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VCU homecoming



Rams soar to top the A-10

Men’s basketball sweeps season series against SLU

PETER MASON
Contributing Writer

After edging the Billikens 63-61 back in January, the Rams dominated round two in the Siegel Center on Tuesday, Feb. 17, defeating Saint Louis University 74-54.

The Rams had a strong start on the night with a 10-2 run in the opening minutes of the game. The first eight of those points were scored by VCU senior guard Treveon Graham, who was the leading scorer for the Rams on the night with 16 total points.

“I thought it was good for the bench to come out and play the way they did tonight,” Graham said. “I just think it’s important for the team as a whole to come out aggressive. The couple games at home, we were playing non-aggressive, so the coaches wanted us to come out real loose and aggressive and I thought if I came out aggressive, my teammates would follow.”

After VCU held an early 10-2 lead, the Billikens went on a 10-0 run to take a 12-10 lead. Redshirt sophomore guard Jordan Burgess landed a layup to tie the score at 12-12. After trading baskets over the next two and a half minutes, the score stood at 17-17 with little more than nine minutes remaining in the first half.

The Rams went on a 10-0 run to take a 27-17 advantage, which they managed to hold all the way through the rest of the first half. St. Louis went into the break trailing 34-22.

“I thought we had a pretty good killer instinct today,” Smart said. “Our guys showed good response today, when St. Louis made a run on us and then to start the second half defensively. We did a nice job there.”

The Rams opened up the second half with junior guard Melvin Johnson hitting a three pointer for VCU. SLU freshman forward Milik Yarbrough hit a jumper to respond for the Billikens. Yarbrough finished as the leading scorer for the Bilikens with 17 points.

After Graham made two out of four free throw attempts, the Rams led 39-24. For the rest of the second half, at no point were the Billikens able to come any closer than 13 points.

Redshirt sophomore guard Torey Burston’s three-pointer with about a minute and a half remaining gave the Rams a solid 74-53 advantage, which ended with a blowout victory for the Rams.

“We have a long way to go in terms of where we need to be as a team, every single possession,” Smart said. “Our young guys understanding the urgency of some of the little details, and Saint Louis has a young team. So I think a lot of those guys on Saint Louis’ team, their best basketball is way ahead of them. They’re going to be a much more difficult team to deal with next year.”

Freshman forward Michael Gilmore was the second-highest scoring Ram after Graham with 10 points and freshman guard Terry Larrier added nine for VCU.

VCU retires Bradford Burgess jersey; Rams defeat U.Mass.

STERLING GILES
Contributing Writer

VCU men’s basketball remained atop the Atlantic 10 on a day that Bradford Burgess’, the older brother of redshirt sophomore guard Jordan Burgess, jersey was retired, with a win against the University of Massachusetts 78-72 on Saturday, Feb. 21.

Burgess was honored prior to the tilt against U.Mass. The former VCU guard played from 2008 through 2012 and was also a member of the 2011 Final Four team. Burgess’s No. 20 jersey was hung among elite company in the rafters. He is one of five players to have his jersey retired, joining the likes of Eric Maynor and Calvin Duncan.

Burgess posted 1684 points in his career, placing him fifth all-time in program history. He is also one of three players in VCU history-joining Warren and Charles Wilkins- to post over 1600 points, 700 rebounds, and 200 assists. He also became the first player in 25 years to appear in three NCAA tournaments for VCU.

Head coach Shaka Smart spoke about how thankful and impressed he was with Burgess’s accomplishments during his collegiate career.

“When (I) saw his name and number up there among the VCU greats, I got kind of emotional because that’s about as good of an accomplishment you can have,” Smart said. “I just appreciate I got to coach him for three years.”

Coined the “Big Shot” for his for his clutch go-ahead baskets throughout his career, one of Burgess’ notable big shots was a game-winning layup in overtime against Florida State University

in the 2011 NCAA Southwest Regional Final.

With Burgess on hand, the Rams had an opportunity to grab the top spot in the A-10 conference with a win. VCU entered the contest tied for first place with the University of Dayton with a 10-3 record. U.Mass. occupied the second spot with a record of 9-4.

VCU forced 16 turnovers and eight steals in just the first half. With just under seven minutes in the half, the Rams led by 16 points. Still, the Minutemen concluded the half shooting 45 percent from the field and only trailed the Rams, 35-30. Senior forward Treveon Graham led all scorers with 14 points. Graham finished the game with a

double-double, scoring 24 points and 10 rebounds.

After halftime, the Rams came out strong, hitting four of its first five shots, which were all from long distance. However, the Rams went cold and went on a scoring drought for more than four minutes. U.Mass. then went on a 12-0 run and even gained the lead at one point during the drought.

But once again, the resilience of Smart’s team was apparent as the team went on another run to close out the game. The Minutemen did not the forfeit the win easily as U.Mass. guard Trey Davis hit a clutch three-pointer with 42 seconds left in regulation. VCU clinched the victory when junior guard Melvin

Johnson and sophomore guard JeQuan Lewis made crucial free-throws to ice the game.

Despite all of the fanfare for his brother prior to the game, Burgess played well, finishing with five points and eight rebounds.

With a VCU win and a loss by second place Dayton University, the Rams move into sole possession of first place in the A-10 with an 11-3 record in conference and 21-6 overall.

Next on the schedule for the Rams is the highly-anticipated rematch with the University of Richmond Spiders, who defeated VCU at home last month. The contest will take place at UR on Feb. 25 at 7 p.m. and will broadcast live on ESPN2 and ESPNU.



Bradford Burgess alongside his family greets his former head coach Shaka Smart during his retirement ceremony at the Stuart C. Siegel Center on Saturday, Feb. 21. Above: JeQuan Lewis, Melvin Johnson, Jarred Guest and Jordan Burgess celebrate their win over SLU.

Race for Homecoming King and Queen: Applications, Pageants, Campaigns and Lip Syncing

TAYLOR THORNBERG
Spectrum Editor

As Homecoming Week dawns on VCU’s campus, the preparations are almost complete, but one question still remains: Who will be crowned Homecoming King and Queen?

Nine seniors are up for this year’s king and queen, and five juniors for prince and princess, each representing an organization, from Alpha Gamma Delta to the Black Student Union. As a new event this year, freshmen and sophomores are

also competing for the titles of lord and lady and duke and duchess. Chinyere Onyirimba, the court chair of the 2015 Homecoming Committee, said this change was implemented to get more students involved with homecoming.

“We wanted to include everyone and basically give everybody the opportunity to show maybe you are freshmen, but you love VCU, you came here, why?” Onyirimba said.

Voting for all titles will take place online from Monday Feb. 23 to Tuesday Feb. 24 through the

myVCU Portal. The freshman lord and lady will be announced at the pep rally Wednesday night, the sophomore duke and duchess will be revealed at the Ram Fest concert Thursday night, the prince and princess will be presented at the “Reign of the Ram” pageant and the king and queen will be announced on game day.

However, before being crowned, the king and queen contestants will take part in a new pageant designed for students to see what the candidates are like. According to Onyirimba,

the “Reign of the Ram” pageant will have four categories for contestants to complete, including an introduction, spirit wear, VCU trivia questions and a talent portion which is a lip-sync contest.

“We wanted to stay true to the lip-sync tradition that VCU has started so that’s definitely going to be a part of the pageant,” Onyirimba said.

While the pageant is an important part of the competition, the quest for the crown for many contestants has been going on for months. Shona Malhotra, a con-

testant for homecoming princess who will represent her co-ed pre-health fraternity Delta Epsilon Mu, said she’s worked toward becoming part of the homecoming court since last semester.

“When I was filling (the application) out I remember thinking ... ‘What about you would best represent your junior class?’” Malhotra said.

Students were able to apply online and fill out a questionnaire including what organization they would represent. From there, they were invited to complete inter-

views with staff members of student organizations. According to Onyirimba, the criteria for homecoming court contestants is based on several factors.

“It wasn’t just based on academics but it was based on personality and why they love VCU and also what they do for VCU,” Onyirimba said.

Once the candidates were chosen, they were able to rack up points for turning in their application, completing the interview, and attending an information session.

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In this section: Heart health. SGA funding. Search committee. Board of Visitors. Leadership council.

briefs

LOCAL

About 1 in 5 state lawmakers have more than \$50,000 in debt

About one in five Virginia legislators list having at least \$50,000 in personal debt besides a mortgage, an analysis of financial disclosure forms by The Associated Press has found.

But state's ethics laws don't currently require lawmakers to offer much detail about the debts. That means the public wouldn't be able to tell if an elected official has a mountain of credit card bills similar to what prosecutors suggested helped drive former Gov. Bob McDonnell into taking bribes from a smooth-talking vitamin salesman.

But more transparency may be coming. Leaders in both the House and the Senate, who are currently working on a final ethics reform package to be approved before the end of the 2015 legislative session, have said they want a new ethics advisory council to come up with new forms that are more transparent about a lawmaker's personal finances.

Brief by the Associated Press

Tobacco giants resist harsh public admissions about smoking

Never underestimate the staying power of big tobacco.

In 2006, U.S. District Judge Gladys Kessler ordered the nation's largest cigarette makers to publicly admit that they had lied for decades about the dangers of smoking.

The basis for the punishment: Testimony from 162 witnesses, a nine-month bench trial and thousands of findings by the judge that defendants engaged in what the largest public health organizations in the country have called a massive campaign of fraud.

Bloodied but unbeaten, the tobacco companies have plunged into another courtroom battle in an effort to stave off the humiliation of having to underwrite an ad campaign in which they brand themselves as liars. Oral arguments are scheduled for Monday before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Brief by the Associated Press

Ex-first lady: Marriage, family poisoned by corruption

Former Virginia first lady Maureen McDonnell told a judge before she was sentenced for corruption that her marriage, family and the state have been poisoned by her criminal conviction. McDonnell was sentenced to one year and one day in prison on Friday. She told the judge takes full responsibility for taking bribes from a businessman. Fighting back tears, she apologized to her family and alluded to the judge's statement at her husband's sentencing that she had "let the serpent" into the Executive Mansion.

Brief by the Associated Press

NATIONAL

Suspect in blast near NAACP office: Target was Accountant

The man accused of setting off a small explosion last month that rattled nerves because of its proximity to a Colorado NAACP office says he was in a rage over his financial problems and was actually targeting his accountant, according to court documents filed Friday.

He said he was angry because the accountant wouldn't return his phone calls or give him back his tax records. It was unclear whether Murphy knew that the accountant, Steve DeHaven, died in June in Mesa, Arizona.

Henry D. Allen Jr., president of the local NAACP chapter, expressed skepticism Friday about the accountant version of the story, but he would not say whether he believed his organization was the target.

Brief by the Associated Press


US charges Duke with illegal pollution from 5 coal ash dumps


Federal prosecutors filed multiple criminal charges against Duke Energy on Friday over years of illegal pollution leaking from coal ash dumps at five North Carolina power plants.

The three U.S. Attorney's Offices covering the state charged Duke with nine misdemeanor counts involving violations of the Clean Water Act.

Duke said Friday in statements and court filings that it has already negotiated a plea agreement under which it will admit guilt and pay \$102 million in fines, restitution and community service. The company said the costs of the settlement will be borne by its shareholders, not passed on to its electricity customers.

Brief by the Associated Press





VCU Pauley Heart Center

VCU raises heart health awareness through February

SARAH KING
News Editor

AUSTIN WALKER
Staff Writer

colleague, doctor Daniel Tang, as part VCU's free seminar series on heart health throughout the month of February.

This Thursday, the last installment of the series, "New Treatment for Atrial Fibrillation," will feature Pauley Center doctors Kenneth Ellenbogen and Vigneshwar Kasirajan. The two will discuss the medical center being one of the few hospitals in the country to utilize a new procedure called hybrid ablation.

"VCU is definitely at the forefront of technological advancements in ways that are less invasive to get people feeling better as quickly as possible," Gertz said.

Another such initiative that Gertz is personally involved with are trials currently underway for the "Parachute procedure" that invokes the implant of an umbrella shaped device for patients who have difficulty breathing after suffering a heart attack.

Gertz said the VCU Medical Center is one of the top 10 institutions in the nation for rolling participants for the trial procedure.

Gertz also emphasized that although the rate of heart disease is slow in young adults, he encourages students to think critically about their current habits.

"Following a heart-healthy diet and exercising will help in the future," he said.

Earlier this year, the Pauley Center was also selected to receive part of a \$10 million scholarship to further research on patient care following heart operations.

The American College of Cardiology selected the VCU Medical Center as one of 35 national institutions to participate in the ACC Patient Navigator Program which aims to educate and properly treat patients following their release from the hospital.

The ACC Patient Navigator Program is sponsored by pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca.

"One of the things we found is that patients who have lower socioeconomic status are more at-risk for readmission because they don't have the same resources that other patient populations have access to," said Dale Harvey, the Director of Performance Improvement at the VCU Medical Center.

This is not the first program initiated by the Medical Center to reduce readmission rates.

"We have a number of activities focused on reducing hospital readmissions that actually predate this program," said chief medical officer for clinical activities Ron Clark. "So for years this hospital has paid, from our own bottom line, to support patients leaving the hospital who don't have access to medications, medical equipment, even patients who need to go to nursing homes."

The federal government has recently begun to fine hospitals once they reach a certain rate of readmission. Virginia ranks high nationally in the average rate of the fines issued. In fiscal year 2015 the Medical College of Virginia faced their highest rate yet with a 0.69 percent readmission penalty.

The VCU Medical Center is one of many Safenet hospitals, which provide care to uninsured and impoverished patients. Thus, the healthcare facilities face higher levels of readmission than hospitals of a similar scale causing unequal penalty distribution.

"The model is imperfect," Clark said, "they do need to make some adjustments moving forward in order to account for important variables that influence the numbers."

In 2013, approximately 2 million patients across the U.S. were readmitted within a month of their release from a hospital, ultimately costing Medicare \$26 billion.

An estimated \$17 billion of that is a result of readmissions that were potentially avoidable if the patient had been administered proper treatment. Even with the recently enacted government fines, the losses medical centers face from high readmission rates exceed the returns.

PHOTO BY JULIE TRIPP

SGA depletes reserve budget, stops funding orgs through spring semester

AUSTIN WALKER
Staff Writer

The Monroe Park SGA announced last week that they are no longer accepting funding applications for this semester after draining a total budget of \$427,000.

As a result, student organizations who have yet to apply for events happening in the next three months are left without the ability to receive money from the school.

SGA Appropriations Committee chair Vivek Patel said this outcome is the result of several factors including inadequate student activity fees, state budget cuts and his reformation of the bylaws allowing the appropriations committee more autonomy throughout the funding allocations process.

By October 2014, the SGA had used all of their original \$227,000 budget, which was intended to last all year. Although this hasn't happened in the last five years, the SGA was prepared for the situation and immediately passed a

\$200,000 reserve spending bill on Nov. 3.

Previously, the SGA senate would vote on an organization's funding proposal, then moved to the appropriations committee for further review before finally passing the proposal back to the senate for final approval.

This year, Patel proposed and followed through with changes to the SGA bylaws that allows his committee to strictly handle funding requests.

"That decreased the timeline by about two weeks," Patel said. "Additionally, I went into my hearing processes and made them more efficient by turning 15 minutes-per-student-org into about half of that; it takes 8 minutes. So I'm seeing twice as many student orgs."

This shift in funding jurisdiction from the senate to the appropriations committee comes at the cost of the senate now having complete oversight of the committee's bylaws. Patel did not detail what, if any, changes the senate

has implemented.

Students also do not receive their funding on a first-come, first-serve basis anymore. Instead, the appropriations committee operates by a timeline. This means that organizations who submit funding requests months in advance, could be a lower priority than an organization who applied much later, but needs the money sooner.

"That's actually something that we're looking to improve upon as well," Patel said. "It seems to me it would be much more fair if we had it on a first-come, first-serve basis across the board. So this is actually something I'm looking to change in the bylaws now."

Currently, each VCU student pays a \$45 student activity fee that is included with their tuition, the added total of which combines to about \$2 million.

This amount is then distributed between the Student Media Center, the SGA Appropriations Committee, the Programming Commission and the Student Ac-

tivities Advisory. This year, the SGA received an allocation of \$646,384.20.

Patel claims that the fee, which was implemented 15 years ago, is no longer adequate for the amount of student organizations who seek funding from the SGA.

“It seems to me it would be much more fair if we had it on a first-come, first-serve basis across the board.”

— VIVEK PATEL

"At that time, there were somewhere between 300 and 350 student orgs," Patel said. "Fifteen years later, if you throw in inflation, the price of good and services goes up, and you also add in that we have another 200 student orgs — we're about 540 now — but the student activity fee has not

changed."

Patel hopes that there will be a reexamination of the student activities fee that may better provide for all the organizations at VCU that ask for funding through SGA.

Since last year, Patel said the number of funding requests has tripled.

He explained that a possible cause for this drastic increase is a direct result of state budget cuts.

The university announced last year that the state would reduce VCU's funding by \$21 million to help cover a government deficit. As a result, there were student organizations that relied on a portion of this money to operate, and consequently had to apply for money through the SGA instead.

"I stand behind every decision that has been made by the committee so far," Patel said. "Every dollar that we give to an organization is rightfully spent and I'm more than willing to provide the records that show that."

FAST FACTS

- VCU students pay a \$45 student activity fee that is included with their tuition.
- This year, the SGA received \$646,384.20 and budgeted \$427,000 for student appropriations.
- The sum of all student activity fees is about \$2 million.
- Monroe Park SGA drained their total appropriations budget of \$427,000 by February 2015.
- That \$2 million is distributed among the SGA, the Programming Commission and the Student Activities Advisory Board.

SGA Appropriations Committee chair Vivek Patel said the drain was caused by:

- inadequate student fees
- state budget cuts
- Patel's reformation of the bylaws to give the appropriations committee more autonomy

PHOTO BY BROOKE MARSH

The SGA has discontinued granting student organization funding requests for the remainder of the year. SGA committee meeting times are available online and are open to the public.

Council to unify College of Humanities and Sciences



PHOTO BY BECCA SCHWARTZ

Dean Jim Coleman has relaunched The Leadership Council for the College of Humanities and Sciences, which seeks to increase a sense of identity across its 24 subject areas. The council currently comprises 19 students representing 12 different disciplines within the college.

SARAH KING
News Editor

With the help of a relaunched initiative and a few dedicated students, Jim Coleman, Dean of VCU's College of Humanities and Sciences, is determined to bring his 14,000-student school closer together.

Coleman's brain child, The Leadership Council for the College of Humanities and Sciences, is an initiative intended to strengthen unity among students and departments, increase the college's sense of identity and promote interdisciplinary exchange, communication and academic excellence.

Currently, the college includes

the School of World Studies and the Robertson School of Media and Culture, as well as 24 subject areas and 15 science and liberal arts departments and programs.

"My favorite part thus far has been witnessing the effective consultation that goes on during council meetings and encountering the diverse array of ideas that our Representatives bring with them from their respective departments," said Sameen Meshkin, one of the council co-presidents.

Although Coleman originally launched the initiative in fall 2013, the council underwent a leadership change in spring 2014, and now consists of 19 students representing a dozen different departments within the college.

Danarubini Ramanan, co-president of the council alongside Meshkin, said the leadership organizes meetings and information about the college through feedback from students and faculty, shares findings with the dean's office, provide resources for events and project planning and collaborates with the SGA for fundraising initiatives.

Mounika Abbareddy, the council's student treasurer and fundraising chair, said some in-progress initiatives include a college-wide research fair, gala event, graduate workshops and panel speakers.

Abbareddy also credited Coleman's commitment to the goals of the council, Gregg Johnson,

the College's Communications Director, and Robert Tombes, the faculty advisor, for providing invaluable guidance thus far.

"Sameen and I worked closely with Dean Coleman and Mr. Gregg Johnson all of last year to plan out the goals and structure of the council. We regularly held student focus groups with CHS students, CHS academic organizations, Dean Coleman and Mr. Johnson," Ramanan said.

Ramanan said these focus groups gave the group a better sense of what students liked about VCU and the college, how they thought interdisciplinary exchange could be improved and what the purpose of the council could be to fulfill their vision for

FAST FACTS

The Leadership Council for the College of Humanities and Sciences

- CHS is largest college in the school, accounting for nearly 60 percent of VCU undergrads
- Initially launched in Fall 2013 by CHS Dean, Jim Coleman
- Relaunched after a change in leadership in spring 2015 (Danarubini Ramanan & Sameen Meshkin as co-presidents)

Purpose:

- Build Unity in CHS between students and departments
- Promote Interdisciplinary Exchange
- Promote academic excellence
- Serve as a voice for students in communicating with Departments
- Increase CHS sense of Identity
- Council members selected through application/interview process
- Selected 1-3 members to represent each major based on the size of the major
- 19 current council members representing 12 different areas of study
- Council is still seeking a student to represent LSEE, political science, history and chemistry departments
- Interested students contact: chsleadershipcouncil@gmail.com

the college.

Ramanan said Johnson helped recruit students to serve on the council by reaching out to department heads in the college for their nominations of students.

After conducting an application and interview process, up to three students were selected as representatives of each major in the college based on the size of their given major.

The co-presidents said it took nearly a year satisfy Coleman's intended objectives and gauge student feedback before relaunched the council in Spring 2014. They declined comment on what prompted the change in leadership.

Ramakin said the council is still seeking student representatives from the departments of chemistry, statistical sciences, LSEE, history, political science and sociology. She said the council welcomes student feedback and will soon be creating a google form for students to submit their opinions on improving the college and what they'd like to see the council accomplish.

"I am very much looking forward to witnessing this increase in identity and unity that we are working hard to achieve," Meshkin said.

Interested students can email chsleadershipcouncil@gmail.com for more information.

VCU Health System CEO search underway

KRIS MASON
Staff Writer

When Sheldon Retchin, Chief Executive Officer of the VCU Health System and vice president for Health Sciences, stepped down from his position on Dec. 8, president Michael Rao didn't delay in assembling a search committee for his replacement.

"We want someone who has clear understanding of academics, business and health care," said John Ward, search committee co-chair alongside Eva Hardy.

Ward and Hardy made clear they don't have any questions about the characteristics they are looking for in for an ideal candidate, especially in light of Retchin's accomplishments in serving VCU for 32 years.

Retchin is set to assume the CEO position of the Ohio State University's Wexner Medical Center on March 2. Ward said the search process for Retchin's replacement is estimated between six months and a year.

Ward, who has worked at MCV for more than 40 years, spoke highly of Retchin, who he said is also a good friend of the Ohio State University president.

Jerome Strauss, dean of the VCU medical school, will serve as interim vice president of academic health affairs and CEO of health

system.

"We need someone with very good people skills: someone who can communicate, someone who can move forward without feeling like they have to start over or tear down what we've spent so much time building up," Ward said, adding that Retchin placed the VCU Health System in a "wonderful position."

The committee's first meeting was originally scheduled for Feb. 17, but will instead take place this week due to inclement weather. Aside from Ward and Hardy's co-chair positions, the search committee consists of 15 other members.

"We wanted a search committee that's inclusive, not so big it was cumbersome, but inclusive so when results come out individuals that are selected are reflective of the individual thought process of the members," Ward said.

At the initial committee meeting, Rao and consultants from Isaacson, Miller, the firm facilitating the search, will share their thoughts on how they hope to engage the pending process.

Collectively, the group will collaborate with Isaacson, Miller as the firm reaches out to their established network of qualified candidates to gauge potential interest in the position.

Retchin's now-vacant role serves dual functions. The vice presidency

of health affairs aspect is academically focused and includes oversight of the schools of nursing, pharmacy, medicine and health administration. The CEO aspect concentrates on the clinical facets including the health system's hospitals.

We need someone with very good people skills: someone who can communicate, someone who can move forward without feeling like they have to start over or tear down what we've spent so much time building up.

— JOHN WARD

Ward said he thinks the hiring decision will impact the Monroe Park campus as well as MCV, largely due to the increasing amount of collaborative research initiatives between the two campuses.

"Increasingly our own little world is becoming flat in terms of our need and dependence on one another," Ward said. "What you're going to see is more and more interaction, so I think it's incredibly important."



PHOTO BY JULIE TRIPP

Search committee members will collaborate with search firm Isaacson, Miller to appoint a new CEO of the VCU health system. The committee's first meeting will take place this week.

Royall to serve as Board rector

MATT LEONARD
Online Content Editor

William A. Royall, local businessman and veteran of the Virginia Commonwealth University Board of Visitors, will assume the position as the board's rector on July 1.

Royall has served on the BOV since 2011 and becoming vice-rector in 2013. During that time, Royall saw VCU through the Quest for Distinction, Final Four games and library construction.

Royall founded Royall & Company in 1983. The company provides direct marketing, student recruiting and advancement

services to universities across the country. He sold the company in December 2014 for \$850 million.

He now serves as the company's chairman, according to a Richmond Times-Dispatch article from the time of the company's sale.

Royall's other involvements include co-chairing VCU's Institute for Contemporary Art fundraising campaign with his wife, Pam. The Royalls, along with Steve and Kathie Markel, received co-chair positions after each family donated \$5 million to the funding of the ICA. They now head fundraising efforts for the project.

Royall has also served as a member of the Board of Trustees at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and has served as its president since 2013. Before serving as the board's president, Royall and his wife gave financial support to the VMFA in the form of loans and gifts.

He is also an advisor to the VCU Interactive Marketing Institute and is a former member of the George Mason University board.

He was inducted into the Greater Richmond Business Hall of Fame last May.

what's happening at

program details, rates, and locations at recsports.vcu.edu

get your ride ready for spring with OAP's Bike Shop:
all free! tuesday bike maintenance clinics, individual instruction, use of repair equipment! at the outing rental center, 130 S. linden st.

running for fitness:
running nutrition
[thursday, 2/26, 5.30pm]

march intramural registration
[2/22-3/4, [check website for times and locations](#)]
tenis singles, dodgeball, kickball, ultimate, cornhole, kanjam, and softball tournaments.
free agent meeting
[3/2, 10pm, cary.st.gym]

ACE group fitness instructor exam prep course
[tuesdays and thursdays 3/17-4/16, 3-5pm]

US masters swim
[monday 3/16-4/29 register 3/2-3/13 at noon]

/vcurecports

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vcurecports.tumblr.com

/vcu_recports



STAT OF THE WEEK Men’s basketball ranks fifth in the country in turnovers forced per game (16.8) and fourth in steals (10.0) as of Feb. 20.

Rams come up short to George Washington

SOPHIA BELLETTI
Contributing Writer

After spending the past two weeks on the road, VCU women’s basketball came up short in a return to the Siegel Center where they hoped to use home court advantage against the No. 24 ranked George Washington University Colonials, Wednesday Feb. 18.

VCU was unable to keep up with the Colonials’ offense, losing 65-57, their fifth consecutive loss. The Rams now sit 14-12 overall and 9-3 at home. The Rams struggled from the floor, shooting 35 percent from the field and 42 percent from the line.

George Washington certainly had the height advantage over VCU, with several of their players standing more than 6-feet tall as the Colonials beat the Rams on the boards, out-rebounding VCU 54-31.

“I thought our post players did a good job of battling for 40 minutes,” said head coach Beth O’Boyle. “But when you give 18 offensive rebounds to a team like GW it’s tough to pull out the win.”

Sophomore guard Hannah Schaible put the Colonials on the board early in the first minute with a three-point shot. VCU answered GW’s three pointer with one of their own when sophomore guard Isis Thorpe lined up behind the arc two possessions later.

After five and half minutes, the first pair of foul shots of the game were taken. VCU sophomore guard/forward Camille Calhoun went to the line after snagging an attempted layup. Calhoun knocked down both free throws for the Rams, narrowing GW’s lead to five points.

Eight minutes into the first half, freshman guard Chadarryl Clay knocked down a big three for VCU to tie up the game. Twenty seconds later, GW’s freshman guard Brianna Cummings answered Clay’s three, to put the Colonials back on top, 15-12.

A Thorpe field goal and free-throw shot at the 7:26 mark of the first half once again narrowed GW’s lead to a five point deficit.

With 5:49 left to play in the first period, junior guard/forward Adaeze Alaeze put up a shot on the block, drawing the foul. Alaeze converted a three-point play making the contest a one-possession game, 24-21.

With 1:46 left to play, the referee called a technical foul on GW sophomore guard Caira Washington for talking back after she didn’t agree with his three-second call. O’Boyle sent VCU’s best free-throw shooter, sophomore guard Ashley Pegram to the line. Both free throws rattled out of the basket, resulting in opportunity missed for the Rams.

George Washington would continue to hold the lead throughout the first half entering the break up 31-26.

Alaeze scored the first points of the second half 30 seconds in with a layup down the lane. However, GW would begin to pull away. A jumper from the free-throw line by senior guard Lauren Chase gave GW a 43-30 four and a half minutes into the second half.

Thorpe, the Rams leading scorer with 17 points, tried to rally her team back into the game but the Colonials continued to bounce between a nine and 11 point lead over the Rams throughout the first 10 minutes of the second period.

With the Rams in the bonus and nine minutes left to go, George Washington extended their lead to 53-39.

VCU only committed five fouls in the first half, but committed their eighth with 5:20 left to go, allowing the Colonials to get to the line and put GW up 17 points, their biggest lead of the game.

With the win slipping away, O’Boyle’s team applied tough pressure on defense, not allowing the Colonials to score in over two and a half minutes. GW went a stretch of 0-4 and 1-6 helping the Rams cut the deficit to 61-53.

With two minutes left to play, a late three-pointer by Pegram cut GW’s lead to five, the closest since half time. However, VCU’s enemy became the clock, as GW’s ensuing possessions ran out the clock. With VCU already in the penalty, the Rams had no choice but to foul sending GW to the line to seal the game. VCU lost 65-57 after coming back from several double digit differences.

“Overall our intensity was there from start to finish,” O’Boyle said. “The little sparks there where they pushed it to a double digit lead and it’s tough to come back on, on a team like that.”



Redshirt-sophomore guard Chadarryl Clay scored 15 points, four rebounds, three assists and one steals in 28 minutes of play against ranked George Washington University on Wednesday, Feb. 18 in a 65-57 home loss.

The loss drops the Rams to 5-8 in the Atlantic 10.

The women’s basketball team played another home contest against the University of Massachusetts on Sunday, Feb. 22, but results were not final as of press time.

Press Pick

Isis Thorpe No. 45 Sophomore Guard vs. No. 23/24 George Washington University

Points: 17

Minutes: 34

Field Goals Made/Attempted: 6-12

Three-Point Made/Attempted: 4-7

Free-Throw Made/Attempted: 1-2

Offensive Rebounds: 0

Defensive Rebounds: 6

Steals: 0

Assists: 0

Blocks: 0



Women’s tennis results

Middle Tennessee State University			
Singles #1			
VCU: Cindy Chala	6	6	
MTSU: Tiffany William	3	0	
Singles #2			
VCU: Salome Kvitashvili	5	4	
MTSU: Darya Shulzhanok	7	6	
Singles #3			
VCU: Olga Barsheuskaya	6	6	
MTSU: Jesse Grace	2	1	
Singles #4			
VCU: Darya Berezhnaya	3	6(4)	
MTSU: Giulia Squadrin	6	7(7)	
Singles #5			
VCU: Ludivine Burguiere	6	7	
MTSU: Brittany Huxley	3	5	
Singles #6			
VCU: Alejandra de Lasa	3	3	
MTSU: Nayara Moraes	6	6	
Singles #6			
VCU: Alejandra de Lasa	3	3	
MTSU: Nayara Moraes	6	6	
Doubles #1			
VCU: Olga Barscheuskaya/ Salome Kvitashvili	6		
MTSU: Tiffany William/ Darya Shulzhanok	0		
Doubles #2			
VCU: Cindy Chala/ Darya Berezhnaya	2		
MTSU: Brittany Huxley/ Nayara Moraes	6		
Doubles #3			
VCU: Ludivine Burguiere/ Alzbeta Veverkova	3		
MTSU: Giulia Squadrin/ Jesse Grace	6		



Senior Cindy Chala

Press Box

VCU rich with Syracuse 8 history

BRYANT DRAYTON
Contributing Writer

In our lives, there comes a time to reflect on a moment, when all was risked for the betterment of another individual or group. Few can relish such moments or events, where the prosperity of their successors was more important than that of their own. For the Syracuse 8, this opposition confronted them at an early age and would impact the rest of their lives.

In response to racial oppression, the “Syracuse 8” was formed, as nine African-American members of the 1970 University of Syracuse football team boycotted the upcoming season.

The nine players, who were mistakenly known as the Syracuse 8, were: Gregory Allen, Richard Bulls, John Godbolt, Dana Harrell, John Lobon, Clarence “Bucky” McGill, A. Alif Muhammad who was known as Al Newton, Duane L. Walker and Ronald Womack.

The 1969-70 football season for Syracuse was at the epicenter of a society moving forward from racial oppression. As the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s was coming to an end, so was the position of African-Americans harboring a lesser role in society.

McGill, now a Richmond resident, was one of the nine with NFL aspirations that was inevitably cut short based on the repercussions from the boycott. McGill entered the 1970 season with hope that soon turned into despair, as he witnessed the injustices plaguing the Syracuse football program.

“During that time, the late ’60s, there was a pulpary of events happening such as Kent State, Woodstock, Civil Rights and

the Vietnam War,” McGill said. “Once we discovered the issues we stuck together.”

In coming to Syracuse, both black and white athletes received minimal academic support from the coaching staff, as coaches acted as advisors for players.

With academics in the hindsight for the athletes, life after football was in the minds of the nine.

“The NFL was cognizant in what we were doing and who we were, there was no way we were going to play NFL football,” McGill said. “Our education was not hindered because we outsmarted them as all of us graduated, and now we have a couple attorneys and very successful college graduates.”

The Syracuse 8 started, as fellow teammate John Godbolt shared similar talents with a long line of former great Syracuse running backs, among them Ernie Davis and Jim Brown.

The team, led by head coach Ben Schwartzwalder, was not ready for another athlete with the boldness of Brown. Schwartzwalder made it clear the extent of what Godbolt could say and do, diminishing the potential talent he had to display.

“He was really disliked by the coaching staff, and was told he reminded them of Jim Brown,” McGill said. “Fortunately for us, we had a group that could support each other.”

Both Davis and Brown faced opposition during their time at Syracuse, but reflected on their goals and aspirations more so than the social injustices presented to them. Brown went on to be one of the top running backs in the NFL and Davis became

the first black Heisman Trophy winner. John Godbolt was never given the chance to excel at Syracuse which led to the decision for the nine to boycott spring practice and the season.

Leading up to the first game of the 1970 season, a riot was started before the first home game against the University of Kansas. Publicity about the Syracuse 8 exploded after the riots, as the student body was also fed up with the athletic department.

Jim Brown grew fond of the story, and offered his advice to the nine, supporting the movement that was starting.

“Jim Brown made sure we understand what we stood for was honorable, but on the other hand our NFL football careers would be over,” McGill said. “After some deep discussion as a group, we voted we didn’t want to see any other black players go through what we had to go through.”

The boycott began with the optimism of sitting out that season and being allowed to play the following. Claims were made that Schwartzwalder sent letters asking the nine to rejoin the team, but those letters were never received.

The 67 white players all came to their decision: It would be better off for them if the nine were not a part of the team, claiming the distractions from the boycott would interfere with the team camaraderie. The football careers of the Syracuse 8 were over.

McGill, who recently retired from being general manager of the Juvenile Enterprise Program, worked with delinquent youth in the city of Richmond. VCU men’s basketball player Treveon Graham recently took part in an internship

where McGill was his mentor.

“I took Treveon from September to December this past year, and he took part in shadowing judges, visiting parole officers and speaking to the youth, basically involving him in all aspects of criminal justice,” McGill said.

Robyn McDougale, an associate professor at VCU who primarily deals with the impact of violent crime on youth and community development, set up the internship with McGill and the Freight Train.

“Clarence took success, to turn into passion to help young men and change their lives,” McDougale said. “Treveon really made a connection with the youth, as they loved how he treated them like they were humans.”

VCU men’s basketball players Melvin Johnson, Mo Alie-Cox, as well as Graham have all worked with the criminal justice program and visited the youth, developing a relationship with them.

In 2006 the Syracuse 8 were recognized for their boycott as they were exonerated and given the Chancellor’s Medal of Extraordinary Courage. The Syracuse 8 Scholarship Fund is now given to an African-American or Latino first-year student who exhibit leadership skills and community service duties. This year, their book “Leveling The Playing Field: The Story of the Syracuse 8” will be published and sold everywhere.

“Our legacy of courage, leadership, and our unification of humanity will forever be our bond,” the Syracuse 8.

Sunday sweep for men’s tennis

PETER MASON
Contributing Writer

Everything went the Rams’ way on Sunday, Feb. 15, with the men’s tennis team grabbing two swift victories over Radford University and George Mason University at home. The Rams defeated the Radford Highlanders 5-0 in the first matchup. Junior Michael Voscek, sophomore Catalin Fifea, sophomore Wilder Pimentel and sophomore Jacob Svensson grabbed four straight singles matches. In one doubles match, freshmen Louis Ishizaka and Antonio Battle Rodriguez defeated Radford’s redshirt sophomore Samuel Taylor and freshman Nikhil Mannepalli 6-0 and 6-4. Voscek grabbed the first singles match over RU’s senior Patrick O’Keef 6-4 and 6-0. Fifea grabbed

the singles win over Radford’s freshman Michiel Meekers. Fifea won round one, 6-2 and Meekers took round two, 7-6. Finally in round three, Fifea took the win 7-1. Pimentel’s win was over Radford’s freshman Jose Moreno Manzano with a 6-4 win in round one. After falling to Manzano 6-4 in round two, Pimentel grabbed round three, 10-7. Svensson finally won the fourth singles match over Radford’s sophomore Janken Thoen in two quick rounds 6-4 and 6-2. The second match over George Mason was the first Atlantic 10 match of the season for the Rams and they started things right with a 4-1 victory over the Patriots. The first three singles matches went to VCU. Voscek won the first match 6-0 and then 6-2 over Mason’s sophomore James Lange. Fifea won the second match over Mason’s junior Aaron Capitel 7-5 in

the first round. Capitel won 7-6 in the second but Fifea finished it 7-3 in the third. Pimentel won the third match swiftly over Mason’s junior Conor Moran 6-1 and then 6-3. Junior Tanner Baine was the only Patriot to manage a win for Mason in the fourth singles match. Battle Rodriguez fell 6-4 in round one and then again was bested 6-4 in the second round. Svensson and Ishizaka won the doubles match over Mason’s senior Joe Hill and freshman Daniel Gutierrez 6-4 in both rounds. Overall the wins sealed a 4-1 victory for VCU. With the wins, the Rams improved their record to 10-3, and started off A-10 play with a record of 1-0. VCU will host North Carolina State University and Howard University on Friday, Feb.27.



Junior Michal Voscek scored single victories against Radford University (6-4, 6-0) and George Mason University (6-0, 6-2) on Sunday, Feb. 15.

PHOTO BY ALI JONES

Snow alters baseball schedule

KRIS MASON
Staff Writer

The official Twitter account of VCU baseball has had more tweets about inclement weather and schedule changes in the past week than play on the field. The team’s schedule has already been altered multiple times less than a week

after the season began. The team announced Thursday, Feb. 19 that they would be adding a three-game series Feb. 21 and 22 against Bucknell University in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, with a double-header on that Saturday and followed by another game Sunday. This series replaced a series

scheduled for the same dates against former Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) rival University of Delaware at home in Sports Backers Stadium. The entire series was canceled due to the snowstorm earlier in the week. Inclement weather is the primary story of the season thus far for the VCU baseball team. The Rams were scheduled to play three games in the Wake Forest Tournament Feb. 13 and 14, but ended up only playing two games due to weather conditions. In the season opener, the Rams defeated Georgetown University 6-3. They dropped the next contest against tournament host Wake Forest 1-0. The series finale against the University of Delaware was originally moved to the scheduled home series against the Blue Hens before the entire series was canceled. The game scheduled the following Tuesday, Feb. 17 at the University of Virginia was postponed to a later date that is still to be determined. The next scheduled game for the Rams following the three-game series against the Bison of Bucknell is at the University of Maryland Tuesday, Feb. 24 before hosting the University of Pittsburgh in a three-game series Friday, Feb. 27 through Sunday, March 1.




Redshirt-freshman Brett Hileman at bat during preseason.

PHOTOS BY CHRISTIAN MARTINEZ

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ON THIS DAY in 1940, Walt Disney’s animated film “Pinocchio” was released.

VCU Homecoming Events

TAYLOR THORNBERG
Spectrum Editor

VCU’s Homecoming 2015 is starting with a bang, and this year’s theme, “Empire,” is shaping the week’s events.

The festivities kicked off on Sunday with the VCU women’s basketball team playing University of Massachusetts in Rams country, and continues with events and spirit days throughout the week.

Monday will feature the spirit day “Ram Horns.” Students can wear any VCU-related headgear to show their Rams pride. Students can attend the “Royal Lunch” at the Larrick Student Center

Ballroom on the MCV campus at noon, with free food, music and prize giveaways.

That evening, everyone is invited to “Light up the Night,” the official kickoff to homecoming week. The event will be in the Commons Ballroom at 6 p.m. with food, games, raffle prizes, music and other activities.

Tuesday’s spirit day will be “All Gold Everything.” Students can participate by wearing gold jewelry and accessories. Tuesday’s events will begin with an all-day blood drive in the Commons Plaza. Tuesday night will be “VCU’s Got Talent,” a performance from students showcasing a variety of skills

and talents. The show will be in the Commons Ballroom at 6 p.m. and participants will compete for the title of the most talented Ram on campus.

Wednesday’s spirit day will be “Black and Gold.” Students can participate by wearing any black and gold apparel. Wednesday night, the men’s basketball team will play University of Richmond in the Spiders’ arena. A watch party and pep rally will be held in the Siegel Center. The doors will open at 5:30 p.m. and the pep rally starts at 6 p.m. Students will be able to meet VCU athletes and coaches, enjoy a bouncy house and watch the game at 7 p.m. on the

new jumbo screen.

Thursday’s spirit day is “Spirit Fingers,” and students can sport black and gold nail polish or black and gold Band-Aids. Thursday afternoon will be a service event called “Build Your Empire.” Teams will compete to build an “empire” using donated canned goods. The event will be in the Richmond Salons in the Commons at 3 p.m. Thursday night is the big homecoming concert, with headliner Chance the Rapper and openers Magic! and Chaz French. Student tickets are still on sale for \$15, and will be \$25 the day of the show.

Friday will be the final spirit day, “Ram Pride,” where students

can participate by wearing any VCU apparel they have. A karaoke night will be held on the MCV campus in the Court End Ballroom at 4 p.m. with free food and a cash bar for those 21 and older. Later in the evening, the Homecoming King and Queen will be crowned at the “Reign of the Ram” event, a pageant where contestants will compete in categories including spirit apparel, lip syncing and others.

Saturday is game day, as well as “The Grande Coronation,” which features all the game day events. The day begins with the annual Homecoming parade, hosted by Students Today Alumni Tomorrow.

The parade begins at 11 a.m. at Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School, and will head up to Broad Street and loop back to end at the Commons. Students are invited to watch the parade or join in by registering online. The next event of the day will be the tailgate, starting at noon, featuring bouncy houses and other inflatables, food trucks and vendor tents.

Although tickets to the homecoming game are sold out, students can still watch VCU take on University of Dayton in the Commons at 1:30 p.m., where a watch party will provide free food.

February

Monday, 23

T-shirt swap with STAT
Commons Theater and Lobby @ noon

Royal Lunch
Larrick Center Student Ballroom (MCV) @ noon
A free lunch with music and giveaways to break up the monotony of Monday.

Light Up the Night
Commons Ballroom @ 6 p.m.
The homecoming week kickoff with games, food, raffle prizes, music and other activities.

Spirit day
Ram Horns: Wear your most spirited headgear.

Saturday, 28

Parade
Starts at Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School @ 11 a.m.
The parade will loop and walk up Broad Street, ending back at the Commons. Watch or register to join the parade online.

Tailgate
Floyd Avenue in front of the Commons @ noon
Food trucks, bouncy house, and a real tailgate experience.

The Homecoming Game
Siegel Center @ 2 p.m.
The men’s basketball team will play Dayton. Tickets are sold out but there will be a watch party.

Watch Party
Student Commons @ 1:30 p.m.
For those who didn’t get tickets to the game, free food will be provided as you watch the game from outside.

Tuesday, 24

Blood Drive
Commons Plaza, all day
Donate blood and save a life between classes.

Art Gala
Commons: James River Terrace

VCU’s Got Talent
Commons Ballroom @ 6 p.m.
VCU students show off their talents to compete for most talented Ram.

Spirit day
All Gold Everything: Wear all gold jewelry or accessories.

Friday, 27

Unity Stroll-Off
Commons Lobby @ noon

VCU’s Karaoke Night
Court End Ballroom (MCV campus) @ 4 p.m.
Karaoke, free food and a cash bar for those 21 and up.

Reign of the Ram
Commons Ballroom @ 6 p.m.
The Homecoming Court Pageant will have Homecoming King and Queen contestants competing for the crown by lip-syncing and wearing their school spirit.

Spirit day
Ram Pride: Wear anything that shows off your school spirit.

Wednesday, 25

“Rep Yo Class”
Commons Theater and Lobby @ noon
Pep Rally and Watch Party – Siegel Center, doors @ 5:30, event starts at 6 p.m. Meet with VCU athletes and coaches, hop on a moon bounce, and watch the men’s basketball team take on University of Richmond on the jumbo screen.

Spirit day
Black and Gold: Wear all your black and gold apparel.

Thursday, 26

Rodney Ram Photo-Op
Commons Theater and Lobby @ noon
Take pictures with the school mascot.

Build Your Empire
Commons Richmond Salons @ 3 p.m.
A competitive service event where teams must build an empire using collected canned food, must register online to participate.

Ram Fest Homecoming Concert
Siegel Center, doors open @ 6 p.m.
Chance the Rapper, Magic! and Chaz French will take the stage for VCU’s homecoming concert. Student seated tickets are \$15 online and \$25 the day of the show.

Spirit day
Spirit Fingers: Wear black and gold nails or band-aids.

Cosplay club charms Katsucon judges on Valentine’s Day

AMELIA HEYMANN
Contributing Writer

Dressing up as your favorite comic book or movie character may seem like a tradition reserved for Halloween, but for cosplayers, it’s a year-round tradition.

Fans of everything from video games to anime make own costumes, and enter competitions. The hobby has become so popular that VCU has its own cosplay club, which entered this year’s Katsucon Masquerade competition.

Most members of the club make costumes and cosplay specifically for anime or comic conventions. Conventions are a great opportunity for cosplayers to get together and take photos of their cosplays, said Max Lincoln, vice president of cosplay club at VCU. Lincoln said that the average cosplayer attends two to three conventions a year.

The Cosplay Club at VCU attended Katsucon 2015 earlier this month. Katsucon is an annual convention held in the National Harbor in Maryland Feb. 13-15. The group was able to meet other cosplayers and compete in a cosplay contest referred to as a “Masquerade.”

Founding member and club president Hannah Huddle said Masquerades are cosplay competition talent shows with multiple awards and areas to enter. They range from judging the craftsmanship of a costume, to full-on skits or choreographed dance performances in costume. Huddle said Masquerades can typically last two to three hours.

This year, members of VCU’s club won the Judge’s Choice award and Best Novice Performance. Huddle said the group performed a comedy sketch about various characters from the anime “Gurren Lagen” on Valentines Day. The performers were Huddle, Cosplay Club members Mikaela Rice, Milie Shah and VCU alumni Ryan Lee.

“My group was in the novice category since it was our first time competing as a group,” Shah said. “It took us around five months to complete our costumes and write, record, rehearse the skit.”

There are strict cosplay rules to enter the Masquerade. Huddle said that 80 percent of a cosplay has to be made by the cosplayer, which only leaves room for an individual to buy shoes, contacts and a wig. Cosplayers planning to attend the masquerade often must apply months in advance to enter.

While there are cosplay competitions, they are a lot less extreme than what would be seen on the show “Heroes of Cosplay.” Lincoln said the show gives a slanted view that everyone makes cosplay on a competitive level.

“Heroes of Cosplay’ is a very interesting show,” Lincoln said. “I don’t appreciate the outlook it has placed upon cosplayers through this particular medium, but it’s a good way to see other people cosplay on a wider medium as long as you take it with a grain of salt.”

The show also seems to promote “cosplay fame,” the idea that by doing cosplay one can gain wide recognition or respect within the

cosplay community. Lincoln said that cosplay fame does happen, but it’s not the most common occurrence.

Huddle said the only truly famous success story she can think of is Yaya Han, a cosplayer who is often invited as a guest to many conventions and even has her own cosplay accessory store. Most people who cosplay do it for fun, Huddle said.

“I feel like a lot of people identify with it (cosplay) for the same reason I do it,” Lincoln said. “You either really like a character or a character’s costume and you want to make it and cosplay it.”

There isn’t the same fierce competition in the cosplay community as seen on “Heroes of Cosplay,” but there is still a level of judgment. Lincoln says that there is a huge online backlash for doing anything that isn’t “the norm” when it comes to making cosplay. Huddle also mentioned that cosplay is a great “nerd space” for females.

“Cosplay is a really nice place for girls who like nerdy stuff,” Huddle said. “It’s a really female-heavy community even though there is a lot of representation of all genders.”

Huddle added that this is positive because in a lot of other “nerd spaces” or events she’s found herself one of maybe two girls, which made her uncomfortable.

Huddle, one of the founding members of Cosplay Club at VCU, said the club started because she went to her first convention in cosplay and loved it. Huddle and her friends Mikaela Rice and Mil-



VCU Cosplay Club took home Judge’s Choice and Best Novice Performance awards from the Katsucon convention in Maryland.

lie Shah knew that other people at VCU were into cosplaying and decided to create an official VCU club.

“I actually got into it because of my brother,” Shah said. “He was a big fan of Naruto and he cosplayed as Naruto on Halloween. It looked really fun so I wanted to as well. Then I met my roommate Mikaela who talked about making cosplays and that’s how I got roped into making my first cosplay.”

The club meetings are part

instructional demos or discussions, and part open workshop. Demos include having someone who knows how to use a material the rest of the club doesn’t and leading a short lesson, or how to design costumes while on a college student budget. In the workshops, everyone works on their own costumes.

There are many chances to join the cosplay club for events. Lincoln said they are currently in the process of planning an event where

local photographers in the area can come to the club and practice photography by taking pictures of the club members in their cosplay.

Cosplay Club at VCU meets every first Tuesday of the month in the Depot, and other events can be found on their Facebook page. Anyone is welcome to come to a meeting and join the club, not just art or theatre majors. Huddle said they have members who are everything from creative advertising to biomedical engineering.

Students up all night to help nonprofits

DANIEL PARKER
Contributing Writer

A piece of advice from Kyle Daileda, one of eight team leaders for Createathon 2015, is to avoid coffee before midnight at Createathon at VCU, a caffeine fueled event where students revamp nonprofits.

Createathon at VCU is a 24-hour event that provides nonprofits with free marketing direction from students organized into teams.

Each CreatAthon at VCU team comprises six members — five

members and one leader. Each member specializes in Leaders meet with nonprofits to get a grasp of the needs of each nonprofit. These team leaders can either just go with the suggestions from the nonprofits or students can introduce new ideas to help revitalize the nonprofit.

CreateAthon began in 1998. In 2007, VCU professor Peyton Rowe developed an academic model for CreateAthon OnCampus to be used for local nonprofits. Now known as CreateAthon at VCU, students have been selected for this

year's CreateAthon that begins on March 11, over spring break.

Over seven years of events, VCU has worked with 76 total nonprofits and 543 students.

At VCU, students have redesigned logos and websites. In some instances, students have suggested changes to the name of the organization itself. All deliverables are created over 24 hours alongside other teams except for video footage, which is allowed to be made beforehand.

Alex Coyle was a team leader at a previous CreateAthon at VCU assigned MathScience Innovation Center, a nonprofit that offers STEM programs for grade school students.

"When you're there with your team and all the clients are there and to just be there to have a formal meeting," Coyle said. "Like, here's what we all did up on the wall — look at all the work you can churn out in 24 hours. It was just really a great motivational booster."

This year, eight nonprofits are teaming up with students. Peyton Rowe, the director for VCU's CreateAthon, selects nonprofits based on whether they are stable enough to use the work offered to them.

"A lot of times, people think I'm going to volunteer and every nonprofit can benefit," Rowe said. "There's an art to matching nonprofits that are in a good place to receive pro bono, skill-based work like CreateAthon can provide."

CreateAthon at VCU has a pool of money for each participating nonprofit organization. This money is given to CreateAthon at VCU from donors.

One sponsor for CreateAthon at VCU is Carter Printing, which provides print services for the nonprofits involved in the event. A recent sponsor is VCU's Alternative Learning Transformation Lab which is going to assist Createathon with technological support.

"The thing I love the most, because I'm a lifelong teacher, is it seems impossible to get up in front of a group of your clients at 8:30 a.m. after you've been up all night and make a passionate and persuasive presentation," Rowe said. "But every single time the students do."

Students interested in becoming team leaders can apply in the fall by taking MASC 467, a class called Nonprofit Project Development.

'Most talented Ram' to perform at pep rally

AUSTIN WALKER
Staff Writer

As part of this year's homecoming celebrations, a selection of spirited Rams will take the stage as contestants in "VCU's Got Talent" event on Tuesday.

The biggest change this year is the committee to incorporate the Theatre Department.

The Theatre Department is sending a collection of actors to perform an act during the opening and intermission of the show. Their planning has been outside of the Homecoming Committee, so it will be a surprise to everyone as to what they will be presenting.

"I'm excited for the new aspect of the Theatre Department being involved because they're pretty awesome and I'm glad I was able to reach out and they were interested in being able to perform and be a part of the talent show," Grier said.

Shaunice Grier, a forensic science major and a first-timer on the committee, organized VCU's Got Talent and said that the event has managed to encompass people from every class, with many different types of performances. There will be dancing, musical performances and comedy.

"I'm excited about people stepping up to the plate and getting out of their shell and showcasing their talent," Grier said. "Because it's ultimately a reflection of VCU and its diversity and spirit as a whole."

Last year, the winners of VCU's Got Talent were able to perform as the opening act for the Homecoming concert featuring Fabolous, Jhene Aiko and Mack Wilds. This year the first place winners will

perform at the pep rally before the watch party of the game between VCU and University of Richmond. Second and third-place winners will walk away with a trophy to showcase their efforts.

Auditions videos were accepted this year. Shaunice was in charge of viewing the 20 submissions and selecting the performances that would be displayed. Currently, 14 performances are scheduled, but this isn't concrete. There's always a chance that performers will drop, or space will somehow become more or less available.

She said she chose these 14 based on uniqueness, interest, spirit and talent. She said she was willing to ignore their ability as performers if their spirit, talent, confidence and interest made them stand out.

The panel of judges will also base their scoring off of this same criteria. It consists of four judges, with a representative of the Theatre Department, Residential Life and Housing, the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs and Students Today Alumni Tomorrow. Their decision will be announced the following day at the Pep Rally, followed by a performance by the winners.

As of last Thursday, the office of the Student Organizations Planning Committee was packed with black and gold decorations. In every room there were boxes filled with spirit wear, streamers and confetti.

Grier assured that, despite the clutter, the events were more than likely to be ready by their scheduled time and that she was looking forward to Tuesday.



Students help nonprofits redesign logos and websites, suggest name changes and create deliverables at CreateAthon

Battle for the crown: Who will be Homecoming King and Queen

—continued from front page 1

From there, Malhotra said they will receive points for their participation in competitions for each class.

"We actually have a flyer competition for the junior class, so we all made flyers for promoting the homecoming week," Malhotra said. "We've been trying to get everybody hyped up about it by telling everybody to go share their favorite flyer."

Aside from competing, homecoming court contestants are also invited to attend every homecoming event for the week and wear their homecoming court sashes. Malhotra said this would be something new and different for her as a busy student.

"I'm really excited for everything," Malhotra said. "I've never really been super involved with homecoming in the past, I didn't really know about it."

According to Onyirimba, this year's Homecoming Committee wanted to reach those students like Malhotra who don't know much about homecoming or who have never taken part in it.

"I want people to come out and enjoy themselves and just experience homecoming, especially our freshmen that have never experienced college homecoming," Onyirimba said. "I think that it's really important for them to come out and learn about the events and learn how they can get involved, especially if they want to try to help out for next year."



Nine seniors and five juniors are competing for the homecoming titles, and to receive the prizes pictured above.



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Quote of the week

“To generalize all 1.6 billion Muslims based off of the actions of the small percentage that makes up terrorist organizations like al-Qaida and ISIS is absurd.”
— Hiba Ahmad

A “savage” Muslim on bigoted perception

HIBA AHMAD
Contributing Columnist

After my column “The American Muslim community matters” was published last week, a bigoted comment was posted online, accusing this columnist of, among other things, being a “savage.” The column detailed the failings of media in reporting on the Muslim community in the wake of three Muslim students that were killed in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The comment reflects what seems to be a widely held belief that an entire community is to be held responsible for the actions of a select few.

The commenter stated that “when you savages,” speaking of Muslims, “learn to play nice, then the media will stop reporting on you.” As much as I welcome criticism from all viewpoints, it is my duty not only as a writer, but also as a member of the Muslim community to combat the misconceptions held by this bigot and other Islamophobes.

The commenter pulled a quote from my article: “As citizens we need to take back control over what we want covered in our media.” He assumed that when I referred to citizens that I meant Muslims need to take control over the media. This is a misunderstanding. When I wrote citizens, I meant all American citizens, regardless of faith or ethnicity. We all watch the news on a daily basis and we all have the right to be represented in the press equally.

He went on to make a list of the crimes all Muslims should stop committing in order to stop getting an unfair representation from the media. He argued, “stop killing us over cartoons,” referring to the horrific Charlie Hebdo shootings.

I want to clarify any confusion regarding the depiction of anything holy in Islam. The illustrations of not only Prophet Mohammed, but of all figures mentioned in Islam including Jesus and Moses are condemned. The reason why depicting anything mentioned in the Qur’an is prohibited is to prevent the worship of idols. No being is to be prayed to other than God or Allah in Islam. Often times when symbols, pictures, or statues are created, followers will begin to pray to the objects rather than the higher power. The only Islamic art that is seen as acceptable in Islamic communities is the Arabic calligraphy itself, which often times are verses from the Qur’an.

I am in no way saying that the murder of our fellow journalists is justified, but there is a reason why Muslims felt insulted by the cartoons, the same way any Christian, Jew or Sikh would feel ashamed to see a perverted version of their religious leaders. This whole perception that Islam is a very vengeful and violent religion is misguided. The eye for an eye theory is not Islamic (in fact, such punishment has its origins in ancient Greece). Communities that follow such practices certainly need to reeval-



ate, but it is a cultural issue specific to those communities, not a problem with Islam.

Another suggestion the commenter provided was that Muslims should “stop strapping bombs on themselves and blowing us up,” or to “stop beheading us.” I too wish terrorists would stop strapping bombs on themselves and blowing themselves and innocent civilians up. I too grieve for the families who have to watch in horror when

mainstream media outlets highlight their evening broadcasts with their loved ones at the mercy of black-cloaked terrorists. However, notice I said terrorists, and not Muslims.

To generalize all 1.6 billion Muslims based off of the actions of the small percentage that makes up terrorist organizations like al-Qaida and ISIS is absurd. Also, suggesting that Western nations are the only ones who suffer at

the hands of these monstrous organizations is wrong. In December, over 140 students and faculty members lost their lives in Peshawar, Pakistan at the hands of the Pakistani Taliban. They were Muslims. Twenty-one Egyptians were murdered execution style according to a video released by ISIS on Sunday night. They were Christians.

These terrorists know no boundaries and are blinded by their personal agendas. They cower behind the excuse that Islam allows them to commit such atrocities in hopes to reach the highest levels of Jannah, or Heaven. These are warlords who took advantage of the suffering populations within the Middle East and Southwest Asia and exerted their power through empty promises of wealth and safety. So trust me when I say, I truly do wish terrorists would stop strapping bombs to themselves or executing citizens, but I can assure you that that’s not an everyday hobby of an everyday Muslim.

In a defiant, all-caps offer of advice, the commenter simply suggested, “STOP KILLING US.”

Once again, the entire Muslim community cannot apologize on the behalf of some misguided individuals. Unfortunately, when Muslims are mentioned in the news it is to highlight some sort of calamity that has happened in an Islamic region or population, and more often to indict an entire community for misdeeds performed by a small group of radicals. This is what was

addressed in the previous article.

If the only image that is painted of Muslims is negative and violent, then viewers will have an incomplete — and incorrect — view of an entire community of people. However, by using our individual skill sets and our faith, Muslims have stepped out of their comfort zones and opened up their doors to encourage those who are curious to come seek information about our practices.

Buzzfeed shared an article showing Muslims taking a pledge to practice Lent, a Christian practice of avoiding vices, to promote interfaith solidarity. Right here on campus the VCU Muslim Student Association holds Qur’an classes that welcome anyone who is interested in learning about the faith and the Holy Book to come study with fellow Muslims.

But the best way for anyone who is curious about Islam to see the true nature of our faith is to come and witness Friday prayer. We gather to collectively hear a sermon, often times about issues that any individual regardless of what background could be facing. Then we stand together, shoulder to shoulder, and pray. For a moment, all is calm. All the tribulations we face are forgotten, and silent prayers waft through the room.

That sense of community and devotion is what Islam is all about, and I promise if any of you choose to wander in one day, you too will be awed.

Golden state of blight: On VCU homecoming’s Empire theme

MORGAN WHITE
Opinion Editor

It seems ridiculous that it’s even necessary to say, “Maybe that’s a bad idea.” But here we are: A portion of the student body saw nothing wrong with using “Empire” as the theme for this year’s homecoming.

There will be one event daily this week, including Chance the Rapper concert, a homecoming court pageant parade, a pep rally and a talent show, and ending with the homecoming game where the VCU Rams will play Dayton at Siegel Center. Perhaps the only event out of these that will do any real good is an event on Thursday around the same time the concert is, a way to donate canned goods to the Hospitality House by bringing them and building an “empire.” Chances are the majority of people will only go to the concert.

“If we’re building an empire, homecoming should be used as a chance to help Richmond’s underprivileged residents, especially public school students who may one day come to VCU. Stabilizing VCU’s foundation should be the name of the game, volunteering, donating and fundraising the primary activities.”

If the homecoming committee hopes to build an empire, they have to start by considering Richmond’s less privileged residents. According to a Jan. 2014 Washington Post article, 26 percent of Richmond’s population is considered low-income. The article said that people within a few minutes’ drive to the Capitol are at the worst, stating that between 67.2 percent and 50.7 percent of people living in that area are poor. Out of 49 Richmond Public Schools, 37 receive Title I funding, Title I being the program that aims to close the gap between students who come from low-income families and students who don’t.

The theme “Empire” was a terrible idea; it reinforces the mindset that VCU built the city of Richmond. While the things VCU has done to revitalize the area may have cut down on crime and poverty in certain parts of the city, VCU isn’t an empire, it’s an educational institution and it should be thought of as such. In terms of being an empire, it has exclusively worked to push the poor out and bring the rich in.

If you have ever been to Southside you would realize that areas not inhabited by VCU are mostly poor and black. In Richmond, the few rich and triumphant on the top rule and all the steps below are stepped on and abused for those who are higher upspecifically those affiliated with VCU. Like a professor of mine said the other day, a murder in Southside Richmond would be far less newsworthy than a murder on the West End.

The same thing could be said about a murder in VCU territory. Even fresh food is harder to come by outside of Ram country, given that the closest thing the residents of those areas have to a grocery store is usually a gas station or a corner store. Economically it’s unfortunately smarter for companies to open up their grocery stores where the university lies.

When you live in the former capital of the Confederacy, “empire” is nowhere near close to being a good mindset to have. The head of that burgeoning empire was burned here on April 3, 1865 when it was seized by the Union Army. As an institution we should remember that. We should remember, and realize that after all of this time a large racial and class divide still exists. We can’t allow black and gold to be the colors of arrogance.

If we’re building an empire, homecoming should be used as a chance to help Richmond’s underprivileged residents, especially public school students who may one day come to VCU. Stabilizing VCU’s foundation should be the name of the game, volunteering, donating and fundraising the primary activities. Instead, an exorbitant amount of money is being spent on bouncy houses, and only the barest minimum of community outreach is involved.

Too much sugar is bad for your health

VICTORIA ZAWITKOWSKI
Staff Columnist

VCU was named one of the top 20 fastest growing sugar-baby schools by Seeking Arrangement, a website dedicated to connecting students (sugar babies) looking to have their education paid for by wealthier individuals who are looking for companionship. While the arrangement may be consensual, the risks outweigh the benefits.

Student loans surpass credit card and auto loan debts. According to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, American borrowers have racked up about \$1.2 trillion in outstanding federal student debt. Those numbers can be daunting.

A college diploma is the new high school diploma, and yet getting there costs much more than the average U.S. citizen can afford. But signing up for a site like seekingarrangement.com can ruin your reputation and make it harder to find a job in this market than not having a four-year degree.

Seeking Arrangement has users pick a pseudonym for their username, but that’s as far as it goes in protecting your identity. Users upload photos, name their school, age and a wealth of other personal information. Many user profiles are available for viewing without even signing up for the site. This gives employers another avenue to check on you, and gives potentially unsafe persons the opportunity to access your personal information. The images and information you post up could come back to haunt you.

Personal health is another issue stemming from websites for sugar babies and other forms of online dating. In 2004, a research team at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta found that 43 percent of the women they surveyed had had sex with someone they met online, and those women tended to have a high rate of sexually transmitted infections.

Nearly half of the 20 million new sexually transmitted diseases diagnosed each year are people aged 15 to 25 years old. College students see a higher rate of sexually transmitted diseases and adding the element of online dating increases their exposure to people and diseases if they’re not careful. The online dating industry



has seen tremendous growth. According to David Evans of OnlineDatingPost.com, the online dating industry in North America has grown from about \$40 million

“A college diploma is the new high school diploma, and yet getting there costs much more than the average U.S. citizen can afford. But signing up for a site like seekingarrangement.com can ruin your reputation and make it harder to find a job in this market than not having a four-year degree.”

in revenue in 2000 to more than \$1.5 billion.

Many people have experienced success from online dating sites. One in three Americans have found their spouses using such a service. However, online dating is still a far cry from the services that Seeking Arrangement provides. Considering this site specifically targets college students, it is somewhat more reprehensible than other similar sites.

In a 2013 survey, the site revealed that the average sugar daddy was around 42 years old, with an average annual salary of about \$500,000. Roughly one-third of the men on the site are married and the women who participate usually range from 18–25 years old.

Younger, poorer college students are much easier to manipulate than other members of society. Students who are looking for a sugar daddy are entering into contracts in which they receive money for intimate relationships or services. That is very similar to an escort service or prostitution and it crosses several moral boundaries.

Seeking Arrangement and other related sites perpetuate the objectification of young women and the treatment of women as a commodity. While it may seem to be a fair contractual arrangement, it is not fair to take advantage of students who cannot see how certain choices they make in the present can have severe consequences to their future.

COMICS

Messages in the Snow by Lindsey Wall



Snow Day by Christine Fouron



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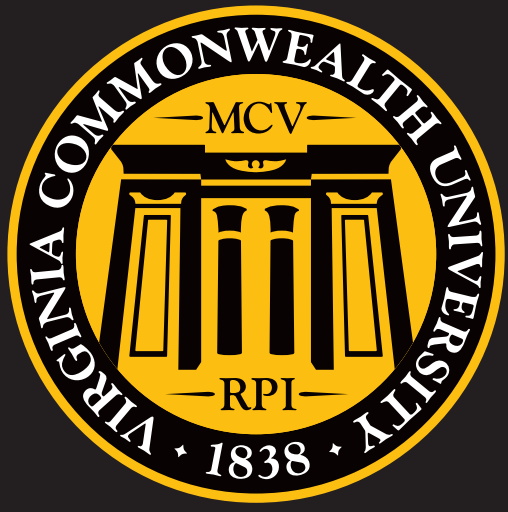
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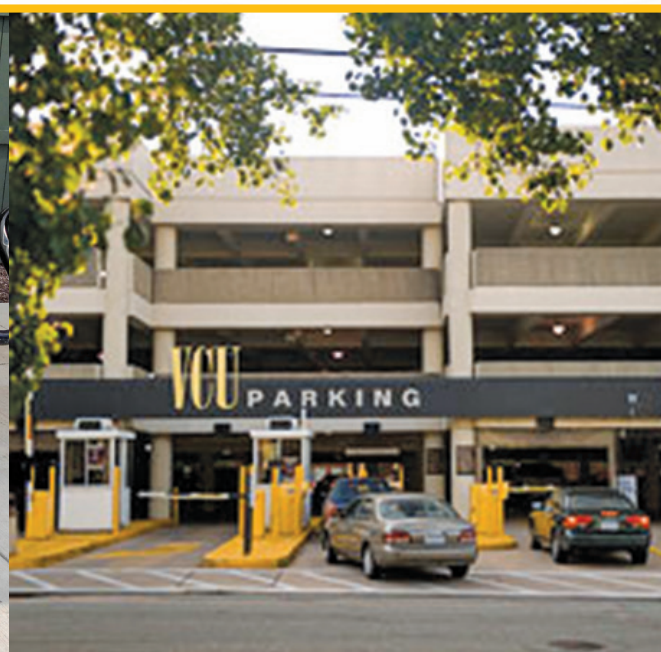
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