances of having your crime be considered for capital punishment skyrocket: 95 percent of defendants charged with the death penalty have to rely on overworked court-appointed attorneys.

So if the death penalty has never been found to be an established deterrent (despite extensive study, I might add), and has been established to be innately discriminatory, what advantages does it bring? Certainly not economic ones. It actually costs more money for the state and

the individuals involved to try and execute a criminal than it does to put them in jail for life without parole. One of the more conservative figures was a study by Indiana's state government, which found the total cost of the death penalty is 38 percent more than the average cost of life imprisonment. In states such as New York and California, the percentage is much higher.

As I said at the beginning, Gray is guilty. His crime was heinous, and there is nothing to excuse that. But to remember the Harveys by wasting money on his death is foolish. Those funds would be better spent investing in Richmond's police force and education system, helping to ensure that such a tragedy never happens again.

Welcome to VCU

ALI FARUK

*President, Monroe Park Campus SGA
Special to the Commonwealth Times*

Hi, and welcome to the 2006-2007 school year at VCU. I'd like to give a very special welcome to our new freshmen, all 3,550 of you! This is a very exciting time for VCU's freshmen. Incoming VCU students now all share a common student life experience through our new University College. The honors program has now been expanded into the Honors College, and the Hibbs Building has been completely renovated and no longer feels like a landfill. This column is to help keep students updated on what the Student Government Association is doing to improve our university. Tonight at 8 p.m. the student government is hosting a meet and greet event for interested students. It's a great way for you to meet your student representatives and learn more about the SGA! The event will be in the Richmond Salons I and II upstairs in the University Student Commons.

The SGA has many issues on its agenda this year. The first is to lower the cost of textbooks. To help you save money on textbooks, we've created a book-trading Web site where you can buy and sell used textbooks directly from one another. This cuts bookstores out as the middlemen and allows students to keep their money. The book trading Web site is located online at www.vcusga.com/booktrading. It's free and easy to use, so tell all your friends and classmates!

The second major project is to improve academic advising. We are currently reviewing and providing feedback on proposed changes to advising in more than a dozen departments and programs at VCU. The student Senate will hold open hearings to get more student feedback on how to improve advising. The dates and times of these hearings are to be determined and will be announced within the next couple of weeks.

The SGA will be holding fall elections for the student Senate in October. I encourage all of you to become active and voice your concerns by becoming a student senator. To run for the student Senate, pick up and fill out an elections application packet online at www.vcusga.com. Then print out the petition, get 75 signatures, and turn it in at the SGA office. Packets are due Sept. 22. For more information visit the SGA Web site online at www.vcusga.com. All students are also welcome to attend student Senate meetings held every Monday at 4 p.m. in the Forum Room of the Commons.

Again, welcome to a new year at VCU! I look forward to seeing all of you on campus. Feel free to contact me anytime about your concerns at sgapresident@vcu.edu or drop by our new office in the Commons, Room 228, right at the top in front of the main staircase. Best wishes on a new semester!





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