

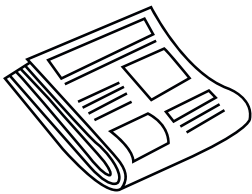


IT'S BACK

A complete guide to the 2013-14 men's basketball season

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briefs

LOCAL

VCU to shuttle students on Election Day

VCU’s parking and transportation office will assist students Tuesday, November 5, by transporting them to and from local polls from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a shuttle bus that will run approximately every 30 minutes.

Last year, VCU along with the student run organization “Ram the Vote” transported students to the polls. This year, the task has been passed on to VCU Parking and transportation.

“We want to be a part of encouraging students to get out and vote,” said assistant manager of the VCU office of Transportation and Parking Robin Mack “That’s primarily what we’re trying to do.”

Mack said there is no funding source identified for this project so the cost will come from their transportation budget.

Pick-up areas are located in front of the Cabell Library and the Larrick Student Center with signs saying “Ram the Vote” to direct students where to go. The buses go to George Washington Carver School, Dominion Place and Main Library.

Brief by Janeal Downs

Officials demand university action following racial profiling discussion

Students and staff called for action against potential racial profiling during a panel discussion hosted by the Black Education Student Association on Monday, Oct. 28. VCU Police chief John Venuti and others presented topics and answered questions by students about the potential for racial profiling around campus.

The “ambiguous” nature of recent VCU alerts prompted the panel discussion, said panel moderator Susan Gooden, Ph.D., executive director of the Harris Leadership Institute at VCU.

Venuti presented alongside VCU alumni and current employee Stephen Davenport, Kevin Harris, assistant vice president of academic and diversity affairs, and Aashir Nasim, Ph.D., department chair of African American Studies at VCU.

Brief by The Commonwealth Times

Students weigh in on ADA discussion

Students and staff raised questions on the details of the Americans with Disabilities Act with the leaders of VCU’s Division of Inclusive Excellence on Wednesday, Oct. 30.

Paula McMahon, an ADA coordinator at VCU, led the discussion.

Participants discussed the impairments or afflictions officially recognized as disabilities according to the ADA, violations of the ADA and if VCU has properly accommodated disabled students and employees according to the law.

The ADA defines an individual with a disability as a person with a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities including walking, seeing, hearing, speaking and more, according to McMahon’s presentation.

Brief by The Commonwealth Times

NATIONAL

Gunman targets TSA in Los Angeles airport shooting

A man totting a semi-automatic rifle, some 150 rounds of ammunition and a grudge against TSA workers shot his way past a security checkpoint at Los Angeles International Airport in a deadly rampage that sent hundreds of travelers fleeing in terror.

When the shooting stopped, a Transportation Security Administration officer was dead. Gerardo I. Hernandez, 39, became the first TSA officer in the agency’s 12-year history to be killed in the line of duty.

Five other people were hurt, including two other TSA employees and the gunman, identified as Paul Ciancia, 23, of Pennsville, NJ. He was shot four times by airport police and remained hospitalized but there was no word on his condition.

Brief by the Associated Press

Pakistan slams U.S. for killing Taliban leader

The Pakistani government Saturday accused the U.S. of sabotaging peace talks with domestic Taliban fighters by killing their leader in a drone strike, as the militants began the process of choosing a successor.

The rise in tension, even though the U.S. took out Pakistan’s No. 1 enemy, shows just how complicated the relationship between the professed allies can be. The two repeatedly have clashed over issues such as drone strikes and Pakistan’s alleged support for militants fighting U.S. troops in neighboring Afghanistan.

The Pakistani Taliban leader slain Friday, Hakimullah Mehsud, was a ruthless figure known for a deadly attack on a CIA base in Afghanistan and a bloody campaign that killed thousands of Pakistani civilians and security personnel.

Brief by the Associated Press

Local restaurants look to capitalize on basketball season

MATTHEW LEONARD
Contributing Writer

The Siegel Center may play host to thousands of die-hard basketball fans for each home game, but before the clock starts and after the final buzzer sounds, fans give a welcomed influx of business to local restaurants.

Basketball fans’ desire to have a place to call their own has crowds to Baja Bean Co. at 1520 W. Main St.

Brandon Alness, a junior member of the Rowdy Rams, said his decision to make Baja Bean a regular game-day destination was a simple one.

“Baja Bean was the only place that would really pay the necessary money to get the live streams from other school’s athletic websites,” Alness said.

Jeff Allums, the owner of Baja Bean, said the trend of students watching games in his restaurant flourished during the team’s 2011 Final Four run. Once that season was over, the customers kept coming in.

“Basketball season affects us year round,” Allums said. “Now, we see a lot of the Rowdy Rams and a lot of the students a little bit more year round now. Winter for us used to be like summer at a ski cabin, dead. So at least now the business is steady year round.”

Last year, Baja Bean reached capacity (between 170 and 180 people), nearly every basketball game, Allums said.

This past March, Baja Bean renovated its patio, and it is now ready for winter. The minor renovations feature new walling and outdoors heaters, and increases ca-



PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

Owner Jeff Allums said Baja Bean Co. gets so packed on game day that students have camped outside to get a seat.

capacity by 50 seats.

This bump in business in the winter was just what Baja Bean needed to reach record profits. Allums said both 2011 and 2012 ended in record earnings for the restaurant, and he said this year looks set to do the same.

“If you don’t get here an hour before the game, you’re not going to get a seat,” Allums said.

Baja’s dedication to promoting basketball games have driven fans

to extreme lengths, even camping in front of the restaurant.

Before the Butler game last season Allums said 40 to 50 VCU fans slept in front of the restaurant to make sure they would get a seat.

“We woke them up by tossing burritos to them,” Allums said. “Free, of course.”

Restaurants closer to the Siegel Center also see an influx of customers during basketball season.

“On a game night we’ll see

about double the business,” said Ray Ralph, a server at The Village Café, at 1001 W. Grace St.

Ralph said when crowds start filling in before the game, The Village Café clears out their front entrance for more waiting room and they have more servers on staff.

“Customers will be waiting shoulder to shoulder for a table,” Ralph said.

Other local business hope to experience the same financial suc-

cess come basketball season.

Unleashed Gourmet Hot Dogs, at 515 N. Harrison St., opened up earlier this year on North Harrison and Broad St. Galina Vaytser, owner of Unleashed, said business has been slow ever since the doors opened.

“I hope basketball season affects our business,” Vaytser said. “But I don’t know if it will.”

Contest winners could chill with Shaka

SAM ISAACS
News Editor

Coaching the men’s basketball team to victory is not the only thing Shaka Smart is concerned with this November.

All month long, Smart and his wife Maya will team up with FRIENDS Association for Children, a non-profit child assistance organization, to try to raise \$100,000.

The CT talked to Maya Smart about their commitment to the Richmond charity.

CT: Tell me about the group you are supporting.

MS: FRIENDS Association for Children has been around since 1871. It used to be used for supporting orphaned black children.

Over the past 100-plus years, they have expanded to meet the contemporary needs of children in need.

They have two programs set up, one in Jackson Ward, the other in Gilpin Court. FRIENDS assists with early childhood education programs. They also work with music and art and just giving kids of parents who might be at work or in class a safe place to learn and grow.

CT: When did you and Shaka decided to get involved with the charity?

MS: This January we entered the Coach’s Charity Contest run by ESPN where each coach picked a charity. The fans then voted online for which coach and charity they wanted to see win. The winner of the contest received \$100,000 toward their charity of choice.

Ohio State University won, and we came in second place. That wasn’t good enough for us, we felt we had some unfinished business to attend to, so we made the decision to get involved and raise the money ourselves.

CT: How are you going about raising that money?

MS: We have made it our goal to raise the \$100,000 this November. Using a platform called “bonfirefunds.com,” we are selling shirts online for a cause. The shirts promote the city and the charity.

With each T-shirt purchase, \$10 is donated directly to FRIENDS. Additional donations can also be made on top of the T-shirt sale when a user is in the checkout stage of ordering.

I really like the idea of selling

shirts for the charity. It is a grassroots kind of way to get people involved. I want to see thousands of these shirts in circulation.

CT: There is a contest involved as well. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

MS: We wanted to give anyone who is interested a role in helping out. We also decided to give people and incentive, so we came up with an array of different awards for the most shirts sold.

If you are interested in spreading the word, you can register yourself as a fundraiser. Doing that creates a unique link directed toward you that you can send out via social media. All shirts purchased in that link are credited to you.

Groups can also enter as a team. Each member has their own link,

CT: What are the prizes in the contest?

MS: You get awards depending on how many shirts you or your team have sold. 10 shirts gets you a free shirt, 15 gets you a limited edition Shaka Smart tee and the first 30 people that sell 50 shirts get a dinner for two with Shaka and I at The Roosevelt.

There is also a special prize for the team who raises the most money. Shaka will visit that team for an hour, and they do something like a workout training session with him or have him speak to the group. Pretty much anything the winning team wants.

The 2013 gubernatorial election: Who’s on the ballot?

SEAN KORSGAARD
Contributing Writer

The fight for the next governor of Virginia comes to an end on Tuesday, Nov. 5.

To help make sense of all the campaign ads, debates and promises, the CT has broken down the platforms of the three candidates competing in the gubernatorial election, so you’re ready for Election Day.

Ken Cuccinelli (Republican)

Cuccinelli has been the attorney general of Virginia since 2009. He also served as a state Senator, representing a district in Fairfax County, from 2002 until his term as attorney general.

As attorney general, Cuccinelli earned national recognition for taking an active role in efforts to repeal the Affordable Healthcare Act. He also enforced antitrust legislation and campaigned hard against cyberbullying and sex trafficking.

Prior to his career of public service, Cuccinelli earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Virginia and a law degree from George Mason University. He also co-founded and operated a law firm.

Campaigning under the motto “Fighting for Virginia, Fighting for

You,” Cuccinelli’s platform is geared heavily toward job growth. His plans on supporting manufacturing and small businesses, taking measures like simplifying regulations and cutting taxes.

He is also focused on energy policy, supporting both offshore drilling and more nuclear plants in the state.

Cuccinelli considers himself a devout Catholic, and has been a vocal supporter of both pro-life policies and traditional marriage for years. He opposed abortion, same-sex marriage and universities extending discrimination protection

toward the LGBT community.

His education policy supports school choice and a heightened focus on STEM, or science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.

Terry McAuliffe (Democrat)

McAuliffe is running for public office for the first time. In addition to being a major fundraiser and former chairman of the Democratic National Committee, he served in the boardrooms of a handful of major banks and corporations, including Federal City National Bank in Washington, D.C.

He was also co-chairman of former President Bill Clinton’s 1996 re-election campaign and was chairman of Hillary Clinton’s 2008 presidential campaign.

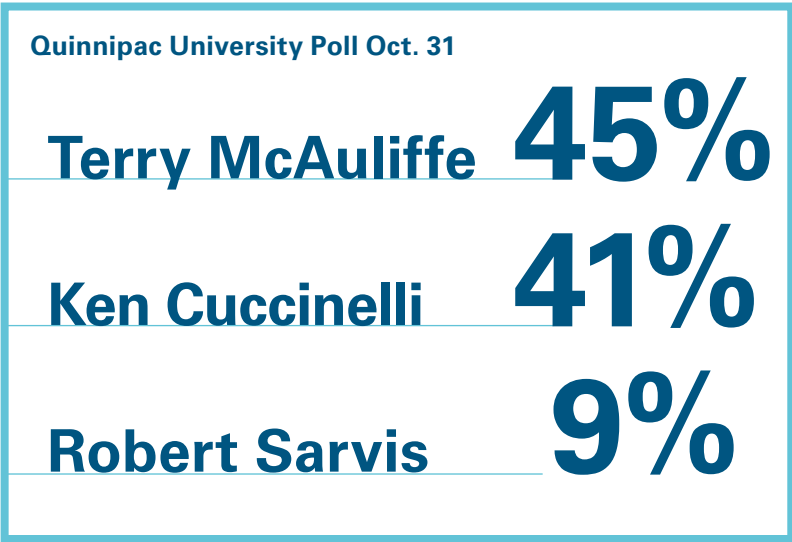
McAuliffe successfully ran for the Democratic nomination for governor of Virginia in 2009 but was defeated in the primaries. He holds a bachelor’s degree from the Catholic University of America and a law degree from Georgetown University.

McAuliffe’s motto, “Putting Jobs First,” emphasizes job growth across the state. He plans to do this by eliminating several business taxes and expanding Virginia’s transportation infrastructure.

McAuliffe supports the implementation of the Affordable Healthcare Act in Virginia, and wants to expand both Medicare and the state mental health system. His education plans include workforce development and the DREAM Act, which would give permanent residency to children of immigrants.

While pro-choice, McAuliffe said he will not alter current state law regulating abortion.

Originally against both coal and offshore drilling, McAuliffe has spoken out in favor of both since he received the democratic nomination. On the campaign, McAuliffe said



he supports LGBT rights. In the past, he was a vocal supporter of the Defense of Marriage Act.

Robert Sarvis (Libertarian)

In direct contrast to both Cuccinelli and McAuliffe, Libertarian candidate Robert Sarvis has no formal political experience. Instead, his background is that of a businessman and software developer. He worked with Google to develop the Android platform.

Sarvis earned his bachelor’s degree in mathematics from Harvard University, a master’s of advanced studies from Cambridge University, a law degree from New York University and a master’s degree in economics from George Mason University.

Regarding his platform, Sarvis is running under the motto “Open Minded and Open for Business.” He has pledged to support school choice, right-to-work laws, drug policy reform and gun rights.

Sarvis has said marriage equality is a personal issue for him and supports legalizing same-sex marriage if elected governor. He also supports reforming the tax code, cracking down on government corruption and looking into ways to reduce the costs of education.

Students respond: What do you think of the new basketball ticket system?

SARAH KING
Contributing Writer

Starting this season, tickets to VCU basketball games will only be offered online. The tickets are purchased via an online account through VCU Athletics. If ticket requests for a particular game are over capacity, a lottery system is used to decide who gets into the game.

The new process was made to give every student an equal chance to gain entry to games. The CT asked students what they think about the new policy.



TANETTA WALSTON
Social Work master's program

"I think probably about the same amount of people will come out to the games with the new ticketing system, but it does seem a lot more organized. We used to have to wait in line no matter what the weather was and you couldn't bring umbrellas or anything inside. It was terrible."



STEPHEN WEBBER
Homeland Security major

"Yeah I've heard about the online thing, but there hasn't been a lot of info on it. I've only been to one game, and that was two seasons ago, but I'll go to more this season. My roommate is pretty big into basketball."



SYDNEY BALLESTEROS
Theatre and International Studies major

"I think the new system is much smarter; it's how the big schools do it, like Duke and (Kansas). I haven't been to many games in the past, but I'll be going to more this season, I'm a senior and need to live out my college experience. I definitely think a bigger crowd will come out to games this way, you don't have to buy your tickets in the rain."



COURTNEY BAILEY
Business major

"I don't like it; the process is kind of complicated. I already bought tickets with the new system but it was easier to do it going to the box office. You have to get tickets three games in advance. The old system was just more straightforward."



CYNTHIA SKALA
Exercise Science major

"I saw an email on the new system briefly, and it seems a lot easier and more convenient. I'm really excited for the season, and I plan on going to pretty much all the games. They're fun to watch."



BOBBY JONES
Mass Communications major

"I'm all for the new system. People don't have to leave their home and you can be lazy. Of course more people are going to buy tickets. I'm definitely going to a lot of games this season, 'cause yeah, sports."

SGA elections scheduled this month

CYRUS NUVAL
Staff Writer

The elections committee of VCU's Monroe Park student government association expects voter turnout to increase with this coming fall's SGA elections despite not making any changes to the way they advertise the elections to students.

During last semester's elections, 1,465 students voted for a president, vice president and 30 senators. This semester, members of the elections and public relations committees said they are expecting to exceed that number.

Mihir Baxi, chairperson for the Monroe Park SGA's elections committee, said he thinks with the steps taken by the elections and public relations committees, voter turnout should increase.

"We have been doing what we can to get our name and the awareness about the elections out there," Baxi said. "Our online presence has increased ... we've also increased our actual campus presence."

Aside from the signs and posters placed around the campus, the delegates and senators have promoted the SGA by approaching students, asking them about university issues and reminding them about the upcoming elections.

"I can't exactly say how high turnout will increase this semester because we haven't made any exact

projections or calculations," Baxi said. "But because of the efforts the delegates and senators have made recently, I am sure that we will get a lot more voters this elections than we did last time."

However, there are some members of the senate who do not agree.

One such senator is sophomore interior design major, Julia Rubert, who said she thinks voter turnout will be about the same as last year's election.

"Leadership is hoping for an increase, but I am not so sure," Rubert said. "We got a late start for the elections and the campaigning ... we used to begin our campaigns earlier and we haven't really changed or improved the way we communicate to the students about the elections."

Rubert also said there are still candidates running for senate who have not finished up their elections packets. Until they have finished their election packets, they cannot officially campaign for the SGA senate.

An elections packet is a stack of documents that aspiring candidates are required to sign and answer to acknowledge that they understand the rules of campaigning for a senate seat, Rubert said.

"The elections committee is expecting a greater turnout but I'm thinking it's going to be about the same," Rubert said. "If there's increase, it might be a slight or

minimal one."

Rubert herself is running for re-election in the Monroe Park SGA senate.

Brittney Maddox, a sophomore art education major, said she has heard of the SGA, but not the upcoming elections. Maddox said she and her friends have not seen any visible posters or signs, have not been approached by campaigning candidates and were not told online about the elections.

"I mean I've heard about them (the SGA) before but I'm not really even sure what the organization even does," Maddox said. "I don't even know if they have a social networking site ... I don't know if I should even vote because I don't know who are the people representing me and students like me."

Junior Keenan Collins, an English major, said he wasn't even aware that the SGA existed.

"It's probably my bad or because I'm more focused on other things, but I've never even heard of the SGA," Collins said. "I'm glad that we have people representing the student body but they haven't really made themselves visible, to people like me at least."

Voting for the 30 open senate seats begins Nov. 12 and ends Nov. 14. The positions of president, vice president and the other 30 senate seats are voted on during the spring semester.

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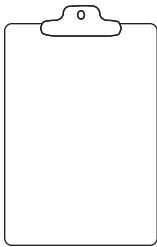
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H A V O C





STAT OF THE WEEK: VCU converted just 13-25 (52 percent) free throw chances during its exhibition against California University (Penn.) last Friday.

Transfer now on winning side of 2011 Sweet 16 thriller

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

On March 25, 2011, Terrance Shannon was on the losing side of a Bradford Burgess game-winning layup in overtime of the Sweet 16 in San Antonio. Two years and 241 days later, the Forsyth City, Ga. native will suit up for the VCU Rams against his former team, Florida State University, at the 2013 Puerto Rico Tip-off.

In his own words, Shannon acknowledged he is now playing for the enemy and admitted the one-point NCAA tournament loss to VCU haunts him every day. He still can't stand seeing the black and gold 2011 Final Four T-shirts, he said, but don't let that be misconstrued.

Now in his last year of NCAA eligibility, Shannon has overcome a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), a scratched cornea, a neck strain, a torn labrum and three knee scopes to join a nationally-ranked basketball team in Richmond. And no grudge is going to prevent him from helping the 2013-14 Rams reach their maximum potential.

"I feel like coming here, bringing that leadership, making sure we're all on the same page, we got that strong bond," he said. "I feel like nothing can tear us apart. The only thing that can stop us is us."

His journey began on the neighborhood basketball court in a small city of less than 4,000 people in central Georgia, where Shannon played through sprained ankles and jammed fingers with regularity. His daily trips to the local court were a learning experience, he said, and they helped him accomplish something many people from that area haven't been able to.

Less than 14 percent of Forsyth City, Ga. residents 25 years or older have a bachelor's degree, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2007-11 American Community Survey. But Shannon's perseverance enabled him to use basketball as a means of overcom-

ing that statistic, he said.

The multi-sport athlete dropped football around eighth grade when a couple of varsity basketball letters helped him craft his focus. At 6-foot-4 and roughly 15 years of age, Shannon began to realize that his size, athleticism and determination could help him earn a college education.

Several Southeastern Conference schools, including Auburn University and the University of Georgia, heavily recruited him, but Shannon chose Florida State, and moved from a city of 4,000 to a university of more than 40,000.

"At the time, FSU was the right place," he said. "It felt like home. A couple of guys that were on the team I had played AAU basketball with. I had a good relationship with all of the coaches there and I loved the environment when I visited. It's one of the best conferences; you got the Dukes and the Carolinas. Everything felt right."

The good feelings continued at FSU when a surprise decision to start sophomore Shannon against then No. 1 Duke University paid off for head coach Leonard Hamilton in 2011.

Shannon learned of the coach's decision less than five minutes before tip-off, he said, but Shannon helped spark the Seminoles' upset of the previously undefeated (17-0) Blue Devils. He contributed six points and four rebounds in 14 minutes of FSU's 66-61 victory.

Just when his confidence peaked, seven games into an optimistic junior season, Shannon received another setback in the form of a torn labrum. The injury kept him inactive for seven months and forced him to redshirt his third year at FSU. Conditioning became a factor after the surgery, he said, and Shannon weaved in and out of the FSU rotation upon his return.

Experiences like these are what Shannon says will help him provide integral senior leadership for a young VCU team. With only two other seniors on the 2013-14 VCU

roster, Shannon hopes to offer equal value on and off the court.

"I can give them feedback on my personal injuries and situations that can help these guys when they're feeling down or need someone to come to," he said. "I can also bring energy to the table and a physical presence in the post. (I'm) a guy that's willing to be coached."

Coaching him now is Shaka Smart, and the rapidly rising household name was one factor among several personal reasons Shannon said brought him to Richmond for his final year of eligibility. VCU's basketball-centric environment and up-tempo style of play also enticed the fifth-year player to join the Rams in 2013-14.

The transition appears to be mutually beneficial: VCU adds experience and front-court depth to an undersized roster, while Shannon has the benefit of joining the nation's 14th-ranked team for his final year of NCAA eligibility.

Whether it's a starting job or a role position off the bench, Shannon is comfortable with whatever the coaches ask him to do, he said. There is reason for optimism with this year's team, Shannon said, but he knows that VCU basketball is larger than the 15-man roster.

"We're not playing for us," he said. "We're playing for other people as well. We have to stay hungry and humble."

Shannon's past should help him stay true to those principles. After escaping the constraints of an underprivileged city, his current pursuit of a master's degree in homeland security is just one element that speaks to Shannon's ambition.

Shannon isn't one for individual awards or personal milestones. He doesn't measure success with statistics. His ability to overcome odds can be traced throughout the entirety of his 23-year history, and Shannon says he's simply satisfied to be in Richmond with a chance to play.

"It's been a tough journey," he said. "But I'm still standing."



Fifth-year forward Terrance Shannon looks to provide the Rams with a physical post presence.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VCU ATHLETICS



Juvonte Reddic is one of three seniors on the men's basketball team this season.

CT FILE PHOTO

Senior leaders to guide young team

SEAN LABAR
Contributing Writer

The VCU men's basketball team will tip off its 2013-14 season on Friday night without two key pieces from last year's team: point guard Darius Theus and shooting guard Troy Daniels.

Both graduated in the spring, and it will be up to seniors Juvonte Reddic, Rob Brandenburg and Terrance Shannon to take over leadership on a squad that lists eight freshmen on its roster.

All three have embraced their new role and say that their job is easier because of the younger players' willingness to learn.

"I've been impressed with how the freshmen have been coachable," Brandenburg said. They just want to learn. They come to me, they come to Terrance, or they come to Juvonte as big brothers whenever they need help."

Reddic could arguably have the biggest impact on those around him. He averaged 14.6 points and 8.1 rebounds per game last season and is on the radar of several NBA teams. The younger guys will naturally look up to him.

Reddic attended camps hosted by NBA stars LeBron James and Amare Stoudemire in the offseason and attributes those experi-

ences to helping him gain leadership skills.

"I learned that I could be a leader both on and off the court," he said. "In the past I kept to myself but I've been working on it, and coach Smart has been on me about becoming a leader. I

"In the past I kept to myself but I've been working on it, and coach Smart has been on me about becoming a leader. I think I've done a good job trying to teach the young guys what I learned at those camps."

— Juvonte Reddic

think I've done a good job trying to teach the young guys what I learned at those camps."

Shannon, a transfer from Florida State, entered the preseason in a unique situation. He had to learn Shaka Smart's fast paced-system while still trying to use his veteran knowledge to assist the younger players.

His teammates feel like it has

been a smooth transition.

"(Shannon) never seemed uncomfortable, he's one of the most vocal players on the team" Brandenburg said about Shannon. "Just his experience will help everyone on the court, he's a big addition to this team."

Brandenburg understands the value of leadership and used the offseason to prepare for his new role.

"I've been thinking about it since the season ended last year," Brandenburg said. "There are different ways to lead. I take pride in doing things the right way. I lead by example. Whenever someone needs guidance, they can look at me."

The Rams are heading into Friday's game ranked No. 14 in the nation in the AP preseason poll, the first time in school history they have entered the season as a ranked team.

But the seniors understand that nothing is accomplished until they take the court and perform.

"We can only take preseason polls with a grain of salt," Brandenburg said. "We've been around the game three or four years now and realize anything can happen. We just have to control what we can control and bring the freshman along."

Roster breakdown: 2013-14 men's basketball

BRANDON RAMON
Contributing Writer

Perhaps head coach Shaka Smart's biggest headache nowadays is one any head coach would gladly accept — it comes from having so much talent at every position. This year's team has a promising mixture of returning players and newcomers that is expected to contend for a national championship. But which starters are a sure thing? Which role players will emerge as significant contributors? Below is a roster breakdown for the 2013-14 VCU Rams.

Juvonte Reddic (F) senior

The fourth-year Ram will likely attract several NBA scouts to the Siegel Center over the course of his senior season. Reddic is widely considered a borderline late first round or early second round pick in next year's NBA draft. His mixture of size, skill and athleticism fits VCU's fast-paced style of play to a tee. Smart will look to him to lead the team as a senior and all-conference first-team candidate. Reddic may receive many conference player of the year votes.

Prediction: Reddic will average 17.2 PPG, 10.1 RPG. He will claim the Atlantic 10 Conference Player of the Year on his way to a late first-round selection in the NBA draft.

Jared Guest (F) junior

Guest will try to work his way back to full strength after an offseason ankle injury. He is a stretch four that moves well in VCU's press and provides a presence on the glass. Guest's experience in the system should benefit him as he continues to gets healthy, but he will likely be the third or fourth option in the post behind Reddic, Shannon and possibly even Mo-Alie Cox at times.

Prediction: Guest will average 4.2 PPG and 3 RPG in his junior season.

Jordan Burgess (G/F) redshirt freshman

The local product from Benedictine High School enters the VCU rotation much fanfare, as RamNation is eager to see him put in work and carry on the Burgess family legacy. His physicality and athleticism will help the Rams execute his press effectively especially if he decides to go with a small lineup, Burgess can play either forward spot. He will see lots of playing time and has an advantage after practicing all last year with the team after the NCAA deemed him ineligible to compete. He may see some starts in small lineups.

Prediction: Burgess will average 7.1 PPG and 4.8 RPG in his first active season with the Rams.

Torey Burston (G) redshirt freshman (not pictured)

Burston is a quick point guard, who would likely see heaps of playing time elsewhere in the Atlantic 10. Shaka Smart has expressed his likeness for Burston, a walk-on for the Rams. With an overload of backcourt talent, there may not be many opportunities for Burston to showcase his skills behind both Lewis and Lyles in the current rotation.

Prediction: Burston may get the opportunity to come in and energize the crowd in the last five minutes of lopsided games.

Antravious Simmons (F) freshman (not pictured)

Simmons gives the frontcourt some added size when Reddic or Shannon need to rest or get in foul trouble. Still new to Smart's system, Simmons will seek knowledge from upperclassmen at his position and use it to build on for next season, when Reddic and Shannon graduate.

Prediction: Simmons will struggle to find significant minutes on the floor this season barring any significant injuries.

Briante Weber (G) junior

The "Ram Burglar" is expected to step in as the starting point guard this season. The point guard in VCU's system is pivotal and Weber has big shoes to fill with the graduation of Darius Theus. Weber is a defensive specialist, and last year he nabbed 2.7 steals per game. With increased playing time this year, he may lead the nation in steals. New emphasis by the NCAA on contact will force Weber to tweak his aggressive style to stay out of foul trouble but with his superior athleticism he is sure to continue giving opposing guards nightmares. Weber figures to be a lead candidate to repeat as the conference Defensive Player of the Year award. His offensive output should improve as well in his new role as a starter.

Prediction: Weber will average 7.5 PPG, 4.5 APG and 3 SPG on his way to a second consecutive A-10 Defensive Player of the Year award.

Treveen Graham (G/F) junior

Graham's versatility and mixed skill set also makes him a legitimate NBA prospect. He led the Rams in scoring last year with 15.1 ppg, and all signs point to improvement. During the offseason, Graham competed for Team USA in the World University Games. The graduation of Troy Daniels means that Graham should get more looks on the perimeter and he should serve as VCU's go-to scorer for much of the season. Don't be surprised if he also contends for the A-10 conference player of the year award.

Prediction: Graham will average 16.9 PPG, 6.8 RPG, 1.5 APG and will be named to the All A-10 First Team.

Jairus Lyles (G) freshman

Lyles is considered a combo-guard who possesses the ability to score, pass and defend. He played both point guard and shooting guard at DeMatha, where he helped lead the Stags to the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference finals in his senior season. A lack of available playing time could lead to Lyles redshirting his freshman season, but he has a promising future as a scoring point guard or an undersized wing player.

Prediction: Lyles redshirts his freshman season to maximize playing time and eligibility down the road.

Rob Brandenburg (G) senior

Brandenberg could be the X-factor for VCU. Good things happen when he scores in double-digits. He looks to take advantage of the extra minutes opened up at the guard positions, playing a little bit of both lead guard and off-guard. "Superberg," as his teammates often call him, has one of the quickest first steps in the conference. Consistent perimeter shooting is also key at his position with the loss of starter Troy Daniels.

Prediction: Brandenberg will average 12.4 PPG, 3.1 RPG, 1.8 SPG and will be named to the All A-10 Second Team.

JeQuan Lewis (G) freshman

Lewis may be the leading candidate for the backup point guard position. He was the highest-rated recruit out of the three freshman guards (Brooks and Lyles). The transfer of Teddy Okereafor means that head coach Shaka Smart has a need for ball handlers and Lewis could be used to help fill that void off the bench in his freshman year. He played 18 minutes in Friday's exhibition, and played point guard even when Weber was on the floor.

Prediction: Lewis will be the second guard off the bench and will control the point whenever he is on the floor. He will average 3.1 PPG and 2.4 APG in 2013-14.

Mo Alie-Cox (F) redshirt freshman

Cox is arguably the most physically intriguing player on the Rams roster. He is undersized in the post but makes up for it athletically with a 45-inch vertical leap and a 7-foot-1 wingspan. Alie-Cox is in the mold of a player Richmond natives may be familiar with in the great Ben Wallace. The energy that Alie-Cox brings to the court will force Coach Smart to find him minutes somehow. VCU did not have a player to average at least 1 block per game. Alie-Cox has the tools to change that even with limited action.

Prediction: Matchups and effort plays will determine Alie-Cox's playing time. There figures to be at least 5-10 minutes per game on the table for him to make an impact and earn the trust of coaches moving forward. Smart will use him to give Reddic, Shannon and Guest a break in the post.

Melvin Johnson (G) sophomore

Johnson could see the biggest statistical improvement this year. After showing promising signs of scoring ability in his sophomore campaign, Johnson will likely receive considerably more minutes and added responsibility with the departure of guards Darius Theus and Troy Daniels. He will help the Rams stretch the floor and could see a significant increase in three-point field goal percentage. Incorporating his signature floater he labeled "The Melvin," Johnson should be one of the conference's highest-scoring bench players.

Prediction: Johnson will average 10.1 PPG, 2 RPG, 2 APG, 1.1 SPG and will be named to the All A-10 Third Team.

Douglas Brooks (G) freshman

Brooks comes into Richmond after being ranked as the No. 11 high school basketball player in the state of Florida by ESPN. He possesses the lateral quickness to defend the opponent's ball handler and he has the range to be a threat from the three-point line. Brooks led the Rams in scoring with 14 points during the exhibition game against California University (Penn.) last Friday. Like Lewis, he could see considerable minutes to spell Weber, Johnson and Brandenberg in the loaded VCU back court.

Prediction: Brooks will serve as a reliable complement and a stingy on-ball defender for Shaka Smart's aggressive defensive system. He will likely be used to stretch the defense when Shaka Smart wants to use smaller lineups.

Emerson Burk (F) freshman

Burk is a walk-on in his first year with the program. With the experienced and talented frontcourt that VCU boasts, Burk might not see much playing time and could potentially redshirt his first season.

Prediction: Burk will likely spend much of the 2013-14 season observing from the bench. He could see playing time in blowouts, but don't expect the freshman to have much of an impact in his first season with the Rams.

Athletics introduces lottery ticket system

KRIS MASON
Contributing Writer

No longer will students have to gamble hours of their time on game day only to miss out on tickets to watch the men's basketball team play at the Siegel Center.

VCU Athletics adopted a new ticketing policy that requires students to make an online ticket account through the VCU Athletics website so they can request tickets, print them out and show them at the gate, along with their VCU ID, to gain guaranteed admission.

Scott Day, VCU's assistant athletic director for athletic communications, said the project was in the works for nearly a year and the effort was designed to better accommodate the student body.

"As an athletic department, we recognize how important our student body is to the atmosphere at the Siegel Center and want to provide everyone an equal chance to contribute to that atmosphere," Day said in an email. "Over the past year, we have worked closely with the student government and Dr. Reuben Rodriguez's group to come up with a more efficient way of providing each student an equal chance at men's basketball tickets."

This method differs from years past in that students will no longer have to wait in line for several hours leading up to tip-off. In previous years the student ticket policy was strictly a first come, first serve for the general student

population. Security would let students enter until the allotted amount of 2,000 student seats had been filled. Only a student ID was required for entrance.

VCU's 16-game home schedule has been broken down into six separate claiming periods throughout the season. Each claiming period consists of between one and four games to choose from. Beginning at 10 a.m. of each claiming day, students will be able to request tickets for the designated games. Tickets are emailed to students less than a week prior to games.

The potential down-side rests in the fact that students must attend games they receive tickets for in order to fill the Siegel Center. If a student misses three games after claiming tickets, they will be unable to request tickets for the remainder of the year.

Rowdy Rams members are able to claim tickets a day earlier than the rest of the student population. Every member is guaranteed entrance to every game if they request a ticket in the Rowdy Ram claim periods. However, if they don't request tickets during the claim period, then their request will be put into the student lottery.

With this system, tickets will be automatically given out to students if ticket requests are not at full capacity. If ticket requests exceed the allotted amount, there will be a lottery run to determine which students win tickets.



Students will no longer be required to wait outside the ticketing office to attend men's basketball games at the Siegel Center.

Analysis: Atlantic 10 shake-up favors VCU

SEAN LABAR
Contributing Writer

The Atlantic 10 made a major splash in the college basketball scene a year ago, sending five teams to the NCAA tournament.

It looked like the conference was going to jump out of the national reputation as mid-major and emerge as a consistent powerhouse. But the hype was short-lived, and the A-10 looks very different heading into the 2013-14 season.

Butler University, Xavier University, Temple University and the

University of North Carolina at Charlotte all jumped ship for new conferences. Two of those four squads were representing the A-10 in the big dance last March.

Conference realignments have been particularly prevalent over the last few years. More than 50 schools were affected in the 2013-14 round of realignment, breaking up some of the most storied rivalries in college basketball history. But new clashes will emerge, and fans will eventually embrace the revamped landscape of NCAA hoops, though it may seem unfam-

iliar right now.

For the A-10, it is impossible to predict the future of the conference. But on paper, it doesn't seem nearly as promising as a year ago.

Butler will be the toughest to replace. They helped give the conference credibility with Final Four appearances in 2010 and 2011 and became a team, much like VCU, that the casual college basketball fan wanted to watch.

The A-10 did make a move to fill the void left by the four schools, welcoming George Mason University to the conference in

June. The Patriots are coming from the Colonial Athletic Conference, formerly VCU's league. Mason should adjust quickly to the elevated level of competition in the A-10. They know what it takes to win, after defying all odds in 2006 to make it to the national semifinals.

The conference realignment benefits VCU immediately. The Rams have been projected to finish third in the conference the last three seasons under Shaka Smart in both the CAA and the A-10. But now that a few of their

fiercest opponents are gone, the tables have turned. VCU enters the 2013-14 season as the favorite to win the conference. They earned 19 of the 24 first-place votes in the official A-10 preseason coaches poll.

Most of this comes from the Rams' coaching, depth, athleticism and return of key players like Juvonte Reddic and Treveon Graham. Smart has done a masterful job with the program and the early recognition is more than warranted. But both Butler and Temple went 11-5 in the A-10 a

season ago, just one game behind the 12-4 Rams. It is fair to say if they were still competing in the conference, they would be in the conversation.

The Rams will also have matchups with the University of Virginia and Florida State University early in their schedule. If VCU can come away with wins against the pair of ACC opponents, it will further solidify its position as a legitimate national championship contender.

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Key Matchups

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

ALONZO SMALL
Contributing Writer

The VCU men's basketball team will look to establish itself as a contender and distance themselves from the Cinderella label in 2013-14. The Rams will get the opportunity to prove themselves with a tough early-season non-conference schedule. The CT has broken down the key games to watch this season so you can mark your calendar ahead of time.

NOV. 8

Illinois State University
at 7:00 p.m. (MASN)

The season-opener against ISU marks the beginning of VCU basketball's most highly-anticipated season in program history. For the first time ever, the AP Preseason poll has ranked the Rams among the top-25 teams at No. 14. The Redbirds (18-16, 8-10) finished in sixth place in the Missouri Valley Conference, but nearly knocked off eventual national champion Louisville University last December. ISU lost a close contest to the cardinals 69-66, and beat a nationally-ranked Creighton team on Feb. 9.

NOV. 12

University of Virginia
at 7:00 p.m. (ESPN 2)

VCU's second game of the season should be one of its most challenging contests of the year. The Cavaliers are coming off a fifth place finish in a competitive Atlantic Coast Conference and they return last year's leading scorer Joe Harris. U.Va. enters the season ranked No. 24 in the AP preseason poll and the Rams will have a tough task traveling to Charlottesville, Va. for the second game of the year.

NOV. 21

Florida State University
at 7:30 p.m. (ESPN2)

The opening game of the Puerto Rico Tip-off will feature a rematch of the 2011 Sweet 16 with Terrance Shannon's former team. The Seminoles are coming off an 18-16 record and a sixth place finish in the ACC. Head coach Leonard Hamilton has to deal with the loss of senior leader Michael Snaer, and FSU could have a down year in a tough conference. The Rams will have to beat the Seminoles to set up a potential rematch with last year's national championship runner-up University of Michigan in the second round of the tournament.

DEC. 21

Virginia Tech University
at 5:30 p.m. (NBC Sports Network)

Continuing the ACC trend, a Dec. 21 matchup with Virginia Tech as a part of the 2013 Governor's Holiday Hoops Classic will serve as a great interstate contest. The Hokies are dealing with the loss of the nation's leading scorer, Erick Green, but should be a formidable opponent. Tech finished last in the ACC a season ago, and head coach James Jones has just two seniors on the 15-man roster. VCU will likely be a heavy favorite at the Richmond Coliseum, but Tech has been known to play up to its competition. Most recently, the Hokies defeated No. 1 Duke University 64-60 in Blacksburg, Va. on Feb. 26, 2011. Virginia Tech has five victories over top-ranked opponents overall.

JAN. 9

George Mason University
at 7:00 p.m. (CBS Sports Network)

In its second game of the new year, VCU will host Atlantic 10 newcomer George Mason University. The Patriots come to the conference one year after the Rams made the same transition from the Colonial Athletic Association. GMU, the original Cinderella story, finished last season with a 22-14 record in the CAA. The two Virginia schools met three times during the 2011-12 season, and VCU won two of the three games. Last year's leading scorer, Sherrod Wright, returns for his senior season and the Patriots will look to make an impact in their first year in the A-10.

JAN. 25

La Salle University
at 12:00 p.m. (ESPN or ESPN2)

Last year the Explorers represented the Atlantic 10 in the Sweet 16 of the NCAA tournament. La Salle finished the season fourth in the conference with an 11-5 record in the A-10 and a 24-10 record overall. La Salle won the only matchup between the two teams a season ago at the Siegel Center when the Rams were ranked No. 19 in the country. Head coach John Giannini is coming off his first NCAA tournament appearance with the Explorers and will have to deal with the loss of last year's leading scorer Ramon Galloway.

FEB. 1

University of Richmond
at 12:00 p.m. (ESPN or ESPN 2)

The interstate rivalry continues with the first of two match-ups at the Siegel Center in February. UR lost its leading scorer Darien Brothers, but the Spiders can turn to senior Derrick Williams for consistent scoring and rebounding. Chris Mooney's club finished 10th in the conference a season ago with an 8-8 record in the A-10 and a 19-15 record overall. The two Virginia teams split the season series in 2012-13, but VCU has won eight of the last 10 matchups overall. The Rams will be a heavy favorite to claim both legs of the Black and Blue Classic in 2014.

FEB. 15

Saint Louis University
at 2:00 p.m. (ESPN or ESPN 2)

A rematch of last season's Atlantic 10 championship game will likely feature the conference's two top teams once again. The Billikens were 13-3 in the A-10 and 28-9 overall in head coach Jim Crews' first season. Saint Louis won both matchups against the Rams last season, including a 62-56 victory over VCU in the A-10 championship. A third-round NCAA tournament loss to Oregon University ended Saint Louis' campaign in disappointing fashion, but the Billikens return five seniors to a deep roster. Don't be surprised if the upper portion of the 2014 A-10 standings resemble those of last season.



Head coach Shaka Smart believes the rule changes will fail to hinder VCU's havoc once the Rams get acclimated to the new calls.

Analysis: Rule changes to hamper havoc

BOBBY GARY
Contributing Writer

The NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel has approved 28 changes to men's and women's basketball involving certain calls and reviews for the 2013-14 basketball season. A decreased national scoring average prompted the adjustments and free throw attempts are expected to increase as a result. Though some recognizable coaches including Louisville University's Rick Pitino have commended the new rules, the modifications could have a negative effect on VCU's havoc style of play. Among the most notable modifications is the change in how the block and charge calls will be made. After the recent revisions, a defensive player is not allowed to enter the path of an offensive player once the ball handler has initiated an upward motion to attempt a shot or pass. Previously, the defender had to be in legal guarding position by the time the

"We're not gonna change our style of play. We're just going to play with a little more discipline."

— Shaka Smart

offensive player's feet left the floor. Beginning this season, referees are also instructed to pay added attention to some of the current rules. More consistency in foul calling is expected when:

- A defender keeps a hand or forearm on an opponent.
- A defender player puts two hands on an opponent.
- A defender continually jabs by extending his arm(s) and placing a hand or forearm on the opponent.
- A defender uses an arm bar to impede the progress of an opponent.

Additional changes have been made to monitor reviews and elbow rules. Division I teams averaged 67.5 points per game a season ago, the lowest average since the 1981-82 season, according to NCAA.com's Greg Johnson. VCU men's basketball finished 11th in the country in points per game last season. The Rams averaged 78 points per contest. As a result of the revisions to monitor review, referees will now be able to use the monitors to determine which player committed a particular foul. Previously, the monitor was only used to determine who would shoot the free throws. The monitor can also now

be used in the last two minutes of regulation and overtime periods to determine shot clock violations. If there is a question as to whether the shot was for two or three points in other parts of the game, the referee can now signal the scorer's table and have the shot reviewed during the next media timeout. All of the adjustments are designed to allow for more offensive freedom, which doesn't bode well for the Rams, who have made a living on points off of turnovers in the past. VCU led the nation in steals last year, forcing 422 over the course of the season and averaging 11.7 per game, the With players like Briante Weber, who was fifth in the nation with 98 steals in 2012-13, the Rams certainly will have to adjust but will the rule changes take havoc out of the equation? Head coach Shaka Smart says he isn't worried. He believes the changes will actually play to VCU's advantage in the upcoming season. "The NCAA and other coaches are concerned about the decline in number of average points scored in a college basketball game. Our points have gone up," Smart told fans at the annual basketball tip-off dinner. "We're not gonna change our style of play. We're just going to play with a little more discipline."

Previews and predictions for 2013-14 season

NATHAN HEINTSCHEL
Contributing Writer

The 2013-14 VCU men's basketball team returns three of its top four scorers from a season ago and has the potential to secure its first Atlantic 10 Conference Championship en route to a deep NCAA tournament run. The Rams enter the season in the preseason AP top-25 for the first time in program history. As the 14th-ranked team in the nation, a Sweet 16 appearance is certainly possible.

If the Rams reach the Sweet 16 they will likely face a showdown against one of the projected No. 1 seeds. The current projected No. 1 seeds are the University of Kentucky, Michigan State University, Louisville University and Duke University. Defeating any of these teams would allow VCU to reach the Elite 8, and the last time VCU made a run this far in the tournament, they reached the Final Four in 2011.

VCU's success in the NCAA tournament is not solely dependent on winning the A-10. VCU earned a No. 5 seed last year without winning the conference, and they can expect a similar outcome if they have a repeat performance.

However, the Rams might experience a slight dip in seeding because of conference realignment. The A-10's loss of Temple University and Butler University might lead to a drop in conference strength; the Rams could be closer to a No. 6 or No. 7 seed if they do not win the conference.

VCU's preseason strength of schedule ranks 327 out of 351 Division I teams. Among the

Atlantic 10, VCU has the lowest strength of schedule in the conference, according to ESPN's Joe Lunardi.

Keep in mind that VCU's strength of schedule will fluctuate as their opponents' records change. The Rams finished last season with the 33rd-hardest schedule in the country.

Now the conference favorite, according to official A-10 preseason predictions, VCU lost four times against conference foes (University of Richmond, La Salle University, Saint Louis University and Temple) last year with three of the losses coming away from the Siegel Center.

But considering its improvement and a much weaker conference schedule, VCU could easily finish the 2013-14 season with a 13-3 record in the A-10. A one-game improvement from last year's slate would almost certainly earn the Rams a No. 1 seed in the A-10 tournament.

No matter how far VCU goes in the tournament, the team's success rests on the play of a combination of redshirt freshman talent and-savvy upperclassman that earned valuable tournament experience the past couple seasons.

Despite losing two starters in the offseason, VCU's havoc will likely be just as potent as previous seasons. Its aggressive defense aims to convert steals and rebounds into quick points.

The loss of point guard Darius Theus means the Rams are losing out on 2.4 steals per game. However, Briante Weber is coming off a season in which he averaged 2.7 steals per game, and newcomers Jordan Burgess, Doug Brooks and

Jarius Lyles could help bolster the defensive statistics. In the Black and Gold scrimmage, Brooks had four steals; Burgess and Lyles each had three. Look for VCU's steals per game to hover somewhere around last year's average of 12 per game.

One area the Rams could see a statistical improvement is rebounding. Juvonte Reddic led the team on the glass last year with 8.1 rebounds per game. Treveon Graham chipped in with 5.8 a contest. This year, VCU adds Florida State University transfer Terrance Shannon, who averaged 5.6 rebounds per game with the Seminoles a season ago. At 6-foot-8 inches and 240 pounds, Shannon should provide the Rams with depth in the front court and should be a big factor on the glass.

With the added emphasis on touch fouls this season, free throw attempts should increase across the board. The coaching staff has stressed its team's position at the charity stripe, Shannon said, and the Rams look to improve on a season in which they shot 70.1 percent on 669 attempts from the line. VCU ranked 155th in the nation in free throw percentage in 2012-13 and converted just 13 of its 25 attempts (52 percent) in Friday's exhibition against California University (Penn.).

Head coach Shaka Smart enters his fourth season with arguably the best roster and highest expectations in school history. With multiple conference player of the year candidates, three senior leaders and versatile guard play, the Rams enter 2013-14 as a complete team and a legitimate national championship contender.



The men's basketball team enters the 2013-14 season ranked No. 14 in the country. It is favored to win the Atlantic 10 conference.

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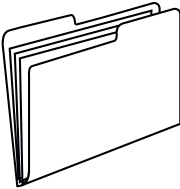
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ON THIS DAY in 1996, the CT reported that the men’s basketball team held their annual Black and Gold scrimmage at the Franklin Street Gym. The Gold team defeated the Black 64-61 in overtime.

GAME DAY SPECIALS: where to eat and watch the action

Balliceaux

Balliceaux will open an hour before tip-off, and closes at 2 a.m. Happy hour is scheduled from 5-7 p.m. Their late night menu features \$3 fries, \$5 clam fritters and an \$8 burger. More specials are being planned for the student crowd, and the location has a full bar. Balliceaux is located at 203 N. Lombardy St.

The Well

The latest addition to West Franklin Street includes an upscale American-style menu, and is open until 2 a.m. It features salmon and butternut ravioli. Happy hour is scheduled from 5-7 p.m., and VCU students get a 10 percent discount. The restaurant has a full bar and TVs. The Well is located at 900 W. Franklin St.

Bigs BBQ

As the newest addition to West Grace Street, this restaurant serves Southern-style barbecue, featuring pulled pork, beef brisket and smoked hot dogs. Specials include \$5 pork sandwiches and half-priced appetizers from 7:30-10 p.m. Bigs BBQ takes Rambucks and offers discounts to students. They have a TV for viewing the game. Bigs BBQ is located at 931 W. Grace St.

The Village Cafe

Serving Richmond since 1956, this restaurant features American-style pasta, burgers and shakes. Happy hour is from 3-8 p.m., and Friday food specials are in the planning stages. The cafe will be open until 2 a.m., and has a full bar with a TV. The Village Cafe is located at 1001 W. Grace St.

Unleashed Gourmet Hot Dogs

Another newcomer to the VCU area, this restaurant serves hot dogs, with names like French Poodle and Siberian Husky, and is open until 11 p.m. Happy hour is from 5-8 p.m., and drink discounts are included with a hot dog purchase. This restaurant accepts Rambucks and has a TV. Unleashed Gourmet Hot Dogs is located at 515 N. Harrison St.

BoDillaz

Only two blocks from the Siegel Center, this Mexican-style restaurant will serve their famous quesadillas until 2:30 a.m. Game day specials include \$3 chili cheese fries, and a TV will show the game. BoDillaz is located at 916 W. Broad St.

MAYA EARLS
Contributing Writer

The men’s basketball team tips off its season this Friday at the Siegel Center. For those seeking a bite to eat before the game, or a flat-screen TV viewing party, there are plenty of options within walking distance of campus. The CT has compiled a list of restaurants to visit on game day that will not break your budget.

Mellow Mushroom

This Carytown restaurant features an Italian-American menu, with build-your-own-calzones or pizza options. The eatery stays open until 2 a.m. There is a full bar inside and TVs. Mellow Mushroom is located at 3012 W. Cary St.

Sticky Rice

This Fan favorite features an Asian-fusion menu, with sushi and buckets of tater tots. There are both vegetarian and vegan options available. Happy hour will last from 5-6 p.m., and includes half-off edamame, miso soup, side tots and sticky balls. The restaurant has TVs and a full bar. Sticky Rice is located at 2232 W. Main St.

Home Team Grill

This restaurant will be open until 2 a.m., making it an option for a Rams’ post-win celebration. The menu features American-style burgers and wings, with a few vegetarian options. Happy hour is scheduled from 3-7 p.m., and more game day specials are in the works. There are multiple flat-screen TVs inside, as well as a full bar. Guests can also dine at the patio. Home Team Grill is located at 1630 W. Main St.

Baja Bean Co.

This restaurant, also open until 2 a.m., serves Mexican-style burritos and tacos, with a build-your-own burger or quesadilla option. Happy hour will be from 4-7 p.m. Game day specials are being planned. There are TVs for viewing the game and a newly built patio equipped with a full bar. Baja Bean is located at 1520 W. Main St.

Roxy Cafe

Roxy Cafe features American-style burgers, Philly cheese steaks and popcorn shrimp. Its happy hour is scheduled from 11 a.m.- 9 p.m., but the eatery is open until 12:30 a.m. It will serve \$6 cheeseburgers and wings will be discounted on game day. More specials are in the works. There is a full bar and flat-screen TVs for watching the game. Roxy Cafe is located at 1104 W. Main St.

821 Cafe

Open until 11 p.m., 821 Cafe features an American-style menu with burgers, nachos and vegetarian-friendly pasta. Happy hour is scheduled from 4-7 p.m., and \$5 appetizers will be available on game day from 5-7 p.m. There is a full bar inside, as well as flat-screen TVs. 821 Cafe is located at 825 W. Cary St.



With a roster of more than 120 members, the VCU Pep Band enters its sixteenth season under director Ryan Kopacsi, who almost retired at the beginning of the school year.

Pep band enters sixteenth season under Kopacsi

BEN SIMON
Contributing Writer

While the men’s basketball team wreaks havoc on the court, the VCU Athletic Band, known as the Peppas, wreaks its own havoc in the stands. The Peppas, who have become renowned in the college circuit, will soon enter their 16th season under director Ryan Kopacsi. The band made national headlines during the Atlantic 10 basketball tournament last spring when they were shown playing on a double-decker bus on the Today Show. In September, Bleacher Report named the Peppas the second “Most Entertaining Pep Band in College Basketball,” after George Mason. “It’s bigger than I ever realistically thought it would be, but it’s not as big as I ever dreamed it would be — yet,” said Kopacsi, who took over as director in 1998. Kopacsi said there was a need for athletics to step up their persona. This prompted the athletics department to look for a new director to help reinvent the pep band. Kopacsi was previously a student in the band.

“So the athletic director at the

time, doctor Richard Sanders (and B.J. Burton, called me into their office and (told me): ‘Look. You’re kind of a troublemaker, but you have a lot of energy. I think if we redirect that negative energy into something positive, you could be exactly what we need.’” Since then, Kopacsi has helped propel the band to new heights. When starting out, though, a rather different dynamic existed than it does now. “I was really young and really immature and very self-centered, and I was really good at what I did,” Kopacsi said. “As I got older ... (I) realized the band is more and more capable ... and now, the image of the band is more about them and less about me, which is really the way it should be.” The first performance to really put the Peppas on the map came on March 15, 2007, during a game against Duke in Buffalo, NY. “I remember it like it was yesterday,” Kopacsi said. “We played at halftime, and after we played, I just looked around and it seemed like all 18,000 people were standing up and clapping for us, and it was pretty amazing.” At the beginning of each

season, any interested students, including members of the previous season’s band, must audition in front of Kopacsi and a member of the athletic department to be considered for a spot. Although the bar is set high for these musicians, the band’s roster has more than 120 members. “We just have more and more people showing interest,” said Elizabeth Arthur, a clarinetist and the band’s librarian. “As we go to tournaments, people are like, ‘Oh hey, I want to be in that band.’” Despite becoming a renowned pep band director, Kopacsi decided to retire last season. A Facebook group dedicated to persuading him to stay, “Keep Ryan at VCU,” was started the same day as the initial announcement. After a week of uncertainty and a massive outpouring of fan support, Kopacsi changed his mind and decided to renew his contract. The new terms included a school-sponsored fund-raising campaign on behalf of the band. The “Keep Ryan at VCU” group still functions as a fan page for the pep band. “Fifteen years is a long time to do something in your life, and I just wasn’t sure if I’d overstayed

my welcome,” Kopacsi said. “It was something that I’d thought about all summer. Luckily enough, the president of the university, (Michael) Rao, Ed McLaughlin and all the guys in the department felt strongly enough about it to talk to me and want to bring me back, so they did a nice job in convincing me.”

“It’s bigger than I ever realistically thought it would be, but it’s not as big as I ever dreamed it would be — yet.”


—RYAN KOPACSI

The pep band doesn’t just play during basketball games, however. They also perform during men’s and women’s soccer, field hockey and volleyball games. The band practices once or twice a week, although most members also practice individually in their spare time. Prompted by fan interest, the band released their own album, titled “The Peppas” in 2011. During the recording process, both

current members and band alumni contributed their talents. The album consisted of 10 tracks and costs \$8 a copy — just enough to cover the cost of production. In addition, the band has played at several non-athletic events. “A couple of years ago, when we were in the CAA (Colonial Athletic Association), we did a ‘Breakfast with the Bands,’ because all the schools came to Richmond and they were here the night before tournament play started,” said Leslie Lopez, administrative assistant to the band. “The first day of tournament play, we all gathered at the convention center downtown, and we all went around, played a couple songs, and then we came together and played one song.” Arthur was with the band at the time. “(We got) to play with Towson, George Mason, and OU as one big superband ... (It was) probably one of my favorite (performances).” Another popular event is “Band Day,” in which local high school students get to rehearse with the Peppas and watch them perform during a basketball game. “We branch out to local high schools,” said Zachary Taylor, lead trombone player and equipment

manager. “It’s a whole new experience when you see all these kids come together, and you’re trying to show them ... how we do VCU basketball, (and) the VCU Pep Band.” While the performance is thrilling, Taylor said, the emotions turn to exhaustion when the game is over. “When we’re performing, in general, it’s almost the most exhilarating feeling you could ever feel, but immediately after the game and packing up and everything, I feel pretty taxed,” Taylor said. The role of the band’s performance is a major misconception to some fans. “We’re not there to be musicians. We’re there, first off, to support the teams,” Taylor said. Kopacsi agreed. “We don’t ever want to be the main show. But we definitely want to be able to support ourselves and give those guys as much support as we can without being a drain on them.” In the end, the experiences have led the Peppas to form a tight bond with each other. “The band is a family,” Taylor said. “It’s not like an organization or a group of people ... It’s more than a team.”

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Gold Rush Dancers ready for hoops season

SAMANTHA MCCARTNEY
Contributing Writer

With black and gold pom-poms in hand, VCU's Gold Rush Dancers take the court at halftime of each home game with a burst of energy that further excites the already-rowdy crowd.

The team, which has 23 dancers, has been directed by Vicki Wells for the past 15 years. Wells was contacted about coaching the team after the university was looking to give athletics a face-lift after the Siegel Center finished construction, she said.

"I'd say that getting involved with VCU was fate," Wells said. "The university wanted to revamp the cheer program and add a dance team to help promote athletics and 'the Stu.'"

With more than 25 years of dance experience under her belt, Wells choreographs the routines and coaches the team along with the team captains and lieutenants.

Previously, Wells was involved with the Washington Redskins' cheerleaders and performed with their traveling troupe. She is a former member and instructor for the National Cheerleaders Association. Many of the dancers Wells has coached over the years have since moved on to bigger projects.

"I have alumni Gold Rush Dancers (who) have danced for Beyoncé, Lil Kim, Lil Wayne, performed in music videos, joined professional dance companies, (danced for teams in the) NFL, NBA, been on stage with Madonna and performed on Broadway," Wells said.

The choreography performed by the dancers is a mixture of ballet, tap, jazz and hip hop. Incorporating the styles and backgrounds of the dancers from those with technical training to competitive cheering or dancing backgrounds.

Erin Coumes, a senior elementary education major, has been a Gold Rush Dancer since she was a freshman.

"One of my good friends freshman year was trying out and asked

me to come with her so she would have a friend at the auditions," she said. "I ended up loving it and four years later I'm still lucky to call myself a Gold Rush Dancer."

The auditions for Gold Rush are a two-part process. The first is the preliminary audition, which took place over a span of eight hours this past year. Dancers learn a routine and perform in front of a panel of judges, who determine which hopefuls will return the next day for callbacks.

Those called back are given the chance to perform their own personally choreographed routine, which will determine whether they gain a spot on the Gold Rush Dance Team.

"The audition process is stressful, but fun at the same time ... it's always fun to learn and perform new choreography while being surrounded by very talented dancers," Coumes said.

Kiana Wood, a junior dance and choreography major, is one of the Gold Rush captains. She described the audition process as a major commitment.

"It's an all-weekend event, roughly around 14 hours (total) consisting of warm-up, technique drills and choreography," Wood said. "We usually get about 50 or more girls that come out — this past fall audition we had about 70 girls audition. It's a pretty hardcore weekend as everyone's nerves are on a thousand."

Wood, who has danced for the past 17 years, has been a Gold Rush Dancer since her freshman year and has seen the ascension of VCU basketball in the past three years.

"I've always been able to perform in front of big audiences, but audiences as big as the screens of ESPN took my experience to a new level," Wood said.

Although the Gold Rush Dancers have been an integral part in the halftime show for many years, when the VCU men's basketball team made it to the Final Four, expectations rose for the performers.

"After that year, VCU basket-



The Gold Rush Dance Team incorporates a blend of ballet, tap, jazz and hip hop into its performances.

ball became more popular and there was a higher expectation for the spirit squads to meet," Coumes said.

Jade Mallard, a junior mass communications major, tapes the performances and is often right at the center of all of the action.

"They definitely spice the game up," Mallard said. "I always see

people cheering and dancing with them."

When the basketball team travels during the season, six dancers are chosen to travel with it to perform at away games.

The Gold Rush Dancers don't just perform during men's basketball games, however. They also dance during women's basketball

games, volleyball games and even occasionally at community events, such as breast cancer walks, charity events and the homecoming parade.

"I love working with talent, and we have plenty of that on this team," Wells said. "However, the most rewarding part of my job is recognizing in each dancer their

unique gifts, ones that they don't recognize in themselves, then helping them to develop the confidence in that gift and push them to the extreme."

With basketball season just around the corner, students can expect to see the VCU Gold Rush Dancers during halftime, ready to excite the crowd.

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The audition process for Rodney the Ram involves a question and answer test, a review of VCU history and a two and a half-minute crowd pump-up routine.

Q&A: Rodney the Ram talks hoops, mascot life

LINDSEY FITZGERALD
Contributing Writer

The CT caught up with Rodney the Ram on the phone this week to hear his views on VCU's competitive edge heading into the men's basketball season, what it takes to be a mascot and what to look forward to in the season ahead.

CT: What was the shift in Rodney's appearance like last year?

RR: I think Rodney established himself much more like the university has in recent years. He switched over from a lovable personality to a more aggressive, more competitive ram ... He transitioned over from more of like a laid-back, passive ram, to more an aggressive go-getter.

CT: How does he reflect the university?

RR: In my opinion, I think that it reflects, in recent years, the moves we've made, especially in the past two years, making moves to get back to the Final Four ... and, for the first time, VCU's been ranked in the top-25 preseason poll. So I think that is kind of the new persona we're taking on, is being more of an aggressive competitor.

CT: Is Rodney's persona different when he's not at basketball games?

RR: Rodney is the same. Rodney's personality is a very swagger-filled, confident, (masculine) ram that has a soft side for children and a hard side for competitive teams. As far as any type of rivalry we have or any opposition other than VCU, Rodney doesn't take well to. But he reacts well to children and carries himself with a lot of confidence and a lot of swagger.

CT: What does it take to be Rodney the Ram?

RR: The audition process is a question and answer, kind of a review of what you know about VCU, a brief history of VCU, then we do

like a dance and crowd pump-up audition, as well as a minor physical test, to make sure you can keep up with all the physical demands of Rodney ... The suit gets very hot so it's important to have somebody that can withstand that.

CT: What is the dance audition like?

RR: It's a two and a half minute work where you have to be able to go up and down the court, basically like working the crowd, but you have to involve some jumping as well as some running ... The suit weighs around 25 pounds, but it's made out of really thick cotton, so it's really hot.

CT: What's a day in the life of Rodney like on a basketball game day?

RR: Rodney shows up to the arena about an hour and a half before and stretches out. He kind of watches a bit, but you know he doesn't come out until game time so he hangs out in his locker room, stretches out, warms up, gets a feel for what's going to happen and then once game mode hits, he's just 100 percent full-blown ram power.

CT: How do you balance paying attention to the game and engaging with the crowd?

RR: That comes as kind of a feel thing. The position is very reactionary. You've got to be ready to react with the crowd. That's one important thing, is knowing the rules and knowing when — there's only certain occasions you can actually do something, just in the general terms of a mascot. You can't start up a riot against a call or anything ... There are certain times you're not allowed to be on or around the court ... that affects determining those times where maybe I'll go in the crowd and try and interact with fans on a personal level, as well as when something negative happens. I might wave my hands in front of my nose, but you can never directly address a (referee) unless they address you

first. So it's just kind of reading the game and feeling what's going on and reacting from there.

CT: Is it ever hard to hold back?

RR: There are times that, I guess you could say, in the heat of the moment, you might forget something. I know for a fact that there's been certain Rodneys that have gone out on the court when they're not supposed to be out there, but luckily in the past four years there haven't been NCAA violations as a result of it.

CT: What are the consequences for violations like that?

RR: The first thing, just the most basic one, is that referees are allowed to, in a basketball situation, they are allowed to give a technical foul to the mascot. That would result in two free throw shots for the other team as well as the ball back ... It could stem on up from there. The biggest restriction would be the NCAA requesting that the mascot not be present at sporting events as a result of infractions, but that's a long way up. Like I said, we haven't had any problems with it.

CT: What do you look forward to for the upcoming basketball season as Rodney the Ram?

RR: One thing you could say for Rodney that I look forward to is that he is a brand on the rise. So as VCU continues to grow, as the university gets more recognition nationally, Rodney kind of is synonymous with that. So we are starting to get a lot more appearances and stuff and a lot more reaction to appearances from non-VCU alumni and just Virginia residents on the basis of the success of not only basketball, but all the sports ... So watching Rodney grow because his brand just gets bigger everyday that VCU does.

Rodney's views are his opinions, not a VCU-affiliated statement.

VCU radio station earns feature spot on mtvU

INGA SCHUNN
Contributing Writer

Nowadays, whenever you hear 'MTV' you probably think of "Jersey Shore," "Teen Mom" or "Catfish," but it seems the network hasn't quite given up their music roots. WVCW, VCU's student-run radio station, will appear on MTV's college music channel, mtvU, this week.

WVCW has strived to gain more recognition on campus. Over the past few years, the station has put efforts toward applying for a low-power AM frequency with the Federal Communications Commission, reclaiming their air time in VCU buildings such as the Shafer Dining Court and focusing on social media promotions and outreach.

Over the summer, Joel Austin, the general manager for the station, reached out to mtvU to inquire about nominations and involvement in their awards and programs.

"I wanted to see how (WVCW) could get nominated for Best University Radio Station," Austin said.

At the beginning of September, Austin received an email invitation for WVCW to be featured on the channel's College Radio Countdown show. The show features a different college radio station every week in the form of a short video and a list of 10 songs chosen by the station's staff to represent their

university's musical vibe.

This is Austin's fourth year working for the station. In his time at WVCW, he's done everything from disc jockeying to production management.

"It's the best job I've ever had."

"VCU has a large and diverse audience. We couldn't choose from YouTube or Vevo ... the song had to be from (mtvU's) library."

—JOEL AUSTIN

It's so rewarding," he said.

Heather Hudgins, the outreach and advocacy coordinator for WVCW, has worked with the station for three semesters. She manages their Instagram, Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter accounts. Being featured on mtvU is the kind of exposure WVCW has set out to gain this year, she said.

Austin and Hudgins both said choosing 10 songs to represent VCU was the most difficult part of the process.

"VCU has a large and diverse audience," Austin said. "We

couldn't choose from YouTube or Vevo ... the song had to be from (mtvU's) library."

Incorporating bands native to Richmond was a priority, as was gathering suggestions from everyone involved with the station.

The station decided to select "DoYaThing" by Gorillaz, Andre 3000 and James Murphy for the top spot. GWR's "Zombies, March!", Childish Gambino's "Bonfire," King Tuff's "Bad Thing" and AWOLNATION's "Kill Your Heroes" are also featured on the top-10 list.

Creating the promotional video for mtvU's website was the responsibility of the station's employees. Over the course of the last month, the station's team worked on narrowing down footage to less than two minutes.

"We have so much footage we could have used," Austin said.

"We are really lucky ... our production team did an amazing job."

Matt Ruland, a DJ and a VCU police officer, plays music under the name "DJ Five-Oh." Ruland has a short appearance in the video.

"You won't see a (police officer) rocking out in any of the other college videos," Austin said.

He hopes the mtvU feature will lead to an increase of recognition from the VCU community.

WVCW will air on mtvU on Tuesday, Nov. 5 on mtvu.com.



Heather Hudgins, the outreach and advocacy coordinator for WVCW, has managed the station's social media accounts for three semesters.

PHOTO BY CHRIS CONWAY

PHOTO BY INGA SCHUNN

Purchasing equality

KAYLIN KAUPISH
Guest Columnist

Equality remains an evolving concept in this day and age. For me, the realization started while chatting with a friend about annoying coworkers. She mentioned a woman at her work who had complained about a date she had been on. Apparently her date had asked if she could pay for her half of the meal. This was an obvious turn-off for her and she decided to never see him again. I marveled at this presumption, that it was the place of the man to buy the meal. It harkened back to the notion that it was the place of the woman to cook the meal. I found myself disgusted with her disgust. I wondered if this was just a one-time situation. I had always split the cost of dinner with my previous boyfriend and I have other friends who practice the same rule with their boyfriends. Perhaps this woman had just been raised by some old-fashioned ideals or was not savvy to the dating world. My curiosity got the better of me and I came across a report about a paper presented at an American Sociology Association meeting in 2013. The study, titled “Who Pays for Dates? Following

versus Challenging Conventional Gender Norms,” by Chapman University’s David Frederick, showed that “39 percent of women hoped that men would not ask them to contribute” to the date and that “44 percent of women were annoyed when the men ‘expected’ the women to pay.” The numbers baffled me. Even though they were below 50 percent, there were still women who considered it a nuisance to pay for the food they’d just enjoyed. The next statistic stated that “64 percent of men believed women should pick up from time to time, though 76 percent said they felt ‘guilty’ saying so.” This guilt is not completely foreign to me. My previous boyfriend sometimes asked if I could pay for my half of the meal, which I was happy to do, but he told me he felt bad because he didn’t make enough money to pay for me. I told him it never bothered me, but I could tell it bothered him. According to society’s standards, this decent man was inadequate. It was a form of emasculation and I hated it. The paper further stated that “many men’s willingness to absorb the price of early dates and more than half the costs later on keeps chivalry alive, gender roles

distinct and some privileges for both sexes intact.” In regards to the concept of privilege, history shows us this use to be true. Men worked and got a paycheck while women stayed at home and remained virtually penniless. Therefore, it made more sense for the man to foot the bill. But this only used to be true. Nowadays, women are making a good amount of money in the workforce. While women still makes less than men, many women make enough money to support themselves and have some extra left over. In my past relationship, I made more money than my boyfriend and definitely had more to spend because financial aid paid for my tuition. Because of this, I was more than willing to pay for my half of the date. I even picked up the whole bill from time to time, just as he did when he could afford it. When considering the distinction of gender roles, I found this notion to be almost moot. While society still has a lot to say about what a men and women can’t do, the boundaries are changing every day. Men are more likely to spend time with their children than ever before and women are becoming a force to be reckoned with in

the workplace. With the constant fluctuation of gender roles, it’s only a matter of time until this tradition of the man paying for all of the dates goes out of style as well. In regards to chivalry, the word brings up the outdated images of knights and ladies in distress. I understand that chivalry is still important for some and that chivalry is dead because feminism killed it. I don’t think that is true at all. If anything, chivalry is more alive than ever, because another demographic has started to practice it as well: women. Who says that it is only the man who can be chivalrous? As if a woman is supposed to sit around in her tower while the knight fights the dragon? Why can’t she grab a sword and go down to help? Luckily, the study found that it was the younger couples in their 20s who were more likely to split the check. This finding gives me hope that our generation can begin a new trend. So, ladies, keep this in mind next time you are on a date. When the waiter brings the check, consider that knight in shining armor image, put yourself in the armor for once, and say, “I’ll get it this time, darling.”



What’s in a name?

LAUREN MCCLELLAN
Guest Columnist

When I came to VCU in August 2010, I entered as a freshman into the School of Mass Communications. Since I’ve been here, it has always been called just that: the VCU School of Mass Communications. Now, in my last year here as undergraduate student, the name has changed to something that doesn’t make much sense to me and other mass communication students. We are now students of the Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture. I’ve learned plenty about media from the School of Mass Communications since I’ve been here, sure. The mass communications curriculum is strangely structured and I don’t feel that the classes I’ve taken in the past years have prepared me for my print/online journalism senior capstone classes, but that’s a different editorial for a different time. That second part of the name, in my opinion, doesn’t have much to do with my major. Of course the students coming out of VCU should be cultured; that will help us prepare for being citizens of the global community and it will teach us tolerance and acceptance. But has the School of Mass Communications really taught me that much about culture? I don’t think it has. I’ve learned how to write in AP Style. I’ve learned how to write hard news stories, features, broadcast scripts and press releases. I’ve learned how to use a production camera. But the School of Mass Communications has not been the school that has taught any of us

anything about culture. I’ve learned more about culture by making friends who came from different backgrounds than me and who have different world-views than I do. I’ve learned about culture by attending events that taught me about different parts of the world. I’ve learned about culture by taking classes from a wide range of departments and professors. I’ve learned about culture by involving myself in different organizations. I’ve learned about culture by working for the National Scholarship Office, where we have students and alumni applying to go to amazing things in every different corner of the world. I’ve learned to be tolerant, accepting and open to other people’s opinions, but the School of Mass Communications didn’t teach me that. There’s not a 100-level MASC course that taught me about culture. I understand that VCU needs donors, of course. When people who have the resources donate to higher education, it’s not a bad thing. It helps schools thrive. It’s even better when it comes from an alumnus such as Mr. Richard T. Robertson. He’s just giving back to the school that taught him. But I feel like it is just misleading unless the school plans to overhaul their curriculum to include some classes that actually combine media and culture many different cultures. I’ve learned about culture by just attending VCU. I don’t think the School of Mass Communications should try to take credit for something they didn’t teach me themselves.

Consider the cost of canceled class

JOSEPH FARRELL
Guest Columnist

I showed up to class this week and saw a sign posted on the door: “Class canceled this week.” Initially, I was pleased, as I had a lot of work I needed to do and now had three hours or so of time I could devote to catching up. These pleasant thoughts followed me out of the building, and only dissipated once I paid for a soda using my ATM card. As has been the case for the past year, I got a sinking feeling upon using my debit card, as I know that the majority of funds come from student loans. My thoughts and feelings about this missed class shifted at this point because I realized the obvious: I’m paying to learn, but most of my learning is in class and missed class is missed value on my money. But how much? As I agonized over numbers and struggled to keep my mind focused, I realized what really irked me was those first days of class each semester and how I’ve suffered from distorted thoughts by considering them a blessing. I had considered the freed time wonderful and had always been so pleased to walk out of class early after some menial ice breakers and reading the syllabus as a group. Until

that day, I considered the mindless use of 45 minutes before leaving early a blessing, but now I realized how costly these classes were. My task started with tuition expenses. For my graduate social work program, I pay about \$4,990 a semester in tuition, plus an additional \$1,220 in fees as of fall 2013. Summing these together gave me the cost of tuition, in total, for a semester. That number is around \$6,215. Let’s also keep in mind that tuition costs are rising steadily, and that last year the 3 percent increase was a 30-year low. I have five classes, but one is a field placement ‘class’ that requires no course instruction. So I get four courses of instruction this semester, with 15 class sessions per course, which when multiplied amounts to 60 class sessions per semester. If I divide my total tuition (\$6,216.23) by the amount of classes I get per semester (60), what I end up with is the total value per class session in dollar terms: \$103.60. Now that I had calculated that number, I could go back to my initial problem: the first day of class. Without exception, each class has involved either reading the syllabus as a group, performing some silly ice breaker, or a combination of the two. I have four “first classes” each

semester, and will have completed four semesters by the time my graduate degree is attained. That means I can do some simple math to see what these classes cost me. By multiplying my four graduate classes (12 credit hours being typical for a graduate student) per semester by my four completed semesters by the cost per class (about \$100), I got about \$1,650. I was dumbfounded. I’m seriously paying \$1,650 to read a damned syllabus out loud? To stand up and say my name and favorite hobby? To tell people my pet’s name? Give me a break. But then I realized something worse: \$1,650, being paid for by student loans, is borrowed money and that borrowed money will accrue interest for 30 years. I determined that my FAFSA loan has an interest rate of 5.4 percent and that it’s scheduled to be paid off in approximately 30 years, so what I needed to do was figure out how much \$1,650 in wasted class costs would end up costing me to pay back with interest over the allotted time. By multiplying the cost of these classes by the annual interest rate (0.54 percent) and the amount of years (30) until it would be paid off, I found that the interest earned on the cost of these classes is roughly \$2,685.

Wow. As my head spun, I realized I needed to sum this interest amount with the initial cost of these classes to determine how much, in total, I would end up paying out of pocket to group read a syllabus or share an interesting fact about myself with the class. The initial cost of these classes added to the interest earned on the cost of these classes comes out to just over \$4,340. The moral of this story is, the next time you show up for your first day of class and your teacher predictably instructs you to either talk about yourself for 20 seconds or help read the syllabus as a group, before you opt to smile gleefully about how easy this class will be and how grateful you are for these gentle beginnings to the semester, remember that these classes will cost you a couple thousand dollars. How many months of rent is that? What kind of car could you buy with around \$4,000 as a down payment? How crazy a shopping spree could you go on at Macy’s with a \$4,000 gift card? How many years of Christmas presents for family and friends would that amount cover? These are just some sobering thoughts that are worthy of more attention by a student body strapped for cash as it is.

Support the third-party threat

DANIEL PARKER
Guest Columnist

In Virginia, we have two major choices for governor: the corrupt religious zealot Republican Ken Cuccinelli or the spineless swindler Democrat Terry McAuliffe. But why should we vote for either? The “lesser of two evils” paradox only creates more mediocrity. In a battle of two politicians involved in political scandals, the only thing Virginia will be left with is scandal. In one corner is the self-righteous Cuccinelli, the man who wants to reinstate outdated sodomy laws. He is also in a scandal involving taking ‘political gifts’ worth around \$18,000 from Jonnie R. Williams, CEO of Star Scientific Inc., a nutritional supplements company. The other candidate isn’t looking any better; while Cuccinelli takes “political gifts,” McAuliffe is involved in an even worse scandal. The environmental company

that McAuliffe championed and co-founded, Greentech, is under investigation for soliciting loans from investors — something that makes a political gift seem like child’s play. While he doesn’t want to bring us back into the dark ages of civil liberties, as a Cuccinelli administration might do, a potential fraud is not a better option than Cuccinelli. Now, I know you’re thinking third-party Libertarian candidate Robert Sarvis isn’t going to win anyway, which is likely true, but if he gets 10 percent of the vote, Libertarians get public funding, meaning that the floodgates are open and the duopoly of the Democrats and Republicans in Virginia is no more. The two-party system in this country is severely broken and leaves Americans with no real options when addressing controversial issues. Both parties, for example, believe that privacy is not an option in this age and that NSA wiretapping is justified. The

current power structure also holds that indefinite detentions of U.S. citizens are appropriate and should be legally viable for the executive branch. The idea of either party caring about civil liberties seems to be a giant joke — unless you think gun rights is the be-all, end-all civil liberty issue. While Democrats claim to be against bank subsidies, they frequently cave in to this form of crony capitalism. While some minorities in both parties speak against these bailouts. In the end, their voices are lost under the majority leader’s opinions on the issue. Whenever I think about how our system has gone down the tubes. I recall the Obama-Romney foreign debate. This debate seemed like some sort of joke as Romney coddled to Obama and essentially said he agreed with anything. While I’m not sure how I stand on drone strikes, it would be nice to hear a politician actually come up with an option that’s different. When I heard the third-party

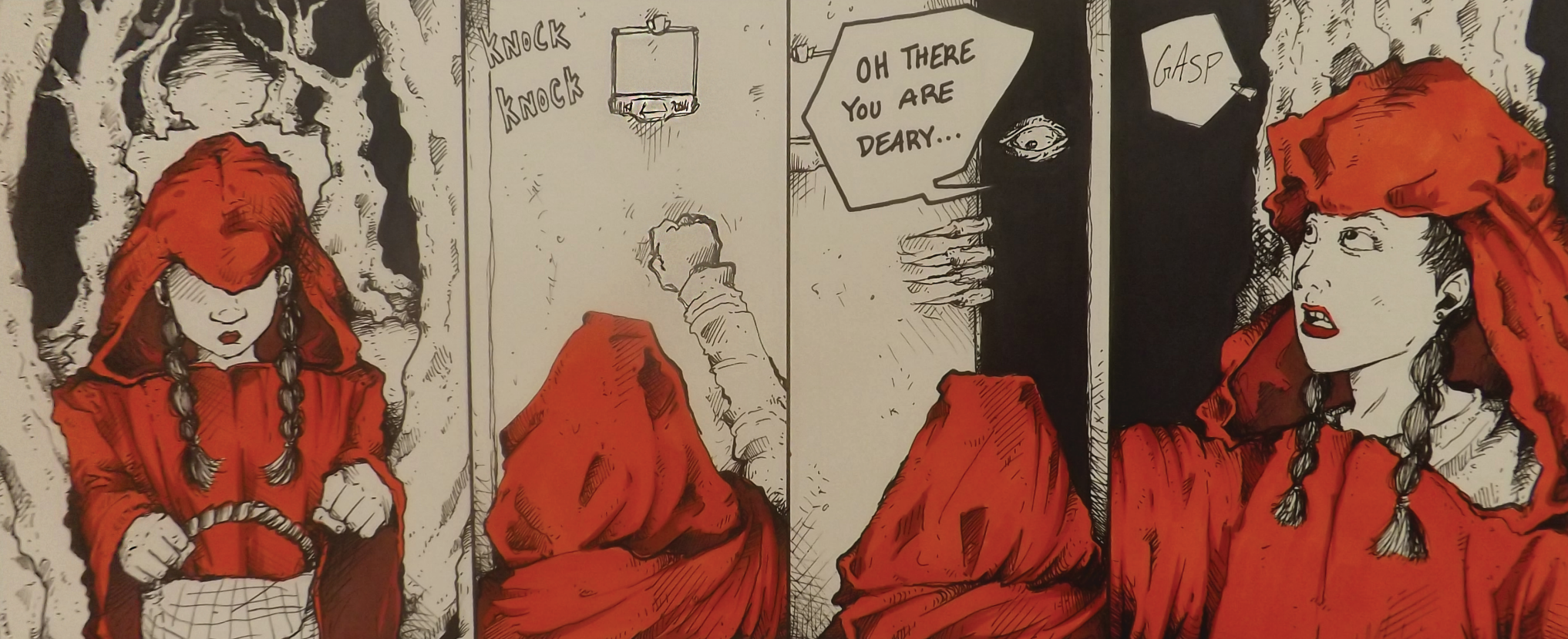
debates, there was a stark difference that included solutions other than lowering taxes or being tough on terrorism. Viable third parties seem to be our last hope at the precious options that I feel are lost in this country. Sure, McAuliffe isn’t an anti-gay zealot who will destroy women’s reproductive rights and persecute people for something they do in their bedroom, but is corruption like soliciting still appropriate? I’m not Libertarian: I don’t agree with most of Sarvis’s platform. But if he receives 10 percent of the vote, we could see the fear of a third option on the ballot brought to politicians currently in state office. I refuse to feel trapped in our two-party system and vote for the same-old, same-old. You should be tired of this, too. This election, vote for Sarvis and let’s get some real choice in our elections.



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CORRECTION

A story in the Oct. 28 issue of The CT headlined “By the numbers: Shaka’s contract extension” incorrectly stated that Smart’s contract guaranteed him \$10,000 for country club memberships and housing. The contract states that if Smart was to receive supplemental money for country club memberships or housing benefits, he has to report it to the NCAA. In the same issue, a story headlined “Students find competitive outlet in club sports” includes a photo caption that incorrectly states VCU club football is one of 26 recreational sports students can join. The club football program ended in 2011. The CT regrets these errors.

THE CT STAFF

Executive Editor

Mark Robinson
robinsonmw@commonwealthtimes.org

Copy Editor

Meagan Dermody
dermodymb@commonwealthtimes.org

News Editor

Sam Isaacs
isaacss1@commonwealthtimes.org

Sports Editor

Colin Kennedy
kennedyct@commonwealthtimes.org

Spectrum Editor

Shelby Mertens
mertenssn@commonwealthtimes.org

Opinion Editor

Shane Wade
wadesk@commonwealthtimes.org

Managing Editor of CT.org

Samra Khawaja
khawajasm@commonwealthtimes.org

Online Editor

Liz Butterfield
butterfieldem@commonwealthtimes.org

Social Media Specialist

Caitlin Puffenberger
puffenbergercj@commonwealthtimes.org

Webmaster

Michael Pasco
pasco.michael@gmail.com

Staff Writers

Cyrus Nuval
Zoe Dehmer

Photography Editor

Chris Conway
conwayc@commonwealthtimes.org

Comics Editor

Chris Kindred

Illustrators

Dan Nacu
Kyle Saxton

Graphic Designers

Sagal Hassan
Miranda Leung
Anna Shcherbakova
designers@vcustudentmedia.com

Advertising Representatives

Adam Naccarato
Mike Rodriguez
David Mistler
ctadvertising@gmail.com
980-875-7325

Student Media Director

Greg Weatherford
goweatherfor@vcu.edu
827-1975

Business Manager

Lauren Katchuk
lpkatchuk@vcu.edu
827-1642

Production Manager

Mark Jeffries
mjeffriesVCU@gmail.com

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