



Junior Jarred Guest (left) and senior Juvonte Reddic (right) leave the court after the Rams’ 65-61 loss to Saint Joseph’s in the Atlantic 10 tournament final on Sunday in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rams lose second straight A-10 tournament final

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

The Atlantic 10 Championship came down to just three minutes of play, but the VCU men’s basketball team was unable claim the crown, falling to Saint Joseph’s University 65-61 at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn, N.Y. on Sunday.

The Rams blew a six-point second-half lead and were tied at 54 with less than three minutes on the game clock before SJU’s Langston Galloway knocked down a long jumper to give the Hawks a three-point advantage they wouldn’t relinquish.

SJU extended its advantage to as many as six points and converted free throws from there to

lock up its third A-10 tournament title.

The loss marked the second straight year VCU fell in the tournament’s title match, and head coach Shaka Smart said this year’s loss hurts just as bad.

“It’s difficult,” he said. “It’s not any more difficult because of what happened last year, you just want to win this year.”

Senior Rob Brandenburg scored 18 points and was named to the all-tournament team along with teammates Briante Weber and Treveon Graham, but the Rams were unable to stop Galloway and Halil Kanacevic, who was named the tournament’s most valuable player following his 11-point, 14-rebound performance.

VCU had some quality op-

portunities, Smart said, but was unable to convert the open looks. The Rams shot 26 percent from long range, 37 percent overall and made just eight of their 15 free throws.

Kanacevic and Galloway both played all 40 minutes in the contest, and Smart said his opponent deserves all the credit.

“Congratulations to coach Martelli and his team,” Smart said. “I think they’ve had a terrific year and they earned this championship today.”

To reach its second consecutive A-10 tournament championship game, VCU topped George Washington University 74-55 on Saturday.

The Rams’ semifinal matchup with GW was much closer than

the score indicated. VCU came out flat against the Colonials and found themselves down six with just more than eight minutes to play in the first half.

Johnson exited the game with a left knee injury in the opening frame, but VCU would rally behind their teammate and Brandenburg netted a buzzer beating three-pointer, which gave VCU a two-point cushion heading into halftime.

The Colonials scored seven of the first 10 points in the second half and claimed a 38-36 lead before the Rams took over. From there, Graham scored seven consecutive points and VCU used a 41-point second half to close the door on GW’s tournament chances.

Graham led all scorers with

22 points, while Weber filled the stat sheet with 16 points, eight assists, six rebounds and two steals. Cox had his second straight impressive performance, chipping in eight points, seven rebounds and two blocks off the bench.

VCU grabbed 37 rebounds, including 11 on the offensive glass, and shot 44 percent from three-point range in the victory.

With the win, Smart moved into first place on VCU’s all-time wins list.

The Rams’ tournament run began Friday evening with a quarterfinals matchup against cross-town rival University of Richmond. The meeting was the third of the season between the Rams and Spiders, and VCU completed a clean 3-0 sweep of Richmond with a 71-53 victory in

their first postseason game of 2014.

Weber came out of the gate strong, scoring the first six points of the contest in front of a Ram-heavy crowd. VCU shot just 40 percent from the field and 37 percent from long range, but used 20 offensive rebounds to generate 22 second-chance points.

The Rams pulled down 22 more rebounds than did Richmond on Friday and scored 21 points off of 14 Spiders turnovers.

Graham finished with 14 points and six rebounds, while Cox contributed seven points and 10 rebounds off the bench. Weber added five rebounds, two assists and two steals to complement his game-high 18 points, and VCU picked up its 25th victory of the season.

Four men’s hoops players awarded Atlantic 10 honors

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

Four members of the VCU men’s basketball team received awards last week from the Atlantic 10 for their play during the 2013-14 regular season.

Junior Briante Weber earned his second consecutive A-10 defensive player of the year award, while sophomore Melvin Johnson was named the conference’s sixth man of the year. Junior Treveon Graham was named to the A-10 first team and senior Juvonte Reddic earned second-team honors, as well.

For Weber, the award tops off a record-breaking season in which he set the A-10 single season record for steals. He finished the regular season with 111 steals — a career high — and set VCU’s program record for steals in the process.

Graham’s first-team nod comes one year after the Washington, D.C. native earned second-team honors in his sophomore campaign. VCU’s

leading scorer averaged 15.5 points, seven rebounds and two assists per game during the regular season.

Though he started six games for the Rams, Johnson received the conference’s sixth man of the year award in his second season with the team. The sophomore finished the year as VCU’s third-leading scorer (10.6 ppg), and averaged the fifth-most minutes per game (22.9 mpg).

For Reddic, the second-team award was a slight step back. The senior earned first-team honors a season ago and entered his final year as one of the favorites to win the A-10 player of the year award. He averaged 12.2 points and 8.4 rebounds per game for the Rams, but shot a career-worst 56 percent from the free throw line.

Saint Louis University’s Jordair Jett was named the conference player of the year, and SLU head coach Jim Crews took home the coach of the year one season after VCU head coach Shaka Smart earned the same distinction.



Junior Briante Weber earned his second straight A-10 defensive player of the year award after tallying a record-breaking 111 steals in the regular season.

Student fees to fund part of \$25 million basketball facility

CYRUS NUVAL
News Editor

VCU announced plans earlier this month to build a \$25 million practice facility for the men’s and women’s basketball teams using \$10.5 million from student fees.

The university has already collected \$14.5 million from private donations and the remaining \$10.5 million will come from student fees currently being used to pay off part of VCU’s debt on the Siegel Center. The facility will be built on the 1300 block of West Marshall Street in the Carver neighborhood.

The project was originally approved by the Board of Visitors in 2011 to cost between \$14 million and \$16 million and be paid for entirely with private donations. The original plan featured a single gym in the Siegel Center parking lot.

This month, however, the Board approved an amendment for the new facility to be a two-story, 60,000-square-foot structure, which increased the cost by an average of \$10 million.

The new facility is expected to contain separate women’s and men’s gyms, practice courts, locker

rooms, coaches’ offices, strength and conditioning rooms, a sports medicine center, a hydrotherapy room, viewing decks, player lounges, equipment rooms, a video suite and player dining rooms.

Construction of the new practice facility is expected to begin sometime during the spring semester and take 15 months to complete. VCU spokeswoman Anne Buckley did not give an exact date when construction will begin. As of now, the women’s and men’s basketball teams make use of the Franklin Street Gym and the Siegel Center for practice.

Buckley said student fees will not increase due to the construction of the facility and no state funds will be used. The facility will only be open to VCU men’s and women’s basketball players unless arrangements are made with the Athletics Department, she said.

VCU women’s basketball head coach Marlene Stollings said at a press conference on March 10 the new facility will increase VCU’s status in the NCAA and the school’s recruiting power.

— continued on page 2

Atlantic-10 individual awards

- Briante Weber - Defensive POY
- Melvin Johnson - 6th man of the year
- Treveon Graham - 1st team A-10
- Juvonte Reddic - 2nd team A-10



In this section: Monroe Park renovations. Ohlinger retirement. Basketball practice facility. Alternative Spring Break.

briefs

LOCAL

McAuliffe travels Va. touting Medicaid expansion

In his first months on the job, Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe is trying to capitalize on Democrats' takeover of top state offices and the state Senate by pushing a key element of President Barack Obama's health-care law through a Republican-dominated House of Delegates.

The General Assembly's regular session ended a week ago without an agreement on expanding Medicaid, leaving the matter to be resolved with the rest of the state budget at a special session at the end of March. Now McAuliffe is drawing on his past as a rock-star fundraiser by barnstorming cash-strapped hospitals to pressure the House to accept billions in federal money to insure the poor.

If the two sides can't agree on a two-year budget by the end of June, state government would shut down. McAuliffe has rejected Republican calls to pass the \$96 billion budget without expanding Medicaid and revisit the subject in another special session.

Brief by the Associated Press

Ex-Va. gov seeks FDA, SEC files on likely witness

Former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell's attorneys are seeking documents from two federal agencies that they hope to use to attack the credibility of the government's expected star witness in his public corruption case.

McDonnell and his wife, Maureen, are charged in a 14-count indictment with accepting more than \$165,000 in gifts and loans from Williams in exchange for helping in promoting his products. They have pleaded not guilty. Williams is expected to testify at the jury trial set to begin July 28.

Defense attorneys filed papers late Thursday asking U.S. District Judge James Spencer to issue subpoenas for U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Securities and Exchange Commission files of dietary supplements maker Star Scientific Inc. and its former CEO, Jonnie Williams.

Brief by the Associated Press

Innocence Project: testing clears two in Va. rape

DNA testing clears two men sentenced to long prison terms for a 1996 rape in Norfolk, the Innocence Project argues in a filing with the Virginia Supreme Court.

One of the men, Percell F. Warren, died in December 2012 in Deerfield Correctional Center, where he was serving a 160-year term. He was 56. His brother-in-law, Nathaniel E. Epps, 63, is serving a 153-year sentence at the Greenville Correctional Center.

The Innocence Project has filed a petition with the state Supreme Court for a writ of actual innocence for Epps, citing DNA testing on sperm found in jeans worn by the victim, The Richmond Times-Dispatch reported Friday.

Brief by the Associated Press

NATIONAL

What happened to the missing plane's transponder?

As the search continues for the missing Malaysia Airlines flight, a key unanswered question is what happened to the Boeing 777's transponder.

Transponders emit electronic signals containing information that shows up on air traffic controllers' screens. The information includes the plane's unique identifying code and its direction, speed and altitude.

Transponder signals are used by air traffic controllers to keep track of flights and are also employed in collision-avoidance systems.

In the case of the Malaysian jetliner, the transponder stopped about an hour after takeoff, when the plane was above the Gulf of Thailand between Malaysia and southern Vietnam.

Brief by the Associated Press

FBI balks at pot background checks

The FBI is refusing to run nationwide background checks on people applying to run legal marijuana businesses in Washington state, even though it has conducted similar checks in Colorado — a discrepancy that illustrates the quandary the Justice Department faces as it allows the states to experiment with regulating a drug that's long been illegal under federal law.

Washington state has been asking for nearly a year if the FBI would conduct background checks on its applicants, to no avail. The bureau's refusal raises the possibility that people with troublesome criminal histories could wind up with pot licenses in the state — undermining the department's own priorities in ensuring that states keep a tight rein on the nascent industry.

It's a strange jam for the feds, who announced last summer that they wouldn't sue to prevent Washington and Colorado from regulating marijuana after 75 years of prohibition.

Brief by the Associated Press

Renovations could push homeless out of Monroe Park

MATT LEONARD
Staff Writer

The Richmond City Council may lease Monroe Park to a nonprofit organization for renovations, and some local activists are worried the move will effectively push the homeless out.

A nonprofit called the Monroe Park Conservancy was set up to plan the renovations and raise money for the required construction. The conservancy is made up of individuals representing VCU, the public and the city equally, said conservancy executive Alice Massie.

A proposed lease agreement would have the city lease Monroe Park to the conservancy for 30 years at a cost of \$1 a year. If the lease agreement is approved the conservancy must raise \$3.3 million to begin construction.

Massie said the nonprofit would allow more donors to donate money to the park renovations, whether it is corporate money or private money.

VCU spends \$130,000 per year on Monroe Park, Massie said. If a lease is signed, VCU's spending is expected to increase to \$200,000 each year. Richmond spends \$10,000 a year on Monroe Park, Massie said.

"The park belongs to the city of Richmond and it will always belong to the city of Richmond," Massie said.

Local activists, however, see planned renovations as another attempt to drive out the homeless population.

"The plans themselves were about gentrifying the park and making it a place where homeless people won't want to go," said Mo Karn, a local activist, speaking of the 2010 plans for park renovations.

Karn said she thinks the plans have remained the same, but planners are using a different name. The conservancy was known as the Monroe Park Advisory Counsel in 2010, she said.

The conservancy insists there are no plans to rid Monroe Park of homelessness.



PHOTO BY BROOKE MARSH

A proposed lease agreement would have the Richmond City Council lease Monroe Park to the Monroe Park Conservancy for 30 years at a cost of \$1 a year. If the lease agreement is approved, the Monroe Park Conservancy must raise \$3.3 million to begin renovations.

"It is a public park and it will remain a public park," Massie said. "The park will be closed for 12 months for construction and the homeless population will have to find somewhere else to go for that time, but they are welcome back after that."

Karn said the park being closed for a year is the problem. She works with the organization Food Not Bombs, which has fed people in

Monroe Park for 20 years.

"In 2010, they told us to go to the Conrad Center. They wanted to centralize the entire homeless population to this one center," Karn said. "But the center lost funding and it no longer exists, so now there isn't even an alternative."

Karn insists she isn't completely against the idea of renovations, just renovations that require closing the

entire park for any period of time.

"I don't think we should start leasing out our public parks until the public says they want that to happen," Karn said.

The planned renovations for the park include subsurface and aboveground updates. Subsurface construction would be done by the city of Richmond and would include putting in new wiring and sewer

systems, which have not been replaced since the 1920s. Massie said the conservancy would pay for above ground updates. The lease agreement would include an exit clause.

"At any point if someone doesn't like the way something is going the lease agreement can be voided and the park goes back to the city," Massie said.

Ohlinger to retire after 17 years

ALI JONES,
STEFANI ZENTENO
Contributing Writers

VCU's associate vice president of Facilities Management Brian Ohlinger is set to retire on May 10 after 17 years at the university.

Ohlinger oversees planning, designing and construction of campus buildings, environmental health and safety, maintenance and operations, renovations, and real estate services.

A national search is under way for his replacement, and while Ohlinger's is not involved in the recruitment, he said he will help the transition process.

"You know, it's time to retire, it's a normal transition in life," Ohlinger said. "And I'd like to say, none of us do anything alone. I would just say I've been very fortunate and have had a great staff supporting the overall operations. Everybody within facilities has contributed to our success, it hasn't singularly been me. It's a team effort and I've had a great team."

VCU spokesperson Pam Lepley, said the university has constructed and renovated more buildings and improved transportation over the past 10 years with Ohlinger leading Facilities Management.

"In some way he's touched almost everything that's made us what we are," Lepley said. "Until (Ohlinger) came, our campuses were not as distinguishable, but he really built VCU to have true university campuses."

Lepley said under Ohlinger's leadership, the VCU campus has grown and flourished.

"Under (Ohlinger's) tenure, we went from being a commuter university to a full-fledged residential, major research university," Lepley said. "(He) led the infrastructure of the amazing transformation, on both the medical center and Monroe Park, and ensures there is continuity between the two."

Among other projects, Ohlinger, led two master site plans: the construction of the Siegel Center and Cary Street Gym, costing approximately \$30 million and \$38 million, respectively.

The Cary Street Gym won awards for its immersion into the area: the Leadership in Energy and Environment Design (LEED)

certification and one of the year's National Intramural-Recreational Sports Associations' (NIRSA) Outstanding Sports Facilities (OSF).

John Venuti, vice president of public safety, also worked with Ohlinger and Facilities Management as part of the VCU Inci-

dent Response Team. The group prepares and responds to critical incidents that may impact operations, safety, and recovery operations for VCU.

"(Ohlinger) has also assisted police with the new police headquarters project and the police regional training facility that is being developed," Venuti said. "(He) is very good at what he does, and he's made significant contributions to the growth and development of VCU. I heard when I got here he was going to build one last building before he left VCU, and that was about four buildings ago."

I heard when I got here he was going to build one last building before he left VCU, and that was about four buildings ago.

— JOHN VENUTI

Student fees to fund part of \$25 million basketball facility

— continued from page 1

"This practice facility will validate our growth as a national contender," Stollings said at the press conference. "The first thing that comes to our mind is recruiting. This facility will increase our ability to attract higher caliber and profiled student athletes to this university."

VCU men's basketball head coach Shaka Smart said the facility will improve the welfare and experience of VCU's basketball players.

"We talk all time about student-athlete welfare and the student-athlete experience," Smart said at the press conference. "This practice facility will allow us to centralize all of our athletic operations in one place that's going to have all the opportunities for our guys to have the best experience in the country."

Some students, however, are concerned about the development and hope that the student body will benefit, in some way, from the construction of a training facility that can only be used by a select few.

Student Government Association chairperson George Pottanat said if most of the student body cannot use the facility, VCU Athletics should improve the events and benefits all students receive from its department.

"Hopefully they do have a plan or maybe someday to help out with coordinating tailgates and continually working on improving students perks," Pottanat said. "After all this is the students' money."

Elise Ridley, a music major, is worried that the university administration favors the VCU basketball teams and Athletics Department over the other departments and schools.

Ridley is also concerned that



PHOTO COURTESY OF VCU ATHLETICS

Marlene Stollings, head coach of the VCU women's basketball team, said the new practice facility will increase VCU's status in the NCAA and the school's recruiting power.

the university administration is not paying enough attention to projects that could directly benefit the student body.

"There are plenty of existing projects that need to be tackled ... like student practice rooms and facilities and upgrades to the Temple building, before they add new ones," Ridley said. "While the renovation to the Cabell Library is a start, there are other things that benefit larger groups of students that should be fixed first. If

I'm paying for something that me and my peers cannot use or benefit from, then I do not support this."

Ridley, who is a resident of Carver, is worried that construction of the facility will increase activity in her neighborhood.

"I live in the area that is intended for this construction," Ridley said. "There's already a lack of parking and privacy when there are games happening. I can't imagine shoving more activity in that area."

JANEAL DOWNS
Staff Writer

Other students went to New Orleans, La. and worked with the maintenance of the New Orleans City Park and the St. Bernard's Project, a nonprofit organization rebuilding homes that were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

"Sooner or later my goal for ASB is to have a total of approximately 15 trips of which we have a solid seven or eight trips we go to every year ... so every year some organization can depend on us," Joseph said.

— AUGUSTIN JOSEPH

In previous years, domestic trips were \$300 per student, but with increased support from the school the costs were \$225 this year per

"It meets what VCU is all about, what we define in the Quest and really our commitment to community engagement," Schenk said. "It allows the students to go and really immerse themselves in another culture or another community or immerse themselves into a social issue."

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A collage of two interior photographs. The left photo shows a rooftop terrace at dusk with modern outdoor furniture, a stone fireplace, and a glass-enclosed area. The right photo shows a bright kitchen and dining area with wooden cabinets, a granite countertop, a spiral staircase, and a long island with bar stools.

A collage of two exterior and common area photographs. The left photo shows a multi-story building's courtyard at night with a fire pit, seating, and string lights. The right photo shows a common lounge area with a pool table, brick walls, and large windows.

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sports

Tournament berth means end nearing for revered seniors

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

With Sunday's loss to Saint Joseph's University in the Atlantic 10 tournament championship, the VCU men's basketball team moved one step closer to losing two of its most prominent players.

Seniors Juvonte Reddic and Rob Brandenburg are the only remaining names from a 2011 Final Four roster, which helped establish the foundation for a now nationally known program in Richmond.

As the two seniors head into their fourth NCAA tournament in four years, each knows they have to put everything on the line.

"For me and Rob, we know every game could be our last game," Reddic said. "So we just go out there and give it our all for not only ourselves, but for our teammates."

That's what Reddic and Brandenburg have been doing since day one, when the pair of freshmen joined a team competing in the Colonial Athletic Association and struggling to earn a tournament bid.

Now, after helping transform the Rams into a perennial contender, the two are preparing to

leave the program after their next loss. Brandenburg says that serves as inspiration to compete.

"I'm going to use this as motivation to leave it all out there," he said after the loss to SJU. "I'm going to do everything in my power to make sure my teammates are ready, to make sure that, whatever happens, I leave it all out on the floor like I did tonight."

The motivation was evident Sunday when Brandenburg dropped 18 points in the losing effort. Several VCU players were emotional after the game, and junior Treveon Graham said the team is consciously playing for the seniors.

"We talk about it a lot," Graham said. "This being their last go-around, we want to make it special for them."

Friday, March 21 marks the first, and potentially last, do-or-die scenario for Reddic and Brandenburg with the Rams, as VCU gets set to play Stephen F. Austin State University in the second round of the NCAA tournament in San Diego. With a win, the Rams will advance to the third round and take on the winner of UCLA and Tulsa matchup for a bid to the Sweet 16.



Senior Juvonte Reddic was honored on March 8 at the last VCU home game of the 2013-14 season. Reddic and guard Rob Brandenburg are the last remaining members of the Rams team that went to the Final Four in 2011.

With Johnson injured, reserves must step up



Sophomore Melvin Johnson injured his left knee in the Rams' win against George Washington University in the A-10 tournament semifinals. There is no timetable for his return.

The Press Box

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

Sophomore guard Melvin Johnson was knocked out of Saturday's Atlantic 10 semifinal game against George Washington University with a left knee injury, leaving the VCU men's basketball team without the A-10's sixth man of the year for the remainder of the tournament and perhaps the NCAA tournament, too.

No timetable has been given for Johnson's return, but head coach Shaka Smart said his presence in the starting lineup would be sorely missed.

"When Mel (Johnson) went down that was a hit to our team, to our guys, to our coaching staff because he's one of the guys that everyone on our team absolutely adores, including the coaches," Smart said. "And secondly, he's a very, very good player."

Junior Treveon Graham, the Rams' leading scorer, echoed Smart's sentiments.

"He's a loving person," Graham said. "He's easy to get along with and he's one of the funniest guys on the team so it's great to be around him."

Redshirt freshman Jordan Burgess started in Johnson's place in Sunday's A-10 championship game. Johnson was VCU's third-leading scorer, averaging 10.4 points in 22.4 minutes per game. Burgess averages 4.8 points in 21.1 minutes per game.

Beyond the numbers, the Rams are losing their best three-point shooter, which could drastically impact their tournament chances.

Burgess provides VCU with superior defense, but shoots the perimeter shot at a 32 percent clip compared to Johnson's 40 percent conversion rate.

If Johnson is forced to sit out during the NCAA tournament, head coach Shaka Smart may have to tweak his half-court offense. With Johnson on the floor, VCU is able to stretch the floor, which creates driving lanes for guards Briante Weber and Rob Brandenburg.

Though Johnson doesn't contribute too much beneath the arc, Burgess is also fairly one-dimensional. Sixty-six of Johnson's 123 field goals on the year have been three pointers and 22 of Burgess' 45 baskets have come from long distance.

"When Melvin went out with the injury it really hit us because he's a great player, a player that we look for," Graham said.

Peppas partake in battle of bands in Brooklyn



The VCU Pep Band performed outside of the Barclays Center in Brooklyn, N.Y. before the Rams' semifinal matchup against George Washington University this past Saturday.

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

Roughly four hours before the VCU men's basketball team faced George Washington University in the semifinals of the Atlantic 10 tournament, the two university pep bands engaged in a competition of their own.

The Peppas set up outside the Barclays Center just after noon on Saturday and performed several signature songs in front of a sizeable crowd. The stakes weren't as high as the basketball that ensued, but VCU band director Ryan Kopasci said it's a tradition that helps bands show school pride.

"They do it at the Final Four every year," Kopasci said. "We did something similar in the CAA with Mason. So when we both came over here it's something that we wanted to do. It's nothing real official. It's more for the fans than anything."

Jared Peyton, a senior tuba player for the Peppas, echoed Kopasci's sentiments, saying the battle of the bands was a friendly competition to help get the fans involved.

"This is fun because we're not

really competing," Peyton said. "Musicians don't have to choose sides. It's more like a community thing."

The Peppas, who have garnered national attention for their halftime rendition of Miley Cyrus' "Wrecking Ball," are accustomed to impromptu performances,

“ This is fun because we're not really competing. Musicians don't have to choose sides. It's more like a community thing. — Jared Peyton

Peyton said. As a freshman, the band roamed the streets of Chicago during VCU's Final Four run in 2011, playing on various street corners until they were asked to move.

There was no victor in the battle of the bands competition, but VCU did top George Washington on the basketball court later that afternoon.

Alumna’s fundraiser sends Rowdy Rams to A-10 tournament

COLIN KENNEDY
Sports Editor

They called it the Rowdy Bus. Forty-six members of VCU’s basketball fan club, The Rowdy Rams, crammed into a coach bus and trekked up to Brooklyn, N.Y. this past week to watch the men’s basketball team compete in the Atlantic 10 tournament.

It was a seven-hour trip from Richmond, Va., but that didn’t matter because the transportation, lodging and game tickets were free. A trip that would ordinarily cost several hundred dollars was made possible by an alumna’s idea, generous donations and the power of social media.

Tori Valentine, a 2012 VCU graduate, heard rumors that George Washington University was sponsoring a bus to send its students to Brooklyn to help cheer on the Colonials in tournament play. When she discovered her alma mater had no such option, she took initiative.

“Because of the home court advantage we have at VCU, and because we are undefeated at home I felt that we needed to have our students in the stands,” Valentine said.

Valentine did the research, added up the numbers and came to the conclusion it would cost roughly \$8,000 to send a bus of students up to New York. She set up an online fund through a web-site typically used by startups and took to Twitter.

Valentine called it “Book it to Brooklyn.” Within hours after she began the campaign on Wednesday afternoon, the money began piling up.

Baja Bean Company, a restaurant located in the heart of Richmond, was the first to contribute, Valentine said, donating \$1,200 to the cause. VCU head coach Shaka Smart and his wife Maya Smart pitched in \$1,000 of their own, as did VCU alumnus and former basketball standout Eric Maynor.

Using hashtags and Facebook, Valentine said she reached her goal within 24 hours of establishing the fund. Before it was all said and

“VCU may have had the biggest crowd regardless of these 46 students, but bringing the Rowdy Rams definitely helped raise the noise level considerably. I think it’s great that someone thought of this before it was too late and I think it truly shows the power of social media.”

— Jake Salmons

done, she helped raise more than \$14,000 without asking a single person for money.

Mara Derosé, a Rowdy Ram member included on the trip, said she was glad Valentine came up with the idea.

“It’s been a fantastic experience,” Derosé said. “The fact that she was able to raise so much money in such a short period of time is incredible. I think I speak

for everyone when I say that we’re grateful for the opportunity.”

The VCU basketball team was also thankful. A massive contingency of Rams fans invaded the Barclays Center beginning on Thursday and several players mentioned the fan support during postgame press conferences.

Chants of “V-C-U” rang throughout the arena on countless occasions, and a sea of black and gold dominated the stands in a tournament that included 13 different teams.

Jake Salmons, another lucky Rowdy Ram, said Valentine’s effort made a difference on and off the court.

“VCU may have had the biggest crowd regardless of these 46 students,” Salmons said. “But bringing the Rowdy Rams definitely helped raise the noise level considerably. I think it’s great that someone thought of this before it was too late and I think it truly shows the power of social media.”

Valentine’s effort also shows the power of Ramnation, Salmons said, because not every university possesses the school spirit to raise that amount of money in such a short period of time.

Other notable donors included NASCAR drivers Elliot and Hermie Sadler, Richmond International Raceway, Haley Certified Toyota and some of VCU basketball’s assistant coaches.

Excess money will be used to help fund a bus for the NCAA tournament if the Rams play on the East Coast, Valentine said, or could be used for next year’s A-10 tournament.



VCU fan Chris “Pav” Crowley was one of hundreds of Rowdy Rams who made the trip to Brooklyn, N.Y. to support the VCU men’s basketball team’s bid for its first Atlantic 10 tournament championship.



CT SECTION MEETINGS



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MULTIMEDIA	Thursdays, 1 p.m.
ONLINE	Fridays, 3 p.m.



THIS WEEK IN REC SPORTS

March 17



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Two different sessions offered, choose **one**:
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Saturday, 3/22, 9am–3pm
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Two different sessions offered, choose **one**:
3/29–3/30, 12–6 pm
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Cost: \$50
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League: Dodgeball (6)
Outdoor Adventure Program
Climbing Weekend
Date: 3/22–3/23, register by 3/18
Cost: Student: \$44, F/S/A/+1: \$50
Day Hike
Date: 3/22, register by 3/18
Cost: \$22 F/S/A/+1
Day Mountain Bike
Date: 3/23, register by 3/18
Cost: Student: \$10, F/S/A/+1: \$12



spectrum



ON THIS DAY in 2003, the CT reported the band Boogie Hawg stole the show at a Reel Big Fish concert at the Canal Club.

Richmond Guitar Quartet to perform for music series

BRENDA ACEVEDO
Contributing Writer

Former VCU Music students will return to the W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts as the next guest artists for the 25th annual guitar series on March 23.

Formed in the mid-2000s, the Richmond Guitar Quartet was the result of four undergraduate student's desire to play as a small ensemble. The quartet members are Andrew McEvoy, Nathan Aldhizer, Matt Rise and Ron Alig.

McEvoy said before performing professionally, the members of the group were just friends who enjoyed performing on the guitar.

"We all enjoyed each other's company, and shared a similar passion for the guitar and the myriad of styles encompassed by its repertoire," McEvoy said.

Guitar coordinator John Patykula began the guitar concert series at VCU. Patykula said he requested to have the quartet perform because the members showcase their talent in a wonderful way.

"They have the ability to play the music and also to arrange it," Patykula said. "They can take any piano piece or an orchestral piece and change the notes ... for four guitars."

In the past, the guitar series has featured classical and flamenco guitarists. Some notable artists who have performed include Ricardo Marlo, a classical and flamenco guitarist, and Torcuato Zamora, a flamenco guitarist.

By including a variety of performances such as the Richmond Guitar Quartet, Patykula said younger students can learn how to set themselves apart from the crowd as professionals.

"If you're just learning to play the guitar, it's nice to get exposed to some very good guitarists," Patykula said. "Students can see what they want to be."



Clockwise from left: Andrew McEvoy, Matt Rise, Ron Alig and Nathan Aldhizer will perform together as the Richmond Guitar Quartet for the guitar performance series at VCU.

McEvoy jokingly said his quartet performances have more unusual benefits as well.

"RGQ concerts cure most minor illnesses within two weeks of attendance," McEvoy said. "On many occasions, our younger audience members find love and are married within five years of concert attendance."

Patykula said the guitar series is more than just watching artists perform on stage. When performers interact with the audience, people are more engaged and leave with a memorable experience.

Patykula said he also wants the guitar series to teach students how to bring their own personality to the stage.

"There are so many different approaches to the classical guitar and everybody is different," Patykula said. "As faculty, we want students to have their own personality and their own say, with some direction, of course."

As a former student, McEvoy said he was able to learn how to develop his own talents through diverse musical training. McEvoy said he is thrilled to attend

the annual VCU concerts and is honored and humbled to contribute to them.

The quartet performance will take place on March 23 at 4 p.m. in the W.E. Singleton Center for Performing Arts in the Sonia Vlahcevic Concert Hall. Tickets are \$10 for students and \$15 for general admission. They can be purchased online through VCU Music or at the box office in the W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts at 922 Park Ave.

Film screenings remain sacred at Grace St. Theater

ALEX FALLS
Contributing Writer

The silver screen has given way to the digital screen in the modern age of technology, but Richmond's Grace Street Theater gives the community a chance to see films in their original 35mm form.

Before digital became the industry standard, film was the way of the trade. Grace Street Theater projectionist Leland Lew still believes film projection is the best representation of classic cinema.

"All the stuff was created by the artists and the directors was originally for film," Lew said. "Not like newer films that shoot directly to (digital). (35mm) films were originally shot on film, and I think they should be seen on their original formats."

VCU School of the Arts stages Cinematheque on selected Tuesday nights at the Grace Street Theater. The event takes its name from the French word 'cinematheque,' meaning "cinematic library." Cinematheque screenings take place each semester and admission is free to the general public.

VCUArts' Cinema program director Rob Tregenza said Cinematheque is important to the entire Richmond area.

"There has to be a cinematic culture in Richmond where art students and the community can actually see current cinema and also see historically important cinema," Tregenza said.

Tregenza said Richmond requires a special kind of place where people can gather to view and discuss cinema in its original presentation and help that culture thrive. Tregenza based his program on Paris' 1960s version of Cinematheque.

"Historically, the Cinematheque in Paris was a major cultural institution in the '60s," Tregenza said. "Most of the new-wave film directors ... what they learned about film was in the Cinematheque in Paris."

The next film scheduled for screening is France's provocative "Hors Satan" ("Outside Satan") on March 25. Other films being screened this season

include the classic "Singin' in the Rain" and modern foreign films such as "Ashes of Time" and "Almayer's Folly."

Nell Chenault, a research librarian for film and music at VCU Libraries, attends screenings as often as she can because she said viewing a film on a computer or at home cannot match the experience of sitting in an audience.

"The large screen and the dark draws you into the storytelling," Chenault said. "Your brain is actually more emotionally engaged in this setting. You also participate with the fellow members of the audience as they laugh, gasp and emote."

The movie industry's shift to digital film is reflective of society's continued integration of the newest technologies, Lew said. Costly shipping has forced 35mm film to be more of an antique.

"It's more about transport," Lew said. "It costs probably about \$75 to \$100 to ship a film across the country. But what does it cost to download a film into a digital server? Nothing."

The availability of 35mm film prints in a digital-dependent world has presented problems for Cinematheque, Tregenza said.

"What's available has increasingly become an issue because a lot of distribution is moving to digital ... completely to digital," Tregenza said. "At this point, we're locked into showing everything in 35mm, which is what I would love to continue to do."

Tregenza says he wants people to attend Cinematheque in the same way people attend the opera. His program facilitates a venue where people can view an antiquated art form in its most authentic presentation. Tregenza also compared seeing cinema in 35mm to seeing a favorite band perform live.

"Wouldn't you so much rather see U2 in concert?" Tregenza said.

Screenings are held on select Tuesday nights at 7 p.m. at the Grace Street Theater at 934 W. Grace St. Admission is free. The full Cinematheque schedule can be found online.

Art students fundraising for senior sculpture showcase



Noelle Choy (left) and Molly Gentry (right) are currently working on pieces for the senior showcase.

HUNTER CASTEN
Contributing Writer

This spring, sculpture majors are faced with a daunting decision: to host their senior showcase in one of the VCU Arts buildings or to outsource their production to one of the many galleries in the Richmond Art District.

Two years ago, the senior class had the idea to move the show off campus as a way to stand on their own. Sculpture major Nathaniel

Cody decided to carry on the tradition this year using crowd-funded support.

"They were the pilgrims to this idea of the sculpture seniors (moving) out on their own and it seemed to continue after they left," Cody said. "It has now turned into a lineage for the senior class to figure out how to have their show off campus."

Cody and his fellow sculpture majors created a video to accompany a Kickstarter campaign, which

is in the process of raising \$3,000. Other arts departments have chosen to host showcases off campus as well, such as communications arts, photography, fashion and cinema. Cody said curating work is an important skill for those with a future in the arts, which is why the sculpture showcase is planned by the students themselves.

The event is important both as a social gathering and as an opportunity for seniors to showcase their sculpture work for public

viewing, Cody said.

"This show is about making art for other artists, not for commodity or commercial purposes," Cody said. "We all make exciting work that challenges the boundaries of contemporary art in different ways, ranging from object-making to performance."

Cody said many aspects of the space in which the work will be showcased are important, from location to the purity of white paint on the walls. Benefactors will support the artists as they renovate their gallery space by repainting the walls, adding track lighting and creating supporting walls to hold their sculptures up.

"There will be installations, a room for screening videos and multiple event nights with performances," Cody said. "For future professionals in the arts, this show is not only important as a gathering, but also as experience for us to work independently."

The senior sculpture majors are \$325 short of their Kickstarter goal; the campaign ends March 30. If the class meets its goal, the VCU Arts 2014 Senior Sculpture Showcase will open April 18 at 7 p.m. in the VCU Fine Arts Building at 1000 W. Broad St., and continue through May 5, at 207- 209 N. Foushee St.

The off-campus showcase will open alongside the Fine Arts Building Senior Showcase, which closes Sunday, April 20.



The sculptures in progress, like the one above, are made of many materials, including wood and sponge.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NATHANIEL CODY

PHOTO COURTESY OF NATHANIEL CODY

‘Ram Factor’ competition to showcase student talent

SARAH KING
Staff Writer

VCU’s own rendition of “X Factor” will take place for the second year in a row on Wednesday, March 19 at 6 p.m. in the Commons Ballroom to raise money for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Ram Factor is a singing competition hosted by Alpha Kappa Lambda. All proceeds from the fundraiser benefit the foundation, which aims to fight the genetically inherited lung disease. Cory Garnett, senior biology major and one of the event founders, is looking forward to seeing a large crowd at the competition.

“There are 400 available tickets at \$5 apiece available in break-point, so we’re hoping for a solid turnout,” Garnett said.

Auditions to compete in the event were held online and in-person from March 2-9. The online auditions were conducted through the Ram Factor Facebook page, where contestants could post videos. The 10 videos with the most likes made the show. Christopher Guzman, a contestant selected through the online process, said he was happy to be chosen for the event.

“I’m so ecstatic that I was chosen, and got as many votes as I did,” Guzman said. “I’m shooting for the \$100.”

Live auditions were held and judged by members of the fraternity. Garnett said this year the event grew to accommodate more competitors.

“The Ram Factor committee decides who we think should be in the show,” Garnett said. “We have 18 competitors this year compared to last year when we only had 16.”

A panel made up of the Ram Factor committee will judge the show. The first place winner will receive \$100; second place will receive \$50; third place will receive \$25. Tickets for Ram Factor are available for \$5 at Breakpoint in the Commons.

French Film Festival to return to Richmond



“Attila Marcel” is based on a pianist in Paris trying to follow his dreams. The film will be shown on Sunday, March 30 at the French Film Festival at the Byrd Theatre.

SARAH KING
Staff Writer

Students will get the chance to spot French celebrities next week as VCU and the University of Richmond partner to put on the 22nd annual French Film Festival March 27-30 at the Byrd Theatre.

The film festival, sponsored by the French Embassy’s Cultural Services, is a four-day event

dedicated to French cinematography. Actors, directors, producers, cinematographers, screenwriters and artist-technicians from across France will come to Richmond for the event hosted in Carytown.

“This event is the largest film festival outside of France, and isn’t done anywhere else in the world,” said Peter Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., director of the festival and professor of French culture

and film studies at VCU.

Kirkpatrick and his wife Françoise Kirkpatrick, who is a professor at the University of Richmond, have directed the festival since its founding 22 years ago.

The event draws an audience from across the United States, typically topping 21,000 attendees. Kirkpatrick said 47 people from Paris will also be in attendance this year.

“Any student at VCU will later regret missing this unique event if they do not go,” Kirkpatrick said. “This is such a unique opportunity that is held in high esteem by both the French and Americans.”

More than 25 films will be shown throughout the course of the weekend including comedies, social-dramas, documentaries and short films. Presentations by French directors, screenwrit-

ers and cinematographers will take place as well. The festival will also feature films shown in countries outside of France and the U.S.

French director Philippe Muyl will premier his new film, “Le Promeneur d’Oiseau,” which is a story centered on the voyage of a grandfather and his granddaughter.

“This event is the largest film festival outside of France, and isn’t done anywhere else in the world.”

— PETER KIRKPATRICK, PH.D.

“It is only the second official co-production between China and France, and the first one by a French director,” Muyl said.

French director, actor and producer Jacques Perrin will share a new documentary, “Che strano chiamarsi Federico,” made by Italian director Ettore Scola and Italian cinematographer Luciano Tovoli.

“What a treat Richmond is in for with this film,” Perrin said.

All of the films will have English and French subtitles, so the audience can appreciate films in all languages.

Planning the festival is a yearlong production and includes the work of about 20 interns from VCU and University of Richmond.

“French master’s students in France come over for the film festival, as well as many volunteers, actors, directors and professionals,” Kirkpatrick said.

Students can purchase passes for the event for \$65, instructors for \$105 and regular attendees for \$115. Passes are available online at french-filmfestival.us or at the French Film Festival Office at 920 W. Franklin St.

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“Some students aren’t invested in the school system and only want to get what they want.”

— Emmett Fleming



ILLUSTRATION BY DAN NACU

End the practice of hazing

NOURA BAYOUMI
Guest Columnist

With 55 percent of college students involved in extracurricular organizations experiencing hazing, according to HazingPrevention.org, the issue is inarguably a serious one. Hazing is among the most notable forms of harassment on a college campus. Its form can vary, being psychological, physical or otherwise exploitative, making it hazardous for students. Why do some student organizations, from fraternities and sororities to athletic teams and clubs, rely on hazing in order to initiate new members into their organization? There are many reasons why I assume students choose to

engage in hazing. Members may feel greater identification with their organization if the initiation process is difficult. It can force a pledge class to create a strong bond in a short period of time and it eliminates the people who don't take the process seriously enough for the leadership's liking. However, hazing isn't the answer for those wishing to create unity. I was once in a sorority that didn't practice hazing. It was in our bylaws to never haze a pledge, no matter what the circumstances were. We still had a strong bond. Nobody was dropped off in the middle of the woods blindfolded or forced to binge-drink to gain admission. Just a few weeks ago, the fraternity Sigma Alpha Epsilon

announced that they will ban the initiation process for its pledges after at least 10 SAE members have died in hazing, alcohol or drug incidents at SAE events since 2006, according to Time magazine. The article also mentioned that many of the victims were freshmen pledges, who are considered the most vulnerable to peer pressure in their first year at college. There are many ways members of an organizations can forge a close bond without hazing. Go camping for three days without any phones or laptops; plan more activities together and get to know one another, share your deepest secrets. It's better than putting your own life at risk.

Freshman year should be the time to educate students on hazing. As a part of VCU's curriculum, there should be a mandatory class that educates students on the impact hazing can have on students. One day one of those students will become the president of an organization and they will have to make the decision on whether they should haze. Before engaging in an act that's potentially harmful, ask yourself if you're willing to give up your life in order to be initiated in a fraternity or a sorority. Keep in mind, this is an organization that will only be relevant for about four years of your life.



ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS KINCHES

Duke student's ordeal a learning opportunity

DANIEL PARKER
Guest Columnist

The Internet has brought with it an increase of people who can't mind their own business. The cloak of usernames provides cowards with the perfect chance to intrude into the lives of others and pass unfair judgement. The anonymous nature of the web gives people delusions that their over-the-top insults are somehow justified. A freshman at Duke University who goes by the name of Lauren in interviews had her porn star alias 'Belle Knox' revealed. Afterwards, Lauren dealt with harassment from classmates and strangers. Some even called for her expulsion from the university. The legal decisions of consenting adults are not anyone else's business and are not worth the torment of strangers. Condemnation of harmless behavior is a waste of energy. In no way does Lauren's job choice affect her academic career. No amount of mental gymnastics can justify calls for her expulsion for the university. Some people even called for the use of violence against Lauren. The money Lauren received from the films paid for her tuition. People are angry about a student choosing a completely legal route to make money because of their moral objections. No one is harmed by the way this consenting adult makes her money. Although you could make a weak moral argument about her profession, doing so would be unnecessary and cruel.

The threats of violence against Lauren are disturbing. We live in a world of full of war, crime and corruption. Yet some people find themselves wasting their energy on trivial events like this young woman's personal decisions. If our country spent its attention on something productive, instead of other people's business, our world would be better for it. However, some people still find themselves mesmerized by trivial affairs. An attention deprived section of our population passes judgment on consenting adults for basically harmless activity. Lauren's decisions honestly aren't anyone's business, nor do they justify the level of harassment she has received. Lauren is inspiring in the way she is owning up to her decision. The way she refuses to back down in the face of numerous threats shows an admirable level of self-assurance and determination. "The Internet does not dictate my life, my sexuality is not some sort of blackmail to be used against me, granting you ownership over my life or my story. It is my life. It is my story, so I'm refusing to let the bullies win," Lauren wrote in a column for xoJane. I'm outraged at the amount of hatred one woman can receive for doing something within her personal freedom. It's disheartening that people would waste their precious existence on such a pointless crusade.

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Do university ambitions reflect students' will?

EMMETT FLEMING
Guest Columnist

News recently broke that VCU would spend an incredible amount of money building a new basketball practice facility — a head-turning \$25 million. To me, that seems like \$25 million too much. Money like that can go to more demanding causes at the school, like security or maintaining school facilities. The power to change administrative priorities is within us, the community and students. Our voices can influence whether VCU spends money on academics or athletics. Students just have to realize as much. If the student body wants VCU to spend its cash more wisely and on issues other than our basketball team, then the school will have to listen. VCU is large, but not so large that it can't listen to its students. This incredible amount of money, although neither from, nor beholden to the student body, is somewhat symbolic of the disconnect between administration and students. — Emmett Fleming

connect between administration and students. VCU is a college expanding so quickly that its student body can't catch up to itself. It morphs daily. VCU is a city within a city and that sometimes makes it difficult to gauge student opinion. The school represents its students with every check cashed for its development. I've met many people at VCU

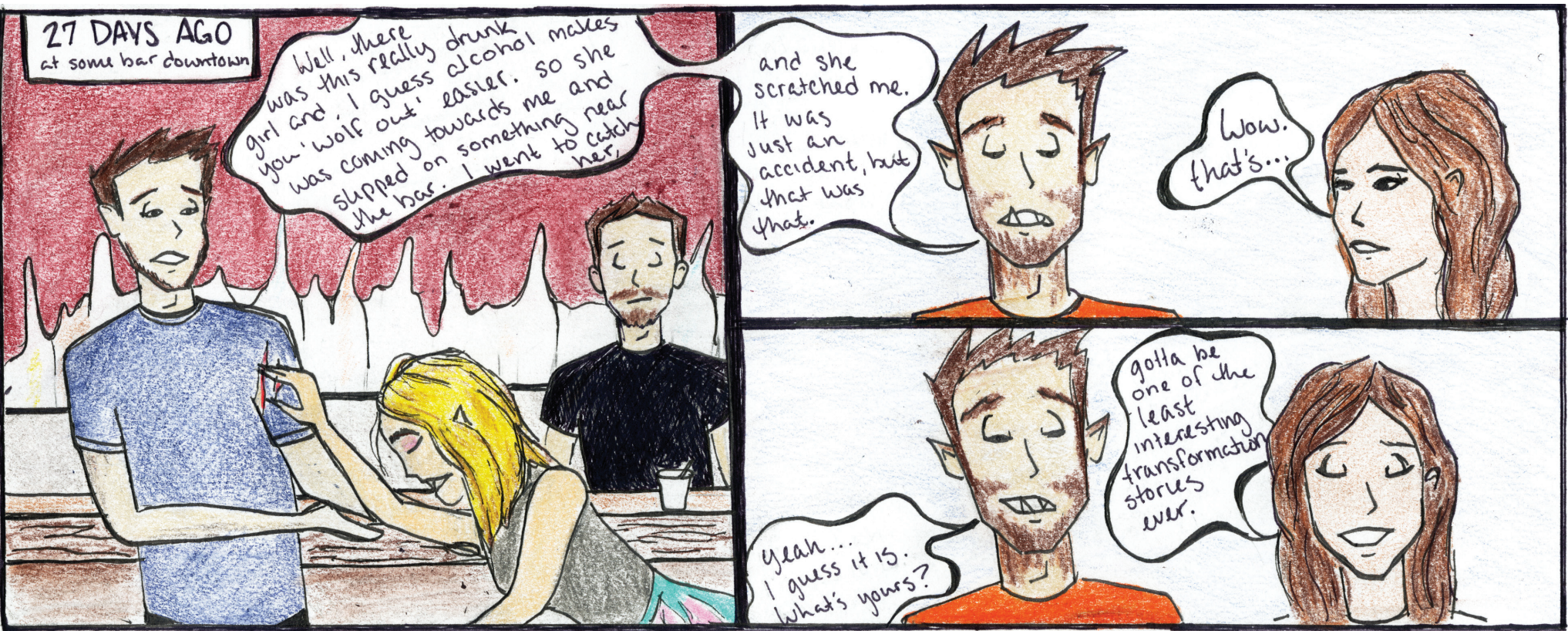
and not one follows the basketball team or really cares about it. They're more focused on their own lives. Understandably this doesn't reflect the college, but it shows the impact of a large school where students exist anonymously in a system that knows them by their V-numbers — it almost sounds Orwellian. When anonymity is high and no one really knows each other, it's easy to feel unrecognized. The student body is impatient. Some students aren't invested in the school system and only want to get what they want. "I'll get mine and you get yours" seems like an accurate tagline for the school. When the student body is disconnected from the school, it's hard to find problems surrounding the school paramount in life. We all pay tuition, which is an investment to the school, though it's absent of the heart and care necessary to galvanize support for VCU's community to reach students and see what they want for the school's future.

COMICS

Moon Beans by Helen Stoddard



Adult Wolf by Candace Faircloth



Commonwealth Times Elections

Nominations for Executive and Managing Editors accepted through Thursday, March 20 at noon.

Candidates will speak on Saturday, March 22 at 3 p.m. in the Student Media Center at 817 W. Broad St.

Voting will take place from Saturday, March 22 at 4 p.m. to Monday, March 24 at 4 p.m.

Winners will be announced on Tuesday, March 25.

Interested? Contact editor@commonwealthtimes.org.

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