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Rao: VCU needs more resources

MARK ROBINSON
Executive Editor

After nearly five years as VCU president, Michael Rao is still working to balance state budget cuts and the lofty goals he set for the university with his Quest for Distinction strategic plan.

“I fear that we will soon hit a ceiling, in terms of what we can accomplish, if our resources do not match our talents and ambitions,” Rao told a crowd of about 175 administrators, faculty, staff and students at the W.E. Singleton Center on Jan. 23. The speech was the first formal State of the University address of Rao’s tenure as president.

Rao named fundraising his top priority in 2014, with money needed to provide more financial aid for students, better student services, expand the university’s infrastructure and fund the VCU Medical Center adequately.

Of the \$183 million Virginia budgeted for higher education, only \$31 million is allotted for financial aid, Rao said. The sum is divided among all state universities. State schools with larger endowments can provide financial aid packages to attract top-notch students, but VCU is struggling to do the same, he added.

“We can no longer expect that the state will fund two-thirds of a student’s education. That’s what happened a generation ago,” Rao said. “Now, it’s closer to one-third.”

The university raised nearly \$78 million in donations and pledges in 2012-13, the most in its history. Rao told the audience he was committed to “leveraging his presidency” to grow the university’s endowment, which he called “not

competitive.”

“I get the privilege of being in this position. How do I make the most of it for VCU?” Rao said after the address. “Is it sitting in my office? No.”

Aside from financial aid, Rao stressed the importance of providing better advising and enrollment tools for students to promote success. He praised the university’s “Do the Math,” campaign, which encourages students to enroll in 15 credits each semester to graduate in four years.

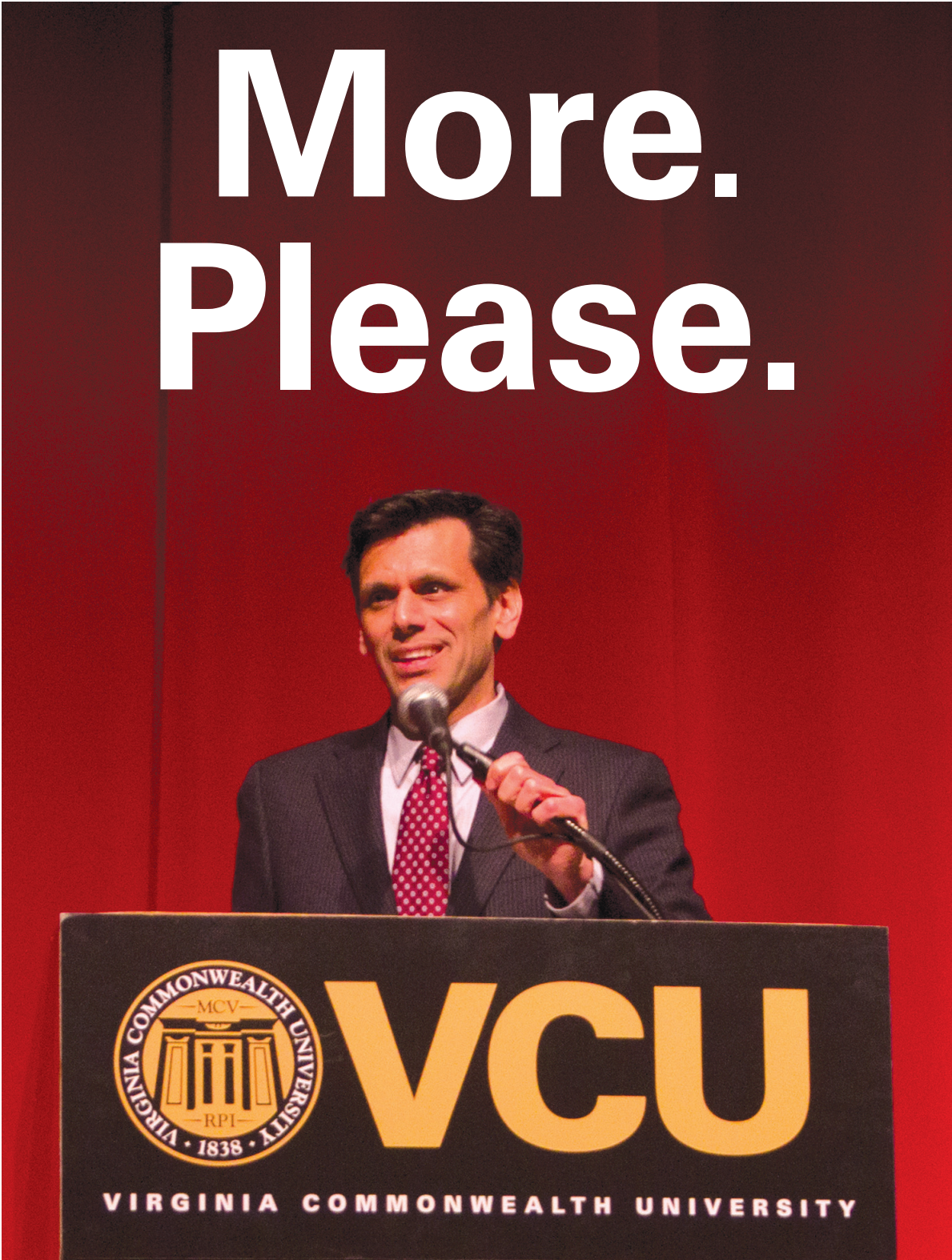
Thirty percent of VCU students graduate in four years or less, according to U.S. News and World Report, which ranked VCU as the 167th public university in the country. The four Virginia schools ranked ahead of VCU on the list all had higher four-year graduation rates: University of Virginia (87 percent); William & Mary (83 percent); Virginia Tech (59 percent); George Mason University (42 percent).

The continued expansion of the Monroe Park Campus will also be a priority in 2014, Rao said. A \$50 million renovation and expansion of Cabell Library is scheduled to begin in March. Fundraising for the Institute for Contemporary Art is on track, Rao said, and construction is slated to begin later this year. In 2013, the university completed the \$44 million Academic Learning Commons, the \$30 million West Grace North residence hall and the 12-story, \$158 million McGlothlin Medical Education Center on the Medical campus.

“While these three buildings are unrivaled anywhere, we do not have enough spaces that look like what you would find at other peer universities,” Rao said.

“I fear that we will soon hit a ceiling, in terms of what we can accomplish, if our resources do not match our talents and ambitions.”

— MICHAEL RAO



VCU president Michael Rao delivered the first State of the University address of his five-year tenure on Jan. 23 to a crowd of 175 administrators, faculty, staff and students at the W.E. Singleton Center.

Despite its perpetual construction on new projects, VCU has the fewest square feet per student among Virginia’s research universities, Rao added.

Rao praised his colleagues for their contributions to VCU’s reputation as an urban research institution. The university received nearly \$250 million in sponsored research

in 2012-13, he said, including two of its three largest grants ever.

In his remarks about the VCU Medical Center, Rao expressed concern about the possibility of losing up to \$300 million in federal funds in a five-year period if the Virginia General Assembly does not expand Medicaid. The loss would jeopardize a \$70 million

contribution the VCU Health System makes to the School of Medicine each year, he said.

“We are working urgently with our partners in the halls of the capitol,” Rao said. “Meanwhile, our mission in the halls of the hospital remains the same: caring for our people.”

PHOTO BY BROCKE MARSH

Men’s basketball defeats Dayton, La Salle on road

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

Junior Treveon Graham scored a career-high 34 points and senior Rob Brandenburg hit two clutch three-pointers as the VCU men’s basketball team secured its second straight conference road win with an improbable 97-89 double overtime victory at La Salle University on Saturday.

The Rams needed a late rally and a Graham layup in the closing seconds of regulation to force overtime, but VCU escaped Philadelphia, Penn. with its eighth victory in nine games.

With the win, head coach Shaka Smart’s team improved to 4-1 in the Atlantic 10 and 16-4 overall on the season.

It was an unusual victory for the Rams, who recorded just five steals — all courtesy of junior guard Briante Weber — and notched only nine bench points in the winning effort.

VCU came out aggressive and opened an 11-point lead in the first half before the Explorers trimmed it to four at halftime. From there, La Salle took advantage of several second-half VCU miscues to take a double-digit lead into the final minutes of regulation.

But the Rams’ full-court pressure forced a couple of key turnovers and Smart relied on Graham down the stretch to pull VCU even at 73 heading into the first extra period.

Five additional minutes wasn’t enough to separate the two A-10 teams, but Brandenburg knocked down back-to-back three-pointers in the second overtime to give the Rams some breathing room.

Despite shooting just 68 percent from the free throw line as a team, a couple of Rams, including Weber and Graham, converted in the waning moments to seal VCU’s 16th victory of the season.

Graham and senior forward Juvonte Reddic combined for 61 points and 27 rebounds, while La Salle senior Tyrone Garland poured in 30 of his own for the Explorers.

The win against La Salle came just three days after VCU downed Dayton University by double digits in Ohio. Wednesday’s 80-66 win against the Flyers was arguably VCU’s most impressive and complete performance of the season.

The Rams used a barrage of early three-pointers to grab a nine-point halftime lead before turning up the defensive pressure in the second half.

Weber and Reddic contributed 18 points apiece — most of which came after halftime — and head coach Shaka Smart’s team scored 28 points off of 18 Flyer turnovers en route to a decisive road win.

Dayton came into the contest having lost just two home games all year, but the Rams shot 49 percent from the field, 38 percent from three and 85 percent from the free throw line on the evening, while tallying an impressive 19 assists on 30 field goals.

For Reddic, it was his highest scoring output since the senior dropped 24 against Old Dominion University on Dec. 8.

Up next for VCU is Fordham at home on Wednesday, Jan. 29. The Rams will be seeking their 10th consecutive win at the Siegel Center before opening up February with a home game against the University of Richmond Spiders.

Pay up, graduates

SHANE WADE
Opinion Editor

Once you get into your daily routine here, it’s sometimes easy to forget that VCU is a large, heavily populated university. When VCU provides a service to students, particularly a free service, it’s not just a couple hundred students who benefit; it’s thousands of students.

When VCU announced that they would no longer provide graduating students with free caps, gowns and hoods for their graduation, it’s not hard to understand the reasoning behind their decision.

It’s also not hard to understand the student body’s response to the decision.

As petty as it might seem to be frustrated with the university for this decision, it’s not an unreasonable emotion. After four long years of paying VCU’s annually increasing tuition, student fees, parking passes, bus passes, lab fees, printing costs, meal plans and more, the addition of graduation fees feels like another hindrance, intended not to stop, but to slow. It’s a taxing experience that leaves students concerned about what program or service will be next to be defunded or canceled.

On the part of the university, it’s a smart decision that could have and maybe should have taken place some time ago. Not spending an

annual cost of \$140,000 to provide graduating students with material they’ll use only once, if they attend their graduation at all, is a smart cost-effective measure.

While we can only hope it will decrease the steepness of the next tuition increase or prevent some other small, but innocent service or program from being cut, it’s a step toward the kind of fiscal responsibility that we, as students, can respect.

In the official notice, the university states that the cost has diverted funds from priorities like financial aid and student services. In invoking two services held sacrosanct to the student body, however, the administration has made an unspoken promise and forced itself to make marked improvements on those two fronts or risk the ire of students, who will remember next year when they’re reminded they have to buy their own regalia.

While students may call the administration uncaring for ceasing the service, remember that slighting their graduating students is the last thing the university would want to do. Those students are about to become alumni and, consequently, potential donors to the university.

The university greatly relies on the generosity of donors and endowments and if you don’t believe that, check out the names on VCU buildings. In the last fundraising

year, the university brought in more than \$120 million in gifts, according to the Office of Development and Alumni Relations, creating hundreds of student scholarships, supporting various research projects and helping the construction of a number of new buildings for both the Monroe Park and Medical campuses. Despite how students feel and interpret administrative responses, there is evidence to show that they care about their reputation with the student body.

It behooves us to remember these facts. To forget and generate banal posts on Facebook about VCU not caring about the financial or general well-being of its own student body is to do a disservice to the thousands of dollars you spend on tu-

ition and the thousands of dollars the university invests in each student. We are all pulling in the same direction, earnestly hoping to combat the rising expense of higher education. What the student body ought to concentrate on is holding the university accountable for what they do and remaining well-informed.

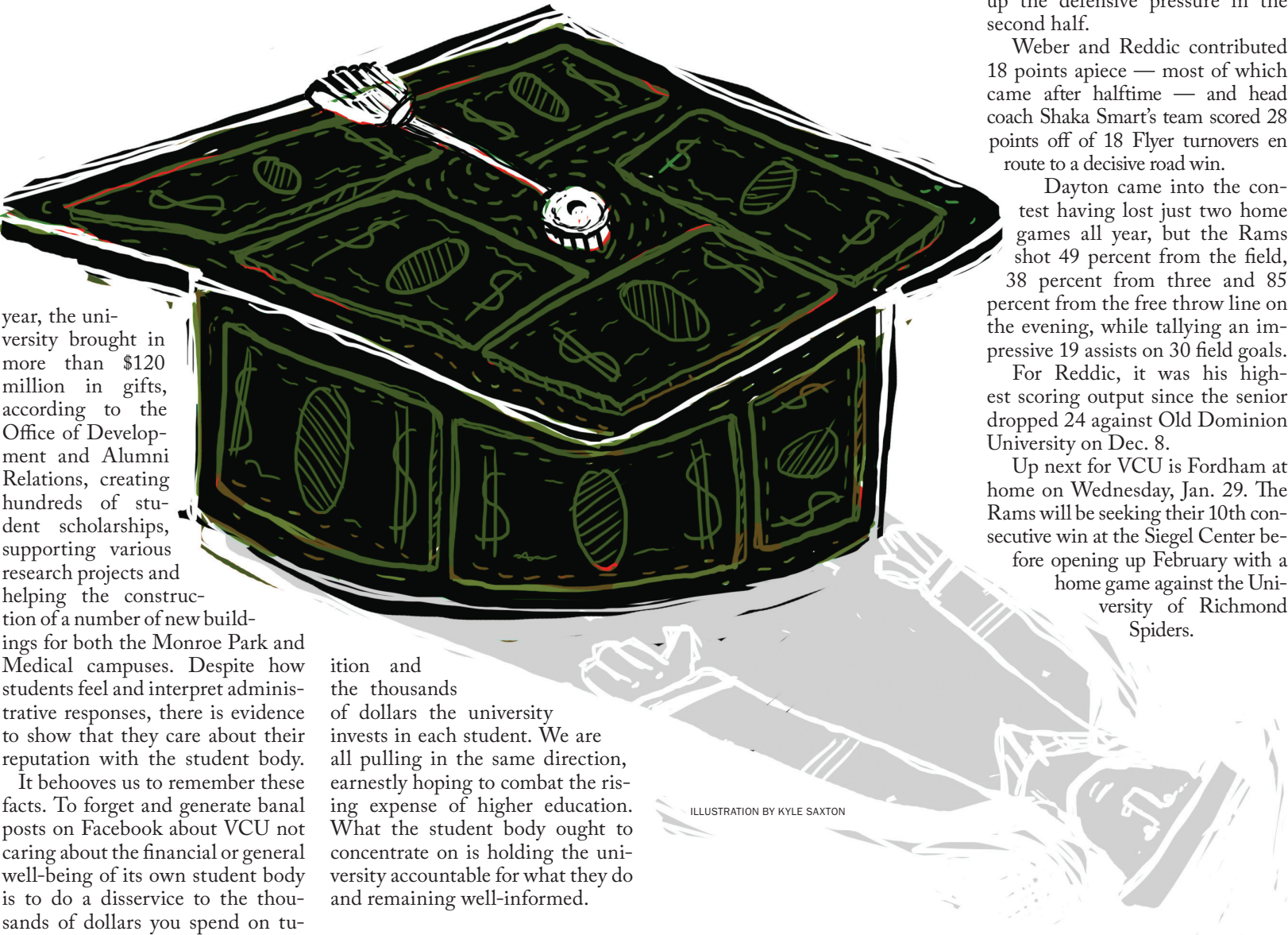


ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE SAXTON



In this section: Historical resolution causes controversy. Overdose amnesty bill killed. Emergency preparedness. Bicyclist safety. Camp Kesem at VCU.

briefs

LOCAL

Trial date set for McDonnells
Indictment

A trial date has been set for former Gov. Robert F. McDonnell and his wife Maureen for July 28, following a Friday arraignment at a Richmond federal courthouse. Both pleaded not guilty to all 14 charges.

Federal authorities say the McDonnells repeatedly asked Johnnie Williams, a Richmond area businessman, for loans and gifts totaling more than \$165,000. The 43-page indictment alleges the McDonnells asked for money, clothes, golf fees, equipment, numerous trips and private jet rides in exchange for access to political clout.

Prosecutors allege that McDonnell helped promote Anatabloc, the company's new product. The indictment states McDonnell pitched Anatabloc during an official meeting March 2012 with the secretary of administration in which they would discuss the state employee health plan.

Brief by Capital News Service

Va. Senate Committee Says 'No' To Dreamers

Virginia Senate legislation designed to give in-state tuition to undocumented childhood arrivals was defeated this past week by a Health and Education Committee vote of 6-7.

Senate Bill 249, patroned by Sen. Donald McEachin, D-Richmond, and known as the Virginia DREAM Act, sparked heated rhetoric on whether state or federal legislators should be held responsible for immigration-related measures.

"Shame on the federal government and people from both parties," said Sen. Thomas A. Garrett, R-Hadensville. "Whether it's a failure to secure the borders or failure to acknowledge 12,000 living, breathing human beings who are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, I can't vote on the bill because it's unconstitutional. We can't do this. It's stupid."

Brief by Capital News Service

Pair sentenced for sex trafficking of 15-year-old

Two people have been sentenced to more than 10 years in prison for prostituting a 15-year-old girl.

Twenty-eight-year-old Stephanie Chapman of Fairfax was sentenced to 11 years in prison. Her boyfriend, 30-year-old Ronnie Holmes, was sentenced to 14 years. They were sentenced Friday in federal court in Alexandria.

According to government evidence, Chapman and Holmes met the girl and recruited her to be a prostitute. Prosecutors say Chapman and her boyfriend drove the girl to customers in Virginia, Maryland and Washington.

Brief by the Associated Press

NATIONAL

Fear of slowing growth drags down global markets

Fear is back in the market.

Investors are worried about slower economic growth in China, a gloomier outlook for U.S. corporate profits and an end to easy-money policies in the United States and Europe. They're also fretting over country-specific troubles around the world — from economic mismanagement in Argentina to political instability in Turkey.

Those fears converged this week to start a two-day rout in global markets that was capped by a 318-point drop in the Dow Jones industrial average Friday. It was the blue-chip index's worst day since last June. The Dow plunged almost 500 points over the two days.

The Dow finished down 2 percent at 15,879 Friday. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 38 points, or 2.1 percent, to 1,790. The Nasdaq composite fell 90 points, or 2.2 percent, to 4,128.

Brief by the Associated Press

Judge: Remove life support for pregnant woman

A judge on Friday ordered a Texas hospital to remove life support for a pregnant, brain-dead woman whose family had argued that she would not want to be kept in that condition.

Judge R. H. Wallace Jr. issued the ruling in the case of Marlise Munoz. John Peter Smith Hospital in Fort Worth has been keeping Munoz on life support against her family's wishes. The judge gave the hospital until 5 p.m. CST Monday to remove life support. The hospital did not immediately say Friday whether it would appeal.

Munoz was 14 weeks pregnant when her husband, Erick Munoz, found her unconscious Nov. 26, possibly due to a blood clot. Both the hospital and the family agree that she meets the criteria to be considered brain-dead — which means she is dead both medically and under Texas law — and that the fetus could not be born alive at this point.

Brief by the Associated Press

Commemorative resolution sparks debate

ZOE DEHMER
News Editor

A joint resolution proposed in the Virginia General Assembly to memorialize the contributions of African American cadavers to the training of 19th century physicians in Richmond has an unlikely critic.

Shawn Utsey, Ph.D., a VCU professor and chairperson of the African American Studies Department, is criticizing the resolution proposed by sponsor democrat Sen. Henry L. Marsh III's SJ 84 (D-Richmond). Delegate Delores L. McQuinn (D-Richmond) sponsored an identical bill in the House of Delegates.

Utsey spearheaded research about graverobbing in Richmond and the discovery of the bones of 53 African Americans found in a well outside of the Egyptian Building on the MCV campus nearly two decades ago. He released his findings in a documentary in November 2011.

"These were enslaved people. How do you talk about the contributions of enslaved people?" Utsey said. "How do you talk about the contributions of enslaved people in the Holocaust to science in Germany? Do you think the Jewish community would allow that nonsense? Absolutely not. How is that different than talking about the contributions that enslaved people here made, people who didn't even own their bodies?"

The resolution focuses on the role of Chris Baker, a janitor at the Medical College of Virginia in the late 1800s. At that time, before acquiring bodies for medical science was legal, it was common for African American employees like Baker to be paid under-the-table to steal bodies that physicians-in-training could use for dissection.

For medical students, human anatomical dissection is a common practice in the teaching of anatomy. Today, you can elect to have your body donated for medical science research when you pass away. Until the late 1800s, however, when Virginia state legislation established the State Anatomical Board, it was illegal to obtain human bodies for dissection in Virginia.

In response to Richmond's history with graverobbing, the resolution sponsored by Marsh is his "attempt to help VCU memorialize the cadavers and bring it to public awareness what happened," said Valerie Braxton-Williams, Marsh's legislative aide. Marsh was unavailable for comment as of press time.

Utsey, however, said he finds the sentiment in the resolution to be inconsistent with his perspective and "inappropriate."

"This whole idea of contributions to science is like trying to spin it like something great happened ... it's a sham. That's what it is," Utsey said.

The story of Chris Baker and body-snatching in Richmond was brought into question in November 2011 when Utsey released his research and documentary "Until the Well Runs Dry."

In the 19th century follow-



PHOTO COURTESY OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES, TOMPKINS-MCCAW LIBRARY

Chris Baker, a "resurrectionist," as body snatchers or grave robbers were called, lived with his family in the basement of the Egyptian Building on the Medical College of Virginia campus.

ing the end of slavery, grave robbing targeted bodies from African American cemeteries because they were less protected and held less community interest than white cemeteries, Utsey said.

In his documentary, Utsey revisits the discovery of the bones from the well at the Medical College of Virginia. The bones were later found to have been from the bodies of African Americans, according to a report conducted by the Smithsonian Institute.

The bodies were robbed from their graves by MCV employees like Baker and sold for anatomical dissection at MCV, Utsey said.

Shortly after the release of his film, Utsey approached VCU president Michael Rao, Ph.D., with concerns about what VCU should do to properly deal with the complicated history. As a result, Rao appointed Kevin Allison, his senior assistant, to lead a group in forming a steering committee to make recommendations to VCU for how to properly memorialize the bones.

Utsey said he thinks in addition

to presenting a twisted perspective of the history in the resolution, writing the resolution to begin with is "a compromise of the duties and responsibilities of the committee," referring to the VCU group he is a member of that is responsible for forming a descendant community steering committee to decide how to move forward.

The steering committee that will make those recommendations is to consist of the 'descendant community,' or African American descendants in Richmond whose ancestors were likely in the well.

Allison said that although people do have different opinions of how to acknowledge the matter, VCU intends for the conversation to be ongoing and open to the public.

"Our plan was already for it to be a public, open process," Allison said. "This is not an easy issue and it's not an issue in which everyone has the same perspective."

Since the introduction of the resolution, Allison said the planning committee members have not

had the opportunity to meet to voice their concerns.

Utsey said though he is still undecided, the resolution makes him hesitant to continue to participate in the planning committee that he helped to initiate.

"Some people are uncomfortable with not having the front seat," Utsey said. "I'll probably resign the committee, unless the person that advanced that bill resigns."

The planning committee decided at its last meeting that future meetings would be open to the public, said VCU spokesperson Mike Porter in an email.

The planning committee will meet on Tuesday, Jan. 28, from 1-3 p.m. in the Forum Room, located on the first floor of the University Student Commons, according to a University Public Affairs statement. The meeting is open to the public and there will be an opportunity for those interested to make comments at the end of the planning committee meeting.

House kills overdose protection measure

CHRIS SUAREZ
Capital News Service

Legislation that would protect Virginians reporting drug overdoses was introduced earlier this month after years of lobbying by a VCU student organization, but the bill will have to wait until the 2015 General Assembly session to be heard.

Students for Sensible Drug Policy was the VCU group instrumental in helping introduce HB 557, which sought to provide limited legal amnesty to anyone reporting a drug overdose.

The bill aimed to protect anyone experiencing or witnessing a drug overdose, whether from a controlled substance or synthetic cannabinoid, according to VCU SSDP co-president and treasurer Rose Bono.

"According to the office of the Chief Medical Examiner of Virginia, hundreds of people die every year from unintentional drug overdose," Bono said. "This is an important issue to the public health of Virginia."

The bill also provided protections for minors suffering from an alcohol-related overdose, addressing an issue common to colleges and universities throughout the country.

"We've met parents and relatives of those who have died of overdose," said delegate Betsy Carr, (D-Richmond, the bill's chief patron. "This (bill) is an attempt to save those lives."

The bill was heard in the Courts of Justice subcommittee earlier this month. After deliberation, the subcommittee recommended "laying it on the table," essentially ending discussion on the bill during this session of the General Assembly, according to VCU SSDP president Jurriaan van den Hurk.

Bono and van den Hurk said the VCU group plans to continue ad-

— BETSY CARR

addressing the issue in the future.

Bono said the drafting of this legislation has been in the works over the course of several years with help from former organization leaders and the national SSDP office. After much lobbying and organizing, Carr adopted the issue by becoming chief patron of the bill.

The national SSDP office encourages its local chapters to lobby for regulations in their respective universities that would protect students experiencing overdoses. Because VCU falls under the jurisdiction of the city of Richmond, university officials told members of the SSDP they would have to appeal to city legislators to adopt a law for the commonwealth, Bono said.

During the subcommittee meeting, delegate Jackson Miller, (R-Manassas) motioned to table the bill, citing unintended consequences the bill could cause, such as providing amnesty to drug dealers selling far more harmful adulterated drugs.

"If someone was selling a bad batch of heroin and making people sick, and the police would show up at an overdose caused by that, the (police) wouldn't be able to do anything about it," van den Hurk said "They said the bill wasn't written well enough to account for those loose ends."

Van den Hurk said the organization isn't giving up on the issue. They will wait to see which members will take up leadership roles and shape a new policy to address the issue after he and Bono graduate in May.

Bicycle-passing measure rolls on



SB 97 would increase the distance at which a car can pass electric scooters, wheelchairs, mopeds and animal-drawn vehicles.

LAUREN MCCLELLAN
Capital News Service

ZÖE DEHMER
News Editor

When a car passed painting and printmaking major Warren Jones as he was riding his bike home from work one Thursday evening, he swerved so the two wouldn't collide. Jones overcorrected, his wheel slid out from under him and down he fell. Jones didn't suffer any injuries, but his bike was damaged.

The Virginia Senate Transportation committee recently approved a bill increasing the distance at which cars must pass bicycles, from two to three feet.

For many students like Jones, bicycling is their only mode of transportation, besides walking. Many students find riding alongside cars on the road to be potentially hazardous. In Jones' case, the most costly damage he faces is replacing the bike parts broken in the crash.

"I know how to buy the parts to fix it, but money is always an issue. Stuff doesn't come cheap," Jones said.

SB 97, introduced by Sen. Bryce Reeves (R-Fredericksburg) has been unsuccessfully introduced in

the past by Reeves and a number of other Republican and Democratic legislators.

Previous opponents of the bill, including Sen. Charles W. Carrico (R-Galax) have cited enforceability issues as a reason for barring passage of the bill, saying that it is hard for drivers to know the difference between two and three-foot distances while driving.

The bill would change the distance at which a car can pass electric scooters and wheelchairs, mopeds and animal-drawn vehicles.

Twenty-two other states and Washington, D.C. have similar laws that say drivers must pass bicycles with at least three feet of room.

The Virginia Bicycling Federation supports the bill and its members have met with legislators to advocate for the bill's passage.

"We had reps from the City of Virginia Beach speaking to the Senate Transportation Committee in support of SB 97," said Scott Cramer, board member of the VBF from Norfolk, Va. "When city officials, not just cyclists, want to be seen as bike-friendly, that's a big step forward."

To Cramer, the new bill would give cyclists another layer of protection from vehicles that have wide trailers or large mirrors. Cra-

mer also thinks that the passage of the bill would help the relationship between Virginia cyclists and drivers.

"It will help Virginia's standing as a bicycle-friendly state, since having a three-foot pass law is a criterion from the League of American Bicyclists," Cramer said in an email. "It sends a message to citizens, drivers and cyclists that cyclists' space on the road should be respected."

In 2013, the League of American Bicyclists rated Virginia the 16th most bike-friendly state. The league provided feedback on the ranking, stating that Virginia should consider enacting a three-foot passing law.

In 2015, Richmond will host the Union Cycliste Internationale World Road Championships. Lee Kramer, marketing and communications director for the event's Richmond organizing body, thinks SB 97 could benefit the commonwealth.

"We hope this event is not (only) about bike racing, but making the region more bike-friendly for recreation and transportation," Kramer said. "Any legislation that further supports (this) is a good thing as far as we're concerned."

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ZÖE DEHMER

Students fundraise for national charity camp

HANNAH KHAN
Contributing Writer

VCU juniors Jenny Holmgrain and Sarah Dodson have begun a charity campaign to raise \$30,000 by June 2014 to give children with parents who are suffering or have died from cancer the opportunity to go to a summer camp for free.

The program is managed and supported by the VCU chapter of Camp Kesem, a national charity organization that aims to comfort the children of cancer patients and victims by inviting them to attend a free summer camp for a week.

Holmgrain and Dodson started the chapter last semester when Holmgrain received a call from Camp Kesem's main office, alerting her that VCU was selected to receive a grant of \$10,000 over a two-year period to start a chapter of Camp Kesem at VCU. Student Amber Holloway assists the two as a volunteer coordinator for Camp Kesem at VCU.

After months of collecting signatures and competing in voting competitions against 21 other schools Holmgrain and Dodson officially established the chapter in April 2013.

"We sat in the Commons for hours," Holmgrain said. "We sat there and gave out like five dozen donuts nearly begging people to vote for us so that we could get Camp Kesem to VCU. William & Mary, University of Richmond and U.Va. all had chapters of Camp Kesem. We felt like VCU needed one too."

Camp Kesem was founded in 2000 by a group of students from Stanford University. They named the camp "Kesem," the Hebrew word for magic, because their goal was to bring magic to families coping with cancer.

This year, the camp will serve over 2,000 children. Since its first operating summer, Camp Kesem has grown from a single camp to 54 active chapters in 27 states, includ-



PHOTO BY AUDRY DUBON

From left to right: Sarah Dodson, Jenny Holmgrain and Amber Holloway started a Camp Kesem chapter at VCU.

ing the three other Virginia chapters of William & Mary, University of Virginia and the University of Richmond.

The VCU chapter of Camp Kesem plans on coordinating local events with the University of Richmond chapter to help raise money for both of the camps.

"We've done cool events like 'stuff the cup' and bake sales in the past, and we are definitely going to do more of it this semester," Dodson said. "We want the whole campus to know about us and what we are doing and hopefully contribute to the cause."

Holmgrain's mother, Laura Holmgrain, is also assisting the VCU chapter by contacting possible donors outside of VCU.

"I am very proud of Jenny," Laura Holmgrain said. "In her freshman year, Camp Kesem had told her they weren't launching any new chapters. In her sophomore year they contacted her to start the VCU chapter."

In 2009, Jenny Holmgrain's father died of lung cancer. In that same year, her sister, Skylar, attended a summer camp managed and supported by the George Washington University Camp Kesem chapter.

"Skylar has told me it's the one place that when she goes that they all speak the same 'language' and understand what each of them face or are facing without having to explain it," Laura Holmgrain said. "It makes a big difference. What these college students and organizations accomplish truly is magic to any parent watching their child live through with such sadness."

In the upcoming weeks, the VCU Camp Kesem team will reach out to local schools to find campers, reveal the theme for this summer's camp and review applications for camp counselors.

The VCU chapter has collected approximately \$7,500 to date, Holmgrain said.

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ANALYSIS

Turnovers alone don't guarantee Rams success

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

Just more than midway through the 2013-14 VCU men's basketball schedule, head coach Shaka Smart has the Rams slotted near the top of a competitive Atlantic 10 conference.

At 16-4 (4-1), VCU is still looking up at several teams in the A-10, including two nationally-ranked opponents in the University of Massachusetts and Saint Louis University.

Several statistics could tell the story for the Rams, who lead the nation in steals and turnover margin for the third consecutive year. But a closer look at the numbers reveals a few alarming discrepancies in the team's first 14 wins compared to its four losses.

Ever since Smart came to Richmond in 2009, teams across the country have struggled to find a solution to counter VCU's havoc defense. And though the blueprint to victory against the Rams still remains largely unclear, some statistical similarities can be found in the team's losing performances.

Limiting the turnovers is often the first step opposing coaches point to in game-planning for VCU. Surprisingly, however, there is no direct correlation between forced turnovers and wins for the 2013-14 Rams.

VCU's 18-point loss to Florida State University on Nov. 21 was a perfect example of how opponents can down the Rams despite high turnover totals. The Seminoles coughed it up 25 times in that game, but still managed to score 85 points in the blowout victory.

In four losses this season, VCU has turned opponents over an average of 22 times per game compared to its season average of 20. So perhaps it's time to ask the question nobody in Richmond ever thought would surface: Is Smart's high-pressure defense actually costing the Rams?

It's a difficult argument to make considering the success VCU's program has experienced since Smart's arrival five years ago. The Rams' head coach is 126-41 in four-plus seasons at the helm; however, a trend may be developing among his rare defeats.

A quick look at the box scores will reveal that FSU, Georgetown University, University of Northern Iowa and George Washington University all had something in common in victories against the Rams this season: each shot better than 52 percent from the field against VCU's havoc defense.

But a more thorough breakdown exposes several other parallels, which help prove that these high percentages are the result of more than a hot hand.

If you're going to beat the Rams, you need size and patience. Because VCU forces so many turnovers, they generate more scoring opportunities than most teams in the nation. This is evidenced by the fact that Smart's team ranks 107th nationwide in points scored despite owning the country's 292nd-ranked field goal percentage.

The Rams like to get out in transition and use their conditioning to their advantage. But if teams can slow VCU down and force Smart's team into a battle of half-court play, the Rams often experience difficulty generating good looks at the basket.

Of course, slowing down some of college basketball's speediest athletes is easier said than done.

A zone approach on defense has proven most effective in guarding Smart's team in the halfcourt. To this point in the season, VCU has lacked a true outside shooting threat like they had last year in Troy Daniels. So, opponents should be comfortable letting the Rams take contested shots from the perimeter. VCU is shooting less than 35 percent from three as a team and Juvonte Reddic's drop off in production in the post has only compounded the problem.

But arguably the biggest key to reducing the pace and limiting VCU's possessions has nothing to do with defense at all.

Teams with size that have longer possessions on offense have a better chance of downing VCU because they take quality shots each time they have the ball. Instead of chucking up a three-pointer five seconds into the possession and allowing the Rams to run with long rebounds, successful opponents have allowed the shot clock to wind down before working the ball into the paint for a high-percentage attempt.

In VCU's four losses this season, opponents averaged just 13 three-point attempts per contest. That compares to an average of 17 per game in the Rams' first 14 wins.

Unsurprisingly, Smart's team has been outscored in the paint by an average of more than eight points per loss. Conversely, the Rams have outscored opponents in the paint by five per game in their 14 wins.

The advantage of size is, in theory, a better chance at rebounding. The ability to keep the Rams off the glass is essential in preventing second-chance opportunities and slowing the pace. VCU records enough steals as it is (more than 12 per game), so the importance of securing rebounds to limit possessions is paramount when playing the Rams.

The relatively undersized Rams ranked 11th of 13 teams in the conference in rebounding entering



Redshirt freshman Mo Alie-Cox attempts to score between two Duquesne defenders during last Saturday's 80-65 win against the Dukes.

last week, and the discrepancies in rebound totals in VCU's four losses are huge. Opponents have outrebounded Smart's squad by an average of 12 rebounds per game in four VCU losses this season, including a 45-29 edge in the team's latest loss against GW.

Big bodies that clog up the lane and prevent the Rams from getting to the rim thus have a dual effect

because they force VCU to settle for perimeter shots and subsequently secure the ball for their own team.

Instead of harping on the inevitable and focusing all the attention on limiting turnovers the Rams are bound to force, perhaps the best way for opponents to approach VCU can be found in fundamental basketball.

Fans today are seemingly obsessed with Smart's havoc-style defense, and justifiably so. But instead of spending all week practicing with seven defenders on the floor, maybe opponents should accept the fact they're going to turn the ball over and concentrate on creating quality shots, suffocating half-court defense and securing rebounds.

Of course, there is no perfect plan. VCU has the talent and depth to beat any team in America on any given night. But not many opponents have managed to limit turnovers against the Rams during Smart's tenure. And even then, there is no strong correlation to victory.



Senior Robyn Parks scored 24 points in Wednesday's home loss to Duquesne University.

Women's hoops stumbles in A-10 play

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

After a record-setting start, the VCU women's basketball team lost two of three games during a one-week span against conference opponents, dropping its record to 4-3 in the Atlantic 10 and 16-4 overall.

Second-year head coach Marlene Stollings had her Lady Rams at 15-2 immediately following a 76-69 victory against Saint Joseph's University at the Siegel Center on Sunday, Jan. 12. But home losses to Fordham University and Duquesne University on Jan. 15 and Jan. 22 respectively doubled VCU's loss total in seven days.

Last Wednesday's loss to Duquesne was thanks to a complete performance from the Lady Dukes, whose starting five players combined for 75 of the team's 77 points in an impressive road win.

VCU freshman Keira Robinson scored 16 first-half points and senior Robyn Parks finished with 24 points and nine rebounds, but Duquesne used a 12-3 second-half run to secure its league-leading sixth conference victory 77-65.

The loss came fewer than three weeks after VCU won at Duquesne by a score of 71-68.

Between VCU's two most recent losses was an 81-51 road win against the University of Massachusetts on Saturday, Jan. 18. Parks led the way for the Lady Rams, recording her seventh double-double of the season, and sophomore Jessica Pellechio contributed 16 points off the bench in the blowout win.

The Lady Rams outscored the Minutewomen by a total of 88 points in their two meetings this month.

VCU's third loss of the season came against Fordham on Jan. 15.

Stollings' first home defeat in her last eight contests at the Siegel Center came on a night when Parks notched 26 points, eight rebounds and four steals.

In the end, the Lady Rams couldn't overcome a stellar performance from Fordham guard Erin Rooney, who recorded a triple-double with 11 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists. Four of the Fordham starters finished in double figures, and VCU scored 18 points off of 18 Fordham turnovers, but fell 76-63.

Four days after La Salle University snapped VCU's 13-game winning streak, the Lady Rams used a Robinson double-double and 17 steals to top defending Atlantic 10 champion Saint Joseph's 73-69 at the Siegel Center on Sunday, Jan. 12.

Robinson received her league-best third conference rookie of the

week award thanks in part to her 21-point, 10-assist performance against Saint Joseph's, as she paced VCU toward its 14th win in 15 games.

Parks scored just 12 points on 5-19 shooting, but contributed eight rebounds in the winning effort.

Once again, high defensive pressure got the job done for the Lady Rams. Stollings' team tallied 17 steals and the Lady Rams scored 23 points off of 23 Lady Hawk turnovers en route to their second victory over a top-60 RPI team in three days.

The win against Saint Joseph's was the third time VCU recorded 15 or more steals in a single game this season. The Lady Rams ranked sixth in the nation in turnover margin entering Saturday's contest against George Mason University.



Freshman JeQuan Lewis battles for position against a defender during VCU’s 15-point homecoming victory against Duquesne.

Men’s hoops bounce back after Colonials snap streak

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

VCU hosted the Duquesne University Dukes for homecoming on Saturday, Jan. 18, just four days after George Washington University ended the Rams’ five-game winning streak. Head coach Shaka Smart’s team got off to a slow start at home, connecting on just 10 of 30 attempts in the first half, but stingy second-half defense helped secure VCU’s 14th win of the season.

The Dukes’ four-point halftime lead vanished quickly when senior forward Juvonte Reddic scored to help the Rams reclaim the lead just four minutes into the second frame. From there, it was tight

defense and solid shooting that propelled VCU to an eventual 15-point victory.

Duquesne shot just 30 percent from the field in the second half, while Smart’s team connected on 53 percent of its shots and eight threes in VCU’s 80-65 bounce back performance.

On Tuesday, Jan. 14, the Rams traveled to the nation’s capital to take on the GW Colonials at the Charles E. Smith Center.

Despite 17 points from senior guard Rob Brandenburg, the Rams shot just 37 percent against a stingy 1-3-1 half-court zone defense and struggled to find a solution for the Colonials’ size in the post.

GW forward Kevin Larsen,

who is listed at 6-foot-10 and 247 pounds, scored 17 first-half points and the Colonials outrebounded VCU 45-29 in the 76-66 GW win.

Reddic matched up against Larsen for a good portion of the contest and only finished with nine points on 3-9 shooting, while junior Treveon Graham finished with 12 points on 5-15 shooting.

The Rams did manage to score 24 points off of 21 Colonial turnovers; however, GW scored 46 points in the paint and shot 56 percent from the field in the victory. The loss marked the fifth time in the last eight games in which the Rams shot below 39 percent from the field, and dropped VCU’s record to 13-4 on the season.

Lady Rams rebound against GMU

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

After dropping its second game in three contests against Duquesne University on Wednesday, Jan. 22, the VCU women’s basketball team bounced back with a dominating 112-86 victory against George Mason University at the Siegel Center on Saturday.

With the win, the Lady Rams moved to 5-3 in the Atlantic 10 and 17-4 overall on the season.

VCU scored a program-record 67 first-half points and the Lady Rams shot 49 percent from the

field as head coach Marlene Stollings’ team blew out conference newcomer GMU at home in the only matchup between the two Virginia schools scheduled this season.

Senior Robyn Parks scored 30 points, while freshman guards Isis Thorpe and Keira Robinson combined for 39 of their own in the winning effort.

Turnovers and post play were a problem for the visiting Lady Patriots, who coughed up the ball 21 times on Saturday. VCU scored 39 points off of GMU turnovers and outscored its opponent 46-20

in the paint.

Sophomore guard Jessica Pellechio contributed 12 points off the bench for a Lady Rams team that won for just the third time in six contests.

VCU, which has played more games than any other team in the A-10, has a weeklong layoff before it plays at Saint Joseph’s University on Saturday, Feb. 1. The Lady Rams downed defending conference champion, Saint Joseph’s, at home on Sunday, Jan. 12.

Stollings already has six more victories than she recorded her entire first year with the program.

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ON THIS DAY in 1994, the CT reported the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts recieved oil paintings by Salvador Dali and Childe Hassam.

The man behind the music

SARAH KING
Staff Writer

The Miley Cyrus hit “Wrecking Ball” made a comeback when the VCU pep band performed the song during the men’s basketball game against George Mason University. Unknown to most, none of their recent buzz would have been possible without the work of one former Peppa.

“The only thing I know about Miley Cyrus is ‘twerk.’ I should probably do some research on that, I don’t really remember the lyrics. I remember seeing that cat on YouTube. I guess people loved it,” said Steven Cunningham, in reaction to the the Peppas hit-rendition of “Wrecking Ball.” The band’s performance made national headlines last week and was featured on People magazine’s website.

Cunningham, a 2011 graduate of VCU’s music program, is responsible for writing and arranging all of the pieces for the Peppas. Cunningham played in the pep band all four of his undergraduate years, but did not begin writing music for the group until his junior year.

“Stephen writes probably about 90 percent of the music for the band now that he’s in graduate school at (University of Maryland),” said Ryan Kopacsi, the director of the Peppas. “If there’s a song I want done, I call him and let him know how I want it written out and then I listen to it and if there’s anything I want changed or corrected we go from there.”

Cunningham said the process of writing the music for the Peppas is time-consuming and strenuous because he is in graduate school studying music full-time. It typically takes him one day to arrange a piece.

“He’s perfect for the pep band because he’s such a great musician and he knows the identity of the Peppas,” said Mitchell Redd, a 2010 VCU graduate who played trumpet alongside Cunningham in the pep band. Redd still plays with the Peppas at games occasionally. “He can really get his thoughts down and make music that’s unique to the band because of his experience and understanding of the group,” said Redd.

Cunningham said he learns all the songs by ear on the piano and then arranges all the parts individually for the different instruments in the band, which is what contributes to the time consuming nature of his work.

“I have to make the right decisions because I have to decide what instruments play what parts,” Cunningham said. “A lot of musicians underestimate a song like ‘Wrecking Ball’ because it’s a pop song that’s being played by an instrumental band.”

Despite the time commitment, Cuningham said he continues to write for the band because he loves being involved. The crowd’s reac-

tion to his music only encourages Cunningham to write more.

“Even though I didn’t write the actual song, putting your heart into something, and making it balanced, and hearing it performed live is so great,” Cunningham said.

The pep band has been on the rise since the basketball team’s Final Four debut, and the national exposure the band has received has increased as well. Although they were not expecting the national attention “Wrecking Ball” received when People magazine featured the performance online last week, Kopacsi and Redd were not surprised.

“I kind of expected the song to be as big a hit as it was,” Kopacsi said. “I know it’s a popular song and it’s not a terrible song, and I think what we did with it definitely made it entertaining.”

Redd agreed with Kopacsi, saying he has seen the kind of impact the band can have on an audience and the song took off pretty easily.

Cunningham went to Brooklyn, N.Y. with the band the first time they performed ‘Wrecking Ball’ and he said he was shocked at how well received the number was.

“It was crazy,” Cunningham said. “I wasn’t expecting it. I spent extra hard work on that tune to make sure it was right, and it got played and people loved it. It was Ryan’s idea for the kitty and when he did it people just went crazy. I wasn’t expecting People.com — that’s big time, that’s celebrities. It makes me proud that I wrote that.”

Since graduating from VCU, Cunningham has freelanced and hopes to eventually be a music professor. He plays trumpet exclusively and said his move from Richmond to College Park, Maryland took some getting used to.

“I compare Richmond to New Orleans — there are so many nationalities, people get along better, the music scene is vast,” Cunningham said. “Maryland is definitely a college campus, and it took some time to get used to that — like having grass. They cut it all the time.”

Cunningham has performed at major venues including but not limited to the Washington National Cathedral, Carnegie Hall, Empire Theater and the Hippodrome.

“Stephen is very laid back, a go-with-the-flow kind of guy who works really hard on his craft of playing the trumpet and arranging and composing,” Redd said.

Cunningham has written and arranged pieces for several groups in the Richmond area including Legion of Doom, the Flavor Project, Brunswick, the Brotherhood and the KG experience. Cunningham said he is currently attending graduate school to build experience and get the necessary degrees to become a music professor.



Steven Cunningham rehearses one of the pieces he arranged with the VCU Pep Band. Cunningham arranged the Peppa’s rendition of Miley Cyrus’ hit “Wrecking Ball,” which went viral earlier this month after the band performed it at the Siegel Center.

Da Vinci Center to host student inventors competition

MAYA EARLS
Spectrum Editor

The Venture Creation Competition will begin Feb. 3 at VCU for its third consecutive year, encouraging students to take chances on new ideas for cash prizes.

The da Vinci Center at VCU hosts the competition. Combining the lessons of the School of the Arts, Business and Engineering, as well as the College of Humanities and Sciences, the da Vinci Center strives to enhance innovation and entrepreneurship abilities in students.

The Venture Creation Competition began in 2012 with student teams submitting ideas for new products, businesses or services to the da Vinci Center. The competition is divided into three stages. Stage one is venture description. Each team must explain the mar-

ket for their idea, the technology involved, the costs of production and the product or service offered. Director of the da Vinci Center Kenneth Kahn, Ph.D., said entering the competition is one of the most difficult steps.

“The first challenge is having the confidence to enter,” Kahn said. “But if you take a little risk, something big can happen.”

Winning submissions of 2012 included flavored ice cream cones, a new bike rack system and software and hardware that would help people with asthma. Students who felt strongly about their ideas had a better chance of going far in the competition, Kahn said.

“Really it’s the student’s passion behind that idea, and actually showing how you can make it real,” Kahn said.

School of the Arts graduates Angela Melito and Moria Nisbet

were finalists in the 2012 competition, winning \$1,000 for their concept of a 24-hour store offering art supplies and print services. For the first step, Melito created a survey online to gauge the market for her team’s idea, and she looked at locations available in Richmond for the storefront.

“We were no longer really talking hypothetically,” Melito said. “We were saying this is where we would go, this is how much we would need.”

Even though she had participated in similar projects in the past, Melito said the competition was more challenging and in-depth.

“I really had to put my thinking cap on and think about what the concept process would be,” Melito said.

After reviewing submissions, judges will select semifinalists to

move on to the next round. For the first time in the competition, semifinalists in the second round will create a business model canvas instead of a business plan. Kahn said VCU is just one of many who are changing their focus to business models.

“Many schools are now going to business model generation,” Kahn said. “It’s actually less writing but more thinking.”

Within the business model, teams have to explain resources, partnerships and cost structures. Finalist teams selected will present their research in front of a panel of judges. There are a variety of judges participating in the competition, from local bankers and entrepreneurs to top level business executives. Kahn said one of the most important benefits of the competition is the opportunity to make connections.

“The big outcome is highlighting yourself in front of these people, because some of them might want to invest in your idea,” Kahn said.

Last year, the competition added a graduate division. The winners of the graduate division were Olugbenga “Tumi” Oredein and Eric Pankey, also known as the Skribs team. Their invention later won the grand prize in Wal-Mart’s “Get on the Shelf” competition. Currently, a company belonging to one of the judges in the Venture Competition will manufacture the Skribs wristbands. In an interview with VCU news, Oredein said he could hardly contain his excitement about winning Wal-Mart’s competition.

“I found out on (a) Thursday when I was at the gym,” Oredein said. “I was on the elliptical (machine) and nearly fell off.”

Even though parts of the Venture competition were difficult, Melito said overall she enjoyed her experience.

“If you end up pulling it off ... you get really impressed by yourself,” Melito said.

Overall, Kahn said he wants the competition to create a university-wide environment of innovation and entrepreneurship.

“My interest is that this becomes a mainstay event,” Kahn said. “It helps reinforce the fact that we can make VCU really mean Venture Creation University.”

Electronic submissions for the 2014 competition must be sent to the da Vinci Center by noon on Feb. 3. The finals will be held April 23, where two \$4,000 grand-prize winners will be announced.

Anderson Gallery exhibit explores decaying city



Images of photographer LaToya Ruby Frazier's family and hometown are on display in the Anderson Gallery.

MAYA EARLS
Spectrum Editor

Born and raised in Braddock, Penn., photographer LaToya Ruby Frazier has documented life inside a decaying city. By taking images of her family life at various ages, Frazier has captured the memory of Braddock back in its heyday and the somber emotions of the city in its present state for the exhibition "A Haunted Capital" in the Anderson Gallery.

Even though Pittsburgh and Braddock, Penn. are no more than 20 minutes apart, the two areas look like different worlds. Pittsburgh has a population of more than 300,000 and was named one of America's most livable cities by Forbes Magazine in 2012. Frazier's hometown has a population of little more than 2,000 and is labeled a financially distressed municipality by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

Frazier graduated from Syracuse University in 2007, with a Master of Fine Arts degree in art

photography. According to her website, the photographer presents her work in documentary format, with a focus on postmodern conditions, class and capitalism. Frazier's photographs have appeared in exhibits at the Whitney Museum of American Art in Manhattan, N.Y. and the Andy Warhol Museum's Pittsburgh Biennial.

Organized by the Brooklyn Museum, "A Haunted Capital" features self-portraits of Frazier and her family in what was once home to America's first steel mill. The New York Times reported the exhibit "connects bedrooms and streetscapes" and "the suffering of loved ones." Frazier's grandmother, who is featured in the exhibit died from cancer. Frazier's mother has cancer, and Frazier was diagnosed with lupus in 2002. Even though a large percentage of Braddock's population have long-term illnesses, the local hospital closed in 2010 and was later destroyed.

In a statement on her website, the photographer explained how each generation in her family ex-

perienced different change within Braddock.

"Grandma Ruby, Mom and myself grew up in significantly different social and economic climates in Braddock," Frazier said. "We not only witnessed, we experienced and internalized the end of industrialization and rise of de-industrialization."

Frazier refers to "A Haunted Capital" as a collaboration because her mother often took the photos of Frazier used in the exhibit. During a lecture reported by the contemporary art publication, "Daily Serving", Frazier said she felt a distance between the images projected behind her.

"Between my background and my foreground, I am not sure where I stand," Frazier said.

The images of "A Haunted Capital" give viewers the opportunity to step in someone else's shoes, and watch the transformation of a neighborhood and a way of living.

LaToya Ruby Frazier: "A Haunted Capital" is on display in the Anderson Gallery at 907 1/2

Former VCUarts graduate starts art outreach program

SARAH KING
Staff Writer

VCU's nationally renowned art programs are no longer limited to just college students. Investigation Now, an art program sponsored by VCU, puts a focus on local 8th and 9th graders.

Investigation Now consists of 10 three-hour sessions. This year, the sessions will begin in February and run on Friday evenings from 4-7 p.m.

"So this is a program that I started last year. It's built for area eighth and ninth grade students and the idea is that as a group we look at local contemporary artists, especially VCU professors and students, and we look at the ideas and themes in the works and use those in our own work," said Meredith Hertel, a December graduate of VCU's art education graduate program and the founder of Investigation Now.

"Last year we visited the Tryme gallery, which isn't open to the public, and they let me and my students to come into the building to pick artwork that really resonated with them," Hertel said. "From that, they wrote a poem (to) perform in front of a video camera, and we used green screen technology and picked an image (for the video)."

With the help of other volunteers, her students explored First Fridays to look at local artwork. Hertel said they have studied animation, spoken-word poetry in response to contemporary artworks and group insulation pieces.

"It's a lot of (us) working together, and it's a really awesome experience," Hertel said. "I'm really looking forward to it this semester."

Hertel began the program as a brainstorm with the head of the Department of Art Education, Sara Wilson McKay. The department has an art program available to younger students during the summer but Hertel wanted to do something during the school year as well.

"I really like middle-schoolers," Hertel said. "I think they're a cool age group, and we wanted to focus on local artists and VCU artists because they're coming to VCU for the class. I'm hoping that this semester we might get some of the artists to come in and talk with the kids about their stuff."

Hertel said she hopes the department will eventually be able to offer children scholarships to participate in the \$150 program. Students who receive free and reduced lunch sometimes get a discount Hertel said.

"It's really cool (because) the

kids don't know each other," Hertel said. "At this point it's first-come, first-serve. I (contacted) art teachers because it really is art-based and I feel like they know and can solicit their students. I don't care about their grades or anything but I am interested in what schools they're coming from."

Many VCU faculty members enroll their children in the program, and the school is professionally interconnected, Hertel said. This year's class will cap at 15 students because she is the sole instructor. In the future, with more than one instructor, the program could enroll 30 or 40 students.

"Last year, I didn't make any money for the program because I was a grad student, so it went to the department and they made a very small profit," Hertel said. "This year, I'll make a little bit because we're trying to make it a self-sustaining thing, but hopefully in the future we can give some money back to the department."

Hertel attended University of Pittsburgh for her undergraduate degree in fine arts and art history and hopes to find a permanent job in art education. She said she is also interested in community programming and institutions such as museums.

THIS WEEK IN REC SPORTS

January 27

Aquatics:
Intro to Lifeguarding
Registration through 1/31
Start Date: 1/31
Cost: \$10

ARC Lifeguard Training
Classes meet 2/7, 2/8, 2/9 and 2/14, 2/15, 2/16.
Registration through 2/6
Cost: \$100

Water Exercise Instructor Training
2/11, 4:30–8:30 pm
Registration through 2/11 at noon
Cost: \$25

Outdoor Adventure Program:
Kayak Pool Sessions at MCV Campus Aquatic Center
Tuesdays, 7–9:30 through March 25.
Leave from Outing Rental Center at 6:30 pm.
Cost: FREE

Caving Weekend near Goshen, VA
2/1–2/2
Cost: Student: \$44, F/S/A/+1: \$50

Manchester Wall Adopt-A-Crag
2/8, 10 am–2 pm
Cost: FREE

Cary Street Crux Climbing Comp
2/9, 9 am–2 pm
Cost: \$15

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Mind the wage gap

RYAN DALLAS
Guest Columnist

We hear it nearly every day on the news: rising tuition cost, crushing student loan debt and a lukewarm job market. These issues occupy the minds of policy makers and students alike. For millennials, the generation born between 1980 and 2000, there's something else that should also be in the national dialogue: the gender wage disparity.

A report released by the Pew Research Center in December examined attitudes toward the gender wage disparity and reasons for the gaps continued existence. In the past several decades, the gap has seen considerable improvements with the median hourly earning of women rising from 12 percent in 1980 to 15 percent in 2012 compared to men whose earnings fell from 18.6 to 17.8 percent. Since the 1980s, however, women have surpassed men when it comes to educational attainment, yet the disparity persists.

Among the women surveyed, 51 percent said starting a family makes it harder for them to advance their career because they have to make commitments such as taking a significant period of time off work. Only 16 percent of the men surveyed share the same view.

In addition to that, female millennials tend to be more focused

on their careers compared to men, yet women continue to be underrepresented in top corporate positions. What makes this interesting is that Richmond is home to several Fortune 500 companies where females are underrepresented in top management positions. The researchers also note

“All students should become more attuned to the way the social construct of gender creates barriers in the workforce.”

that while they may be hard to quantify, things such as gender stereotyping, sexism and networks favoring men — such as old boy networks — may contribute anywhere from 20 to 40 percent to the gender wage disparity, according to the study.

The gap isn't only apparent in board rooms, but in academia, too.

Women who go into academia, for example, often have to delay-starting a family well into their late 30s or 40s so they can work toward receiving tenure as one study conducted by researchers in 2008 at University of California-Ir-

vine reveals. In comparison, men in academia are not as nearly affected.

Though men might not be affected directly, they also have a role to play in chipping away at the glass ceiling. According to the report, each generation of men has become more complacent to the gender wage disparity with male millennials being the most complacent. Women across all generations support achieving gender wage parity, according to the report.

All students should become more attuned to the way the social construct of gender creates barriers in the workforce.

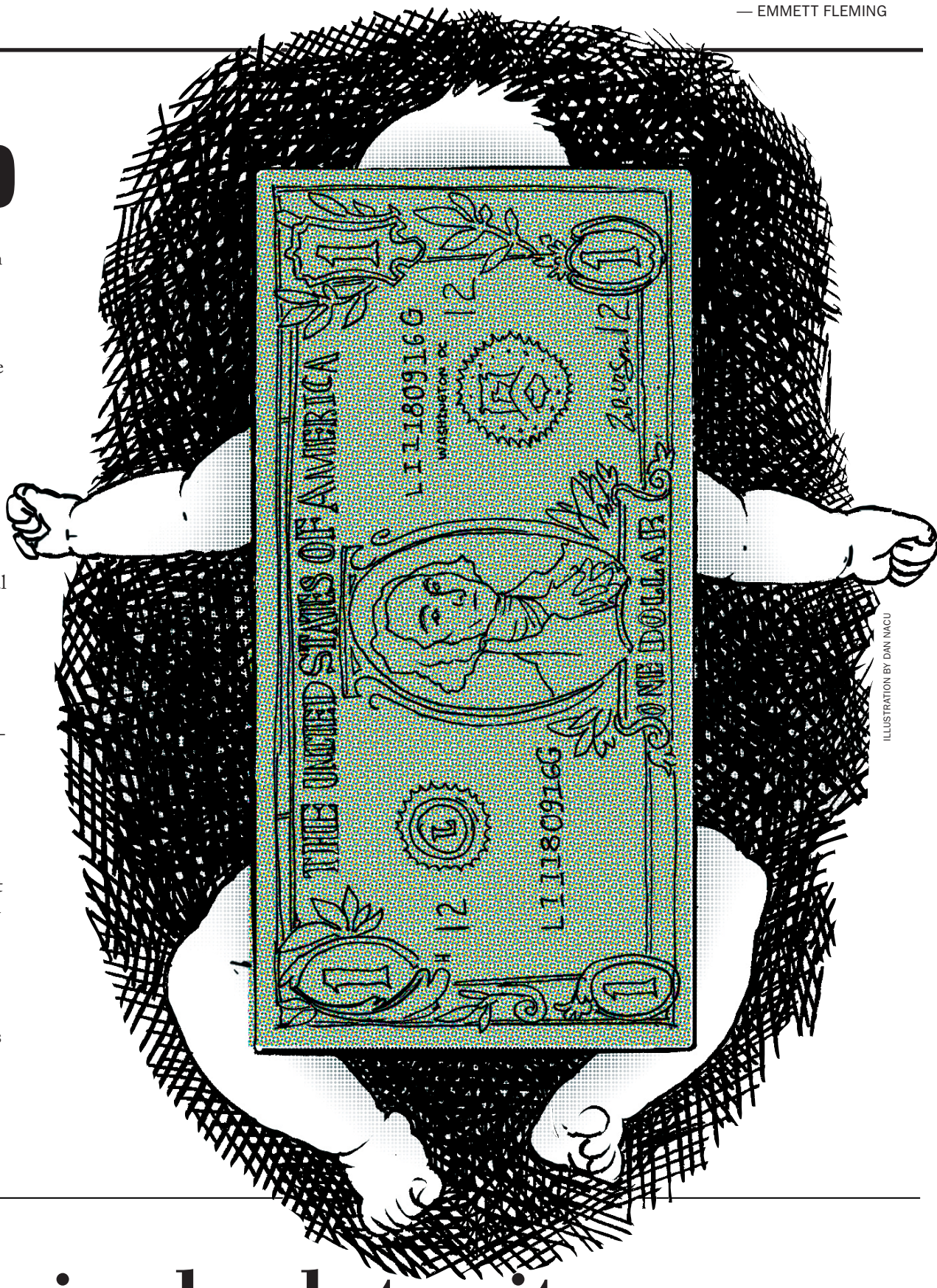
Outside of the workforce, it is important to also be aware of how the socialization of gender roles at home influences the wage disparity. For example, because men are seemingly not disadvantaged by wanting to start a family, they could turn down a promotion, cut back hours and work to normalize paternity leave to prevent women from losing out on career opportunities.

Though how we all might want to get there may vary from person to person, the first step in doing so is to be aware of the gender wage gap and its causes. Retreating from the issue and claiming there is nothing more to be done is a surefire way to undo the gains that advocates and policy makers have worked hard to achieve.

Quote of the week

“The city could be equated to a layover at an airport to these students, who lack a sense of belonging.”

— EMMETT FLEMING



Students take, but don't give back to city

EMMETT FLEMING
Guest Columnist

West Grace Street's facelift evokes a question about VCU's future: Does all this building and growth come with the unintended consequence of reforming the city through VCU's student population boom? These projects bring money into the city and help the school in like fashion, but they come with some negatives; one is in the behavior of a booming student body, the other, the new sense of community that VCU's expansion brings.

Last year, VCU earmarked almost \$2 billion to expand the university, as stated by RVA News, which includes about \$300 million for student housing and around

\$200 million for the medical campus. These projects will last through 2016. The expenditures are slated to provide new student housing on Grace Street, additions to the hospital on Broad Street and parking garages. The boom started happening at a time when VCU seems to be trying to redefine itself.

These additions to the campus expand the school's borders, making space available for the student boom. This “bond” allows the school to build as quickly as they desire to supply a demand for growth as Richmond follows the path VCU carves. The city benefits by securing its revenue with an influx of students. But the members of this boom are not necessarily dedicated to staying in Richmond.

The city could be equated to a layover at an airport to these students, who lack a sense of belonging. Though this is not a bad transition, it goes a long way to establishing and sustaining a sort of “unloved” air onto this city. Almost as if the students impress their own foreign habits onto the city using Richmond's rich historical and geographical past only as a backdrop, creating a comfortable disinterest in the city's traditions rather than continuing to enrich them or invest in them. Broad Street's transformation shows this — the city has a few more attractions to suit more students, with chain restaurants that have a smattering of metropolitan ambience, like Five Guys and Jersey Mike's, alongside newly built

loft apartments close to VCU.

Joey Elswick, a 2003 graduate of VCU, remembers his time at the university well, remarking with tender reflection on the school's then-gigantic size, “Well, my joke as a student was that VCU will become the capital of Virginia in my lifetime.”

The relationship between VCU and Richmond is one where the school expands from necessity and the city feeds off that success, like a tick on a dog.

Before coming to VCU, I attended a small liberal arts college in Wisconsin. While I was there, the students had to take a service learning course. It was dreadful. Everyone avoided that class because it focused on Milwaukee and how

to give back to it. It was community service for college credit. But the course forced us to engage in the community, help the those who were less fortunate. If we did not see the altruistic importance of this class, we still needed it for graduation. It was this class, from that little college that always impressed me.

Despite my criticisms of the college, the class always seemed to be most important to me. It was like the college insisted that the student body be aware of their surroundings. VCU does not have a requirement like that for students to graduate, although there are service learning programs in place for students to elect to take. If not a class like this, then a program that

clearly and concisely outlines “who” Richmond is and how students can give a little back to Richmond's community. VCU's expansion alone will not do the job. We need to build the city and the school together investing equally, or at least, mindfully.

There is a clear distinction between VCU and Richmond — both benefit from this boom and continued investment, but the city and its communities need attention from the university so that the it is not just a machine churning higher numbers and getting record results. I hope to see VCU and Richmond work stronger as a unit instead of two separate entities.

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Mentoring works for both mentee and tutor

KELLY HODGKINS
Guest Columnist

When I first met Nehemiah, I could tell he was a character. Out of his entire first grade class, he was the biggest, which meant that picking fights was a norm. He was unmotivated and disengaged from his schoolwork and loved to goof off with his friends during class.

Although these traits seemed to negatively define him, I took an interest in him. I started to meet with him individually to keep him engaged through his math and literacy schoolwork. I talked with him about using his words when he was upset, not his fists. After countless interactions that helped coach Nehemiah to make positive choices, I witnessed little changes. I saw him understand the negative consequences of fighting. I saw him get excited about learning. I saw him help his classmates and be a better friend. He definitely wasn't perfect, as change happens over a long period of time. But looking from the beginning to the end of the year, Nehemiah made a significant amount of growth because of the investment others made in him.

My mentoring experience was as transformational for me as it was for Nehemiah. It allowed me to understand the importance of

mentoring and what a relationship can do for the academic and personal life of a child. For children like Nehemiah, the need for a mentor is tremendous. Five-hundred-thousand students in the United States drop out of school each year and are led down a path in which negative consequences can severely impact their future. The most horrifying part of this is that we already know who these students are and we can identify them as early as sixth grade through their attendance, behavior, and course performance.

There are many experienced professionals who are working to find solutions to the educational crisis our nation is facing but it seems that a simple answer is right in front of our eyes. Youth who have a one-on-one relationship can drastically change the state of our education system and our country. Studies show that students who meet regularly with their mentor are 52 percent less likely than their peers to skip school, have increased student engagement, have improved attitudes about completing school work and are 46 percent less likely to try drugs and alcohol. Not only are their experiences at school more positive, but their personal lives as well. Mentees report that they have improved self-esteem, created more

positive relationships with family members and built parental trust.

There are 18 million young Americans who need a mentor, but only about 3 million have one. In Virginia, there are more than 150,000 youth that could benefit from a mentoring relationship. Being a mentor is a critical, cost-effective and time-efficient solution to making sure students are in school and on track to graduate.

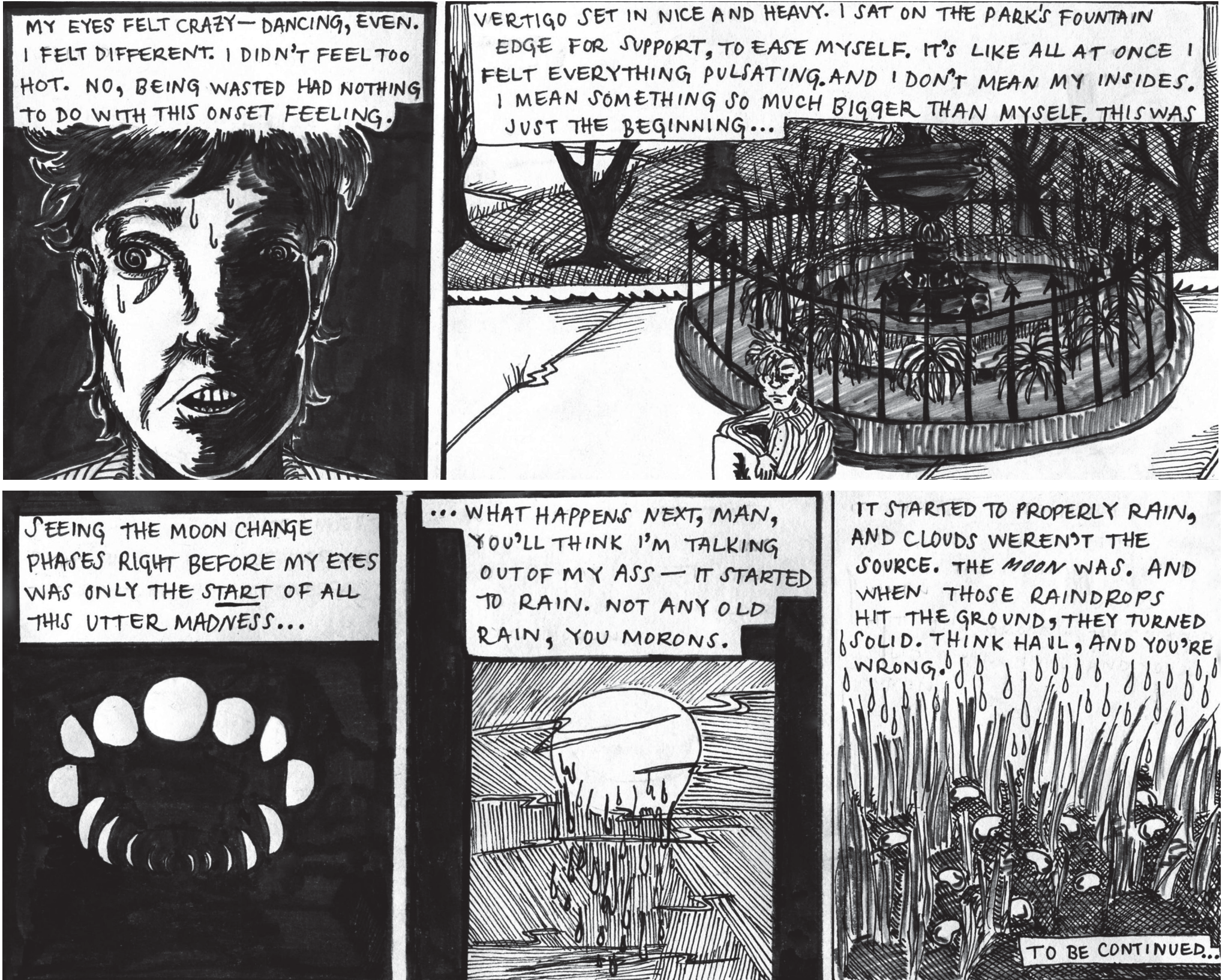
Fortunately, VCU sees the importance of this need. Through organizations like VCU AmeriCorps, The Carver Promise and others, VCU offers a wide variety of opportunities for students and community members to be involved. By visiting the Virginia Mentoring Partnership website at www.vamentoring.org, you can find a multitude of opportunities in Richmond to give at least one hour a week to a young person in need.

Being a mentor has been one of best decisions I have made in my life and I encourage you all to be a mentor to someone who needs you. Together, we can truly make a difference.

Kelly Hodgkins is an AmeriCorps VISTA member serving with the VCU Division of Community Engagement.

COMICS

Moon Beans by Helen Stoddard



New Kids on the Block by Hannah Lazarte



No by Amanda Pressman



Correction

A story headlined “Mass Communications profes- sor chosen to test high-tech gadget” published in the Jan. 13 issue of The CT incorrectly stated that the Google Glass Explorer Program distributed Glass worldwide and 300 U.S. testers were chosen. Glass is only available in the United States. The number referencing the testers chosen for the second round was incorrect. In the same issue, a story headlined “Mozart festival scheduled for Carytown” incorrectly stated the Mozart festival would take place on Jan. 25. The festival took place on Jan. 26. The CT regrets these errors.

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