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## WITH GREAT TALENT COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

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# BRIEFS

## On the cover:

Comic artist and VCU graduate Reilly Brown held a comic signing on Sunday at Velocity Comics.  
Photo by Chris Conway

## Local & VCU

### Judge revises ruling in hit-and-run case

A Richmond judge on Friday appeared to open the door for prosecutors to introduce evidence of Elias Webb's alcohol consumption at his hit-and-run trial next week, amending an earlier decision to allow jurors to hear it only if Webb testifies.

At the end of a motions hearing in Richmond Circuit Court that covered several pretrial issues, Judge Margaret P. Spencer said she was modifying her earlier ruling that would have limited prosecutors from discussing Webb's alcohol consumption during trial, which begins Monday.

Webb, 31, is accused of leaving the scene of an accident that took the life of Lanie Kruszewski, 24, as she was riding her bicycle July 29 on River Road near the Henrico County line.

Spencer initially ruled that prosecutors could not introduce evidence of Webb's alcohol consumption unless he testifies. Prosecutors disclosed last week that they have knowledge that Webb had drunk a beer and then had some wine within two hours of the fatal wreck.

The judge initially indicated that prosecutors could use the alcohol consumption as evidence in an attempt to impeach Webb's credibility if he takes the witness stand, although he is not required to testify.

*Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch*

### Bring in trash can or face fines, says city

Starting next month, Richmond says it will begin fining residents for leaving their trash cans and recycling bins out too long in the city's right of way and putting them out too early, more than five years after a City Council ordinance increased the fine for such violations. The right of way includes sidewalks, alleys and median strips between sidewalks and roadways.

"The right of way is part of a natural corridor contributing to the aesthetic quality and value of our neighborhoods. Removal of our refuse and recycling receptacles after service returns this area to its natural state, providing pedestrian, cycling and vehicular passage in our communities," James Jackson, the city's director of public works, said in a statement this week.

City code says trash cans and recycling bins cannot be put out earlier than 4 p.m. the day before collection and must be taken in by 7 a.m. the following day.

An ordinance passed in November 2007 altered the time frames that trash cans and recycling bins can be left out and increased the fine from \$10 to \$50. However, the city has not had enough code-enforcement officers to go after violators, said Sharon North, a public works spokeswoman.

*Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch*

### Clinton calls for compromise in Richmond Forum appearance

Former President Bill Clinton told a Richmond audience Friday night that only the willingness to compromise will untie the gridlock in Congress that leaves the nation paralyzed.

"The last election was not a mandate for dictatorship of Democrats, just like the 2010 election was not a mandate for dictatorship of Republicans," Clinton, this month's high-profile guest of the Richmond Forum, said at the Landmark Theater.

The 3,600-seat venue was sold out – a simulcast room and student room expanded the event capacity to 4,200.

"Our system was set up for honorable, dignified compromise," Clinton said, adding that he expects to see a much higher level of cooperation in Washington in the near future, now that President Barack Obama has been re-elected.

Clinton, 66, presented himself as a statesman, environmentalist, humanitarian and visionary, displaying lots of charm and cracking the occasional joke.

*Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch*

## National & International

### Powerful Northeast storm kills four

The massive blizzard that whipped New England this week-end with hurricane-force winds and crushing snow tested the readiness of authorities to deal with the increasing frequency of severe and record-breaking weather.

State officials in Massachusetts took the rare step of ordering cars off the streets in advance of the storm, while in Long Island, hundreds of commuters were surprised and stranded by the blizzard, which dumped two to three feet of snow on the region.

The storm claimed at least four lives and added to the march of extreme weather events in the past year that includes Hurricane Sandy, a deep drought, the hottest U.S. year on record and widespread wildfires in the West.

*Brief by the Washington Post*

### Carnival musicians say they're barred from Haiti fete because of anti-government songs

At least three Haitian bands said Saturday that they are being kept from performing at Carnival and that they suspect it's because President Michel Martelly's administration considers their songs critical of the government.

Such a decision would be seen as ironic by many since Martelly himself used to openly mock earlier Haitian governments in his previous career as a musician named "Sweet Micky." His performances during Carnival were legendary for him criticizing authorities, mooning audiences and dressing in drag.

Haitian musicians have long used Carnival as an outlet to air frustration from the streets in this impoverished country. Lyrics often implicate the government as the source of that grief even if officials aren't specifically named.

"Where's the freedom of speech? Where's the democracy? It shows that he has no tolerance" for criticism.

The group's song "Aloral" blasts the government for failing to fulfill five initiatives that focus on education, the environment, rule of law, energy and employment. A video for the song shows a suit-clad man with a bald head, like Martelly, dancing on a desk and thrusting his pelvis.

"If you can't deliver, leave," said band member, Don Kato, who sings the song.

*Brief by the Washington Post*

### Egyptian court bans YouTube for a month

An Egyptian court ordered a one-month ban on YouTube on Saturday, after it said the video-sharing Web site had failed to remove an American-made anti-Islam video.

Cairo's administrative court ruled in response to a suit filed by an independent Egyptian lawyer. Judge Hassouna Tawfiq, who presided over the case, said the ban would also apply to other Web sites that circulated the video, including, potentially, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

It was not clear when the ban would come into effect. Implementation of the ruling is left to Egypt's prime minister and communications minister. The court's decision can also be appealed.

"This is a temporary punishment, you could say, for these Web sites for participating in this," Tawfiq said.

The video in question, titled "The Innocence of Muslims," portrayed Islam's prophet Muhammad as a fool and a womanizer and sparked violent protests across the Muslim world last September.

*Brief by the Washington Post*

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# NEWS

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Global Education Office opens Transition Workshops for international students • 4

Redesign of UNIV 200 for students' benefit • 5



Ukrainian officials visited Richmond last week to experience American culture and history. Back row from left to right: Volodymyr Osypenko, Mykola Yanaki, Oleksiy Chernyak. Bottom row, left to right: Olha Tykhonova, Dmytro Rohachov

# Foreign officials learn lessons of American democracy

Ryan Murphy  
News Editor

The United States has a history of rich democratic tradition, stretching back more than two centuries. Five elected officials from halfway around the world visited VCU last week in hopes of tapping into that history and gaining a better understanding of how to run their own democratic state.

VCU faculty and graduate students hosted delegates from Ukraine between Feb. 2 and Feb. 9. Ukraine, a former Soviet republic, celebrated the 21st anniversary of its independence last December. During their brief time in the United States, the delegates learned about America, meeting with state legislators and policy experts, shopping at Short Pump and attending Super Bowl parties.

The theme of the program, known as the Open World Program, is centered on the role of state legislators in accountable governance. The delegation held meetings with Virginia state legislators, Richmond City and Henrico County officials and VCU professors to learn about economic development, the government's role in the lives of its people and promoting citizen activity in politics.

"The United States has been a demo-

cratic society for more than 200 years. We as Ukraine, as a new independent country that was founded over 20-something years ago, have good examples (for encouraging democracy) by looking at the U.S.," said Volodymyr Osypenko, a deputy head of the Crimean Office of the Party of Regions, through an interpreter. He said that his profession for the past 10 years has been to encourage people to be active participants in the political process.

"We do have tools (to engage citizens), but the thing is, we aren't really good at using these tools, not as good as Americans are," Osypenko said. He noted that observing the Virginia General Assembly and meeting with Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce was enlightening, and that officials told the delegation that they are "going in the right way in terms of developing (their) democracy" in Ukraine.

This is the third year the Open World Program has been hosted at VCU. Amanda Velez, the program's coordinator at VCU, said that it is a collaborative effort between the Global Education Office, the L. Douglas Wilder School of Public Affairs and the School of Mass Communications and is largely funded by the Library of Congress.

"We want VCU to be a platform for learning ... (so people can) come, learn about the American system of govern-

ment and learn from professionals in their fields," Velez said. "We also see it as a way for the VCU community to experience and interact with the world here in Richmond, without even having to travel."

The seed of the project was planted when VCU mass communications professor Jeff South spent time training journalists in Ukraine in 2007. He said he wanted to maintain a relationship to the country, and was approached by FHI 360, a nonprofit human development organization, about hosting journalists and elected officials from former Soviet-bloc countries during their trips to America.

"There's a big push at VCU to internationalize our curriculum, and our activities overall, and this is part of that; learning from people in other countries, how things operate and introducing them to what VCU and Virginia and America have to offer," South said.

John Aughenbaugh, a public policy instructor at VCU's Wilder School, held two seminar discussions with the delegation during their visit.

"For many of them, because they are in positions of government authority and they're trying to make a democracy work, and it's a young democracy, they're trying to figure out what they can learn from the U.S. version or what they can avoid," he said.

Depictions of the U.S. governmental workings in television news and on the Internet often lead to a lot of questions, based on cultural and historical differences, Aughenbaugh said. During one of the seminars, the delegates inquired about American property taxes and the implications of the new government-mandated health care plan.

"It seems like the government is against the people," said Mykola Yanaki, the chairman of Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, in reference to the U.S. government enacting what some of the delegates saw as policies at odds with the public's desires. He noted that in Ukraine, only about 5 percent of citizens pay property taxes — those who own houses or apartments above a certain size, or those who own more than one property — and that universal health care is guaranteed by the Ukrainian Constitution. Aughenbaugh said that this kind of exchange is exactly what the program is about.

"They are just completely befuddled by certain things that we in the United States sort of just take for granted. My American students would never ask me some of those questions," he said. "I end up being reminded or learning a lot about my own country simply because of what I have to explain about my own country and watching their reactions or getting their questions." **CT**



# Dorms face off in energy reduction competition

**Katelyn Boone**  
Staff Writer

VCU kicked off the Campus Conservation Competition this week as part of a larger national energy reduction competition where energy use per person is compared among universities and colleges.

VCU's dorms are competing among themselves to see who is the most energy efficient.

The national competition runs from Feb. 4 - April 26 and is judged by establishing an initial energy consumption baseline from the schools. At VCU, measurements for the baseline began a week ago and will last for two weeks. The calculations are reflective of the amount of energy consumed per person. That baseline will be used to measure the difference in electricity consumed for the competition for the next two weeks.

VCU is also competing head to head with the University of Richmond. Currently, VCU is ahead of UR with an overall energy reduction of 4.8, com-

pared to UR's 0.1 percent reduction. Readings are routinely updated on the building dashboard webpage.

Wyatt Carpenter, a junior in environmental studies and urban planning and intern at VCU's Office of Sustainability, helped in planning and promoting the energy reduction competitions.

"A lot of (students in) dorms take for granted energy use," Carpenter said. "They don't realize they're using more energy than they think. It's important to use less and be mindful of the impact that you have on the rest of the world."

VCU students can see their building's real-time energy consumption by visiting the VCU building dashboard. The dashboard allows students to see the kilowatt-hours saved, pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> averted and money saved.

The dashboard uses interactive tools to compare total kilowatt-hours, kilowatt-hours per person and kilowatt-hours per square foot of 26 VCU buildings. Currently, the Cary and Belvidere Apartments have reduced energy use by 11.3 percent, resulting in a total of 7,585 kW saved. **CT**



PHOTO BY ZOË DEHMER

Linda Hancock, director of the Wellness Resource Center, contributed to the Global Education Office's "Sex and Drugs in the U.S." workshop last week.

## Workshops offer advice on American culture

**Zoë Dehmer**  
Contributing Writer

The Global Education Office (GEO) launched a new series of workshops for international students that aims to educate and inform students about various — and sometimes confusing — aspects of American culture.

International students were invited to "Sex and Drugs in the U.S." last week, a workshop held by the GEO geared toward teaching international students about understanding American culture when it comes to sex and drugs.

The workshop was designed to offer a place for students to ask questions about cultural differences that may exist between students' own countries and their new environment at VCU in regards to sex and drugs.

"Things like knowing what's legal and what's not, cultural nuances and idiomatic terms for these subjects are important for our students to know," said Renee Russell, a communications manager at GEO.

The seminar was offered as part of GEO's series Transition Workshops for International Students, and men and women were divided between two

rooms to make students feel more comfortable. The discussion topic was American ideas about sex and drugs and tips on how to safely and legally deal with them in the U.S.

The Transition Workshops series serves as a learning tool to answer any questions students may have about the nuances of living in the U.S.

For those who have questions and prefer not to discuss them in a group setting, Russell said that there are plenty of other opportunities open to not just international students, but any VCU students.

"GEO offers one-on-one academic advising as well as a peer advising program. Of course, the university offers the Wellness Center for health-related matters and VCU Counseling Services for students experiencing culture shock. We all work together to try and assure the complete well-being of our students," she said.

Upcoming workshop topics include how to manage time and money, how to do your taxes, academic research and writing skills and getting to know Richmond. **CT**

### TOP 5 DORMS WITH THE MOST ENERGY REDUCTION TO DATE

Data courtesy of buildingdashboard.net/vcu

- 1** Cary and Belvidere Apartments: 11.3% reduction  
7,642 kWh saved; 413 occupants
- 2** Ackell Residence Center: 9.3% reduction  
2,527 kWh saved; 394 occupants
- 3** Rhoads Hall: 3.0% reduction  
200 kWh saved; 697 occupants
- 4** Honors College: 2.6% reduction  
1,304 kWh saved; 177 occupants
- 5** Brandt Hall: 1.7% reduction  
207 kWh saved; 640 occupants

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PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

As the director of the Writing Center and core director of the UNIV 200 program, Patricia Strong has helped redesign the class to be more interactive for students.

# UNIV 200 revamped for students' benefit

**Amir Vera**  
Staff Writer

During the summer of 2012, the notorious Writing and Rhetoric Workshop class, better known as UNIV 200, underwent a total redesign.

Newly appointed director of the core writing curriculum, Patricia Strong, has been working to change the structure and reputation of a required course many students dread.

"I want them to learn the skills of writing the research paper, of course, but what I want them to leave with is a sense of what it means to effectively argue, whether it's a text argument, a visual argument (or) a performance argument," she said.

The course is now designed to be more interactive with student research. Students not only learn to conduct research and write a long paper, but Strong has placed emphasis on translating that information into different mediums as well, such as making a video or powerpoint for a presentation.

Strong was appointed to the position of director in the beginning of the fall semester to head the pilot program of the new UNIV 200. Before accepting the directorship, she was — and still is — the director of the University Writing Center. Because of this, Strong said it was easy to make the transition into

her new role.

"What I'm doing now is merely a natural extension of what I've been doing the last 15 years at the university," Strong said. "It just brings things together for me. It allows me to work with faculty whereas before I've been primarily working with students. So that's a big change for me."

It was a big change for the University College as well. Ten University College faculty members, including Strong, came together over the summer to redesign UNIV 200 to make it more student friendly. According to Strong, students believed UNIV 200 was just a class to write a long paper.

"That's really one of the reasons we wanted to shake it up," Strong said. "We wanted to modernize it, make it more contemporary. I would hope that we could breathe some new energy into student's perception of the class. So we can get rid of the myth of UNIV 200 as being some sort of obstacle to overcome."

The new version of UNIV 200 is broken up into four units: critical analysis and understanding argument, research inquiry, paper writing and translation of research into a new medium for a non-academic audience.

The new curriculum has already shown positive results. According to Melissa Johnson, curriculum coordina-

tor for the University College, withdrawal rates have gone down as the student success rate has gone up.

Students are now engaging in multiple processes and producing multiple products, so the work is distributed more evenly over the semester," Johnson said. "We continue to adjust and revise the curriculum in response to student and instructor feedback."

Strong, who also teaches UNIV 200,

saw positive reactions to the pilot program. She said that students are more aware now of the real purpose of the course instead of seeing it as a chore.

"Students saw more utility in the course objectives," Strong said. "An increased connection between what they were learning between UNIV 200 and how they can apply that learning to their upper division courses. That's really the main goal of UNIV 200." **CT**

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# SPORTS

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Women's basketball breaks losing streak • 9



PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

Men's basketball coach Shaka Smart will coach the U-19 USA Men's Junior National Team this summer.

## Smart hired as assistant for USA Basketball U-19 national team

### Staff Reports

VCU men's basketball head coach Shaka Smart will return to the sidelines for the U-19 USA Men's Junior National Team this summer.

Smart will join Florida coach Billy Donovan and Gonzaga coach Mark Few on the coaching staff that won the U-18 FIBA World Championship last year.

"It's an incredible honor to once again have the opportunity to coach some of the finest young players in the country and represent the United States in a national competition," Smart said in a release. "I'm very humbled to once

again be asked to participate."

Donovan will be the team's head coach with Smart and Few serving as assistants on the team.

The coaching selections were made by the USA Basketball Men's Junior National Team committee, which is led by legendary Syracuse head coach Jim Boheim.

Smart, who has won 103 games in four seasons at VCU, will coach for USA Basketball for the third straight year. He was a court coach for the 2011 USA Basketball Men's World University Games Team Training Camp.

Tryouts and training camp for this

year's team will take place from June 14-19 in Colorado Springs, Colo. at the U.S. Olympic Training Center. The team will compete in three round-robin preliminary games from June 27-29 with games against Ivory Coast, China and Russia.

USA will compete in Podvinny Mlyn Arena in the Czech Republic. The top three teams of each group will advance to the next round. Second round games take place from July 1-3 in Sparta Arena and Podvinny Mlyn Arena.

"I think our personalities fit together really well. We all want to be a part of something bigger than any part of us, that's something that I've always been

impressed with Billy; as successful as he's been, all he cares about is the team that he's a part of and winning," Smart said in the release. "And Mark is such a terrific competitor and has such a way with the players that he's invaluable to the staff.

"I just try to bring some youthful energy, those guys are the guys that have won hundreds of games. I also try to bring a level of focus to the defensive end that compliments their knowledge on the offensive side." **CT**







# Is this VCU's new logo

We're developing a brand new look that will help VCU stand out. And we want to know what you think.



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PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

Junior DJ Haley took time off from play for personal reasons.

## DJ Haley returns to Men's basketball team

### *Staff Reports*

Junior big man DJ Haley has returned to the team after taking time off for personal reasons.

Haley was not present for VCU's 81-65 home win over Fordham last Saturday, when head coach Shaka Smart said he did not know when he would rejoin the team.

Haley returned to the team earlier this week and traveled with the Rams to Charlotte for Saturday night's 68-61 win over the 49ers. He was active and in uniform but did not play in the game.

Sophomore Jarred Guest and senior David Hinton saw additional playing time in Haley's absence, getting 14 and 13 minutes respectively off the bench at Charlotte. Haley has averaged eight minutes in 22 games played this season.

He is expected to be back on the court when VCU hosts Massachusetts Thursday night. **C7**







PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

Freshman Kaneisha Atwater had one steal, one assist and three turnovers for VCU against St. Bonaventure.

## VCU women snap losing streak

**Zachary Holden**  
Staff Writer

The VCU women's basketball team snapped their six-game losing streak Sunday afternoon as they took down the St. Bonaventure Bonnies on the road, 64-51.

The Bonnies started off the game with a layup before VCU responded with a Jessica Pellechio 3-pointer. Back and forth scoring saw neither team lead by more than five points in the first half.

A late Ashley Zahn 3-pointer gave the Bonnies a slight advantage entering half-time, which saw the Rams trail 24-21.

The second half would turn into a scoring clinic for VCU, largely in part thanks to Robyn Parks and Pellechio getting hot from virtually everywhere on the court.

At the 7:34 mark, the Rams had a slim 43-40 lead. Over the course of the next five minutes, the Rams went on a 10-1 run, virtually sealing the win. Pellechio and Parks scored eight of the 10 points over this run.

The two ladies combined to score 27 of the team's 43 points in the second half, while the Bonnies scored 27 points as a team in the second half.

Parks finished the day with 21 points, three steals and nine rebounds, narrowly missing out on her eighth double-double of the season. Freshman Pellechio added 16 points, five steals, and four rebounds.

The 20-plus performance from Parks was her eighth of the season, and 23rd straight game in double figures. Pellechio's 16 points were her highest since December 5th against UMBC, and only the second time she reached double-digits in the past seven games.

Freshman Kaneisha Atwater had her second-straight scoreless game and seems to be having a tough February. In January, she was featuring for 30-plus minutes a game in the eight games they had, but in the past two games, she's played a total of 18 minutes.

Pellechio and Atwater, albeit freshmen, seem to step up and help Parks each game. Usually one steps up and the other is pretty quiet, February must be Pellechio's time to shine.

Currently 9-15 (2-7 in the Atlantic 10), the Lady Rams sit 13th and need to string together a few wins in their final five games of the season if they hope to make the A-10 tournament.

They return to the Siegel Center next Sunday, Feb. 17, at 1 p.m. to face the La Salle Explorers. **CT**

## Charlotte win showed Rams' character

**Zachary Holden**  
Staff Writer

When the VCU men's basketball team traveled down to Charlotte to face the 49ers on Saturday night, they knew they'd be in for quite a game.

Entering the night, Charlotte was just a game behind VCU, Butler, and Saint Louis for a share of the lead in the Atlantic 10. Coach Shaka Smart talked about how difficult of a game it was going to be earlier in the week, saying their defense was the best in the country.

Charlotte's defense showed up as they held VCU to their second lowest scoring performance in a win this season. Emerging victorious 68-61, the Rams handed the 49ers their first home loss of the season.

"That was as physical of a game as we've played in a long time and we knew it would be that way," Smart said. "They did a great job on the board on us, doubling us up in that category, but it's a testament to the way we defended and really kept the pressure up on them the entire night."

The Rams weren't the standout defensive team which is something they aren't really accustomed to with their HAVOC style of play. Charlotte outrebounded VCU 36-18, 19 of which were defensive. Due to the rebounding advantage, the 49ers outscored the Rams on second chance points 21-11.

Having just played in front of a sellout crowd last week against Massachusetts, Charlotte was sure to bring

another rambunctious crowd to try to unsettle the Rams.

"Charlotte had a very loud and hostile crowd and it was a challenge all night," Smart said. "But credit our guys for creating that energy we need in environments like this and finding ways to win in tough places."

Tough conference games like this is what separates the good teams from the great teams in the A-10. After two back-to-back losses on the road in a hostile University of Richmond environment, and then home to a surprising La Salle team, questions arose on whether VCU could bounce back with the difficult second half to their conference schedule.

Of the Rams final seven games, six are against teams one or two games off the top mark in the A-10. The seventh team is Richmond, who will no doubt put forth their best effort again.

The difficult upcoming stretch of Saint Louis and Xavier on the road, followed by Butler at home will really define the season.

The game against the Butler Bulldogs could be the determining factor in who ends up as A-10 regular season champion. Thankfully for the Rams, they'll have the home crowd to welcome the nationally ranked Bulldogs with memories of the bitter Final Four defeat undoubtedly still on their minds.

"At home, it's much easier to have that pressure that we do because our fans do an unbelievable job of creating so much energy that our guys really feed off it," Smart said. **CT**

## Men's basketball beats Charlotte behind Brandenburg's 21

*Staff Reports*

Junior Rob Brandenburg scored 21 points in just 22 minutes to lead VCU (19-5, 7-2) over host Charlotte (17-6, 5-4) 68-61 in Atlantic 10 play Saturday night.

Brandenburg led all scorers shooting 7-of-12 from the floor, including three 3-pointers and hitting all four of his free throw attempts.

The rest of the VCU offense was highly efficient as well, as the Rams posted a field goal percentage of 51.9 percent. Juvonte Reddic and Treveon Graham were the other two Rams to reach double figures, scoring 14 and 12 points respectively. It was Graham's 17th straight double-digit outing.

Reddic also had a team-high four rebounds, three blocked shots and two steals. Senior point guard Darius Theus facilitated the Rams' offense with six assists while also adding seven points.

Defensively, the Rams forced 17 turnovers while giving the ball away just 10 times on the other end. Seven VCU

players recorded at least one steal in the contest.

While VCU won the turnover battle, Charlotte dominated the glass. The 49ers out-rebounded the Rams 36-to-18, including 17 offensive rebounds, but still came up short in the end.

Willie Clayton and Terrence Williams paced the 49ers' offense with 13 and 12 points respectively, and Pierria Henry led all players in rebounds with 11. However, Henry and fellow guard Denzel Ingram combined for nine turnovers which ultimately would be Charlotte's downfall.

The 49ers also missed 10-of-22 free throws while the Rams missed just one of their eight attempts.

VCU will return to action Thursday night to face Massachusetts at the Siegel Center at 9 p.m. The Rams finish the weekend in a three-way tie for first place in the A-10 with Butler and St. Louis also holding 7-2 conference records. **CT**



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# SPECTRUM

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## CT Blind Date Introduction to the daters

Each year, The CT chooses two applicants to be taken on a blind date. The two daters do not see each other before the date. We brought them in for a short interview to ask them some questions about themselves and their applications before they are ushered away on a fabulous, all-expenses-paid Valentine's day date.



PHOTOS BY SAMANTHA FOSTER

### Kaelie Ukrop

Freshman  
Theatre and religious studies major

**Commonwealth Times** What made you decide to apply for the blind date?

**Kaelie Ukrop** I had actually never heard of it before. ... I thought, Why not? I've never been on a blind date, so it'll be a new experience.

**CT** What are you expecting from the blind date?

**KU** I don't know. Hopefully just to have a good time, meeting someone, maybe seeing if something is there, but I don't know.

**CT** So you're not putting hopes for finding the love of your life in this date?

**KU** Not at all, I'm just hoping, if anything, to meet a friend. I just want

to have a good time. What happens, happens.

**CT** Since you're a freshman, how is college so far?

**KU** It's been really good. Not really what I expected, but actually I don't really know what I expected. ... Just typical, nothing too exciting.

**CT** What's the most exciting thing that has happened so far?

**KU** I don't really know if I have any crazy, wacky stories. I've been having fun telling my friends that I've been chosen for a blind date experience, so that might be the craziest thing so far. Little things here and there, but nothing too big.

Continued on page 12

### Alex Cortes

Freshman  
Anthropology and Spanish major

**Commonwealth Times** Why did you choose those two majors?

**Alex Cortes** Anthropology because that's what interests me the most and it'll give me a chance to travel outside the U.S.

**CT** Where have you been?

**AC** I lived in Spain in a city called Murcia last year for a semester in between high school and college. I've also been to Canada.

**CT** Did you go by yourself?

**AC** By myself (to Spain) and by myself to Denmark as well. I went there and stayed with one of my best friends

who was an exchange student in my high school.

**CT** What did you do while you were there?

**AC** I did the little tourist things, like seeing major landmarks and stuff. I went back this summer with one of my best friends from the U.S. to a music festival in Denmark. It was really fun. It was a week of camping in a really free environment.

**CT** What kind of music was at the festival?

**AC** There was actually a really big variety, like The Cure was there. I guess you could say that I like music a lot, like shoegaze (music), like My Bloody Valentine and other indie and alternative bands.

Continued on page 12





Continued from page 11

**CT** *What are some of the little things that you like to tell people about?*

**KU** I feel like I have had an exciting experience, but nothing comes to mind. The first week of college I had the little college romance, it didn't really end up working out, ... but that was exciting when it was happening. My best friend from high school ended up going to VCU, which is nice since I wasn't just thrown in. It wasn't like if I went to another college where I knew no one. In high school I had a really tight group of friends and I thought I would have more of a hard time adjusting in this whirlwind, but I've found that I have adjusted pretty well to meeting new friends.

**CT** *What are some things that you like to do?*

**KU** I like to travel. I've been to Spain, Italy, Kenya, South Africa, Mexico and the Bahamas. That's one of my passions. Hopefully after college, I'll be able to continue (traveling), but I'm not sure how to incorporate theater, which is what I love.

**CT** *Did you travel with school groups, or with your family?*

**KU** Different ones each time. ... When I went to Spain and Italy, I went with my church and we did camps for kids and just went around doing com-

munity service, which is awesome. I was there for a week each. Africa was by far my favorite. I was there a month, which is the longest I have ever been out of the country by myself, which is a really crazy experience.

**CT** *What were some of the things you did?*

**KU** The first two weeks I was on a mission trip, so we went out to the villages. We were in Kenya. ... It was the most amazing experience of my life. ... Probably the most amazing memory I have is being in a little hut with just a family and this probably 90-year-old African woman. ... She loved basket weaving and I asked her why she does that, why she loved basket weaving. She said "Well, I'm a widow so instead of going and stealing money to survive, I make baskets so I can sell them in the community." It was really awesome because she has this choice. ... It was really beautiful. She taught me how to do her basket weaving and it doesn't sound very exciting, but it is when you're there and you're in the environment. It was such an amazing experience.

**CT** *So, on your application, you put "snuggle with strangers," as one of your interests. Care to elaborate?*

**KU** I had all these serious things written down, so I needed to write down something funny. That wasn't even funny though. ... I do snuggle with friends I know a lot, but I've never

snuggled with strangers.

**CT** *You don't just invite people off the street to come snuggle with you?*

**KU** On occasion, if I'm bored that night, but no. I'm such a touchy-feely person with my friends. I irritate them and they get so frustrated. They'll be sitting down and I'll just smother them, giving them kisses on the cheek. I'll try to restrain myself on the date. No strangers yet, but it's my aspiration.

Continued from page 11

**CT** *Since you're such a big music fan, do you play any instruments?*

**AC** It's funny you should ask because I was in middle school band and a year in high school and I played the trumpet. I actually just brought it back up to Richmond over the break because I was hoping that I could pick it up and do a little music project or something. Just from like, listening to Belle and Sebastian because they have a lot of trumpet parts.

**CT** *What are you expecting of the date?*

**AC** Honestly, I thought to myself earlier, "No expectations."

**CT** *Why are you not expecting anything?*

**AC** Because it's a blind date. I'm just hoping to meet someone cool. Maybe be friends. Have a good time.

**CT** *What is one of your more exciting stories?*

**AC** I already brought it up, I guess, about me going to Spain. it had a really big impact on my life. It was a really good experience.

**CT** *What sort of things had an impact?*

**AC** Literally just being there. Being able to sit outside and just watch a completely different culture just pass by me throughout the day. I just felt really content there

**CT** *Have you adopted parts of the Spanish culture into your everyday life?*

**AC** I think I've integrated a bunch of different parts. When I was in Denmark, I was there two times for a little over a week both times and I think I adopted a lot of customs from there too, mixed with my American customs.

**CT** *Anything in particular?*

**AC** The siesta. I'm not napping all the time, but when I have the chance. **CT**

### The Last Laugh (1924)

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VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

About you (hobbies and interests):

Photography, (cultures, languages),  
good music (shoegaze, dream pop)

What you're looking for in another person:

No commitments, Not monogamy,  
similar interests, girl colored hair,  
boy: beard

What you're *not* looking for in another person:

commitments, closed-minded  
peeps.

Alex Cortes filled out his application with a certain aversion to commitments.

About you (hobbies and interests):

I'm adventurous. love to travel, eat good  
food, perform, experience life, meet  
others and snuggle with strangers.

What you're looking for in another person:

Somebody who likes to eat, have a good  
time, intelligent, funny,  
GOOD Personality!

What you're *not* looking for in another person:

too interested in themselves, bad  
conversationalist.

Kaelie Ukrop thought her application was a bit dull, so "snuggling with strangers" was added to spice things up.





PHOTO COURTESY OF MEL KOBAN

Mel Kobran, a photography and film major, won a Virginia Museum of Fine Arts fellowship grant with her composite image of Iceland, Tangier Island and Yellowstone National Park

## Professors, students reap benefits of VMFA fellowships

**Samantha Foster**  
Spectrum Editor

VCUarts fiber professor Susan Iverson was awarded her first Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Visual Arts professional fellowship grant this year, after applying since she began teaching at VCU in 1975.

"I think with anything, and I always tell my students this too, different things like this, where there is a different juror every year, there's going to be a different selection every year," Iverson said. "If you're not selected once, you just apply again the next year and the next year and the next year, until you do ... get recognized."

The VMFA Visual Arts Fellowships for 2013-2014 were announced on Tuesday, Feb. 5, and many of the winners were VCU students and professors.

The jurors judge the submitted work based on its artistic merit, not

the medium in which it was created. Categories include crafts, drawing, film and video, mixed media, painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture and art history. Iverson submitted her work in tapestry under the category of crafts for the fellowship.

"At the university, we have the ability to make exactly what we want to make in our studio. It's not necessary for us to sell our work, which allows us to take some bigger risks than some artists working right now, not in an academic position," Iverson said. "That's why these grants are so wonderful. It gives people this free money to take some more risks, to do something different."

The money given for the fellowship must be used to further the artist's work and creativity, whether that means traveling for inspiration, buying supplies or creating material to give to galleries interested in their work.

Senior photography and film major

Mel Kobran was also among the graduate winners for the VMFA Visual Arts fellowship in the category of photography. Her submitted photograph is also featured as the banner on the top of the website for the fellowships.

"I submitted a series of composites from trips I took. The pictures were from a trip to Iceland, a trip to Tangier (Island) and then a trip to Yellowstone (National Park)," Kobran said. Composite images take different elements from pictures and combine them into one.

Kobran intends on using her fellowship funds to travel. "I have a friend who is Syrian and lives in Germany right now, and he's really in the gay rights movement."

VCUarts students are often encouraged to apply to VMFA fellowship because it's free and entry is restricted to Virginia residents. "It's part of what you do, you get yourself out there and apply for things," Iverson said. "If I tell my

students to do it, it seems like I should do it too."

The Fellowship Program was established in 1940 through donations and is still largely funded through those donations as well as annual gifts. To be awarded a fellowship grant, the artist must be a Virginia resident and fall into the categories of professional artists, graduate artists or undergraduate artists.

Each year, submissions are reviewed by anonymous jurors in the art community. With the names of the winners, the names of the jurors are also announced.

Fellowship applicants must apply within a certain bracket, including professional artists, non-degree-seeking students, graduate students and undergraduate students. Professional fellowships are awarded \$8,000. Graduate fellowships are awarded \$6,000 and undergraduate fellowships are awarded \$4,000. **CT**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SUSAN IVERSON

VCU fiber professor, Susan Iverson received a fellowship grant to pursue her work in tapestry, which Iverson has spent mors of her artistic career working on.





This past Thursday, ceramics students, professors and enthusiasts gathered at Quirk gallery for VCU's Craft and Material Studies Department's "Clay is for Lovers" silent auction and exhibition.

Quirk, an art gallery most known for its wearable art products, hosted the event. The auction and exhibition were a fundraiser for the students to go to the 47th conference of the National Council on the Education of Ceramic Arts, in Houston, Texas.

The conference features a host of distinguished artists, presentation and demonstrations, providing an educational opportunity for the students who attend.

Vases, cups, necklaces and figurines graced the tables of the gallery's main exhibition room. Viewers were invited to peruse the pieces and place bids on whichever they chose.

Andrea Keys-Connell, exhibiting artist and assistant professor in ceramics, explained that, though the exhibition appeared cohesive, the pieces varied greatly in terms of the artists' educational experience within the department.

"The show is a good mix. We have first-year ceramic students. Junior and senior undergrads and grad students have their pieces here. Some of the faculty even participated by donating their work," Keys-Connell said.

Megan Oost, a student of VCUart's ceramics department hopes that the money raised at the auction is enough to fund the trip.

"We all want to go. Everyone exhibiting wants to go on the trip," Oost said. "We decided to put our work out there. It's a giant collaborative effort."

"I hope to do something like this every year, that's one of my missions. It's really important to take students to conferences for that kind of exposure and experience," Keys-Connell said.

The gallery show, in addition to raising funds for the trip, also provided students with exposure as local artists and the opportunity to sell work in a professional environment.

"We owe a million and one things to Quirk," Keys-Connell said. "Quirk let us hold the event without any percentage requirement, so all profits go to the artists. Sixty percent goes to the NCECA trip, and forty percent goes to the artists themselves. We are really thankful." **CT**

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# Film festival confronts environmental issues

Alex Carrigan  
Staff Writer

The third annual RVA Environmental Film Festival invited environmental activists to learn more about the issues that they hold dear.

Last weekend, the historic Byrd Theater in Carytown screened several documentaries focused on environmental issues ranging from global warming and overconsumption to nuclear energy. The main part of the festival was held on Saturday, with several films shown over eight hours. The event was open to the public and films were shown back-to-back as a marathon.

Scott Burger, the political chair of the Falls of the James chapter of the Sierra Club, helped organize the event. He said he felt that Richmond needed to become more environmentally aware and hoped the festival would highlight the issue.

"Richmond has always been interested in film over the years, and it made sense to bring in a lot of ideas together, especially a lot of ideas from the outside that might not get a lot of coverage from the press," Burger said.

The festival opened on Saturday with "Mother Nature's Child," a short documentary detailing how nature plays a role in the education and development of children. The film was followed by

a documentary called "The Clean Bin Project," about a Canadian couple who made a challenge to spend a year living without making any waste.

Burger said the festival tends to choose films that are more likely to draw people's interest towards them. In

rate sculptures out of sticks he finds in the woods, and the film shows how he created several of his sculptures.

Penelope Maunsell, the co-director of "Bending Sticks," appeared at the festival for a brief question and answer session about the film along with executive

having a finished product. I think that makes for a more fascinating aspect of the work."

Other films included "Vegucated," which follows three New Yorkers who adopt a vegan diet for six weeks, and "The Atomic States of America," a documentary focused on the hazardous effects of nuclear energy and events like Three Mile Island and the Fukushima-Daichi Meltdown. Burger said he found it the most topical film at the festival because of the nuclear energy debates set to occur this year.

The final film for the evening was "Chasing Ice," a documentary nominated for two Academy Awards this year. Before the film, Glen Besa, director of the Virginia State Chapter of the Sierra Club, gave a brief introduction to the film.

"It is real evidence," he said. "There is physical evidence that global warming is real. We need to talk to people who don't know."

The festival continued Sunday with several more features, including the bee-centered film "Queen of the Sun" and the docudrama "The Age of Stupid." Burger hopes to continue the festival for the next few years, perhaps expanding the film to more theaters and with more feature films. **CT**

11  
THE NUMBER OF  
FILMS SHOWN AT THIS  
YEAR'S FESTIVAL

the past, they have shown films he said "go for the jugular," such as "The Cove," the 2009 Academy Award winning documentary about dolphin hunting in Japan.

After a series of short local films, the next film shown was "Bending Sticks," a documentary following the artistic process of artist Patrick Dougherty. Dougherty is known for making elabo-

producer Frank Konhaus. She revealed that the festival was the second time "Bending Sticks" was shown anywhere, having been released in Durham, N.C. in December.

"People want there to be a statue left in the town square," Konhaus said about the ephemeral nature of Dougherty's work. "A lot of the work is about the process of the work and not really about

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PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

VCU graduate and comic artist Reilly Brown visited Velocity Comics on Feb. 10 to sign posters and comics for comic enthusiasts.

# VCU graduate illustrates for Marvel comics

**Samantha Foster**  
Spectrum Editor

For those who grew up in the dark aisles of comic book stores, hoping to live as exciting of a life as Captain America, the dream of making a living with comic books is often far-fetched. But for comic artist and VCU graduate Reilly Brown, the dream became a reality.

Brown has been invited to speak to a crowd of VCU students and comic enthusiasts on Monday, Feb. 11 in the Commons Theatre.

He has drawn Spider-man, Deadpool and Hercules, among others, but they weren't just scribbled into the margin of notebooks.

Brown has worked as an illustrator with Marvel Comics and been in the comic industry for the past seven years. Brown has even started his own comic series, called Power Play, for which he designed and drew the characters. Brown has drawn characters like Deadpool and Hercules and admits that those characters are his favorite to draw with Marvel.

"Hercules is pretty much a giant frat boy, the original frat boy, and Deadpool is the offbeat, psychopath, want-to-be hero," Brown said.

Brown received his bachelor's degree in fine arts with a concentration in illustration in 2003 but said no one has ever asked to see his degree.

"To be honest, no one has ever asked me for my degree," Brown said. "In some industries, having the degree is everything. In the art world, it's not about your degree. It's about your portfolio."

Despite the lack of interest in his degree, Brown said that he does not regret his time spent at VCU.

"The experience I had at VCU was awesome," he said. "We were learning how to learn. Learning how to really think about art and to look at a piece of art. It's something that you do all the time in art school and no one else ever does that."

Brown will be speaking to VCU students and faculty about his career, including how he got his start in the comic book industry and what it is like to work in the field, both on the side of being an artist and behind the business.

Brown also plans to discuss what graduating VCU students can expect upon leaving school and where he thinks the medium of comic book arts is going, mainly toward the digital age.

Power Play takes advantage of digital technology and can be read on iPods and iPads.

"There are different things that you can do digitally than you can do with print, and you want to do a story that takes advantage of that," Brown said.

While Brown did comment on the "starving artist" lifestyle that students may lead after graduating and entering the world of comics, he is ultimately proud of his work.

"One of the fun things about working in comics is that you have this. I can visibly see all the work I have done. Every single second of my life is on this page," Brown said. "When you're the artist on a comic, you're not just the illustrator. You're the director." **CT**



PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

Reilly Brown has worked for Marvel comics and has drawn characters like Spider-man and Deadpool.



# OPINION

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ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS KINDRED

# Make public Wi-Fi a reality for Richmonders

**Shane Wade**  
Opinion Editor

Tired of paying for Internet service? Want to access your e-mail, social network or bank account anywhere you go in the city?

Then look to citywide WiFi.

Although a Washington Post story that recently reported on the Federal Commerce Commission's (FCC) planned proposal for free public WiFi services may have exaggerated how ready the FCC was to begin building super WiFi networks, it did serve as a catalyst for exploring its merits.

Despite budget cuts and an anti-spending political environment, local governments should still be looking forward to the best ways they can provide for and serve their constituents.

At a time when Saturday postal deliveries are being cut, the idea of setting up a citywide WiFi service sounds ludicrous. But cutting edge ideas usually are: It's time we explore the option and encourage local municipalities to offer their own WiFi services to constituents.

Whether free or low-cost, through the nature of free market capitalism, it'll force private providers to offer customers more competitive services or Internet access packets. If governments

charge for the service, they'll be able to make a small profit and allow the service to be cost-neutral.

For our city, it's unknown how much a comparable plan would cost because no officials have made strides to analyze the cost of the service's maintenance or the construction of transmittance infrastructure.

But other city models do exist.

When Minneapolis, Minn. implemented their own citywide WiFi service, they had some problems, both with the provider and the service. City departments didn't use it or properly allocate money for it, and concerns about the rate model and the physical size of the coverage area (59 square miles, which is about the same size as Richmond) made the service manageable, but a drain on the city.

But other cities, including Riverside, Calif. used Minneapolis for a model for their own success, refitting other public services, including police and fire departments, maintenance crews and garbage collectors, to use the WiFi service to improve and track their performance and travel efficiency.

We could do the same.

According to their official website, the Richmond Department of Public Utilities manages five utilities: natu-

ral gas, water, wastewater, stormwater and electric street lighting. They serve upwards of half a million residential and commercial customers, both within city limits and in the surrounding metropolitan area.

Why not add managing and maintaining Internet access/service to those responsibilities? Why shouldn't the city reach into the future, be a benevolent force and provide residents with a utility service that's becoming so commonplace in our society that cafes, airports and libraries offer it?

Several countries, including Costa Rica, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Finland and France, have implemented laws guaranteeing Internet access, whether free or reasonably-priced, to residents.

These aren't exactly the most financially-stable countries either.

If the act of governments censoring images, videos or documents on the Internet or downright banning access to certain websites qualifies as a violation of freedom of expression, then doesn't a government, federal or local, have some responsibility to be proactive in providing that service to constituents?

If any plan for citywide WiFi is to make strides, a consensual 'yes' must follow that question.

Even taking into account problems

with slow connectivity and security risks, exploring and seizing this opportunity would greatly benefit low-income families, college students and even tourists.

The Internet is such a vast arena of opportunity that its value cannot be measured, quantified or denied. But what we do know is that it's a major benefit for people, especially in an age where more and more jobs require that employees be capable of performing tasks using the Internet or require employees to be versed in computer sciences.

This is a chance to make our government work. It's a chance for Richmond to be proactive and progressive. We don't need the FCC to give us the go-ahead or for Congress to pass legislation declaring it a mandate. Citywide public WiFi, given time, will become a mainstay in American municipalities.

It would be incredible for a city with our rocky history and our lack of noteworthiness to be among one of the few cities in America to successfully implement public WiFi in a manner that benefits the public-at-large and improves the effectiveness of city employees.

While it wouldn't be a revolutionary move, it would be act as a stepping stone for future city projects. **CT**



# 2013 General Assembly no friend of environment

**Brad Pearce**  
Guest Contributor

Even though 2013 is the short session for the Virginia General Assembly, it has been a damaging one for environmentally friendly policies.

Despite the efforts of environmentalists and a small group of legislators, the General Assembly is delivering solid blows to the environment in Virginia. They've effectively repealed the state's only clean energy law — the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) passed in 2007 — by eliminating the incentives for this voluntary clean energy program.

They're also trying to repeal the gas tax. They tried to put an annual \$100 tax on hybrids; it's a small concession that this measure has since failed. The General Assembly seems to want more oil, more gas and more pollution.

The RPS is the state's only incentive for companies to invest in renewable energy. It had the original intent of bringing clean energy online in Virginia but it has since been used by companies, primarily Dominion, to profit from buying renewable credits from other states instead of being used to invest in local renewable energy sources.

To date, we don't have any utility-scale wind or solar power in Virginia. Dominion's long-term goals for renew-

able energy are modest — they put a bid in for an offshore wind block, but development may take up to 25 years.

We're losing jobs to our neighboring states like North Carolina and Maryland, which both have a mandatory RPS laws and mandatory investments in solar energy.

What makes so little sense is why most legislators would ignore the bills this session that would have fixed the RPS; indeed, it only makes sense in light of the larger attacks we've seen on the environment this session.

But as the biggest non-party donor to the General Assembly, it's clear that Dominion has a firm hold over the democratic process. According to the Virginia Public Access Project's website, Dominion's total campaign contributions is around \$640,000, with almost \$410,000 of that total donated to Republicans.

Environmentalists, including dozens of VCU students and faculty, sat in on and made themselves known at committee meetings, testified in front of legislators, picketed, rallied and even danced in a flash mob to make their message clear: We want real climate solutions and we want them now.

Students spoke decisively on the need for renewable energy jobs and the opportunity we have to pass on a cleaner environment to the next genera-

tion. Although we made an imprint with our creative actions and bright green T-shirts, it was clear that the backroom deals between legislators and lobbyists have closed us out.

Nonetheless, the bills supported by environmentalists lasted longer than usual.

Senate Bill 1269, for example, would have restricted a utility company's ability to reap profits from out-of-state renewable energy companies. The bill passed out of committee, but Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling and his Republican allies cast a tie-breaking vote to send the bill back to the Commerce and Labor committee last week, killing the bill for this session.

It's now clearer than ever that climate change is hitting home, especially here in Virginia, where temperatures and sea levels are rising. We need quick action to avoid a climate crisis and we need to demand that our legislators listen.

Being heard at the 2014 legislative session and during the next election is critical.

Getting involved with Green Unity on campus is a great step to take; another is reaching out to your legislators to let them know this issue is important to you before the current session ends. **CT**

the  
**ct**

**Mechelle Hankerson**  
Executive Editor

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## Inappropriate | by Sam Foster





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