



HOLDING ON

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BRIEFS

On the cover:

VCU junior Gabrielle Atkins visits the intersection where Carolina Perez was involved in a fatal accident.

Photo by Chris Conway

Local & VCU

Richmond bringing back boot for cars of ticket scofflaws

Using license plate recognition technology, the city and its parking contractor will begin booting cars with three or more outstanding parking tickets in April, after a lapse of more than a year.

“Parking-enforcement officers will operate vans with two cameras mounted on the roof to identify license plates of ‘scofflaw’ vehicles,” the city said in a news release. “Once the license-plate information has been verified, an orange boot will be attached to either the driver’s side front or rear wheel to immobilize the vehicle.”

The city says it has been lenient in collecting fees for delinquent tickets as Standard Parking Corp., which won a \$15 million contract with the city last year, implements changes. The company is responsible for handling parking enforcement, parking management, meter collection and other services.

No car has been booted since March.

Starting April 1, boots will be installed and the vehicles will get notices, with the full amount due, on the driver’s window and windshield. A \$60 processing fee will be added for placing the boot. Before the boot is removed, all delinquent fines and subsequent fees must be paid in full, the city said. The boot will be removed within 45 minutes of the city receiving payment.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Race for governor a dead heat, latest poll says

The 2013 Virginia governor's race is a statistical tie between Democrat Terry McAuliffe and Republican Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, according to the Quinnipiac University Poll released today.

McAuliffe, the McLean business executive and former Democratic National Committee Chairman, and Cuccinelli, the former state senator and Tea Party favorite, both poll at 38 percent in their quest for the Executive Mansion.

When Republican Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling is thrown into the mix as a possible independent candidate, McAuliffe widens the gap over Cuccinelli, 34-31, with Bolling drawing 13 percent support, but the race is still a statistical tie given the margin of error.

“At this point – although it certainly could change – the data indicates that Bolling’s GOP critics who say he can’t win as an independent but might tilt the result to McAuliffe could be on to something,” said Quinnipiac pollster Peter A. Brown.

Bolling, who pulled out of the GOP nominating fight late last year, has said he will decide March 14 whether to run as an independent.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Crackdown on texting while driving heads to governor

Legislation that would make texting while driving a primary offense and dramatically increase the fines for doing so cleared the Virginia Senate on Tuesday and now heads to Gov. Bob McDonnell for consideration.

“The governor will review this legislation when we receive it,” said McDonnell spokesman Tucker Martin. “However, he does continue to have concerns about beginning to list more specific activities that are prohibited while driving.”

Under House Bill 1907, a law enforcement officer could pull over a texting motorist without having to make the stop for another offense. Violation of the law would bring a fine of \$250 for a first violation and \$500 for a second or subsequent violation.

Under current law, texting while driving is a secondary offense, which means a motorist can be fined only if pulled over for another reason. A motorist can be fined \$20 for a first violation and \$50 for subsequent offenses.

Brief by the Richmond Times-Dispatch

National & International

U.N.: Drones killed more Afghan civilians in 2012

The number of U.S. drone strikes in Afghanistan rose sharply last year compared with 2011, the United Nations said Tuesday. The increase was a sign that unmanned aircraft are taking a greater role as Americans try to streamline the fight against insurgents while preparing to withdraw combat forces in less than two years.

Drones have become a major source of contention between the U.S. and countries such as Pakistan, where covert strikes on militant leaders have drawn condemnation and allegations of sovereignty infringements as family members and other bystanders are killed.

They have not been a prominent issue in Afghanistan, however. While drone attacks have occurred, they have largely been in support of ground troops during operations and have not been singled out by President Hamid Karzai’s administration in its campaign against international airstrikes.

The U.N. mission in Afghanistan said 506 weapons were released by drones in 2012, compared with 294 the previous year. Five incidents resulted in casualties, with 16 civilians killed and three wounded, up from just one incident in 2011.

The U.N. figures were released as part of its annual report on civilian casualties in Afghanistan. Overall, the full-year toll of civilian deaths in 2012 declined to 2,754, a 12 percent decrease from 3,131 in the same period a year earlier. It was the first time in six years that the civilian death toll dropped.

Brief by the Associated Press

Ohio woman claims she was fired for Obama vote

A southwest Ohio woman says she was fired three days after the November election because she voted for President Barack Obama.

The woman has filed a lawsuit in Montgomery County Common Pleas Court seeking damages starting at \$25,000 against Q-Mark Inc. and its president. The Dayton-based company is a sales firm representing manufacturers and defense contractors.

The Dayton Daily News reports that Patricia Kunkle alleges that company President Roberta Gentile told employees last year that Obama supporters would be the first to be terminated if he got re-elected.

The company says she was laid off for economic reasons and cited uncertainty over U.S. defense spending.

Kunkle had become a full-time employee of the company in May 2012 and says she never received any negative evaluations or disciplinary action.

Brief by the Associated Press

Report: Traffic deaths increase in 2012

Traffic fatalities rose 5 percent last year, according to an analysis of preliminary state data, reversing a seven-year decline in which the number of annual traffic deaths reached their lowest level in more than six decades.

An estimated 36,200 people died motor vehicle accidents in 2012, the National Safety Council said Tuesday. That is up from 34,600 deaths the previous year and is the first increase since 2004 to 2005.

Crash injuries requiring medical care also rose 5 percent last year to 3.9 million, the council said. The estimates are based on monthly fatality data the council receives from every state and the District of Columbia.

The council and other safety advocates attributed the increase in part to more driving tied to an improved economy and a mild winter last year.

While that may explain some of the increase, the rate of deaths also increased 4 percent to 1.23 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. The estimated annual population death rate was 11.49 deaths per 100,000 people, also up 4 percent.

Brief by the Associated Press

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NEWS

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PHOTO BY JESS LEE

VCU President Michael Rao spoke about tuition rates and university goals during an address to student leaders Tuesday.

Tuition likely won't go up next year, Rao says

Katelyn Boone
Staff Writer

Tuition probably won't increase for the 2013-14 school year, university President Michael Rao said in an address to student leaders on Tuesday. He noted, however, that tuition rates can't stay the same forever.

"It's unrealistic for any institution to not raise tuition (over time)," Rao said.

The forum gathered student leaders from the MCV and Monroe Park campus and a number of deans and provosts. Rao focused on his plans for the university and how he's trying to work around raising tuition while keeping VCU academically competitive.

Rao pointed out that while tuition would probably not change next year, operational costs inevitably increase every year. In a November budget forum, Vice President for Finance and Administration David Hanson predicted a 5.5 percent tuition increase for in-state students. Ultimately, it is the university's Board of Visitors that votes on whether tuition will go up.

The VCU budget offered by the Office of the President says that the 3.8 percent tuition increase last year was

"funding to address unavoidable costs such as increases in personnel, fringe benefits, costs to meet current enrollment in core course offerings, increased costs in utilities and for the operation and maintenance of new buildings coming on line in the next year, increased costs in library periodicals and licenses, and increases in the costs associated with compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act."

Rao spoke at length about a number of goals from the university's strategic plan, the Quest For Distinction. Rao said he wants to increase the value of a VCU degree and that one of his major goals is for VCU to become one of the top 50 public research universities in the nation. He also emphasized that it is VCU's goal to recruit and retain the best faculty available, and any new funds would more than likely be allocated back to the students through faculty.

"Some faculty members have had no salary increase in the past six years," Rao said. "Their contribution helps the university in positive ways. We want to treat them the same as they would be treated elsewhere."

The VCU budget update from the Office of the President says that the

number of full-time teaching faculty has declined from 88 per 1,000 students to 68 per 1,000 over the past 10 years.

Rao said he is committed to building the reputation of the school with a strong supporting staff without unnecessarily raising the cost of tuition and that he has been spending a lot of his time fundraising this past year. In 2012 the university raised \$100 million according to Rao, and he wants to continue to increase donations and further build the endowment.

After informally presenting this information to the students, Rao opened the floor for an open question-and-answer session, noting that the administration views student feedback as an important factor in decision-making.

"We take your advice seriously, even though we don't get a lot of it," he said. "It is critical for (students and faculty) to be with me on supporting this university – not only now but in the long run."

Students asked questions concerning a range of topics, including the future of housing developments of VCU and a desire for more interdisciplinary classes like those offered at VCU's da Vinci Center.

On housing, Rao said he has a vi-

sion of mixed-use property combining student housing with street-level retail space.

He noted that it's clear students are interested in interdisciplinary courses, but more feedback was necessary to get such courses off the ground.

"If you have an interest, give someone a call. I've heard (interest in interdisciplinary learning) so many times at VCU, that at this point it's more than anecdotal," Rao said. He added that he has hopes for an online class that would give a students a taste of the da Vinci Center experience.

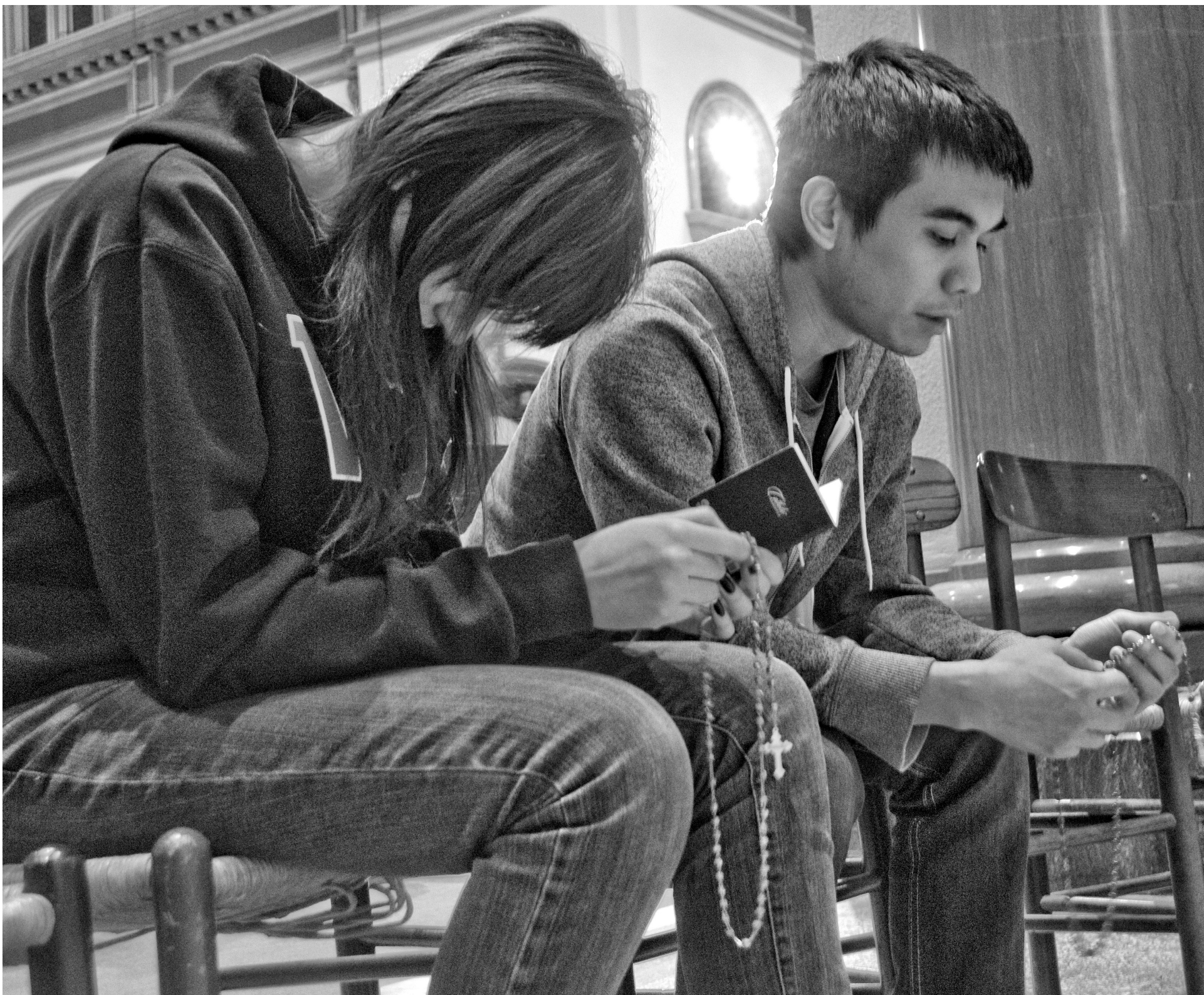
Tina Lowe, a second-year pharmacy student, admired Rao's willingness to be candid and direct with the community.

"I thought Rao did a good job answering everyone's questions, admitting when he didn't have an exact answer and not brushing anything off," Lowe said.

Yvette Pate, a junior studying business and international relations, noted that this kind of forum is as important for students as it is for the faculty.

"If you're involved, then (faculty and staff) will be engaged as well. It's your education, and they want to help," Pate said. **CT**





Gabrielle Atkins, left, prays with her head bowed at a Monday night rosary at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. Atkins was involved in the drunken driving accident last February that killed VCU student Carolina Perez.

One year later, impact of student's death still felt

Mark Robinson
Managing Editor

In the cavernous sanctuary of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Gabrielle Atkins clutches a strand of beige rosary beads and a prayer booklet in her hands.

With her head bowed, she closes her eyes, signs the cross and whispers the Apostles' Creed, then the Our Father. Three Hail Marys follow and a Glory be to the Father. She is one of two people at the scheduled Monday night rosary.

As dictated by the Catholic ritual, the first mystery is announced: "Agony in the Garden," the first of the five Sorrowful Mysteries. They dedicate it to all those lost in the past year.

The Our Father and a round of 10 Hail Marys follows. As each is com-

plete, Atkins slides her index finger and thumb up a bead on her strand. She rocks back and forth rhythmically, meditating. The pair's whispers echo in the empty labyrinth of pews. Two tea candles flicker in front of a cross at their feet.

They complete the Hail Marys and repeat the Glory be to the Father. Atkins kisses the cross on her rosary beads and another round of prayer begins. Her voice blends in unison with the friend next to her, but another voice is missing.

That voice would have belonged to Carolina Perez, a VCU student killed in a drunken driving crash last February. Before she died, Perez would lead the Monday night rosary at the Cathedral.

Atkins recalled how Perez, a native Spanish speaker, would fumble through

the prayers in English.

"She'd trip up on her English whenever she'd pray the rosary," Atkins said. "She'd just give up and do it in Spanish."

Hearing Perez recite the prayers in her native language gave Atkins a sense of a greater connection to the wider Catholic community. Now, the feeling is different.

"Whenever I hear it in Spanish, I hear it in Carolina's voice," she said, quietly. "And it hurts. It hurts now."

After a night of bar hopping with friends in Shockoe Bottom, Varinder "Vick" Chahal got into the driver's seat of his white Mazda to make the short trip home. While driving west on East Canal Street, he accelerated up the steep incline that crests at 3rd Street.

He continued through the intersection toward 2nd Street and a changing light.

A blue Toyota Yaris idled at a red light at the corner of 2nd and East Canal Streets. Gabrielle Atkins was at the wheel. Jan Garcia, a VCU student, sat next to her in the passenger's seat. Carolina Perez was in the backseat behind Garcia.

They were returning from dropping a friend off on Southside after a Fat Tuesday meal at The Village Café and a hangout session at the Catholic Campus Ministry. On the way home, Garcia suggested that Atkins take the Robert E. Lee Bridge home so they could see the lights of the city skyline.

At 12:37 a.m., the red light in front of

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

Atkins turned green. She put her car in first gear and accelerated. Already in the intersection, she looked over her right shoulder and saw a white car coming.

Chahal's Mazda sped through a red light at the intersection and collided with the Yaris on the back passenger side, where Perez was sitting. The impact sent Atkins' car careening across the intersection into a nearby brick building. In a parking lot adjacent to the intersection, a Richmond police officer saw the crash happen.

When paramedics arrived on the scene, they pulled Perez from the backseat first, then Garcia and Atkins from the front. They were rushed to MCV to receive treatment for their injuries. The whiplash from the crash fractured a vertebrae in Garcia's neck. Atkins suffered three broken ribs and a fractured scapula. Her liver and spleen were bruised. Both have since made a full recovery.

Perez died in the hospital. The 19-year-old sophomore was majoring in biology and minoring in chemistry and Catholic studies at VCU. She was a month shy of her 20th birthday.

Neither Chahal, nor any of the four passengers in his car were injured in the crash.

Chahal, a senior at VCU at the time, was charged with felony manslaughter, driving under the influence and refusing to submit to blood and breath tests. The police obtained a warrant for Chahal's blood, which showed his blood alcohol content at the time of the crash was 0.18, more than twice the legal limit.

According to his lawyer, Chahal thought he could beat the yellow light.

Three hundred and sixty-five days have passed since his daughter died, but Rogelio Perez still hurts.

In a short phone conversation, he relayed three things he wants people to know about his daughter and the cause of her death: He wants them to know Carolina was a nice girl. He wants them to know she always tried to be helpful to everyone. Most of all, he wants them to know they shouldn't drink and drive.

No one deserves to feel the pain he has felt since he lost his daughter, he said.

"This thing is going to be hard for all of my life," he said. "It's never going to disappear."

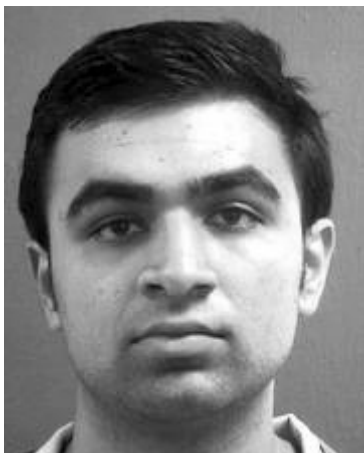


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE RICHMOND CITY JAIL

Varinder "Vick" Chahal is serving a 15-month sentence in the Richmond City Jail.



PHOTO COURTESY OF PRINCESS ANNE HIGH SCHOOL

Carolina Perez was killed in a drunken driving accident last February. She was a VCU student at the time of the crash.

After the accident, Rogelio and his wife, Floriana, went through a bout of depression. The couple's two sons, Rogelio Jr., 14, and Adam, 9, are without their big sister, but their father doesn't think they understand what happened to her.

"They will be more affected when they grow up a little bit more," he said. "I know when they realize exactly what happened, they're going to be more sad."

His family knows him as Varinder. His friends know him as Vick. The Richmond City Jail knows him as Offender No. 133877.

After facing up to 20 years for aggravated manslaughter, Varinder Chahal pleaded down in July to felony manslaughter and driving under the influence, halving the maximum sentence he could receive. In September, a judge sentenced Chahal to five years in prison with four years suspended. An additional three months were tacked on for the DUI.

He never completed his accounting degree at VCU and withdrew from school following the accident, according to his attorney Ed Riley.

Chahal has already served about five months of his 15-month sentence. He can have visitors three times a week, receive mail and play basketball during his allotted recreation time like he did at the Cary Street Gym.

If it was determined that Chahal would not harm himself when he arrived at the jail, he was likely placed in community custody, according to Jerry Baldwin, a spokesperson for the Richmond City Sheriff's Office.

A majority of the Richmond City Jail's nearly 1,400 inmates are placed in community custody, which is broken down into more than 10 groups of up to 130 inmates, Baldwin said. Each of these groups share a large cell, or tier.

Chahal is likely housed with others who have committed similar offenses, Baldwin said.

Inmates in community custody are woken up between 4 and 4:30 a.m. each morning. They wear a canvas, one-piece

zip-up jumpsuit each day. The color of the jumpsuit depends on the tier classification of the inmate.

Those who are not scheduled to go to court immediately leave the tier to eat a 15- to 20-minute breakfast in the mess hall. They aren't allowed to talk during the meal.

After breakfast, inmates return to their tier. The day's schedule depends on the privileges of the tier, which in turn depend on their custody level and behavior, Baldwin said.

Depending on their tier's privileges, inmates are allotted time to participate in substance abuse programs, go to the jail's library or meet with pastors or religious leaders. Recreation time, too, is afforded by privilege.

Chahal spent his 24th birthday behind bars, but could spend his 25th birthday with his family. He is expected to be released in August of this year, according to the Virginia Department of Corrections website.

Chahal denied a request for visitation from the Commonwealth Times.

In the time since her death, Carolina Perez has become the face of a cause on the VCU campus.

Cooperation among the VCU administration, University Wellness Center, Catholic Campus Ministry, Emerging Healthcare Leaders and others who knew Carolina Perez helped establish Carolina's Pledge, a denouncement of drunken driving in the VCU community.

Ninety-six people signed the pledge at the kick-off ceremony last April. Since then, hundreds more have heard Perez's story.

Linda Hancock, director of the University Wellness Center, visited 62 classroom sections of UNIV 101 last fall to teach bystander training to freshmen students. The goal, Hancock said, is to teach students how to overcome the bystander effect, the tendency of people to not speak up or help in an emergency situation when other people are present.

In Chahal's case, each of the four passengers in his car could have spoken up to prevent him from drinking and

driving, Hancock said.

In her mind, every student organization, faculty and staff member need to learn how to combat the bystander effect. The push is already underway. Students involved with Greek life and resident assistants have already received training and Hancock is hoping to reach more students with Perez's story.

"Carolina crystallized something that was going to happen anyway," Hancock said. "It gave all this power to something we needed to do."

The Well is hosting bystander training events open to the VCU community on Wednesday, March 13 from 12 to 2 p.m. at the Student Commons in the Forum Room and again from 8 to 10 p.m. in Virginia Rooms C and D. Another training event the following day will be held from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. in the Commons Theater.

Gabrielle Atkins will sit in the sanctuary of Sacred Heart Catholic Church on Friday at noon to mark the one-year anniversary of losing her friend: Feb. 22, 2013.

Atkins, who hopes to graduate from VCU in 2014, is worried that the initial impact of Perez's death hasn't produced the changes she and others hoped for after it happened. The VCU community is large and Perez was only one member of it, she said.

"(Carolina's death) had a great impact on me and several other people I know, but if you look at it in terms of 30,000 people ... she's just one person. It happened and it's very unfortunate and it's terrible."

"You have one person in jail, one person dead and other people being affected, but in the end, I feel like that's all it will be ... I don't want to say it's normal, but it's not shocking enough to people to keep a sense of urgency," she said.

While recovering from the crash, Atkins thought Perez's death would have a larger impact on the university. One year later, she's dealing with a preexisting anxiety disorder worsened by the emotional trauma of losing a friend and the day-to-day reminders of the void that's left.

Atkins still attends mass, rosary and Catholic Campus Ministry meetings at Sacred Heart. She still walks through the hallways of the classroom buildings she and Perez shared on campus. She still eats at The Village Café with friends and can recall the exact place she sat with Perez the night of their crash: the middle booth on the back wall by the bathrooms.

She's driven through the intersection at 2nd and East Canal streets and wondered how things could have been different, what she could have done differently.

When she sits down in the sanctuary at Sacred Heart on Friday, Atkins will remember a friend whose happiness she truly misses. One year later, a community will mourn with her a death that could have been prevented. **CT**

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CRIME LOG 2/15 - 2/18

FRIDAY, FEB. 15

Grand larceny Johnson Hall, 801 W. Franklin St. - A female student advised that an unknown person(s) removed an item from a secured location.

Alcohol violation 1000 W. Franklin St. - A male visitor was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol.

Assault/Hit and run 500 N. Belvidere St. - A male visitor was arrested for assault on a law enforcement officer and hit and run.

Grand larceny Cabell Library, 901 Park Ave. - A female employee advised that an unknown person(s) removed an item from an unsecured location.

Alcohol violation 1200 W. Broad St. - A male student was arrested for underage consumption of alcohol.

Assault Rhoads Hall, 710 W. Franklin St. - A female student advised that a known person physically assaulted her.

Grand larceny Rhoads Hall, 710 W. Franklin St. - A male student advised that an unknown person(s) removed an item from an unsecured location.

Larceny 609 Bowe St. - A complainant advised that an unknown person(s) removed an item from an unsecured location.

Drug violations Harrison House, 816 W. Franklin St. - A male visitor was arrested for possession of marijuana with intent to distribute. A male visitor was arrested for possession of marijuana.

Trespassing Monroe Park - A male visitor was arrested for trespassing.

Assault/Larceny Corner of Pine and West Franklin streets - A female student advised that a known person physically assaulted her and stole her property.

Damage to state property Cary and Belvidere Dorm, 301 W. Cary St. - A complainant advised that an unknown person(s) damaged a projector.

Drug violations 1400 block of West Marshall Street - A male visitor was arrested for possession of marijuana.

Alcohol violation 1600 block of West Cary Street - A male visitor was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol.

SATURDAY, FEB. 16

Grand larceny Johnson Hall, 801 W. Franklin St. - A female student advised that an unknown person(s) removed an item from a secured location.

Aggravated assault 300 S. Pine St. - A male student advised that an unknown person physically assaulted him.

Drug violations 1124 W. Grace St. - A female and male student were arrested for possession of marijuana.

SUNDAY, FEB. 17

Alcohol violation 1100 block of West Clay Street - A male visitor was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol.

Alcohol violation 500 block of North Harrison Street - A female visitor was arrested for being drunk in public.

Alcohol violation/Drug violation Gladding Residence Center, 711 W. Main St. - A male student was arrested for underage consumption of alcohol and possession of marijuana.

Drug violation 1110 Grove Ave. - A male visitor was arrested for possession of a Schedule II Narcotic and possession of a Schedule I Narcotic.

Harassment Grace Harris Hall, 1015 Floyd Ave. - A female student advised that a known person harassed via computer.

Alcohol violation Johnson Hall, 801 W. Franklin St. - A male student was arrested for underage consumption of alcohol. Another male student was arrested for underage consumption/possession of alcohol.

Weapons violation Corner of North Harrison Street and Floyd Avenue - A male visitor was arrested for illegal possession of a firearm.

MONDAY, FEB. 18

Alcohol violation Rhoads/Brandt Hall, 710 W. Franklin St. - A male student was arrested for underage consumption of alcohol.

Grand larceny Rhoads Hall, 710 W. Franklin St. - A male student advised that an unknown person(s) removed an item from a secured location.

Alcohol violation Brandt Hall, 710 W. Franklin St. - Two female students were arrested for underage consumption of alcohol.



SPORTS

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PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

Senior Troy Daniels had two early fouls and had just eight points on 2-of-5 shooting in Tuesday's 76-62 loss to Saint Louis. File photo from Feb. 16.

Billikens bludgeon Rams, grab first in A-10

Zachary Holden
Staff Writer

VCU's quest for an undefeated month came to an end Tuesday night.

The Saint Louis Billikens took down the upbeat and freshly ranked No. 24 Rams 76-62 in a game that wasn't really close, aside from the opening minutes.

With the outright lead in the Atlantic 10 on the line, it was imperative for the Rams to get a tough win on the road. Entering the game, VCU led the A-10 in scoring offense (77.5 points per game) while Saint Louis led the conference in scoring defense (61.6 points per game).

Just over five minutes into the game, Saint Louis had a slim 11-8 lead. Over the course of the next 10 minutes and

33 seconds, VCU wouldn't score a single field goal. In fact, the Billikens out-scored the Rams 21-1 in that span.

The Rams would pick their scoring up over the final four minutes and enter halftime down 38-21. At the half, Juvonte Reddic led the team with seven points and six rebounds.

VCU usually comes out of the break on some sort of run and forces their opponent to recover from it or get left in the dust. However, in St. Louis, no such run came about.

The closest the Rams would come in the second half was at the 16:20 mark when they were within 11 points. However, that wouldn't last long and within 10 minutes, the Billikens had extended it back to a 26-point lead and all but

sealed the win.

Four Billikens were in double-digits, but the team was mainly led by the trio of Mike McCall Jr., Dwayne Evans and Jordair Jett who combined for 45 points and 15 rebounds. Jett added all 16 of his points in the second half.

Reddic, Treveon Graham and Melvin Johnson were in double-digits, led by Reddic's 18 points. Reddic and Graham also had 12 and 10 rebounds respectively which marked the fifth time this season VCU has had two players with a double-double in a game.

Often important contributors, Briante Weber and Rob Brandenburg, were ghosts for the whole game and had a combined four points, four rebounds and six assists.

Six Rams were in foul trouble by the end of the game. Darius Theus and Brandenburg had four each while Troy Daniels, Weber, Graham and Johnson all had three fouls.

VCU, normally averaging 12.4 steals per game, only recorded five against Saint Louis. The Billikens countered the usually overwhelming HAVOC style of play, which directly influenced their one-sided victory.

The win gives Saint Louis a game advantage over VCU and Butler for the top spot in the A-10.

Saint Louis travels to Butler on Friday which could shake up the A-10 standings even more, while VCU travels to Xavier on Saturday. **CT**



Pole vaulter Justine Dutton pushing for greatness

Daniel Park
Contributing Writer

Of all the New Year's resolutions and promises to be kept, it took Justine Dutton 12 days to break a special goal close to her heart: a personal record in women's pole vaulting for VCU Track and Field.

But if achieving her New Year's resolution meant toppling her records from previous seasons and replacing them with her new record-breaking pole vault jump of 3.45 meters (11 feet, 4 inches), the determined Dutton will train vigorously to finish on top — a position she hasn't placed in over a year.

From Jan. 12-26, Dutton recorded three consecutive jumps of 3.45 meters, once at the Captain's Invitational in Newport News, Va. and at both meets held in Annapolis, Md. — the George Mason Patriot Games and the Navy Quad event — the latter being where the record was first attained.

"It is frustrating, jumping that same height because my all-time (personal record) in high school was 11 feet, 6 inches," Dutton said.

"In college they go by different standards and increments so 3.45 meters is 11 feet and I'm right there," she continued.

"Just watching the videos I'm over (the bar), it's just like something small, but I know the next time that I do a (personal record), it's not going to just be over by one height. I hope it'll be by two heights."

Dutton has a passionate involvement with the VCU Athletics program, which she hopes to continue beyond her athletic career. She looks forward to applying for the Sports Leadership Program and wishes to pursue a career in sports marketing or promotion.

Dutton, an active member of the VCU Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), pairs up with her team member, Andrew Shipp, to brainstorm ideas for future events on how to raise funds for the VCU Massey Cancer Center.

Dutton made the leap to Division I

athletics from Caroline High School in Milford, Va., and the transition has been smooth. She gives most of the credit for her success to the relentless dedication of her mother.

Growing up, Dutton was driven to gymnastics practice five days a week, four hours a day. Her supportive mother chauffeured daily to the only facility available to accommodate her daughter's training — an hour and 30 minutes away.

"Practice was from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. I always had dinner, homework in the car, always on the go," she said.

After breezing through the levels

"THE NEXT TIME THAT I DO A (PERSONAL RECORD), IT'S NOT GOING TO JUST BE OVER BY ONE HEIGHT. I HOPE IT'LL BE BY TWO HEIGHTS."

-Justine Dutton

approved by the USA Gymnastics Association, she skipped No. 6, (a compulsory level) and faced one of her biggest challenges: She was forced to stop gymnastics after sustaining a back-fracture injury in 2007. She retired as a gymnast after level eight, (anything over level 10 in gymnastics is considered Olympic-skilled) and after a one-year hiatus, she was introduced to pole vaulting as a high school junior.

She fell in love immediately, as the motions of pole vaulting were fairly similar to the moves she's rehearsed through her life as a gymnast.

In her final season at Caroline High School, the only high school in the county, Dutton capped off her illustrious career by finishing in first place at the VHSL Group AA State Outdoor Track and Field Championships.

But Dutton is still not finished paying her dues.

Throughout her ups-and-downs, Dutton competed against recurring back pains.

Her durable 5-foot-5 frame withstood competition after competition, but the biggest obstacle she had to overcome started her first year at VCU.

One of the bedrock influences in Dutton's life, her aunt, was diagnosed with breast cancer in the fall of 2010. Treatment began immediately.

In June 2011, Dutton's aunt participated and completed the Susan G. Komen race in Washington, D.C. Life was seemingly going smooth as Dutton's aunt again crossed the finish line the following summer.

However, in fall 2012, she lost her battle with cancer.

Dutton visited her aunt frequently and shared a deep bond with her mother's youngest sister. Since her freshman year, the pole-vaulter's entire college career consisted of competing all while getting tested for three biopsies. All her test results were negative.

Such life experiences for Dutton were seeds that have grown into the taproot of her fortitude.

Whether it's cheering her brother on as he hits home runs in high school, or sitting through the frigid temperatures to watch her sister cheerlead, she said that rich memories of sports and family will harbor in her heart as she trains for



PHOTO COURTESY OF VCU ATHLETICS

Justine Dutton finished eighth at the Atlantic 10 Indoor Championships on Feb. 17 with a 3.30 meter vault.

the future.

Dutton finished eighth at the Atlantic 10 Indoor Championships in Kingston, R.I. on Feb. 17.

She posted a height of 3.30 meters, short of her personal record but was among VCU's top scorers at the event.

She will attempt to break her elusive record in the team's next event at the ECAC/IC4A Track and Field Championships in Boston from March 1-2. **CT**

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Baseball to host Saint Joseph's this weekend



Junior Bill Cullen is 2-for-6 on the season with two runs scored.

BASEBALL WEEKEND SCHEDULE

FRIDAY	VS. SAINT JOSEPH'S	(3 P.M.)
SATURDAY	VS. SAINT JOSEPH'S	(2 P.M.)
SUNDAY	VS. SAINT JOSEPH'S	(1 P.M.)

Staff Reports

The VCU baseball team will play its home opener Friday against Saint Joseph's as the Rams and Hawks begin a weekend series in Richmond.

The Rams are coming off a 2-0 start to the season which began last weekend at the Elon Invitational in Burlington, N.C.

VCU beat Boston College 4-1 on opening day on the arms of sophomores Heath Dwyer and Matt Lees. Dwyer tossed six innings of one-run baseball while allowing four hits and striking out four in his first win of the season. Lees entered in the seventh inning and retired nine straight batters to close the game for the Rams, earning his first save.

After being snowed out on Saturday, VCU returned to the field Sunday and defeated tournament host Elon 6-2. Redshirt senior Taylor Buran hit a three-run home run to break the game

open in the fourth inning and senior pitcher Ryan Farrar earned his first win of the season. He threw five innings and gave up one run.

Saint Joseph's had a successful first weekend as well, winning a three-game series against a quality opponent in Stetson. The Hawks won 5-2 on Friday and 5-4 on Saturday before missing out on a sweep in a 7-6 loss Sunday. Saint Joseph's offense had an impressive showing in its first weekend series, combining for 34 hits in the three games.

The presumed pitching match-up for Friday's game between the Rams and Hawks will be Dwyer against Kyle Mullen, both of whom earned wins on opening day.

Start times for this weekend's games at The Diamond will be Friday at 3 p.m., Saturday at 2 p.m. and Sunday at 1 p.m. Though both schools are members of the Atlantic 10, the series will go in the books as a non-conference matchup. **CT**

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SPECTRUM

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Rex Kennedy succeeds in his dance classes, including his ballet class, taught by his VCU Dance Now choreographer Courtney Harris

Yearlong Audition: Rex Kennedy excels in dance program

Samantha Foster
Spectrum Editor

Rex Kennedy came to VCU as an experienced dancer, having gone to Denver School of the Arts in high school and spending the past two summers at American Dance Festival at Duke University.

Since arriving at VCU, Kennedy has already made an impact on his professors through his classes and work with VCU Dance Now.

VCU Dance Now is an annual production held by the dance department. The dance pieces are choreographed by faculty and visiting guest artists and danced by students. In August, dance students must participate in the three-hour audition process. Kennedy was cast as an understudy for the piece his current ballet and dance history teacher, Courtney Harris, choreographed.

"I was very excited when I (first) saw Rex," Harris said. "I just thought, 'This kid is really gifted. He's talented. He's really interesting to watch.' I like his innate way of moving. ... He's very thoughtful in his approach to dance ... he thinks before he moves."

Kennedy said he thinks a lot of his

success comes from him continuing to be himself as a dancer.

"I've been trying to stay really true to myself," Kennedy said. "There's a big push in the department to be technical dancers but I've been really strong in what I want to do and what I want to be doing in class and where I want to see myself go."

Harris cast Kennedy into an understudy role for her piece titled "Tracking" in VCU Dance Now, knowing that very few freshmen are normally selected for VCU Dance Now. Since Kennedy is one of only five freshmen this year, Harris saw this as an opportunity for Kennedy to learn more about the process of partnering in dance and the rehearsal process.

"(Since) he's a freshman, this will be a great opportunity for him to work on a duet," Harris said. "He's not going to be understudying a piece with 12 or 15 people in the dance. He's understudying a duet which has a different responsibility. I knew that there would be a lot of partnering in the dance, and I thought that this would be good for him."

Harris's work for VCU Dance Now is a duet, but after two understudy partners for Kennedy dropped out from

VCU Dance Now for different reasons, Kennedy has taken on a very different role in the dance studio.

Kennedy has become a rehearsal assistant to Harris, offering his thoughts and suggestions to the dancers and occasionally playing his iPod to keep the energy lifted while Harris worked directly with the dancers.

"He ... has been helpful in giving notes to the cast, helping with the quality of the movement, the timing of the movement. The intention and artistic choices made," Harris said. "He was very helpful in giving me a second pair of eyes."

Harris had considered letting Kennedy and his understudy partner perform a few shows out of the four days of shows for VCU Dance Now. Both said they were disappointed when they realized this wouldn't happen.

"It would be really nice to perform it and it's crushing me a little that I didn't get to, but I've gotten really good relationships with Courtney and (the dancers)," Kennedy said. "It's been good to be more a part of a process as a rehearsal assistant because I've never been in that part before."

In addition to the faculty choreog-

raphers, VCU Dance Now invited two guest artists to choreograph and work with the students for two weeks last semester. This year, those artists are Stephanie Martinez and Kate Weare, but the auditions for their pieces were opened only to juniors and seniors, leaving Kennedy out of the process.

"I wasn't happy with it because I was looking forward for her to come and being able to work with guest artists and auditioning for them and making connections right off the bat," Kennedy said.

Despite his disappointment and frustration about not being able to audition for higher level pieces in the department, Harris said she believes that Kennedy still has a long future ahead of him in the dance department at VCU and after his time at VCU.

"His body is very capable, but he's also a very beautiful and artistic mover. He is where I would expect a freshman to be," Harris said. "He's a little green right now, but by the end of his four years here, he'll be quite astounding and there will be dance companies that want to snatch him up." **CT**

PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

Spike Lee to speak at VCU

Samantha Foster
Spectrum Editor

Spike Lee will be coming to VCU for Black History Month to discuss his rise to fame in the film industry.

Lee will be speaking to a sold-out audience of 400 VCU students, faculty and staff on Feb. 21 at the Student Commons. The free tickets were gone within a few days after they were made available on Feb. 4 through Breakpoint in the Commons.

Lee's appearance at VCU is sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, the Black Caucus at VCU, the Department of Media, Art and Text, the College of Humanities and Sciences and the VCU division for Health Sciences Diversity.

Faith Wilkerson, the interim director of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, said she believes that the students and faculty will be interested to hear Lee's speech because of his previous works.

"He's done some great classic films that I think not only some (of) the faculty and staff can appreciate but also some of the students in terms of the documentaries," Wilkerson said.

Spike Lee is well-known as an American film director, but has also worked as a producer, writer and actor. Lee has worked as a producer with over 35 movies, including the documentary "Malcolm X."

Lee won an Emmy Award and two Academy Award nominations for his film "Do the Right Thing" and his documentary "4 Little Girls."

Wilkerson also said that the majors and interests of students were considered when choosing a speaker for Black History Month.

"We thought about our film students ... and then just our general students who grew up watching his movies,"

Wilkerson said. "(We wanted) someone that the students would want to hear and definitely someone of notoriety. We want to be sure that they're excited."

When choosing speakers, Wilkerson said that the Black Caucus tries to find a person who will be successful in "reaching out to the younger, more urban environment and being able to talk to the students about things that really impact them."

Past speakers for Black History Month at VCU have included author and professor at Georgetown University, Michael Eric Dyson, and BET personality Jeff Johnson.

"Every year (Office of Multicultural Student Affairs) tries to pick a theme for Black History Month and this year our theme was to highlight black (people) in film," Wilkerson said. "We thought about Spike Lee and everyone kind of got excited, so we talked it over with our co-sponsor, the Black Caucus."

For his speech at VCU, Lee has been given free rein to discuss what he'd like, but it will most likely be a conversation about how he has gotten to where he is now and about the films and documentaries he has produced and directed, Wilkerson said. Wilkerson also said that Lee will also be discussing "all the hardships in terms of being an African American film director and even an actor."

In its entirety, Lee's appearance at VCU cost \$38,000, a cost that was covered by the Student Government Association.

The Black Caucus solicited funding from the Monroe Park SGA, whose appropriations committee has special funding for student organizations that wish to plan an activity outside of their normal activities and programs. **CT**



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The background of the entire page is a black and white photograph of a large stack of newspapers. The newspapers are piled haphazardly, with various headlines and mastheads visible. A large, white rectangular text box is centered on the page, containing the main title and a paragraph of text. The text box has a thin black border.

CT ELECTIONS

Elections will be taking place for the positions of *managing editor* and *executive editor* from March 17 — March 18. If you are interested in running, contact executive editor Mechelle Hankerson at editor@commonwealthtimes.org by March 1 for more information.

Friday Night Live becomes No Shame again

Samantha Foster
Spectrum Editor

At Friday Night Live last week, the hosts announced that the student variety show would be buying the copyright and returning to its original name, No Shame.

Friday Night Live will be buying the copyright to the name No Shame, which should cost \$300, said Sarah Worden at last Friday's Friday Night Live, who works as the stage manager for No Shame and is on the SALT board.

Over the last two Friday Night Lives, which are held every other Friday, those involved in Friday Night Live, which includes VCU students from any major, raised more than \$200 through audience donations and auctioning off regular performers to do household chores, like washing dishes and cars. Since Friday Night Live is a free event, the copyright will be bought using only donated money.

At the auction last Friday night, Shane Moran, also known as the Cabana Boy, was sold to an audience member to wash their car or dishes without a shirt. Other auction items included a resume revision by Worden, a shirtless dinner made by one of the members of the regular act "The Armada Chef" and an evening spent cuddling with a bas-

set hound.

Friday Night Live changed their name from No Shame at the end of the spring 2012 semester. The name No Shame was taken from the national organization, No Shame Variety Show, but due to copyright laws, they were not able to keep the name. VCU's No Shame is based off of the original organization but allows its participants more time to perform their chosen talent which can include activities like reading poetry, playing an instrument or acting.

At the beginning of last semester, when the new name Friday Night Live was announced, it was ushered in with a new theme song, complete with signs to help the audience learn the new words.

Since No Shame will be returning, the original theme song will also be making a comeback. Last Friday night, all the performers and the hosts, Erin Adelman and Caitlin Carbone, sang the No Shame theme on stage, while most of the audience sang along to the familiar tune.

While those involved in No Shame declined to comment on the name change until the copyright has been bought, but they did say that the change should be made official soon. **CT**



PHOTO BY AMBERLYNN TABER

Friday Night Live regular Shane Moran was auctioned off last Friday to wash the buyer's car. All the money from the auction went to fund the name change of Friday Night Live to No Shame.

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OPINION

In this section:

Raising minimum wage bad for businesses • 14
Perez's death still a reminder to students • 15



ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS KINDRED

The minimum wage is maximum ignorance

Charles Wilson
Staff Columnist

President Obama recently delivered his State of the Union address to lay out his policies for building a stronger future for the country. One of his proposals included raising the minimum wage to \$9 an hour from its current \$7.25 an hour.

The supporters of the change in minimum wage believe \$7.25 an hour is too low for any person to live on and elevating it would provide a higher income to workers, increasing their purchasing power and economic opportunity.

After all, working 40 hours a week, 50 weeks a year at an hourly wage of \$7.25 provides a meager income of \$14,500. Therefore, a simple way to reduce poverty is through a hike in the minimum wage.

So, if reducing poverty is as easy as passing a law, then why is there so much opposition toward the minimum wage or an increase in its rate?

That question can be answered in any introductory microeconomics course,

which demonstrates that a government-imposed minimum wage creates unemployment through its effects on supply and demand. Since the demand for labor falls as wages rise, fewer workers will be employed at a higher price.

What this really means is that firms are unwilling to pay a worker more than their productivity merits.

Since businesses aren't in business for charity, they usually avoid paying a worker more than they are contributing to output and look toward alternative means of increasing production.

One way businesses respond to the minimum wage is through substituting capital for labor. It is well-documented that a large contributor toward the evaporation of low-end jobs is due to this process. For instance, grocery stores continue to replace cashiers with self scanners.

Businesses also bypass the minimum wage by hiring skilled workers over unskilled. Instead of paying two workers the new minimum wage of \$9 an hour, they could potentially pay one skilled worker to produce a similar level of out-

put, but for a price that's lower than \$18 an hour (the cost of hiring two unskilled workers at the new minimum wage).

In other words, the minimum wage disproportionately harms the individuals the law intends to help, and that is predominantly low educated and skilled individuals.

Just look at the unemployment rate of teenagers, which stands at a sky-high rate of 23 percent. Economic research done by University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman showed that the inception of the minimum wage was responsible for the large disparity in employment levels among teens and adults.

Many of our youth, particularly those who live in the inner cities, find entry-level employment nearly impossible. The greatest cost of not having your first job is not the loss of income, but the lack of opportunity to acquire the necessary skills and responsibilities that promote a good work ethic, the basis of a successful career.

According to a recent editorial in the Wall Street Journal, which cites Census Bureau data, 60 percent of people

who were in poverty last year weren't employed. There's no doubt that the minimum wage is partly responsible for such a staggering statistic. Almost every economic study has confirmed the direct connection between higher minimum wages and lower employment. Obviously, an individual is worse off making \$0 an hour than \$5 or \$6.

Think of it this way: if the minimum wage is such a good idea, then why not raise it to, say, \$25 an hour?

That's because governments can't legislate prosperity. Simply passing a law making it illegal for businesses to hire workers below a certain wage does nothing to improve economic outcomes, but undermines the very individuals that have the least.

Obama's call for a \$9 an hour minimum wage ignores the most basic laws of economics: supply and demand. For the sake of the low-skilled worker, the minimum wage should be abolished, not increased. **CT**

Be change by making changes

Shane Wade
Opinion Editor

It's been a year since the death of one of our own, Carolina Perez.

Perez was killed in a collision last year on Feb. 22, when former VCU student, Varinder "Vick" Chahal drunkenly ran a red light and struck the vehicle Perez was in, causing it to spin into a nearby building.

In response to the tragedy, VCU met with student body representatives to establish "Carolina's Pledge," a student-driven denouncement of drunken driving, altered the code of student conduct to allow the university to be more responsive to similar incidents and worked with the VCU Police Department and Richmond City Police to periodically set up sobriety checkpoints on and near campus.

The university has also done a great deal to prevent similar tragedies. In 2011, VCU was selected by the U.S. Department of Education to receive a grant to bolster campus alcohol and drug abuse prevention programs. Recently, VCU also received a \$9,000 grant through the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control to combat underage drinking on-campus. VCU PD has hosted a number of student outreach programs and information events for student organizations, particularly fraternities and sororities.

In striving to educate students about the danger of alcohol consumption, in conjunction with redoubling enforcement efforts that apprehend those that drink and drive, the administration shows their commitment to students, the campus and the general public.

As an open campus and an integrated part of Richmond, the university has a unique responsibility that most other

college campuses don't have. VCU is responsible not just for ourselves, but the neighborhoods adjacent to ourselves, neighborhoods full of both students and Richmond residents. The actions we take have a direct effect upon them.

We must remain vigilant of the dangers around us. Although the Wellness Center reported in fall 2012 that 74 percent of students have 0-4 drinks when they go out and 70 percent of students drink alcohol fewer than five days a month, there's still a good 30-26 percent of the student body that we need to be cognizant of. As we learned with Perez's death, it only takes one person's mistake to end a life and affect us all.

At a university with just over 30,000 students, it's sometimes difficult to remember that while we're all individuals, we're also all members of the same community. We are, whether we realize or not, closer than we think. I didn't personally know Carolina, but we lived in the same building our freshman year. We weren't friends, but we were here, together, living and interacting in the same environment.

Generally speaking and looking from a wider scope, we weren't all that different. We shared friends and acquaintances. We shared anxieties. We shared aspirations. All of us do. The arbitrary lines of division that segregate us, be they departmental, classification, gender, age, ideology, religion, are just that: arbitrary.

Once we stop thinking about ourselves as separate entities occupying the same space and begin to think of ourselves as we truly are — a living, vibrant, diverse and interconnected community of individuals — we can make the change necessary to be a more deliberate and thoughtful society. When we start to think of each other as allies

as opposed to adversaries, we'll be more likely to stop someone, some stranger, from making a stupid mistake that could have tragic consequences, like drinking and driving.

You don't have to know someone to save someone. You don't have to be noticed to be a difference. It's the small acts and daily deeds of ordinary folks.

That's how change is made. **CT**

Corrections

In the Feb. 18 issue of the Commonwealth Times, the story titled "Students create class for web design, coding" included incorrect information.

The story reported that web design courses in the graphic design department were taught only in the spring and summer. The department actually offers two sections of GDES 308 Web Page Design each fall and spring semester. It also offers an additional GDES 491 Advanced Web Design in the spring and one in the summer.

The CT regrets this error.

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Mechelle Hankerson
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Shane Wade
Opinion Editor

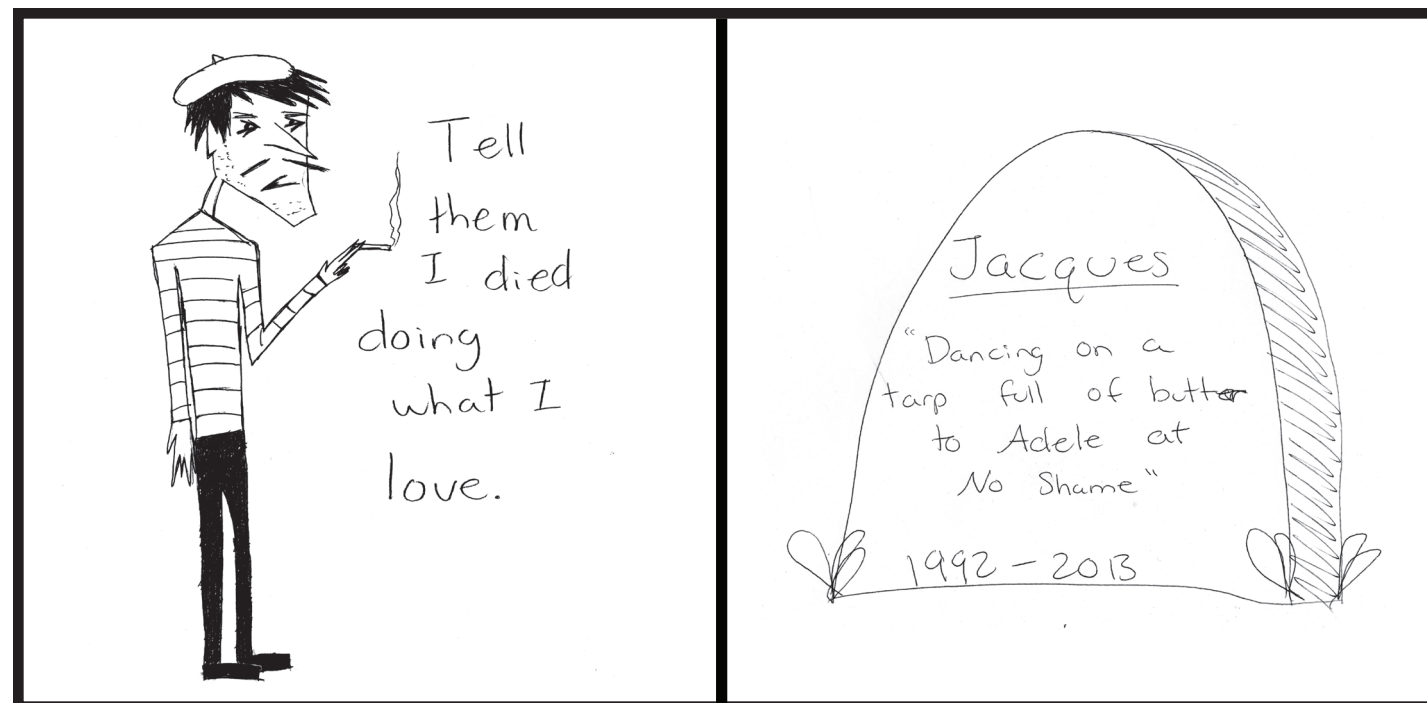
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Inappropriate | by Sam Foster





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