



the
ct

Easter on Monument

Richmond celebrates annual Easter on Parade • 3

News

University policy allows for controversial Genocide Awareness Project display • 4

Sports

Baseball swept by George Mason in weekend series • 6

Spectrum

Reenactment of "I have a dream" speech made 1960s party come alive • 11

Opinion

The major battle: career vs. character • 15





BRIEFS

On the cover:

Molly Blanton and her shih tzu, Nola, attended Richmond's Easter on Parade for the fourth year in a row.

Photo by Amber-Lynn Taber

Local & VCU

VDOT sprucing up Richmond's interstate gateways

Richmond's entranceways from its interstate highways are getting a blooming enhancement.

Work is under way on a \$484,000 landscaping project at the Interstate 95/Broad Street interchange in the city's downtown, part of an estimated \$4 million initiative to beautify the landscape along the Interstate 95/Interstate 64 corridor in the Richmond area.

Flowering shrubs, ornamental and flowering trees, and different types of evergreens will adorn the entranceway into Richmond's center city in the I-95 and Broad area.

Officials intend to use federal transportation funds and state and city matching funds for the project, which will include landscaping improvements at entrances and exits leading to the local streets. The project also envisions gateway welcome signs at as-yet unidentified points in the corridor.

Phases of the project planned in Richmond and Henrico County will treat the highway interchanges at Nine Mile Road, Belvidere Street, the Hermitage Road/Bryan Park area, I-95 and I-64 at Fifth Street, and I-95 between Hermitage Road and Lombardy Street.

Next up will be the Interstate 64/Nine Mile Road interchange phase, which the Transportation Department expects to advertise for bids this fall, Hawthorne said, and the Fifth Street phase, which will go to advertisement in 2013.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

State: Cap damages in Va. Tech negligence suit

The state is asking a judge to honor a \$100,000 cap on damages in a successful wrongful-death lawsuit brought by the parents of two Virginia Tech students who were among 33 killed in a shooting rampage on the Blacksburg campus nearly five years ago.

Attorneys for the parents have asked the court to award each family \$2 million despite a state cap on damages. They have said the money would come from a plan that provides liability coverage for the official actions of state workers.

In a filing this week, the state said the court would be acting "without jurisdiction and commit clear, reversible error by ignoring the plain language" of Virginia's Tort Claim Act capping damages against the state and the provisions of the Risk Management plant.

"Whatever path the plaintiffs ask this court to take," the state wrote in its filing, "the destination is the same. The sole defendant in this case is the commonwealth, no judgment can be entered against any other party, and no applicable 'liability policy' exists with maximum limits in excess of \$100,000."

The state was the lone defendant named in the lawsuit.

The jury awarded the families of Julia K. Pryde and Erin N. Peterson each \$4 million. Jurors were unaware of the state cap on damages when they were deliberating.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Report: City fails to collect millions in taxes

Over the past six years, the amount of uncollected personal property taxes owed by individuals and businesses to the city of Richmond has increased to about \$15 million, according to a report released Wednesday by the City Auditor's Office.

The city also "overcollected" \$83,000 in interest on 44,123 delinquent accounts and, contrary to state law, charged extra fees before issuing delinquency notices, the Auditor's Office says.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

National & International

Tulsa police: Shooting victims chosen at random

Two men were arrested Sunday in a deadly string of shootings that spread fear in Tulsa's black community, and police said they were looking at a possible Facebook posting by one of the suspects that suggested he was angry over the shooting of his father by a black man.

Acting on an anonymous tip, police took the suspects into a custody at a home just outside town around 2 a.m. Authorities said they planned to charge them with murder and other offenses in a series of shootings early Friday that left three people dead and two critically wounded, all of them black.

Police identified both suspects as white but said investigators have yet to establish whether the attacks on the city's predominantly black north side were racially motivated, as many in the community feared.

However, police spokesman Jason Willingham said investigators are looking at a Facebook page in which it appears one of the men, 19-year-old Jake England, expressed anger over his father being shot and killed by a black man. Willingham said police were aware of the page but he could not say for certain it was England's.

Brief by the Associated Press

Peru: Hose gets food, drink to 9 trapped miners

Peruvian authorities say nine trapped miners are being supplied with sports drinks, soup and food while police, firefighters and other workers work to free them.

Police chief Jose Saavedra in southern Peru's Ica region says the bottled items are being pushed to the miners through a hose.

Saavedra says the men have been trapped in a horizontal mining shaft that collapsed Thursday not very deep under the surface. He says the miners are behind debris about six meters (20 feet) wide that collapsed when they set off an explosion to dislodge copper ore.

The miners were working on their own at a mine that reportedly shut down commercial operations in the early 1980s in a hamlet about 282 kilometers (175 miles) south of Lima.

Brief by the Associated Press

Chinese teen sells kidney to buy iPhone, iPad

Authorities have indicted five people in central China for involvement in illegal organ trading after a teenager sold one of his kidneys to buy an iPhone and an iPad.

The case has prompted an outpouring of concern that not enough is being done to guard against the negative impact of increasing consumerism in Chinese society, particularly among young people who have grown up with more creature comforts than the generations before them.

Prosecutors in the city of Chenzhou charged the suspects with intentional injury for organizing the removal and transplant of a kidney from a 17-year-old high school student named Wang, the official Xinhua News Agency said late Friday.

A woman on duty Saturday at the Chenzhou Beihu District People's Procuratorate in Hunan province confirmed that prosecutors are handling the case and that the defendants are facing charges of intentional injury.

The defendants include a surgeon, a hospital contractor, and brokers who looked for donors online and leased an operating room to conduct the procedure, Xinhua said.

It said about 1.5 million people in China need organ transplants, but that only about 10,000 transplants are performed each year, fueling the illegal trade in organs.

Brief by the Associated Press

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NEWS

In this section:

Follow-up: VCU policy allows for
Genocide Awareness Project • 4
VCU Police ask for student assistance • 5

Richmond celebrates Easter with annual Easter On Parade



From top left: Venture Richmond organizes the Easter on Parade with family-friendly activities like clowns and a petting zoo. The parade, which was between Allen and Davis avenues on Monument Avenue, also allows vendors to rent space. Various animal groups brought out pets and pet-owners of Richmond with space dedicated to a greyhound rescue organization and one for large breeds of dogs like Great Danes. The parade has always been pet-friendly, organizing a pet bonnet competition for the best-decorated dog. Lemon, bottom right, was one contestant in the pet bonnet competition.

PHOTOS BY AMBERLYNN TABER



Follow-Up VCU policy allows graphic display on campus



PHOTOS BY AMBERLYNN TABER

Mechelle Hankerson
News Editor

A national anti-abortion organization, the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, visited the VCU campus last week with a controversial display comparing abortion to historical genocides. The group also began a wave of student action against the group and university.

The Genocide Awareness display was first set up in the Commons Plaza last Wednesday. The next day, the group moved their display to the Compass where a group of students met them with signs warning passersby of the graphic display as well as fighting anti-abortion sentiment.

Students also took their frustrations to VCU administration, sending emails questioning whether or not VCU should have allowed the group on campus.

The visit was coordinated by VCU student group, Students for Life at VCU.

Senior Lisa Twigg, president of Students for Life at VCU, said the group started planning the event in November and said she initially had reservations about the display.

"... The pictures that were brought ... (were) obviously disturbing and obvi-

ously very horrific," Twigg said.

She said she was concerned the display would have more of a negative effect than a positive one, but was convinced because, according to Twigg and the CBR, successful social reformers in the past have used a similar strategy of showing graphic images.

Ultimately, Twigg said she thought the demonstration went well and is not opposed to inviting the CBR back to VCU.

"I was telling people our goal was not to be out there and have one voice; we really thought it would be a success only if students had an honest reaction and dialogue with us on these images and on this display," she said. "That's the point."

As a public university, there is little room for VCU administration to regulate the content of demonstrations that abide by applicable rules and procedures.

Official VCU event planning policy states that "peaceful, reasonable, and lawful picketing and other orderly demonstrations in approved areas shall not be subject to interference by the members of the University community," but also that "those involved in picketing and demonstrations may not engage in conduct that violates the rights of any

member of the University community."

Fletcher Armstrong, the director for the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform's southeastern office said counter-demonstrations on college campuses are normal and said despite VCU students' protests, he still thinks the Genocide Awareness Project was successful at VCU.

"We're always successful," Armstrong said. "The goal is to make people see that the unborn child is a human being ... so when people see the pictures of unborn children ... they look human, they are human."

Armstrong also said the goal of the display is also to make people see that abortion is an act of violence.

In addition to enrolled students being exposed to the display, tours of prospective students went on during the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform's visit to VCU's campus.

This was the first week of most public high schools' spring breaks and Joanne Jensen, the associate director of marketing and communications at the VCU Welcome Center, estimates there was an average of 500 prospective students and parents visiting campus each day.

While most tours could avoid the

Center for Bio-Ethical Reform: The group behind the Genocide Awareness Project

Mechelle Hankerson
News Editor

The group behind the Genocide Awareness Project is a national educational center called the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform.

The organization formed in 1990 and aims to change more than just laws relating to abortion. The group hopes to change society, according to Virginia's project director for the Center, Nicole W. Cooley.

"My personal goal and the goal of most pro-lifers is that we want to change our culture," Cooley said while on VCU's campus last Wednesday. "I hope that once the American people realize that abortion is much worse than they thought it was, that abortion will become unthinkable – that would

Continued on page 5

The Center for Bio-Ethical Reform set up their Genocide Awareness Project display two days this week. On Thursday, the group took to the Compass while prospective students toured the campus. Current students gathered at the display, protesting against the group's claim that abortion is a contemporary genocide, as well as the group's use of graphic photos.

display the first day, when the display was moved to the Compass, it was much more difficult.

According to Jensen, student tours go through the inside of the Commons building and the Compass to see Shafer Dining Hall and the James Branch Cabell Library.

She said that the Welcome Center has not received any complaints about the display from touring parents or students.

"We told parents about a demonstration, and it was one that was approved by the university based on the fact that the organization ... agreed to all the university policies and procedures and we had VCU Police monitoring it so there was nothing to worry about, but we did want to let them know there would be some graphic images," Jensen said.

Jensen said the office knew about the display in advance and approached it as anything else they would.

"VCU is a university that is diverse and ... the university also welcomes the expression of free speech," she said. "There's always some diverse, interesting thing (happening) on campus..." **CT**

Continued from page 4

be our new status quo. Not just illegal, but unthinkable.”

The Genocide Awareness Project is considered the group's campus outreach project. The display is brought specifically to college campuses to point out similarities between historical genocides like that in Rwanda and the Holocaust.

According to Cooley, the group does recognize that historical genocides and abortion are different, but she said there are similarities.

“There (are) points of comparison; we're not saying they're identical,” she said.

Cooley said the fact that unborn children are denied personhood under the law, the use of dehumanizing language (using the word 'fetus' versus using the word 'baby') and that there is a higher purpose in having an abortion.

“In the abortion movement we say if we get rid of all the unwanted children, then all we have are the wanted children, and we use all these things to justify killing a group of people,” Cooley said.

“We're not saying (abortion and genocide are) exactly the same (but) the same thought process is used in all these scenarios,” she said.

The Genocide Awareness Project is one of four projects the Center

has. Others include AbortionNO, Reproductive “Choice” Campaign and Matthew 28:20.

Matthew 28:20 was created as an offshoot of the Genocide Awareness Project and employs the same tactic of using large, graphic photos to dissuade viewers to consider abortion as an option. Matthew 28:20, however, is specifically directed at churches and other religious organizations by citing examples and proof from the Bible.

The Reproductive “Choice” Campaign uses trucks with photos of unborn children and the word “Choice” printed on the side. The Center's website said this project was planned “since abortion advocates love to talk about 'choice,' it is time for the entire world to see what that “choice” does to unborn children.”

The website also addresses criticism they receive for their use of graphic photos. The group argues that the photos are no different than the violence and other graphic acts people can see through the mainstream media.

CBR considers the use of photos one of the more integral parts of their campaigns, especially with the Genocide Awareness Project.

“Until people see the truth and know that abortion is way worse than they thought it was, they're not going to be motivated to do anything,” Cooley said. **CT**

VCU Police seek student help in identifying persons of interest

Mason Brown
Staff Writer

VCU Police needs help seeking persons of interest in relation to recent crimes on campus.

Multiple alerts went out to VCU students on Friday regarding the theft and an assault on the Monroe Park Campus.

Police are seeking six persons of interest in connection to an assault and theft. The assault occurred on March 25 outside of the Gladding Residence Center around 3 a.m.

One was described as a black male wearing a grey shirt with two long necklaces. Another male, black, was described as wearing a blue and white striped shirt and white fisherman's hat.

The VCU Police Department is also seeking aid in the identification of one black male seen in a photo provided by police in relation to the theft of a mountain bike valued at over \$350.

The theft occurred at Goshen Market located at 826 W. Broad St. on April 5 at 5:43 p.m.

The person in the second case is only considered a person of interest in the case. **CT**

If anyone has information leading to the identity of any of these people, contact Detective Greer at 804-828-1196.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE VCU POLICE DEPARTMENT

VCU Police released this photo of a person of interest in relation to the theft of a mountain bike valued at over \$350. The police are asking for students to assist in identifying five others in relation to a sexual assault case in March.

VCU RECREATIONAL SPORTS
www.recsports.vcu.edu

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5–9pm

Recertification Course

April 12

5–9pm

Full Certification Course

April 21

9am–2pm

For more information regarding courses and fees visit http://www.recsports.vcu.edu/cpr_first_aid.html

V i r g i n i a C o m m o n w e a l t h U n i v e r s i t y

SPORTS

In this section:

Men's basketball notebook • 7

Former VCU baseball players earn new roles in MLB careers • 8

VCU baseball swept by George Mason in weekend series

Quinn Casteel

Assistant Sports Editor

The VCU (17-15, 6-9) baseball team was swept at home by George Mason (22-11, 9-6) over the weekend, losing to the Patriots 7-4, 2-0 and 4-2 in a Friday through Sunday series.

The three straight losses were in the wake of a five-game win-streak, four of which were road games for VCU. The Rams began the streak at .500 with a 2-8 road record, but caught fire beginning with an extra-innings win over Liberty and went on to sweep Northeastern in Boston.

Whatever momentum was left over from VCU's hot streak was gone by Friday when George Mason arrived in Richmond. The Patriots piled on six runs in the seventh and eighth innings and received eight strong innings from starting pitcher Anthony Montefusco on the first day of the three-game set. The Patriots turned a 1-0 sixth inning lead into a five-run lead in the seventh, thanks to an RBI groundout by Nick Allen, a one-run double by Chris Cook and a two-run single by Duncan Satherlie.

George Mason added two more insurance runs in the eighth, which kept the game even further out of the Rams' reach despite a four-run rally in the ninth. Montefusco began the ninth in search of the complete game shutout, but was tagged for all four VCU runs and was pulled before recording an out in the final frame. He settled for his fourth win of the season.

On Saturday, VCU was shut down by George Mason starter Ryan Pfaeffle and closer Chris O'Grady, who combined to allow seven Ram hits and no runs as the Patriots won 2-0. O'Grady earned his eighth save of the young season and Pfaeffle improved his record to 3-3 with the win.

Ryan Farrar pitched eight innings of two-run ball for VCU, but got nothing in return from the offense, as he saw his record drop to 3-2. He struck out eight Patriot hitters in the game and is now sixth in the CAA, one behind teammate Kyle Haynes with 43 strikeouts.

George Mason completed the sweep Sunday by putting up four runs in the third inning on Heath Dwyer, who took the loss as he fell to 3-2 on the season. Dwyer was making just the third start

of his career and had won two games in relief for VCU before being inserted into the rotation on March 25 against UNC-Wilmington. He went five innings and allowed four runs on Sunday.

Dwyer was bested by George Mason's A.J. Johnson, who went six and a third innings before coming out for Jake Kalish to earn his fifth save of the season in 2.2 innings of work. Brig Tison, Dan Schafferman and Zach Helgeson strung together three straight run-scoring hits in the fourth to do the damage on offense for George Mason.

The Rams began the weekend with a superb 11-4 home record, but fell to 11-7 with the three straight losses. More importantly, they saw their conference record drop to 6-9, where they sit eighth in the CAA. George Mason remains in third place following the weekend slate.

VCU has one game remaining on the home stand before going back on the road and back into CAA play beginning on April 13 for a three-game set with fifth place Delaware. The Rams play an out-of-conference single game against VMI on Tuesday at 6 p.m. at the Diamond. **CT**

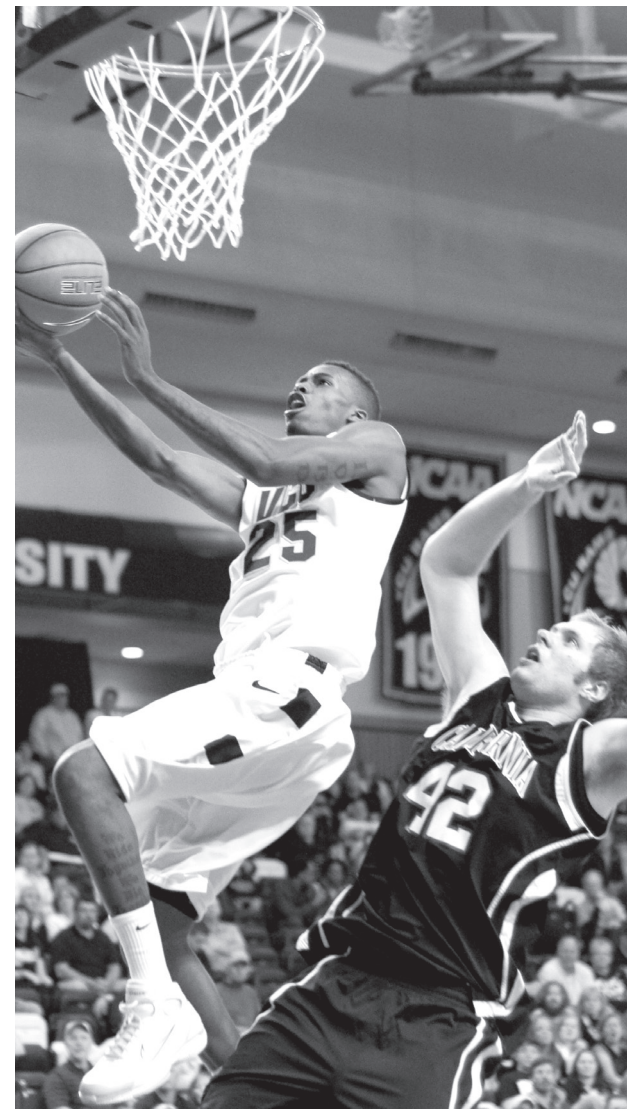


PHOTOS BY CHRIS CONWAY

Junior infielder Jordan Weymouth had three hits and one RBI in the George Mason series.



Joey Cujas receives instruction at third base in a game earlier this season.



Reco McCarter averaged 0.6 points and 0.2 rebounds this season with VCU.

ADVERTISEMENT

VCU head coach Shaka Smart (right) replaced former assistant Jamion Christian (center) with Jeremy Ballard.

Men's basketball notebook

Jim Swing
Sports Editor

Ballard named assistant coach

VCU men's basketball head coach Shaka Smart announced the hiring of ex-Tulsa assistant coach Jeremy Ballard Thursday.

The hire comes a week after former assistant Jamion Christian left the Rams for the head coaching job at Mount St. Mary's. Christian spent one year with VCU after coming over from William & Mary.

"I am extremely excited about the addition of Jeremy Ballard to our staff," Smart said in a statement released by VCU's athletics department. "He comes from a very good coaching pedigree and possesses a terrific combination of work ethic, charisma and basketball knowledge."

In his five years at Tulsa, Ballard helped guide the Golden Hurricanes to 109 wins under former head coach Danny Wojcik. Ballard joins the Rams

after Wojcik left for the head coaching job at the College of Charleston and former Kansas assistant Danny Manning filled the void.

"I am thrilled to be joining Coach Smart and his staff at VCU," Ballard said. "What they have accomplished over the last three years is nothing short of remarkable, and I look forward to the opportunity help sustain and hopefully surpass the standard of success that has been set here."

In his first season at Tulsa, Ballard helped the Golden Hurricanes garner 25 wins and a trip to the Conference USA championship game. Ballard was formerly an assistant at Mercer and Colgate. He was a four-year member of the men's basketball team at Colgate, where he earned his bachelor's degree in English and a minor in Religion.

McCarter to transfer from VCU

Redshirt freshman Reco McCarter will officially transfer from VCU according to a statement released by the

VCU Athletics Department.

McCarter will seek an opportunity to play elsewhere at the end of the spring semester.

"We appreciate the contributions that Reco has made to our program over the past two seasons," Smart said in the statement. "We wish nothing but the best as he moves to the next stage in his career."

McCarter was mostly known for being a showman on the court, coming on in garbage-time situations and attempting flashy dunks. He would regularly gather mass chants of "Reco" during home games at the Siegel Center from fans requesting Smart to put him in the game.

McCarter, a native of Goldsboro, N.C. averaged 0.6 points per game and 0.2 rebounds for the Rams. His last appearance came against Towson on Feb. 8, when he played a career-high four minutes. **CT**

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS WANTED

Would you like to participate in a study trying to understand the individual differences and responses to alcohol and how genetics relates to this? Are you between 21 and 30 years of age and in good health? Dr. Vladimir Vladimirov and his research team are seeking healthy male and female participants aged 21 to 30 years to participate. Qualified participants will be asked to answer questions regarding their personality and alcohol use and will complete two laboratory sessions where alcohol is administered and studied and blood is drawn. By participating in this research you may assist researchers in developing treatments and better understand alcohol use and abuse. You may be compensated up to \$300 dollars. For more information or to fill out a screening questionnaire online, please contact Jason Wright at jdwright@vcu.edu, or 804-628-4386. We look forward to working with you!



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Feb. 18, 2010 Larry Sanders and Rams trounce Drexel.
Story by Taylor Howsman, Photo by Kyle Laferriere

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SMC 817 W. Broad St.



SPORTS

Former VCU baseball players earn new roles in MLB

Quinn Casteel
Assistant Sports Editor

Former VCU pitcher Cody Eppley was informed he would be a member of the 27-time World Series champion New York Yankees on Thursday night, just three days after another former Ram ace, Sean Marshall, was named the closer of the Cincinnati Reds.

Eppley, 26, will be a member of the Yankees' 40-man roster but began the season at Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. He pitched for VCU until the Texas Rangers drafted him in the 43rd round of the 2008 draft. While with the Rangers, Eppley was named the organization's Minor League Relief Pitcher of the Year in 2010, when he racked up 16 saves with a 2.08 ERA and a 5-2 record. He made one stint in the majors in April 2011, but was optioned down to Triple-A in May.

Three days before the start of the MLB season, Reds manager Dusty Baker named Marshall the club's closer in the former Ram's first season with the team. Baker gave the 29-year-old left-hander the job over the organization's

No. 1 prospect Aroldis Chapman. Marshall was drafted by the Chicago Cubs out of VCU as a starting pitcher in 2002 and remained a starter until 2008 when Baker, then the manager of the Cubs, moved him to the bullpen. He was called up to the Cubs in 2006 after four years in the minors and had been a member of the member of their bullpen until this off-season, when he was dealt to division counterpart Cincinnati for pitcher Travis Wood and two minor league prospects.

To this point in his career, Marshall has only seven career saves, but has pitched for Baker in the past and received a great deal of confidence from his manager with whom he is now reunited in Cincinnati. Five of those seven saves were earned in a brief stint as the Cubs' closer last year, which statistically was the best season of his career. He appeared in 78 games and had a career-best 2.26 ERA while winning six games in relief.

On Friday, Marshall made his first appearance with the Reds, pitching a scoreless ninth with two strikeouts in a 4-0 over Miami. **CT**

UPCOMING EVENTS

Staff Reports

BASEBALL

- April 10: vs. VMI (6 p.m.)
- April 13: at Delaware (3 p.m.)
- April 14: at Delaware (1 p.m.)
- April 15: at Delaware (1 p.m.)
- April 17: at Longwood (7 p.m.)

MEN'S SOCCER

- April 14: (Doubleheader)
vs. Virginia (11 a.m.)
vs. Longwood (3 p.m.)

WOMEN'S SOCCER

- April 10: at Richmond (7 p.m.)

MEN'S TENNIS

- April 11: vs. William & Mary (3 p.m.)
- April 14: vs. St John's (11 a.m.)

WOMEN'S TENNIS

- April 11: at William & Mary (3 p.m.)
- April 15: vs. Boston University (10 a.m.)

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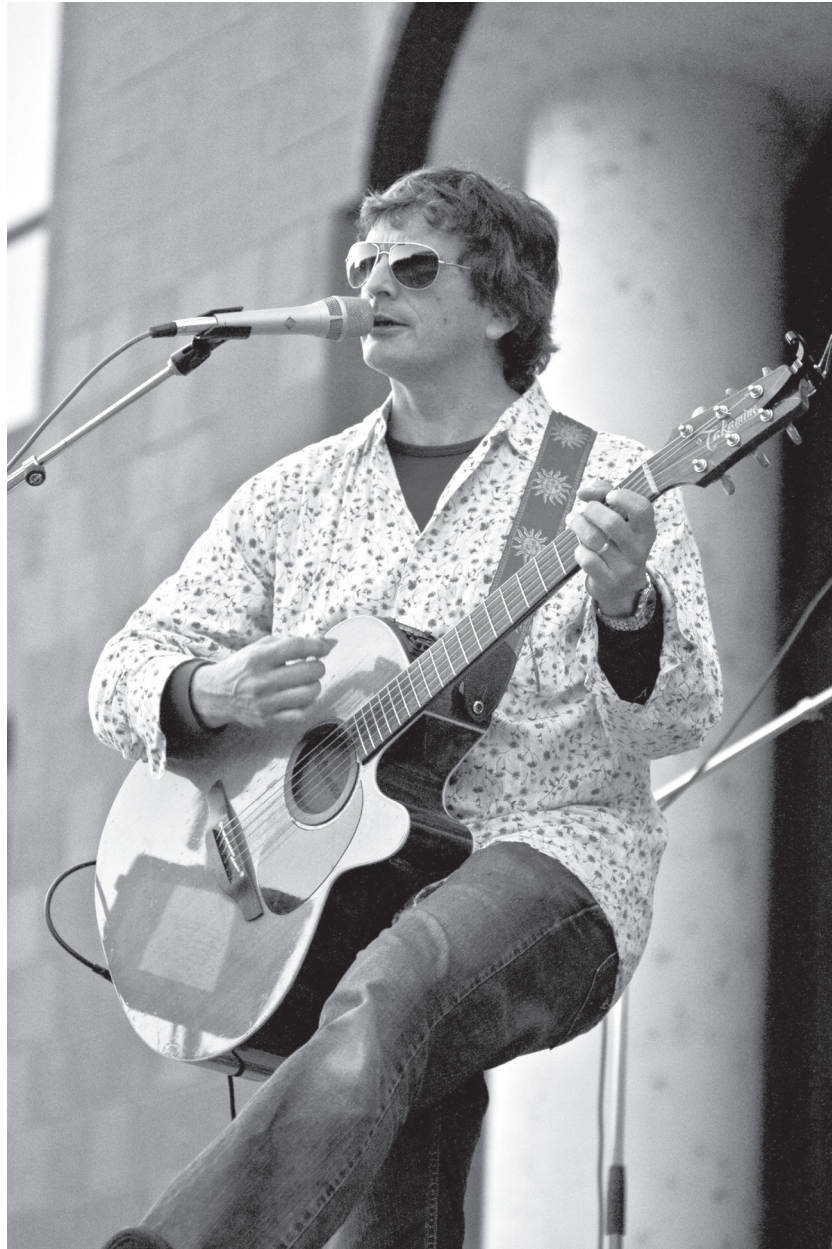
SPECTRUM

In this section:

Theatre VCU graduates direct two nights of “One-derful” one-acts • 11

“The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee” puts a spell on the audience • 12

Album review: Lotus Plaza’s “Spooky Action at a Distance” • 13



PHOTOS BY AMBERLYNN TABER

Day-long ‘60s showcase includes ‘I have a dream’ reenactment

Samantha McCartney
Staff Writer

Paislee Winkler
Contributing Writer

This past Friday from 12 to 10 p.m., as part of Alumni Month, History Now at VCU presented a 1960s showcase which included several lectures and first-hand discussions on society during the ‘60s.

The event, organized by VCU grad student Debbie Sherman, incorporated a reenactment of the famous Martin Luther King, Jr. “I Have A Dream” speech by professional actor Tony Cosby outside at the Commons Plaza.

Cosby’s performance was accompanied with music by VCU’s Black Awakening Choir.

A small crowd initially gathered, confused by what was going on. As soon

as the famous words “I have a dream” were uttered by “Dr. King,” passers-by stopped to listen.

The choir sang after the speech, which got students and non-students alike singing to classic gospel music. Tony Cosby thought that the speech went well, describing it as having “a lot of good reactions and good energy.”

Along with the reenactment, there were a series of lectures in the Commons Theater on topics such as the Civil Rights Movement, fashion of the ‘60s, the anti-war movement, Hollywood and the music revolution. Lecturers included Christopher Wright, Holly Price Alford, Brian Daughterity, Herbert Hirsch and Emilie Raymond.

“I learned a lot from the lectures; it

was a lot more (interesting) than reading a textbook,” said freshman Katherin Terlige.

Along with the Anti-war movement, one of the most recognizable aspects of the ‘60s included the hippie culture - represented on Friday by VCU’s Students for Sensible Drug Policy, some dressed as hippies, who had a stand set up during the event to educate people on the “war on drugs” that still exists today.

The president of the organization, Brian Gilbert, said that the main point of the stand being there was “... to promote student activism and get people to try and understand that there can be a happy medium when it comes to drug policies in this country.”

To end the showcase, there was a

1960s Retro Party and Costume Ball organized outdoors in the Commons Plaza later that night. Students were encouraged to dress up in the typical attire for the time period, whether it be retro chic or more like a Woodstock attendee. Refreshments were served and a live band, the Jangling Reinharts, performed during the party. Awards were also given for the best individual costume and the best group costume.

Toni Johnson, a freshman at VCU who came in a homemade ‘60s mod outfit said she enjoyed the experience.

“The sixties were a big time for fashion,” she said. “I like reliving that time and style.” **CT**



For evening of one-acts, student directors had 30 days to prepare

Michael Todd
Staff Writer

This past Tuesday and Wednesday, the Shafer Street Playhouse stage hosted “One-derful: An evening of one act plays,” a title that could not do justice to the quality of the performances involved. “One-derful” featured four one-act plays over the course of two 40-minute halves. Each play was performed by VCU undergraduate theater majors and individually directed by a small class of VCU graduate majors.

The project was overseen by Josh Chenard, who teaches the four-person graduate directing class.

“I love this project because it’s essentially double-dipping,” Chenard said. “It’s allowing them to take the work that they’re doing in class, and they’ll also get to put a credit on their resume for directing. We can sit around in class and talk about theory and share scenes ... until the cows come home. When you get up and do it, that’s when you really get to see your knowledge and the skills you’re acquired and apply them.”

“One-derful” is the last production Chenard will have a hand in before

he leaves VCU at the end of the semester to teach at New Mexico State University, eventually taking over as the head of their theater department. “These aren’t plays with huge sets and musical numbers and costumes. There’s elements of those things, but the directors challenge was to tell a story without those things,” Chenard said.

The directors were given about 30 days total, including casting calls, to organize their one-acts. During this time, classes were not canceled, but reorganized with Chenard viewing the directing process, meeting one-on-one with each director and helping them organize the space. With no budget for set or props, anything on stage came out-of-pocket or was improvised from previously obtained materials.

“I’ll speak for all the directors (when I say that) we were really lucky that these actors showed up for auditions,” Fitzgerald said of the experience. “They are all fantastic. There were a couple ... not violent, but friendly arguments over who wanted who. We all really lucked out.”

“Danny and the Deep Blue Sea” was

“One-derful” continued on page 12



“One-derful: An evening of one-act plays” was two nights of four one-act plays, each directed by VCU graduates.

PHOTOS BY AMBER-LYNN TABER

"One-derful" continued from page 11

the first and longest one-act of the night, totaling at approximately 40 minutes. Directed by Keith Fitzgerald, it tells the story of two dysfunctional characters who, after meeting at a bar and spending a night together, are able to overcome their own shortcomings as they stumble into a sudden yet sincere relationship.

"It's a story about a relationship that forms (between) two very tortured, beaten individuals who haven't been shown an ounce of kindness in their lives and just happen to be in the right place at the right time. To me it speaks of the fact that anyone can find solace in something they're passionate about, which I guess is kind of my metaphor for theater in general."

Act two opened with the 15-minute "Bedtime," directed by Sharisse Saunders and performed by Kristin Wilson, a freshman, and Anastasia Graves, a senior. Wilson, the youngest of the two sisters the duo portray, questions her old sister about her thoughts on profound issues such as

God and the concept of forever in an attempts to understand her own opinions on the subjects.

"The Problem," another 15-minute one act directed by Brooke Turner, features an intricate and absurd web of sexual facades imposed and unmasked by a husband (Taylor Ballard) and wife (Caty Regan) to keep their romantic life alive.

For Turner, who has taught middle and high school for the past four years, working with an older cast enabled her to undertake a more challenging style of directing.

"It plays as absurd for most of it, until the very end," Turner said. "So getting actors out of trying to play something real ... to focus not on having a real reaction, but being in a real emotional place was probably the biggest challenge. And they did a wonderful job."

"There's a lot of really great stuff done with VCU, not only on the Main Stage, but in Shafer. (Students) may be surprised – they might like the theater just as much as they like seeing a movie.

I think they'd be delighted to find out ... what the theater world is all about."

The "One-derful" evening concluded with "Warburton's Cook," in which John Warburton (James Murphy) believes that he has discovered unpublished Shakespeare original plays – only for his cook and housekeeper, Betsy (Cat Wheelahan), to burn the manuscripts in the fire used to bake Warburton's pies.

The conflict progresses after Warburton chastises Betsy for burning the manuscripts, to Betsy's hurt over Warburton's anger at her attempts to care for him, and concludes with the two of them brought together over the otherwise unfortunate incident.

"It's about love and how people can love the same things, but how to make that practical," Wheelahan said of the play's themes. "Betsy's love is a practical love and one that saves, and one of my favorite lines of hers from the play is, 'Love is in the doing.' If you love someone, it becomes an action, becomes something that you show."

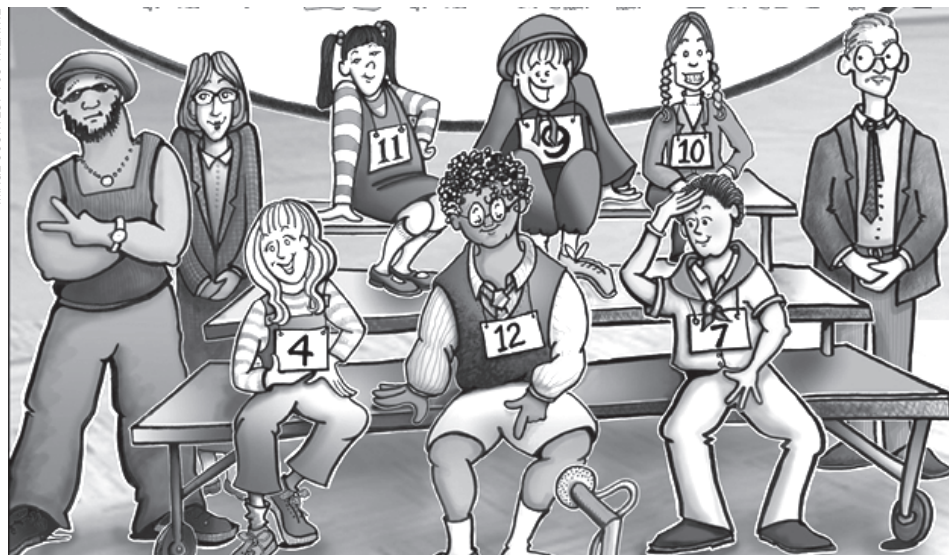
"Warburton's Cook" was directed by first-year grad student Terry Hardcastle,

who has spent the past 20 years performing in southern Florida. This was his first time directing in years and his first time directing in Virginia. Now Hardcastle looks forward to spending more time offstage, be it directing, playwrighting, or teaching.

"I was blessed with a very talented cast," Hardcastle said. "I wanted to choose a script that gave actors fun things to do. I saw that they would be making pies on stage, there was going to be flour ... I could see the stage littered with the stuff by the end of the play. The challenge was getting it all together."

"When you're directing actors, they make contributions to the piece, so it becomes collaborative. But for the most part I saw it as a triangle that was moving around the stage because we have three characters and how their positions on stage help to tell the story."

With yet another successful performance by theatreVCU students and a triumph for graduate student directors, university students can be sure to expect future shows to be equally one-derful. **CT**



Theatre VCU's latest Mainstage spell-binding

Michael Todd
Staff Writer

Friday evening, VCU theater students spelled their way to what promises to be another successful production with the opening weekend of The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. The spelling bee is a one act musical that brings together a hodge podge of inherently hilarious characters spanning the entire spectrum of nerdy or otherwise abnormal. The Singleton Center theater became the auditorium in which the spelling bee took place, with audience interaction that included vigorous clapping when characters spelled words correctly, and polite clapping when the ring of a bell signaled a misspelt word and, consequently, the speller's removal from the bee.

Audience members became so involved, in fact, that they were

randomly selected to join the cast on stage as fellow competitors at the beginning of the bee, with these volunteers selected from a list signed at the theater entrance. Throughout the course of the show, as they misspelled words and were eliminated, these members slowly returned to the audience. One older gentleman, however, after shocking the judges with the correct spelling of an apparently difficult word, was asked to spell a second word in order to return him to his seat and keep him from presumably winning the bee, much to the delight of the audience.

Each time a competitor was eliminated, the cast sang a special goodbye song, and the loser received a hug and juice box from Mitch Mahoney (Brandon Rashad Butts), the care counselor who was serving his parole through the bee, casually dressed in

black jeans, a leather jacket and styling shades.

The show was directed by now-retired Gary C. Hopper, former director of Undergraduate Studies at Theatre VCU. Multiple students describe working with Hopper as feeling like they were treated as professionals as opposed to students.

"He came in every single day with this energy," said Maxwell Moore, whose character "Barf" is an antisocial speller with a rare mucous membrane disorder and the ability to spell words out on the floor with the assistance of his magic foot. "And even on the days when I wasn't feeling it and I didn't want to do it ... you come in and you see Gary, and you're right there with him. He just has one of those personalities."

Additionally, the theatre department brought in vocal coach Rachel Hillmer to help the cast with character voices during both song and regular speech.

"This is my first musical I've ever been in, and it was an awesome experience, and I really want to do more," Maxwell said of the experience. "But VCU usually has a really good balance of alternating musicals and plays, and I think that's a really good thing for the department."

According to cast members, Hillmer's favorite phrase during the rehearsal process was "annoy me with your diction," which became rather confusing and hilarious in itself considering that "diction" was often jokingly misheard as the first name of cast member Dixon Cashwell, who plays Leaf Coneybear.

"It's a bit of a tough show to sing. I remember going in and thinking, I've listened to these songs before, they're fairly easy; but no, no, no," said Moore. "Our music director was really great; I'd never done anything like this before, and she really brought me up to speed really fast."

Besides the actual spelling, Putnam offers audiences songs about same sex parents and unfortunate erections,

religious experiences featuring an Asian Jesus and maybe a couple life lessons buried underneath the topmost layers of humor.

"One of the themes we went for was self-validation," said Erin Adelman, who plays Catholic schoolgirl and preteen prodigy Marcy Park, speaking of the plays underlying themes and each character's journey. "(My character) discovers that she doesn't need to be perfect; Coneybear realizes he really is smart."

For instance, up until the spelling bee, words were the closest companions for both characters Barf and Olive Ostrovsky, described as an "innocent, pure little girl who only sees the good in people" by Maggie Horan. But by the end of the bee, they are able to establish a friendship via their mutual love of spelling.

"She kind of has a hard home life but hides that behind a mask of happiness," Horan said of Olive, who perhaps pulls the most heartstrings of any other character in the show. "She definitely came out of it stronger. Her home life is still uncertain, but she's made a friend, which is huge for her because she has never had any friends."

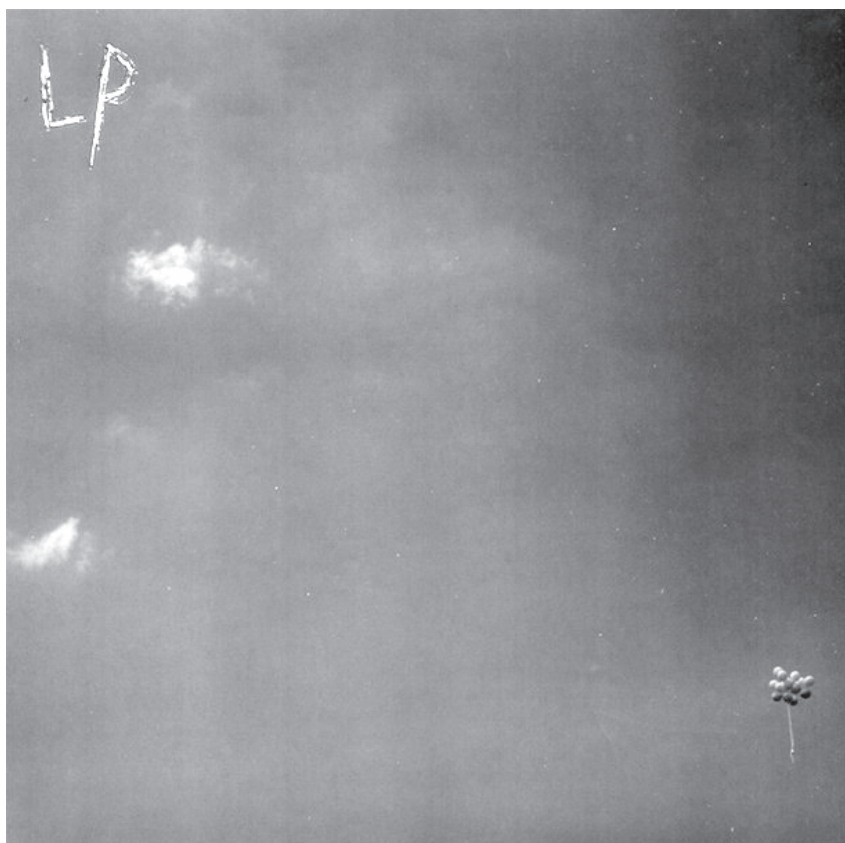
Despite the childish connotations of the musical's title and subject matter, VCU students and other potential viewers should not fear that the content is predictably juvenile or uninteresting. In fact, due to the presence of some strong language and other mature content, the show may warrant a higher rating than would correlate with the ages of the characters involved.

"I think people hear the title of the show and automatically think it's for kids," said Adelman. "But it's not a kid's show at all – it's very adult humor." **CT**

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee will run April 12-14 – 7:30 p.m. • April 15 – 3 p.m. • April 19-21 – 7:30 p.m. • April 22 – 3 p.m., High School Matinees, April – 17, 18-10 a.m.



SPECTRUM



Album review | Lotus Plaza, 'Spooky Action at a Distance'

Brian Charlton
Contributing Writer

Deerhunter has become one of the more consistent sonic explorers in recent years. They are a fascinating group in that there seems to be a democracy under which they work, the same way any one person might experience the ideology – fully participatory of each other yet with an insanely disproportionate power structure.

With lead singer Branford Cox fronting the group, and having come out with three solo-albums as Atlas Sound, he has quickly become one of the most dominant rock personalities. Not to mention how he overshadows his own band with long interviews and bleached blonde hair.

It is easy to view fellow Deerhunter band member Lockett Pundt as following in the footsteps of the introverted guitar masters who serve as a necessary counterweight to their enigmatic counterparts.

Based on this understanding of Pundt, it came as no surprise that his debut solo album under Locus Plaza, 2009's "The Floodlight Collective," came with a mixed bag of looping guitars so loud to consciously overpower his amorphous vocals. He seemed hidden behind his music, and where the songs should have glorified themselves they were kept in their own comfort zone, never evolving too far from their original framework. It is the kind of work an artist trying his damndest to not be noticed would produce.

Pundt's sophomore album "Spooky

Action at a Distance" came into the limelight only a couple of months ago with the release of his single "Strangers," which created some buzz. With its fuzzed melody of back-and-forth guitar riffs, discerning drum beats and clear quality vocals, one could see a definite change in pace for this new installment. The song ends with his anti-flash sound that tends to break from the casually soaring chorus, as in "Desire Lines" from Deerhunter's "Halcyon Digest."

Qualifiers like "shoe gaze" and "dream pop" come to mind with Lotus Plaza's new attempt. The recordings themselves elicit a more clear and understanding sound; the songs are more confident this time around. There is a meditative state of mind that is strongly indulged within the confines of the space Pundt has created for us.

While the name might seem to unduly concoct an overambitious feeling for the album, it is expansive, beautiful and like Einstein's interestingly named theory, feels like greater things are colliding in an infinite space of matter.

It might seem like "Spooky Action at a Distance" is an overly subtle work, but it is imperative to understand that 44 minutes have gone by from start to end brimming with immediacy and dreamlike structures, the sort of thing that might become tiresome at the length of an LP. You have to ask yourself how hard this might be to make consistent, fluid and fresh. Pundt has found a way to crank out one instantly memorable chorus with ear-turning melodies after another. **CT**

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OPINION

In this section:

Picking a major with career promise • 14

Wading through the waters of grad-school options • 15



Scholars in the hands of an angry market

Alina Alam
Columnist

As a student with an undecided major at VCU, various people have given me advice about how to go about choosing my major. While some people have the audacity to tell me outright what I should do, others simply offer their opinion about my strengths and where they see me.

It doesn't matter how the advice is worded or who is giving it, essentially everyone says the same thing: Major in something you love to do.

The trouble that many people have is they don't know what they love or like to do, and they don't know where they see themselves in the future. For me, I'm well aware of my passion, which is

writing, but the question is whether I can make a career out of it.

It's easy for people to offer their opinion, but ultimately the decision is yours. After all, it's your life, and it's the choices you make that will dictate where your path will lead you. The many contradictory messages about choosing majors and careers don't exactly help in the decision making process.

Recently, an article by the Washington Post caught my attention. The article focuses on a report done by Georgetown University concerning college degrees and the job opportunities that come with each. The information in the article isn't exactly jaw dropping: It states that majors in non-technical areas have a higher rate of unemployment.

Surprising? Not really.

The world today has a high demand for students with education backgrounds in science and math fields. Still, the future isn't completely hopeless for those of us who lean more towards the arts; it just may contain more of a struggle.

Ideally, we would all be living our lives doing what we love and still prospering. In this world and with the current state of the economy, however, a reality of that sort isn't the easiest to achieve.

Taking a more optimistic stance, for those who are highly driven and smart about their decisions, there is still hope career-wise. That's the essential idea of the Georgetown study – to bring awareness to college students about the current and future job market, in correlation with what they may be hoping to do in terms of their career.

Don't assume that college is simply the time to receive an education. These degree-seeking years are the prime time to get a jump-start on your career by exposing yourself to the working world via internships and other work opportunities.

While it may be tough to make a decision, your choice may not necessarily be set in stone. Years from now, you may be in a job field completely unrelated to the major in which you earned a degree.

As the future drifts dangerously closer, we should focus on building ourselves and our abilities for the competitive job market that awaits us all after college. **GT**

To go or not to go: the grad school question



Paula Ward
Guest Columnist

Do we live in fear at the thought of graduating college and returning home to the rules and regulations of our parents?

Most of us want a career and a \$60,000 salary to spend as we please. The reality is that the job market isn't exactly flourishing, and attempting to find a job after college has many students worried about their futures.

One option is graduate school. Whether you want to gain experience in a specific field or delay entering the job market, graduate school is something to consider.

Taking that next step in your academic career does have its benefits. If you do decide to attend grad school, you have the potential to earn more money, get hands-on experience, pursue your passion or even change your career path entirely.

Students who are sure of the career path they have chosen already will find graduate school to be a tremendous asset to their portfolio.

At the same time, graduate school is an extremely expensive expenditure. Full-time, in-state VCU graduate students paid roughly \$5,500 a semester for tuition and fees alone last year. Non-Virginia residents paid nearly twice that amount. Some good news for students pursuing doctoral degrees was that tuition dropped to about \$4,700 for Virginia residents and \$9,300 for non-residents.

And because of competition and expectations for higher grades, the number of students graduate schools accept is far more limited than in an undergraduate program.

To add to those troubles, having a graduate degree does not guarantee a job.

Of course, the value of all graduate degrees is not considered equal. Hands-on experience may be the only way to truly master a particular field. There are many careers that require a natural talent in order to find success. In these cases, graduate school could be a lot of work for very little return on investment.

So is a graduate degree worth having in the end?

If you're certain about what you want

to do and you want to be a step above other competitors in your field, graduate school is an excellent way to go. Attending graduate school shows potential employers you are serious about your chosen career and you have the skills to help advance your employer.

Degree programs often offer the hands-on experience that students are looking for. The opportunity to work in your chosen field on a regular basis outside of the classroom allows students to gain experience — and make mistakes without the fear of losing income.

Choosing to go to graduate school

is just that: a choice. Finding out what career path intersects with your future goals will allow you to make such an important choice to make.

You can choose to go straight through to graduate school, not go at all or go later on down the road, but your decision to go to grad school should include a variety of factors, including whether you're willing to take the risk. **CT**

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ct

ADAM STERN **SHANE WADE**
Executive Editor Opinion Editor

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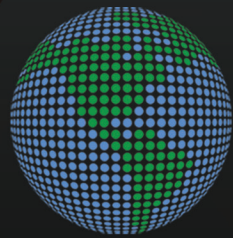
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