



CHAMPIONSHIP BOUND

Men's basketball advances to A-10 title game

Sophomore guard Bones Hyland and freshman guard Ace Baldwin celebrate after beating Davidson in the A-10 semifinal on March 6. Photo by Megan Lee

NOAH FLEISCHMAN
Sports Editor

FROM THE PRESEASON RANKING of No. 9 to the Atlantic 10 championship game, men's basketball proved the doubters wrong over the weekend, winning two A-10 tournament games to advance to the title game next Sunday.

The Rams beat Dayton on Friday afternoon and Davidson in the semifinals on Saturday night. They will play St. Bonaventure in the A-10 championship game.

"No matter what, you never count out young people that have the same purpose and they care about each other," coach Mike Rhoades said. "They play with a purpose, and they play with caring about each other, and you work really hard."

Rhoades said the preseason ranking didn't reflect the team he had but that he used it as motivation in the regular season.

VCU advanced to its sixth A-10 championship game in the last eight attempts and

its first since the 2017 season.

"Two years ago, we were the top seed and got bumped in the first game — that definitely was disappointing," senior forward Corey Douglas said. "And then last year, not getting to play. So to finish it out this way, going to the championship in my last year, it feels great."

“

No matter what, you never count out young people that have the same purpose and they care about each other."

Mike Rhoades, head coach

Douglas scored 10 points in the semi-final game, making all five of his attempts. He added 8 points against Dayton.

The Rams have battled injuries over the last two weeks of the season, including in the A-10 tournament. Sophomore guard Bones Hyland missed the last two regular season games with a sprained foot, and junior forward Vince Williams left the Dayton game with back spasms.

Both players appeared in the two post-season wins, which featured Hyland's 30-point and 10-rebound performance against the Flyers.

The week in between semifinals and the championship will work in the Rams' favor, giving them time to heal, Hyland said.

"These next couple of days, definitely just trying to get better and get lots of treatment as well," Hyland said.

Williams played 27 minutes and scored 8 points against Davidson, a day after the athlete experienced back spasms.

"We're not in this position without Vince Williams," Rhoades said. "He's been our X-factor, our Swiss Army knife. He's really banged up. We've got to get him right."

The team, which has eight underclassmen

on the roster, has "swag," Rhoades said.

"We've got a chip on our shoulder. ... When it's time to compete, I think they compete," Rhoades said. "It doesn't matter what grade you're in or how old you are. If you compete, you're going to give yourself a chance, and I think we do that."

Hyland said he can count on his teammates to "step up and score or make winning plays."

In the Davidson game, freshman guard Josh Banks only played three minutes, but he made an impact. He nailed a 3-pointer to give the Rams momentum in the second half.

"It shows how tight of a bond we have," Hyland said. "Just sticking together when we face adversity — we've been facing adversity all season long — and just trusting each other."

The Rams will play St. Bonaventure in the A-10 championship game at the University of Dayton on March 14 at 1 p.m. The game will be televised on CBS.



Rao: Greek life review will honor Adam Oakes, create accountability

See **ADAM OAKES** on page 2

Candles, flowers and painted portraits of VCU freshman Adam Oakes are placed at a memorial in Monroe Park. Photo by Jay Stonefield



ADAM OAKES

Rao: Greek life review will honor Adam Oakes, create accountability

ANNA CHEN

Contributing Writer

PRESIDENT MICHAEL RAO detailed VCU's "independent, comprehensive review" of Greek life in a statement released Tuesday. The effort follows the death of 19-year-old freshman Adam Oakes.

Oakes was found dead Feb. 27 at a residence on West Clay Street. His family says a Delta Chi fraternity hazing event resulted in his death.

"No parent should receive a call from a college president offering sympathy for the loss of their child," Rao stated in the release. "I'm sickened by what happened

and continue to urge anyone who has information to speak up and contact Richmond or VCU Police."

The Division of Student Affairs will conduct the review and "examine all major aspects of Greek Life at VCU," the release stated.

"Adam and his family deserve answers and there will be accountability," Rao stated. "We will honor Adam's life by setting the bar highest for the very organizations he wanted so much to be part of."

The investigation will examine aspects including relationships between Greek life and the university; the role of university advisers; incident reporting and transparency; hazing, alcohol and drug abuse, and sexual violence; recruitment practices; social, educational and philanthropic activities; and alumni involvement.

"The goal is for something like this to never happen again and to build a national



Vigil attendees placed candles, flowers and portraits at a memorial for Adam Oakes in Monroe Park on March 3. Photo by Jay Stonefield

model that promotes health and safety and creates a climate of respect and inclusion that is conducive to academic success," Rao stated.

Students held a vigil and memorial on March 3 for Oakes. The gathering, both on Zoom and in person at Monroe Park, was held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. for community members, family and friends of Adam who wished to speak and share memories of his life.

Students decorated the base of the Monroe Park fountain with painted portraits of Oakes, candles and flowers.

Oakes' grandmother, Carol Oakes, was "deeply moved" by the attention that has been given to her grandson's death and the respect that has been paid to him.

"His loss is monumental to our family," Carol Oakes said during the virtual vigil. "He was such a gentle giant."

Carol Oakes said Adam was always affectionate, even as a young boy, and never hesitated to hug and kiss his grandparents in public.

"It's just devastating, he was looking forward to college so much and to a bright future," Carol Oakes said.

Freshman Alec Cardullo-Munoz, Adam's roommate, spoke at the vigil about how Adam was one of the greatest people he knew. Cardullo-Munoz said Adam was someone he could always talk to and who would have his back no matter what.

"I just miss my friend," Cardullo-Munoz said during the virtual vigil. "No matter what, I'm always going to love Adam like a brother."

The investigation into Adam's death by the Richmond Police Department is ongoing, according to a department spokesperson.

At the Monroe Park memorial site, sophomore criminal justice major Nick Gilmore expressed frustration with Delta Chi, citing "negligence" from the fraternity.

Gilmore said the fraternity "selfishly" hosted a party during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I strongly believe that we as people have a responsibility to protect each other, even at a cost to ourselves," Gilmore said. "Their actions and inactions should have consequences beyond the suspension of their fraternity."

Max Turner, a close friend of Adam's, said they grew up playing Little League together and described him as "truly a one of a kind."

"I've never met someone like Adam, and I don't think I ever will again," Turner said during the virtual vigil.

Losing a best friend is hard, Turner said, but replaying memories and finding new ones through talking to friends and Adam's parents has been beneficial.

"His legacy is going to live on through the hearts of those that knew him," Turner said. "We really lost a good one, and he'll never be forgotten, and we all love him."

The Oakes family held a funeral service for Adam on Monday at Christian Fellowship Church in Ashburn, Virginia. He was laid to rest at Chestnut Grove Cemetery in Herndon, Virginia, according to NBC 12.

Anyone with information about this case can call Major Crimes Detective Michael Gouldman at 804-646-3915 or anonymously contact Crime Stoppers at 804-780-1000.

Fall dining plan holders left behind more than 230,000 swipes

KATHARINE DEROSA

News Editor

More than 232,000 VCU meal swipes went unclaimed by dining plan holders in the fall semester, according to a university spokesperson. That figure, equating to roughly \$2.3 million worth of food, has increased by nearly 14,000 swipes since fall 2019.

Each swipe is equivalent to \$10.05, according to VCU Dine. Students can swipe to enter Market 810 or redeem a meal at a supported location on campus.

Dining plans are required for students living in some on-campus buildings, including Brandt, Johnson and Rhoads — three buildings that primarily house freshmen. Plans are priced between \$2,090 and \$2,560.

VCU sold 4,109 dining plans last fall and 8,541 plans in the fall of 2019, VCU spokesperson Stephen Barr stated in an email. That is a 107% decrease.

Barr stated 232,029 swipes were left over in the fall and 218,067 were left over in fall 2019. Meal plan holders left 56 swipes behind on average last semester, compared to 25 swipes in the fall 2019 semester.

"It's either this or pay for groceries and make my own food," said sophomore theatre major Jacob Campero. "It's not the

ideal amount of money I'm paying for what I'm getting."

Campero said he purchased a plan with 250 swipes and \$300 in additional spending. He's used about 100 swipes so far and left 20 behind last semester.

VCU implemented changes to spring semester locations and hours on Feb. 15 after evaluating transaction counts and student survey responses: weekend hours were added to Market 810, Pizza Hut closed down and Bleecker St. opened inside of Market 810.

Campero and his friend, freshman theatre major Sophia Conrow, are happy about Bleecker St. opening inside of Shafer but are underwhelmed by the rest of the changes.

"I'm a Bleecker's fanatic," Campero said. "I literally live for Bleecker."

The two said that eating meals together is their only form of physical interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the one-person-per-table rule inside of Market 810 prevents them from sitting together.

The rule prevents roommates and other people who may already be exposed to one another from sitting together as well, Campero said.



VCU students wait in line after ordering food at Market 810, a popular dining location on campus with options for those who have meal plans. Photo by Kaitlyn Fulmore

The one-person-per-table rule was decided through consultation with VCU's Public Health Response Team, VCU spokesperson Anna Obermiller stated in an email.

"The mental health of our students is probably really bad, because you can't even eat with your friends," Conrow said. "Now I know a lot of people just have to take their food and sit in their dorm and eat alone."

Conrow said she understood the increased rules but wishes the university had communicated the changes more effectively before students returned to campus.

As a theatre major, Campero said he often has early morning rehearsals on the weekends and finds it difficult to eat breakfast on those mornings. Market 810 opens at 10:30 a.m. and closes at 6 p.m. on weekends, according to VCU Dine.

Conrow said she regularly eats at Market 810, Shake Smart and Einstein Bros. Bagels for lunch and "wings it" for dinner.

"I go to Avo, but they eat your swipes so I try not to go there too much, because I don't have enough swipes for that," Conrow said.

An entry swipe is required from students in order to enter Avo Kitchen, and additional swipes are required if students choose to get food from the Chef's Table, which offers a selection of steak, seafood and other proteins. The other two stations in Avo Kitchen, True Balance — which is free of the top eight allergens — and Green Leaf, are available with the initial entry swipe.

Despite the changes, the two view their meal plans as a convenience to daily life and plan to purchase one next semester.

Single-dose COVID-19 vaccine rolling out in Virginia

ANYA SCZERZENIE
Staff Writer

Virginians can now receive the single-dose Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine following the shot's approval for emergency use by the Food and Drug Administration on Feb. 27.

The commonwealth will “be in a very different place in terms of supply” this month because of the new vaccine, said Dr. Danny Avula, the Richmond and Henrico Health Departments director during a press event on March 3. He praised the vaccine and stated large-scale vaccination events will begin statewide.

The Virginia Department of Health released a statement Feb. 27, stating that it would begin administering the shot the following week. The commonwealth expects to receive an initial 69,000 doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, according to a Virginia Department of Health release.

An additional allotment of vaccines will be set aside for specific pharmacies that are participating in a federal partnership and vaccinating priority groups, such as people 65 years old and older, for no cost.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine only requires one dose, meaning it only takes one appointment to get fully vaccinated, and more doses can vaccinate more people. The trade-off, however, is a difference in efficacy.

In clinical trials, the vaccine has shown to be around 66% effective overall in preventing moderate to severe COVID-19 illness. The clinical trial conducted in the U.S. showed 72% efficacy in preventing moderate to severe illness, while trials in Latin America and South Africa showed 66% and 57% efficacy respectively, according to a Jan. 29 press release from Johnson & Johnson.

The Pfizer and Moderna two-dose vaccines are both around 95% effective. These

two vaccines were approved by the FDA for emergency use on Dec. 11 and Dec. 18, respectively.

Both vaccines utilize mRNA technology to create immune responses from proteins, which create antibodies that protect against the virus, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Dr. Michael Stevens, associate chair of the Division of Infectious Diseases at the VCU School of Medicine described mRNA as a code that is delivered to cells upon vaccination.

“

This milestone follows a year of incredible work by our dedicated teams and unprecedented collaboration with health leaders around the world — all of whom shared a goal of bringing a single-shot vaccine to the public.”

Alex Gorsky,
Johnson & Johnson CEO

“The code serves as an instruction manual for your immune system, teaching it to recognize the virus that causes COVID-19 and attack it, should it encounter the real thing,” Stevens stated.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine utilizes a disabled adenovirus, which also “delivers instructions on how to defeat the coronavirus,” Stevens said.

In contrast to the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines, the flu vaccine — which many Americans get every year — was only 45% effective in preventing acute respiratory illness caused by the flu in 2019-2020, according to the CDC.

The Johnson & Johnson and Moderna vaccines can be stored at higher temperatures than the Pfizer vaccine. The Pfizer vaccine requires an ultra-cold freezer of -112 to -76 degrees Fahrenheit, while the Johnson & Johnson and Moderna vaccines require normal cold storage. The Moderna vaccine must be stored at -13 to 5 degrees Fahrenheit, while the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is stored at -4 degrees Fahrenheit.

“This milestone follows a year of incredible work by our dedicated teams and unprecedented collaboration with health leaders around the world — all of whom shared a goal of bringing a single-shot vaccine to the public,” Johnson & Johnson CEO Alex Gorsky stated in a release.

Some VCU students, including sophomore information systems major Sammy Shaikh, said they would rather get one of the two-dose vaccines compared to a single-dose option.

Shaikh said his parents and sister, who work in the medical field, have already taken two-dose vaccines.

“I wouldn’t be opposed to taking [the Johnson & Johnson vaccine,] obviously if it’s been in trials for a long time, but I think I’d rather wait for the other ones,” Shaikh said.

The press release announcing the vaccine’s approval states that some people who



A Richmonder receives a COVID-19 vaccine from the Virginia Department of Health at the Arthur Ashe Junior Athletic Center. Photo by Enza Marcy

take it may experience side effects. These include fever, headaches, muscle aches, pain and redness at the injection site, and fatigue.

Public health experts, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, say that the vaccine is valuable despite its lower efficacy because of the ease of distribution. During a White House press briefing on Jan. 29, Fauci called it a “value-added additional vaccine candidate.”

Jae Berin, a freshman chemical engineering major, said she hopes the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is available for first responders who might not have access to the other vaccines.

“I just want to make sure that the people who aren’t able to get anything else, that’s available for them as an option,” Berin said. “But if offered, I would probably do it if I had nothing else.”

Managing Editor Iman Mekonen contributed to this report.

Common Book selection explores climate change, social justice

DYLAN SEAY
Contributing Writer

VCU HAS SELECTED “RISING: Dispatches From the New American Shore” by Elizabeth Rush to be the Common Book for the 2021-2022 school year.

The selection was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2019 under the category of General Nonfiction. The book focuses on the link between climate change and social justice.

The university Common Book is sponsored by the University College department and the Office of the Provost as an initiative to welcome new students to the culture of VCU, according to a university release. The book marks the program’s 15th year.

“Climate change is affecting vulnerable human communities and vulnerable landscapes,” Rush said. “The book is really about what we can learn from those living with climate change in the

present tense, and asks what we can learn from them about the future that we share.”

Rush wrote the book to share her experiences studying rise in sea level and interviewing those who lived on the front lines of climate change, she said.

“I thought if I can bring them with me into people’s living rooms to really listen to how climate change is transforming these vulnerable communities, it has a chance to make it clear and also sort of emotionally resonant,” Rush said.

Rush hopes the book will inspire students to act on aspects of climate change that resonate with them and work to make an impact within their communities, whether it be joining organizations to combat climate change or making lifestyle changes, she said.

The book will be primarily distributed as an e-book, said Felicia Williams, associate

dean of the University College and director of the Common Book program. Past Common Book selections were distributed in print copies.

“Research shows that eBooks can be accessed via a variety of technologies, including computer, smartphone, tablet, and eReaders,” Williams said. “Further, eBooks are by definition paperless, which is considered to be better for the environment.”

Some print copies will be available at the James Branch Cabell Library on Monroe Park Campus and the Health Sciences Library on the MCV Campus, Williams said.

Edward Crawford, an assistant professor in the Center for Environmental Studies and specialist in wetland ecology, recommends the book for students and said the book’s subject material is relevant to Richmond.

“Anything students can do to build their foundational knowledge base is beneficial,”

Crawford said. “So having a nonfiction book that’s going to give facts about what’s going on with the climate is going to benefit everybody that reads it.”

The environmental science professor is the deputy director of VCU’s Rice Rivers Center, which conducts environmental field research on the James River.

The James River estuary begins in the Richmond area with the head of the tide being around 14th Street, Crawford said. This allows the city to be impacted by sea level rise.

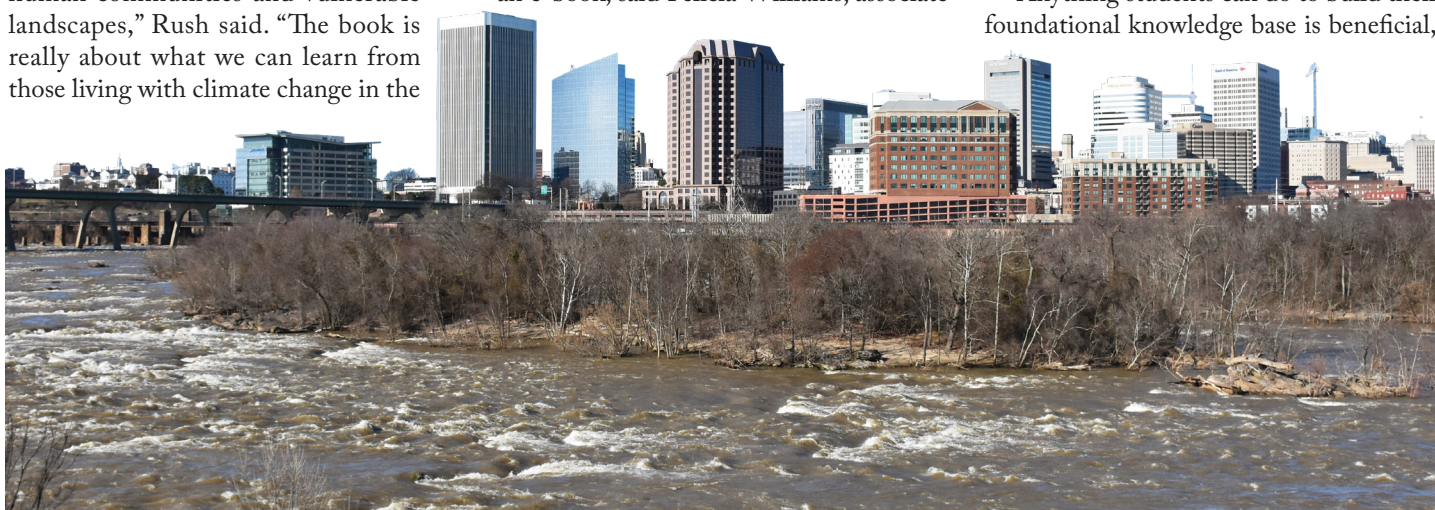
Beyond rising sea levels, Crawford said rising temperatures and increased rainfall are indicative of the changing climates that challenge communities around the globe today.

Crawford said voting is a tool to combat climate change in Richmond.

“[Students] can vote for candidates that they feel support their view on what’s going on with the world around them,” Crawford said. “They can also vote with their wallets; they can buy products that are more sustainable and less harmful for their environment.”

He said it is important that students be aware of the impact that even the most minor decisions can have on the world around them.

“You should be aware that every single thing that you use in your life, no matter what it is, from this pen right here to your cell phone to this computer to a toothbrush to toothpaste,” Crawford said. “Everything has an impact on the environment.”



The James River estuary begins in the Richmond area with the head of the tide located near 14th Street. Photo by Lily Doshi

Stat of the week
Men’s basketball is playing in its sixth A-10 championship game in the last eight title games.

‘THINK LIKE A WINNER’: *King makes instant impact, sweeping A-10 weekly awards*

NOAH FLEISCHMAN
Sports Editor

FRESHMAN OPPOSITE HITTER
and middle blocker Lauren King wasn’t expecting to hear her name called as a part of the starting lineup so early in her VCU career. Once she got a taste of starting at the collegiate level early in the season, she didn’t want to leave it.

“I was like, ‘Okay, I’m gonna stay here. No one is going to take my spot, I’m going to work hard. I’m not gonna waste this opportunity,’” King said.

The Southfield, Michigan, native has been a mainstay in the Rams’ starting lineup and has appeared in 29 sets this season, recording 89 kills and 28 blocks. She logged a season-high, 14-kill performance against Saint Louis on Feb. 5 and a season-high, seven-block match against George Mason on Feb. 1.

King committed to play volleyball at VCU when she was 15 years old. By

committing early, she was able to watch the players that came before her.

The team she watched won an Atlantic 10 title in 2017 and led the NCAA in blocks, most recently in 2019.

King said she kept an eye on former players, such as outside hitter Gina Tuzzolo and middle blocker Tori Baldwin, and wanted to play like them.

“I want to beat whoever’s in front of me. I think it’s a really aggressive and competitive mindset.”

Lauren King, freshman
outside hitter/middle blocker

three awards in the first 15 days of her collegiate career.

“I just want to measure myself by how hard I worked and how much muscle I grew and how much I contribute to the team,” King said. “It was never really about the awards. They’re cool, but that’s not why I’m here.”

Head coach Jody Rogers knew King would win the awards, but when she won them, the athlete remained humble, Rogers said.

“I’ve been coaching almost 30 years now,” Rogers said. “She just was well above everybody else.”

Standing at 6 feet, 1 inch, King isn’t the tallest player on the court. Despite this, she said she’s not scared of going against those that are taller than her.

“Whoever’s in front of me, I want to block them,” King said. “I want to beat whoever’s in front of me. I think it’s a really aggressive and competitive mindset. You have to think like a winner — that’s what it comes down to.”

Rogers said King’s confidence comes from being prepared for any moment.

“She prepared herself to be ready to play a big moment, to withstand pressure situations and be comfortable being uncomfortable,” Rogers said.

King plays with a lot of self-belief, which has helped build her confidence, she said. When things aren’t going her way during



Freshman outside hitter/middle blocker Lauren King hits the ball over the net at the Stuart C. Siegel Center.
Photo by Megan Lee

Lauren King stats

Sets played	29
Kills	89
Digs	20
Blocks	28

Information compiled by Noah Fleischman
Infographic by Gabrielle Wood

a match, she talks to herself to get back in rhythm, she said.

“I think it’s really hard to try to dig yourself out of a mental rut in the middle of a game,” King said. “I think we just had that mindset that as long as you do your best and genuinely your best, it’ll be okay. I think that’s kind of how I get myself out of things.”

But for King, adding to the volleyball legacy and culture inside the Stuart C. Siegel Center is something she wants to do.

“The culture that’s been made here,” King said, “I just wanted to be that and add to that.”

Women’s basketball ‘excited’ to play in A-10 tournament at home

NOAH FLEISCHMAN
Sports Editor

When women’s basketball takes the court Thursday, it will have been 11 days since the team last played. The Rams will enter the Atlantic 10 tournament as the No. 5 seed, playing on the home floor at the Stuart C. Siegel Center.

“There’s a special feeling to be playing in March,” coach Beth O’Boyle said. “There’s been

so much adversity and things this year and just that first step to get on the court and say, ‘Hey, we’re playing for an NCAA tournament bid.’”

VCU, who was picked to finish first in the A-10 preseason poll, will start its postseason run in the second round of the A-10 tournament on Thursday at 2 p.m., facing the winner of No. 12 Davidson and No. 13 St. Bonaventure.

FAMILIAR CONFINES

The A-10 tournament is being played at the Siegel Center this season, continuing its tradition of rotating campus sites.

“I think it’s great to be in our own beds and shoot on our own rims and have some of the comforts of being at home,” O’Boyle said. “There’s definitely an excitement to be in the Stu for the tournament.”

The team will stay in a hotel Wednesday night leading up to their first game and will stay there during their run in the tournament, complying with tournament policy and COVID-19 precautions, O’Boyle said.

SECOND ROUND OPPONENT

The Rams will square off with Davidson or St. Bonaventure in the second round of the tournament.

VCU didn’t play Davidson this season as the game was postponed due to the second COVID-19 pause within the VCU program. It was not rescheduled. The Rams beat the Wildcats 58-52 in their first game of last season’s A-10 tournament.

“You don’t ever usually go into an environment having not played your conference opponent at least once,” O’Boyle said. “This is just one of the added bonuses of ... the COVID year of things that we’re just adjusting to. So, we’re preparing for both teams.”

The Rams beat St. Bonaventure on the road in New York 69-67 in overtime on Jan. 10. Senior forward Sydnei Archie led the black and gold with 17 points and 10 rebounds.

NO. 1 DAYTON

The Rams lost their lone matchup with the Flyers 67-62 on the road on Feb. 14. The game was tight at the end after VCU went on a 10-0 run to pull within 2 points of Dayton. The black and gold shot 36.4% from the field, including the same clip beyond the 3-point line.

Robinson logged a team-high 18 points, including knocking down all six free throws. Junior guard Janika Griffith-Wallace added 12 points in the loss.

NO. 2 FORDHAM

The battle of the Rams didn’t happen during the regular season, as it was postponed due to COVID-19 and was not rescheduled.

Last season, VCU beat Fordham twice, including in the A-10 semifinals 60-55 on March 7, 2020. In that meeting, Robinson led the team with 22 points and Reed added 12 points.

NO. 3 SAINT LOUIS

The black and gold fell to the Billikens 66-50 on the road on Feb. 12. Saint Louis outscored VCU 32-10 in the fourth quarter to put the game away. The Rams shot 29% from the field, including 23.5% from deep in the contest.

Robinson carried the load in the game, scoring 18 points and recording eight rebounds.

NO. 4 RHODE ISLAND

VCU lost to Rhode Island in the season finale 87-68 on the road Feb. 28. The black and gold were efficient from the field, shooting 45.6%.

Robinson logged a team-high 18 points and Griffith-Wallace added 17 points in the loss.

The Rams will play the winner between Davidson and St. Bonaventure on Thursday at 2 p.m. The game will be televised on ESPN+.



Freshman guard Sarah Te-Biasu dribbles at the Stuart C. Siegel Center during the 2020-21 season. Photo by Megan Lee



Former VCU pitcher Sean Thompson pitches at the Diamond during his VCU career. Photo courtesy of VCU Athletics

JOE DODSON
Staff Writer

FORMER PITCHER SEAN THOMPSON will return to the VCU bullpen as director of pitching development after two years of playing in the minor leagues.

Thompson earned the second most wins in program history with 27 in 37 appearances. He posted 249 strikeouts in 300.1 innings pitched over his four years at VCU.

“It was just a ‘no-brainer’ to come back here and get it started,” Thompson said.

Thompson committed to VCU back in 2014 in part because he connected with head coach Shawn Stiffler over being natives of western Pennsylvania, he said.

“The relationship was always great with the coaching staff,” Thompson said. “That’s the big reason why I’m back here right now.”

As a freshman, Thompson helped VCU advance to the team’s first NCAA Super Regional tournament. He allowed just one run in the Rams’ 3-1 win over Dallas Baptist University in the regional championship game.

After finishing his collegiate career, Thompson signed a free agent deal with the Chicago White Sox, who assigned him to one of their rookie-level clubs, the Arizona League White Sox.

“It’s a different level of competition,” Thompson said. “You are competing against not only the best in America but at that point, you are competing against the best in the world.”

Thompson started in nine of his 13 appearances and threw 31 strikeouts over 36.2 innings. After finishing his first season with a 3.68 earned-run average, Thompson was assigned to another rookie-level team, the Great Falls Voyagers of the Pioneer League.

While in Montana, Thompson threw 66 strikeouts over his 14 starts and increased his earned-run average to 6.08.

Thompson often told Stiffler about his dreams of being a coach, he said. Stiffler would respond with, “Let’s talk when you finish playing.” The White Sox released Thompson in May, and Thompson reached out to Stiffler.

“I was kinda blessed during COVID-19 for my career to end with the White Sox because it was perfect timing to make a seamless transition into coaching,” Thompson said.

Redshirt-senior pitcher Michael Dailey said he saw coaching traits in Thompson during their time pitching together for three seasons.

“We both started my freshman and sophomore year,” Thompson said. “It was really nice to be able to just go under his wing and learn from him.”

“

I look at coaching as just being a translator and being able to communicate between the guys.”

Sean Thompson,
director of pitching
development

Thompson’s responsibilities during practice range from field maintenance to running the pitch tracking technology in the bullpen. After practices or games, Thompson reports back to the coaching staff and analyzes the players’ data.

Thompson pitches in with keeping data in the dugout during away games. At home, Thompson operates the TrackMan radar technology, a tool that tracks the velocity of pitches. Thompson talks to the athletes in between innings about his perspective of the game from the dugout, Dailey said.

“We’ll talk over what we’re doing on the mound and how we’re attacking hitters,” Dailey said. “Seeing weaknesses in the hitters. Really just trying to attack the best we can.”

Freshman pitcher Mason Delane said Thompson analyzes his performance and offers pointers after every game.

“After an outing, whether good or bad, we’ll kind of one-on-one analyze my performance and figure out what I could do better or what I did that was good,” Delane said.

Thompson said he approaches each pitcher differently and tries to find the best way each athlete learns.

“I look at coaching as just being a translator and being able to communicate between the guys,” Thompson said. “Take pretty complex ideas or thoughts, and make it easier for them.”

Delane said Thompson has helped him with different techniques, like breaking balls and locating weaknesses in hitters’ strike zones. Thompson has given advice on how to approach different types of hitters, Delane said.

“He’s offered a lot of little things that he picked up in pro ball,” Delane said. “Little things you wouldn’t normally think of — he’s kinda offered those suggestions as things I can incorporate into my game.”

Thompson’s favorite part of coaching has been the continuity between him, the players and the coaches, he said.

“You come here to build relationships and help leave the program hopefully in a better place than when you left it,” Thompson said.

Moving forward, Thompson hopes to continue stepping up in the coaching ranks, he said. Regardless of the level, he said he’s happy to still be a part of the game he loves.

“I just wanna continue to make an impact and help the game grow,” Thompson said.



Former VCU pitcher Sean Thompson joined the coaching staff after two years playing in the minor leagues. Photo courtesy of VCU Athletics

GAME RESULTS

MARCH 5

WOMEN’S TENNIS - AT WEST VIRGINIA

LOST 4-3

Paola Exposito Diaz-Delgado: fifth-straight singles win

MEN’S TENNIS - AT GEORGE MASON

WIN 7-0

BASEBALL - AT VMI

WIN 17-2

Tyler Locklear: 3-for-4, 3 RBI, 2 BB

MEN’S BASKETBALL - VS. DAYTON

WIN 73-68

Bones Hyland: 30 points and 10 rebounds

MARCH 6

WOMEN’S TENNIS - AT MARSHALL

WIN, 4-1

BASEBALL - VS. CENTRAL MICHIGAN,

WIN, 12-11

Hunter Vay: 3-for-5, 3 RBI

WOMEN’S SOCCER - VS. NO. 8 UVA

LOST, 2-1

Samantha Jerabek: goal

VOLLEYBALL - AT DAYTON

LOST, 3-0

MEN’S BASKETBALL - VS. DAVIDSON

WIN, 64-52

Bones Hyland: 12 points

MARCH 7

MEN’S TENNIS - AT RICHMOND

WIN, 7-0

BASEBALL - AT VMI:

WIN 18-7

Tyler Locklear: 4-for-6, 4 RBI

MEN’S SOCCER - AT ELON

WIN, 3-2

Celio Pompeu: 3 goals, first-career hat trick

MARCH 9

BASEBALL - AT VIRGINIA TECH

LOST 10-9

Tyler Locklear: 1-for-3, grand slam, 4 RBI, 2 BB

GOLF - AT CLEVELAND GOLF PALMETTO INTERCOLLEGIATE

5th of 15 teams, Peter Gasperini: T-6, -3

On this day

In 1876, the first discernible speech was transmitted by telephone.



VCU Adjuncts Organizing for Fair Pay displayed their petition on a large scroll outside the Office of the President on March 4. It now has more than 1,300 signatures in support. Photo by Enza Marcy

VCU ADJUNCTS PETITION FOR FAIR TREATMENT

GRACE MCOMBER
Contributing Writer

Dressed in caps and gowns, adjunct professors marched along campus to a graduation procession song. Typically overlaid with congratulatory cheers, the song was instead accompanied by disgruntled chants.

Composed of adjunct professors in VCUarts, Adjuncts Organizing for Fair Pay, or AOFPP, presented a petition to the Office of the President on Thursday. The demands range from higher base pay, one-year contracts for adjuncts and access to VCU Health services.

“If VCU is seriously committed to social justice and the health of their community, they must address the severe inequities they place on their workers,” the petition stated.

The group was founded in 2017 with the initial goal of increasing base pay among adjuncts in the arts department. It expanded to include other departments in the university, and their petition has more than 1,300 signatures from VCU faculty, staff, students and other community members.

“Everybody who’s an adjunct wants to talk about this,” said Jon Rajkovich, an organizer with AOFPP and an adjunct sculpture professor. “It’s a way for people to be part of something bigger than the self.”

There are 691 adjuncts employed by the university, and they teach 16.5% of all VCU classes, VCU spokesperson Mike Porter stated in an email.

“VCU values the expertise that our part-time faculty adjuncts bring to our colleges, schools and units,” Porter stated. “And we have worked to address base pay.” Since 2017, minimum pay for adjuncts has increased almost 50% from \$738 per credit hour to \$1,100 per credit hour today, Porter stated.

Unlike full-time faculty at VCU, adjunct professors are hired on 16-week contracts. They are allowed to teach up to nine credits during the fall and spring semester and six credits during the summer, as directed by

the Manpower Control Program, a Virginia labor law.

Adjunct courses can be canceled at any time prior to the start of the semester. The university is exploring options for compensation when courses are canceled, but Porter was unable to share specific details.

VCU faculty and staff receive health coverage through a state employee health benefits program administered by the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management. However, state law excludes adjunct faculty from coverage under the health insurance program.

The group of adjuncts have garnered attention in the past through social media and organized rallies. In 2017, more than 100 people gathered at the VCU Compass to support a base pay raise from \$800 to \$2,000 per credit hour.

Support behind the group’s efforts led to negotiations in the same year between adjunct staff and VCU President Michael Rao, former dean of VCUarts Shawn Brixey and other program chairs. Base compensation was raised from \$800 to \$1,100 per credit hour for the fall 2020 semester, but still fell below the group’s initial goal of \$2,000 per credit.

“You become a professor because you want to do what you love,” Rajkovich said. “It becomes a labor of love, but there’s no compensation for labor, or even respect for labor either.”

Rajkovich, who has worked at VCU since 2014, said he began organizing after he was approached in 2017 by colleagues who were also struggling to get by with base pay.

“I think all adjuncts can relate to a certain living situation,” Rajkovich said. “We all just kind of came together and were like, ‘Well, how do you survive with this?’”

Taryn Cassella, an adjunct art foundation professor, said the wage increase did



Adjuncts and other supporters walked to the Office of the President on March 4 to present a list of demands for better treatment. Photo by Enza Marcy

little to help her situation. She was able to teach just one class during the fall semester due to course availability, she said.

“I made around \$3,000, which was enough to keep me out of unemployment, but it’s not a living wage,” Cassella said. “It’s always on your mind. We’re very aware that we’re barely making ends meet.”

The organization’s petition calls for another increase of a base compensation of \$3,000 per course credit for all adjuncts. This number is based on a living wage for one adult with one child family living in Richmond, which the group calculated using the living wage calculator from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, according to AOFPP.

Organizer Rose Szabo said the raise to their base compensation was inadequate because it does not provide adjunct professors with a living wage adjusted to inflation.

“There are people who have been teaching here for 10, 20 or 30 years that have actually seen their buying power and quality of life on a slow decline as they continue to teach at VCU,” Szabo said. “The marginal increase in pay is unacceptable.”

Szabo, Cassella and Rajkovich believe that for VCU to address their demands, they need awareness and support from VCU faculty, alumni and students.

Kristin Reed, an associate professor in the department of focused inquiry, said she has supported the adjuncts since 2018 and is disappointed by the university’s lack of urgency, which she believes led to a “compounded crisis” during the pandemic.

“Part of what we’ve seen is a university that’s really slow to take action and is leaving its lowest wage workers out in the cold at a time when our community is under the most stresses,” Reed said.

Spectrum Editor Ebonique Little contributed to this report.

A Year in Photos: COVID-19, BLM movement transformed Richmond

EBONIQUE LITTLE
Spectrum Editor

ENZA MARCY
Photo Editor

It's been one year since the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Virginia. Looking back, the pandemic has changed the lives of individuals all over the world, including those in the VCU and Richmond communities.

At the beginning of March 2020, students sat in class with excitement as they discussed spring break plans. Some traveled overseas while others returned home to spend time with family. Vacations were cut short as the normal life was reimagined. The past year has brought loss and hardships — but also hope.

We've selected archived photos from The Commonwealth Times documenting how the past year has affected Richmond. If you're interested in submitting photos for our next selection, please contact photography@commonwealthtimes.org.



October 17, 2020. Azeon Volden, 10, plays basketball with his family in Marcus-David Peters Circle during Peters' 27th birthday celebration. Peters was an unarmed Black man killed by Richmond Police in 2019 while experiencing a mental health crisis on Interstate 95. Photo by Enza Marcy



January 18, 2021. VCUarts student Riley Claywell paints a portrait of Martin Luther King Jr. on MLK Day at Marcus-David Peters Circle. Photo by Enza Marcy



Aug. 24, 2020. An image of Jacob Blake, an unarmed Black man shot in his car by Kenosha, Wisconsin police multiple times, was projected on the Robert E. Lee monument at Marcus-David Peters Circle, the day after he was shot. Photo by Jon Mirador



October 8, 2020. Chesterfield homeowners Tim and Lauren Barry illuminate their home with political messages in support of then-presidential candidate Joe Biden leading up to the 2020 election. Photo by Enza Marcy



June 3, 2020. Hundreds of protesters chanted "tear it down" by the Robert E. Lee monument after local and state officials announced plans to remove the statue. Photo by Andrew Ringle



March 24, 2020. Popular dining establishments on campus have shut down or closed temporarily. Photo by Georgia Geen

SUBMIT YOUR COVID-19 STORY: The CT wants to know how COVID-19 impacted the lives of VCU students. Email submissions to photography@commonwealthtimes.org by March 15.

EDITOR'S LIST OF FILMS TO WATCH

“Premature” (2019)

Starring and co-written by Zora Howard, this dramatic love story follows a 17-year-old girl who has a summer romance in New York City with an older man. Their relationship prematurely pushes her into the adult world, and she is forced to navigate unintended consequences before leaving for college. In 2020, the film was awarded the ReFrame Stamp for Gender-Balanced Production, an award given to corporations and media that strive for increased female representation.

Available on Hulu
93% Rotten Tomatoes

“Hustlers” (2019)

Written and directed by Lorene Scafaria, “Hustlers” is based on a true story about a group of strippers who fell on hard financial times during the Great Recession from 2007-2009. Together, they target rich Wall Street clients, taking advantage of their wealth. This comedic drama has a star-studded cast, including Jennifer Lopez and rapper Cardi B.

Available on Showtime
87% Rotten Tomatoes

“Selma” (2014)

This historical drama, directed by Ava DuVernay, chronicles Martin Luther King Jr.’s march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965 to establish equal voting rights for African Americans. The historical film was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2015.

Available on Amazon Prime Video for \$3.99
99% Rotten Tomatoes

“Lady Bird” (2017)

This coming-of-age drama captures the growing pains between a teenage daughter and mother. Their troubled relationship is coupled with financial woes, as the mother tries to keep the family afloat after the father loses his job. Directed by Greta Gerwig, this film won the Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture in 2018.

Available on Netflix
99% Rotten Tomatoes

“The Assistant” (2019)

Directed by Kitty Green, “The Assistant” captures the daily routine of Jane, an assistant to a notable male executive at a film production company. In the drama, which sparked commentary about the #MeToo movement, Jane experiences verbal abuse and witnesses sexual exploitation within the film industry.

Available on Hulu
92% Rotten Tomatoes

“Never Rarely Sometimes Always” (2020)

After an unexpected pregnancy, a teenage girl named Autumn and her cousin Skylar travel from a rural town in Pennsylvania to New York City in order to receive an abortion. The film, directed by Eliza Hittman, captures Autumn’s emotional journey with little support.

Available on HBO Max
99% Rotten Tomatoes

Have suggestions for our watchlist? Email spectrum@commonwealthtimes.org



Harold Mendez’s “The Days of Yesterday Are All Numbered in Sum” (2017) is an archival pigment print and graphite mounted on Dibond. Photo courtesy of Jeff McLane

ICA exhibit explores texture, movement and family

CLAIRE DARCY
Contributing Writer

A large, grayscale depiction of a dewy spider web suspended between branches greets visitors to the Institute for Contemporary Art at VCU. It appears cracked like a sheet of glass due to the unique transfer method used to create the image.

“At Night We Walk in Circles” sits on the wall outside of the Beverly W. Reynolds Gallery in the ICA as part of the site’s newest exhibit. Harold Mendez’s “Let Us Gather in a Flourishing Way” opened to the press Friday and to the public over the weekend.

The exhibit is a collection of sculptures, photographs and prints by Mendez and includes works from the past 10 years. Many of the works draw upon themes of movement, migration and cultural connections across borders while evoking senses of ephemerality, vulnerability and fragility.

“Mendez invites us to explore the tension between fiction and truth, visibility and absence, and how history and geography shape our sense of self and our relationship to the world,” stated Jessica McCadden, spokesperson for the ICA, in a press release.

Mendez is a Los Angeles-based artist and has traveled extensively throughout his career. Dominic Willsdon, executive director of the ICA, noted that Mendez’s parents are from Colombia and Mexico, and that as a first-generation American, the geography of Mendez’s lineage is significant and apparent in his work.

The exhibit’s name is borrowed from the first line of a poem of the same name by Juan Felipe Herrera, an American poet and the 21st United States Poet Laureate. Each of Mendez’s works is inspired by poetry, which is part of what drew the ICA toward the exhibit, Willsdon said.

Willsdon said that the ICA has interest in artists that incorporate literary elements into their work. All three current exhibitions at the ICA — “Harold Mendez: Let Us Gather in a Flourishing Way,” “Fernanda Laguna: As Everybody” and “Kandis Williams: A Field”— feature artists that utilize a crossover with literature.

Many of the pieces in the collection are made with “found” objects. “At Night We Walk in Circles” stems from a photograph of a spider web that Mendez found. It was created using a transfer method, in which the photograph was placed face down on a painted sheet of aluminum. The layers of paper behind the photo were removed until the image was once again visible.

“A lot of the sort of mystery and enigma around the work comes from the different ways in which the image is being veiled,” Willsdon said.

Another veil exists in “Let the Shadows in To Play Their Part,” a towering mixed-media painting that is composed of eucalyptus bark, silicon carbide, ink and latex paint. With dimensions of 140 by 240 inches, it is the largest piece in the exhibit, spanning the full area of a dedicated wall that was erected in the center of the gallery.

White fragments peek out of the veil of bark, which was created while Mendez completed an artist residency in San Francisco. The bark was collected from trees in the Golden Gate State Park, Willsdon said.

While at first glance, the gallery may appear to be bleak and devoid of color, the rich pigments of each piece reveal themselves as one looks more closely.

“American Pictures” is a sculpture containing a piece of wood impaled by a metal rod, standing in a metallic base. The wood is dyed a deep red from crushed cochineal insects. Scattered across the base are white carnation petals, which serve as a delicate complement to the cold metal they rest upon.

Willsdon said the carnation petals will be replaced by museum staff as they wilt in order to keep the piece alive at the request of the artist.

“He was also interested in what it would mean to add something to a sculpture that meant the museum had to care for the sculpture,” Willsdon said of Mendez. “It becomes almost like the museum develops a sort of intimacy with the work, having to deal with and care for it in that way.”

Like the vulnerability and fragility displayed in “American Pictures,” another pair of sculptures, “Domingo” and “Margarita,” evoke similar emotions. They are two head-dresses composed of materials such as animal fat, feathers, glass and the foam lining of a baseball helmet.

Willsdon said that the pieces pay homage to Mendez’s parents and match their heights down to the quarter-inch.

“There’s sort of a sense of loss and melancholy that people feel, and even with the two standing figures of the parents there’s a sort of ‘Are the parents still with us? One day they won’t be with us,’” Willsdon said. “There’s a sense of passage of time and potential loss.”

“Let Us Gather in a Flourishing Way” will be on display at the Institute for Contemporary Art, 601 W. Broad St., until June 27. Timed tickets are available on the ICA website.



Harold Mendez’s “Let X Stand, If It Can For the One’s Unfound” (2016) is a mixed media piece mounted on Dibond. Photo courtesy of Jeff McLane

CT Opinions

Quote of the week

"The most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart."
— HELEN KELLER

STAFF EDITORIAL



Illustration by Carleigh Ross

Adam Oakes' death left a void in our community. *VCU and Delta Chi share blame*

FORMOST VCU STUDENTS, MOVING to Richmond is a lasting memory, marked by excitement and hopefulness. Opportunities seem endless — new places to explore, communities on campus to join, new friends to make.

Our university naturally promotes the advantages of living in an urban environment, boasting a "campus with no boundaries" on its website.

"The city is our campus," the website states. "You can't tell where one ends and the other begins, and we wouldn't have it any other way."

VCU welcomes incoming students with messages like this to encourage movement across its undergraduate campus, from the University Student Commons to the Institute for Contemporary Art.

However, when freshman Adam Oakes died at a house on West Clay Street — just six blocks away from the ICA — the university was quick to tweet that he was out of range.

"VCU mourns the death of student Adam Oakes, who was identified by authorities at an off-campus residence early Saturday," the Feb. 28 release stated.

It seems VCU can tell where one campus ends and the other begins, especially when it could be held accountable for a student's untimely death.

Also, the release made no mention of any fraternity involvement. Let's explore the events leading up to a VCU spokesperson choosing that careful language.

Adam entered our community with the same hope and expectation that we all remember feeling during our first days here. He was seeking friendship, acceptance and a spark of light in a series of dark days spent in isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“

If the university allows a reckless group of insecure young men to resume their dangerous activities anywhere near VCU's campus, it will happen again — simply put.”

The CT staff

When Adam arrived at the former Delta Chi fraternity house near Jackson Ward, he found something else — a malignant, shallow growth that had been spreading across VCU's underbelly long before he left his family's home in Sterling, Virginia.

The feeling hangs in the air. At parties like the one Adam attended, new fraternity additions are constantly competing.

From games to alcohol tolerance, one way or another, to be a "brother," you have to earn it.

Someone handed Adam a bottle of whiskey and told him to drink, his family said. Next morning, he was found dead on a couch.

The university won't say Adam was hazed to death. There will be no comment on how or if Delta Chi members were involved. At least, not while its independent review of Greek life, announced the week after Adam's death by senior vice provost Charles Klink, is still ongoing.

"We don't know any more than we are saying," President Michael Rao said Friday during a board of visitors meeting. "For a national model, we have to do this. For the sake of all the young people involved in these organizations."

But there's a chance that even after VCU wraps up its investigation — with no clear end date — those responsible for Adam's death will evade major consequences. After all, Klink stated the review will only "make recommendations about how Greek organizations meet the high expectations we have for them."

The local Delta Chi chapter received cease-and-desist letters from both VCU and its national parent organization. These orders suspend the fraternity until the investigation concludes, according to the university.

The staff of The Commonwealth Times wants VCU to take stronger action against hazing, and soon. Expel Delta Chi. There's

no coming back from this. As Klink himself stated, "Simply put, this cannot happen again."

If the university allows a reckless group of insecure young men to resume their dangerous activities anywhere near VCU's campus, it will happen again — simply put.

We urge the university officials and our peers to respect Adam's family and their wishes. Courtney White, Adam's cousin, said suspending Delta Chi isn't sufficient.

"They're still drinking, they're still having a good time, while my cousin is dead," White said. "He will never get that experience back."

This isn't about university admissions, this isn't about social media statements. This is a void in our community.

Adam's death sent waves of grief to everyone at VCU, even those who never got the chance to know him.

We all feel this loss. Now, the university must act.

Andrew Ringle, executive editor
Iman Mekonen, managing editor
Rachel Rivenbark, copy editor
Katharine DeRosa, news editor
Noah Fleischman, sports editor
Ebonique Little, spectrum editor
Tagwa Shammiet, opinions editor
Enza Marcy, photo editor
Sarah Elson, audience editor
Andy Caress, design editor

ISHAAN NANDWANI
Contributing Writer

SHOCK. DISAPPOINTMENT.
Anger. Sadness.

These were some of the many emotions I felt when I heard about the death of Adam Oakes, a 19-year-old VCU freshman who died on Feb. 27 as a result of the hazing process for the Delta Chi fraternity at VCU.

Whether it's looking at his bright-eyed smile on his family's GoFundMe page, or listening to the stories from his friends during his vigil, it's evident to all that Adam was a person who lived a life of decency and compassion, radiating boundless love to all those who surrounded him. And he had so much more to live for.

At VCU, Adam sought a brotherhood in the Delta Chi fraternity. He desired a group of people that he could establish lifelong connections with; a community that he could lean on and that would inspire him to reach his best self. Instead, Adam endured a process that, paired with the negligence and apathy of his so-called brothers, ultimately resulted in his death — all because of hazing.

We've all heard of hazing, especially within the context of Greek life. Technically it's illegal in Virginia, but I'd say most college students are aware that it happens behind closed doors. Rituals like blind-folding and drinking down dozens of cans of alcohol are rites of passage for brothers pledging for fraternities. VCU is certainly no exception.

This dehumanizing practice is thoroughly problematic. Hazing is an abuse of power, with upperclassman fraternity members

leveraging tactics of intimidation and peer pressure on younger pledging students in a falsified spirit of brotherhood. If recruits are able to make it through hazing, they are awarded the elusive "gift" of full membership into the fraternity.

With such a clearly predatory practice that has now led to the death of a student who had his whole life ahead of him, it begs the question of how this was even able to occur, especially at our university.

The fraternity responsible for Adam's death, VCU's chapter of the Delta Chi fraternity, has had a long history of abuses on campus. They have a rumored reputation for sexual assault. In 2018, they were suspended by the university but pardoned from their suspension early in 2019. It's despicable that

despite these occurrences, this fraternity has remained on campus, threatening the safety of all students.

Justice needs to be served. Delta Chi must be eliminated immediately. All brothers involved in Adam's death must be immediately expelled from the university and tried for manslaughter. I encourage all readers to sign the petition from VCU senior Carson Sturgis on change.org to ensure expulsion occurs.

Beyond Delta Chi's involvement in Adam's death, this incident calls into question the institution of Greek life as a whole, and the future of all fraternities and sororities on campus.

Delta Chi is not the exception here. There are many fraternities at VCU that

Opinions

actively partake in hazing and have a history of misconduct. Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Greek organizations have openly defied the health and safety guidelines put in place by throwing parties and hosting large get-togethers.

These acts clearly pose a danger to the Richmond community. While these organizations preach philanthropy and social support, the contrary is occurring.

Frankly, I'm shocked at the lack of accountability of these organizations by VCU and how much has been swept under the rug — sexual assault, hazing and COVID-19 restriction defiance. The fact that it took the death of a student for the university to launch an investigation into Greek life is unacceptable.

Now that VCU is embarking on the path to rectifying the Greek system, we must hold them accountable. Their initial statement of the investigation was quite vague, and although it's probable that the details of the process are still in the works, it is essential for the student body to demand comprehensive reports periodically of actions and updates into the investigation.

The circumstances that led to Adam's death must never happen again at VCU — or anywhere, for that matter. But for change to truly be effected, all Greek organizations that disobey the law must be abolished immediately. Sorority and fraternity activity throughout the pandemic must be deeply investigated, and all Greek activity must be tightly regulated.



Illustration by Marisa Stratton

WE MUST TAKE A STANCE ON GREEK LIFE

Tea Time with Tagwa:

MINORITY GROUPS ARE NOT YOUR QUOTA

TAGWA SHAMMET
Opinions Editor

Tea timers, how would you feel if someone decided to reduce your race, gender, sexuality or identity to a mere quota? If they simply classified you as a point system, rather than as a unique being?

I can tell you how I'd feel: disgusted. Even the idea to minimize me strikes anger and distaste.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has done just that, and instead of realizing the magnitude of the offense, it's expecting praise.

Late last year, the academy set out new guidelines and regulations for its Best Picture nominations starting in 2024. The Academy Award for Best Picture — which is one of the greatest honors in Hollywood and the international film world — gained new representation and inclusion standards.

In order to receive a Best Picture nomination, films must meet two of the four new criteria points laid out by the academy.

1. On-screen representation, themes and narratives
2. Creative leadership and project team
3. Industry access and opportunities
4. Audience development

This basically means films must include some form of minority representation somewhere on-screen, off-screen, in apprenticeship and/or in marketing and distribution.

The academy desires to have films and creators reflect the general population of audience that is coming to be in our country and around the world in race, gender, sexual orientation and everything else. As our country progresses as a minority-majority population, the academy would like to leave its #OscarsSoWhite stereotype behind.

For the intention, I can applaud the academy. Films do not only tell the stories on-screen. In fact, it's the people behind the cameras, lights and distribution who tell as much of a story as the actors we see.

Diversity in race, gender, sexuality and ability must exist everywhere we look. Nothing should be able to operate without the inclusion of a variety of people, especially films.

We watch movies to escape the realities of our lives. Some films can provide insight into experiences we've never imagined.

Films teach us what we never knew we needed to know. They tell us untold stories and uncover emotions deep in our hearts. They are not strictly white. They are Black. They are LGBTQ. They are Asian. They are impaired. They are everything we see in the world and more.

Reducing them to a quota is unacceptable. That is not the way to promote diversity and inclusion. In fact, it does the opposite. These quotas divide Americans into subcategories that must fight against one another to fill a spot.

We saw that clearly in the implementation of affirmative action quotas.



Illustration by Karly Anderson

Universities and workplaces began accepting and hiring people of color in an effort to showcase their competence of the moving age. However, once those implemented numbers were met, the inclusion stopped.

White students began blaming these quotas for their rejections from opportunities. It turned the accomplishments of people of color into nothing; all that mattered was their color.

That is precisely what the academy will do by implementing these new rules. Films that don't receive nominations will blame these new rules for that. Films that are nominated will be praised for meeting them, rather than the brilliance they portray.

Minority work should be praised for its brilliance, for its ability to invoke emotion and feeling. Instead of adding minimum

minority requirements films must include, the academy could introduce diversity implementation training for all hopeful nominees. Let's not force the inclusion of minorities for simple nominations, but start making their participation a regularity in Hollywood.

The academy and I quite honestly never see eye to eye. I believe they don't do enough. They do the bare minimum and expect a round of applause. That became quite clear when the academy's treasurer and Paramount Pictures CEO Jim Gianopulos was asked about these new rules by the Los Angeles Times.

"Is it perfect?" Gianopulos said. "No. Is it progress? Absolutely. So that's got to be good enough for now."

Thanks, Jim. The reduction of identities to mere rules and statistics that must be met really suffices the equality and representation minorities deserve. A round of applause and standing ovation for you.

The academy simply cares about its perception, rather than doing what is right, and this comment highlights that reality. Representation should be implemented because everything must reflect our diverse country, not because Twitter is mean to you.

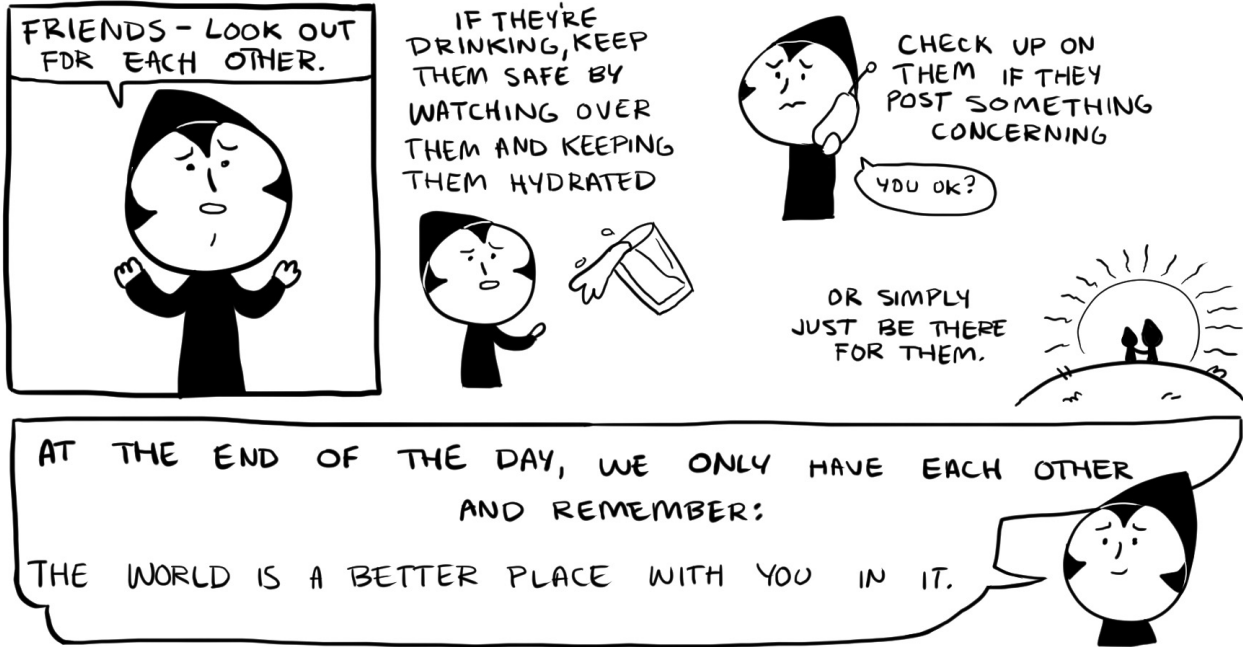
It is time to realize that minority groups do not deserve — and will no longer accept — "good enough." We want every piece of privilege a straight, white, able-bodied man has. Anything less is not good enough for us. And that's the tea.

CT Comics

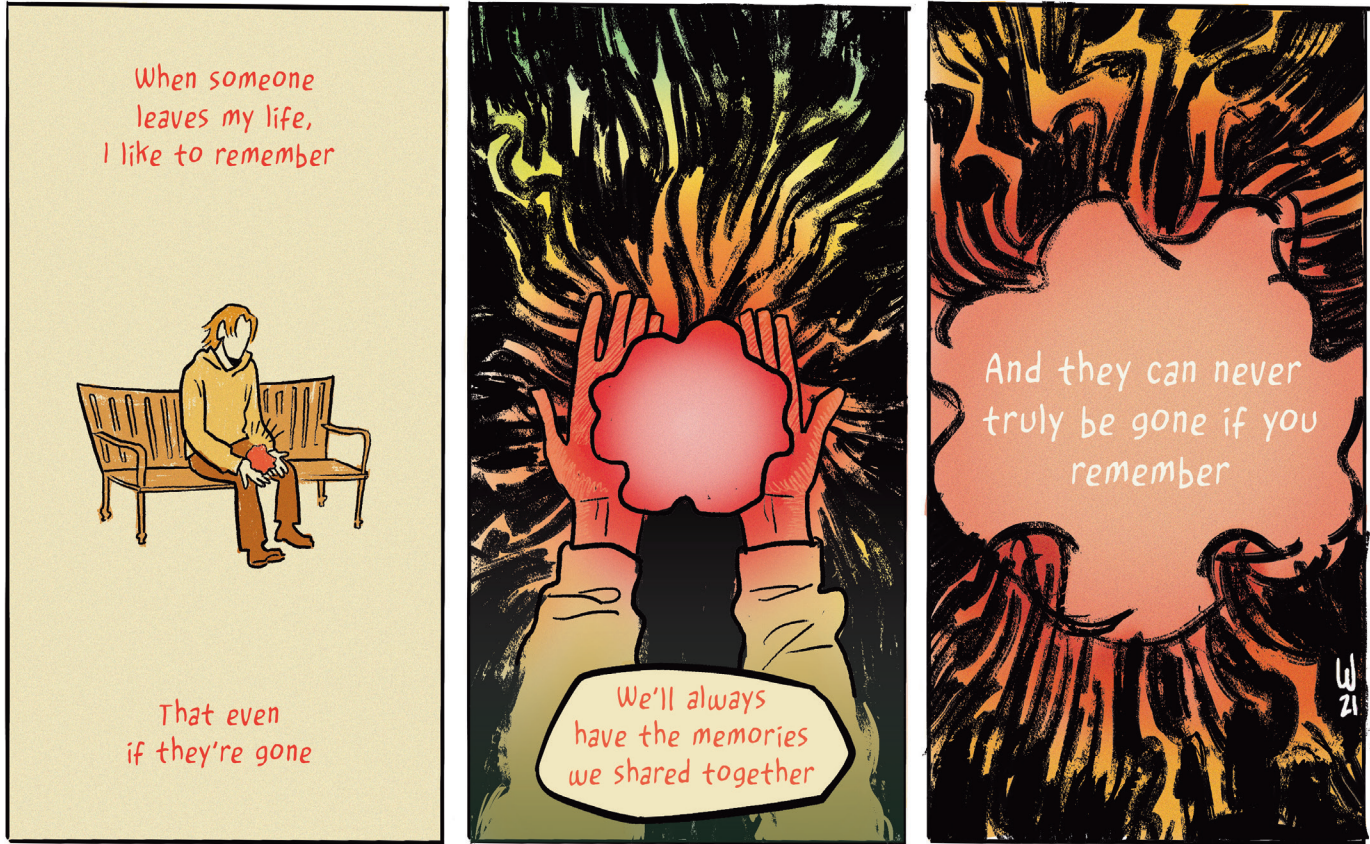
We Remember by Audrey Garrett



Better with You by Sarah Brady



Never Gone by Lauren Johnson



THE CT STAFF

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Andrew Ringle
ringlea@commonwealthtimes.org

MANAGING EDITOR

Iman Mekonen
mekonenib@commonwealthtimes.org

COPY EDITOR

Rachel Rivenbark
rivenbarks@commonwealthtimes.org

NEWS EDITOR

Katharine DeRosa
news@commonwealthtimes.org

SPORTS EDITOR

Noah Fleischman
sports@commonwealthtimes.org

SPECTRUM EDITOR

Ebonique Little
spectrum@commonwealthtimes.org

OPINIONS EDITOR

Tagwa Shammet
opinions@commonwealthtimes.org

PHOTO EDITOR

Enza Marcy
photography@commonwealthtimes.org

AUDIENCE EDITOR

Sarah Elson
elsonsp@commonwealthtimes.org

ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR

Lauren Johnson
illustrations@commonwealthtimes.org

STAFF WRITERS

Anya Sczerzenie, News
Joe Dodson, Sports

VCU STUDENT MEDIA CENTER

DESIGN EDITOR

Andy Caress
designers@vcustudentmedia.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

Jayce Nguyen
Ni Sang
Raymond Liu
Gabrielle Wood
designers@vcustudentmedia.com

AD SALES ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Kofi Roberts
advertising@vcustudentmedia.com

AD SALES REPRESENTATIVE

John Rudolph
rudolphjd@vcu.edu

WEB MANAGER

Chranjitpandian Murugapandi
web@vcustudentmedia.com

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Tibebe Gebiso
distribution@vcustudentmedia.com

TEMPORARY EDITORIAL ADVISER

Mark Robinson
robinsonmw@vcu.edu

CREATIVE MEDIA MANAGER

Mark Jeffries
mjeffries@vcu.edu

SALES & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Dominique Lee
leeds3@vcu.edu
(804) 827-1642

OFFICE MANAGER

Owen Martin
martinso@vcu.edu

ABOUT THE CT

The Commonwealth Times is the award-winning independent student newspaper at VCU, since 1969. The CT staff maintains all editorial and operations discretion. There is absolutely no prior review by the public, university or VCU Student Media Center administration or staff. The Executive Editor writes and manages the Operations Budget.

ADD YOUR VOICE

The opinions pages of the CT are a forum open to the public. Contributions are welcome by email to Tagwa Shammet, by mail or in-person at 817 W. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23220. Opinions expressed are those of individual columnists and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Commonwealth Times. Unsigned editorials represent the collective opinion of The CT staff.

The Commonwealth Times strives for accuracy in gathering news. If you think we have made an error, please email the appropriate section editor. Corrections will appear on the news pages and/or online. One CT per person. Additional copies can be purchased at the Student Media Center for \$1 each.

CT

Puzzles

Los Angeles Times

Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Nichols Lewis

- ACROSS
- 1

Include so other recipients don't know, briefly

4

California neighbor, familiarly

8

Bulk

12

Gloomy

18

Pleased sigh

19

Genesis victim

20

Train

21

Painful

22

It's "gravy" to some Italian Americans

25

Tropical vines

26

Frau's partner

27

Hit one in the trees, maybe

28

Off course

30

Bunch of bills

32

Somme soul

33

Gothic architecture feature

36

Tender spots

39

Preserved, in a way

41

"Melrose Place" complex

44

Derelict

46

Fine, lightweight cloth

47

Obamacare, for short

48

Venus, at times

52

With passion

55

Mao's successor

56

Cartoonist Peter

57

AOL alternative

60

Events with bulls and barrels

61

Like desert climates, comparatively

62

Stern with a bow

64

Bit of statuary

65

Like some pkgs.

68

Real estate listing datum

71

D.C. bigwig

72

Classical name of Troy

74

Fool

75

Fervently wishes

76

"For honest men and bonie ____": Burns

78

Star Wars initials

79

Bar mitzvah staple

80

Wells race

84

Tropical Chinese tree

85

Grade school presentation

88

"I'll take what I can get," in classifieds

89

Hearing tube

94

Foray

95

Favor asker's lead-in

101

Archaeological site

102

Damascus' land

103

Introduction

104

'70s extremist gp.

105

"The A-Team" actor

106

WNBA great

108

Off the wall

111

Playground retort

114

Long battles

116

America's most popular dogs in 2017

120

Go-ahead

121

Big cat hybrid

122

Beauty chain with a salon inside each store

123

Black gold

124

Assignations

125

Ages

126

Coordinate

127

GATT successor

2

Long-distance traveler's concern

7

Nissan sedan

8

Caps, e.g.

9

Evian water

10

TV monitor

11

Mont Blanc's range

12

Artist who created fashion designs for Schiaparelli

13

Most frigid

14

Hebrew hello ... and goodbye

15

Some Vulcans, via melds

16

Gasteyer of "Mean Girls"

17

NFLers near centers

20

"The Waste Land" monogram

23

Sampling the smorgasbord

24

"Happy birthday" writer, perhaps

29

Accomplishment

31

First name in early TV

34

Tiny queen

35

Ling of "The Crow"

37

Put inside

38

Remains awhile

39

One of the Weasley twins

40

Dream, in Dijon

42

Corporate alias abbr.

43

Back

45

Gobble (up)

49

Dirty money

50

Bad looks

51

Like the zone between two tropics

53

Many are mailed in

54

Altar avowal

57

No ____: menu notice

58

Plato's "tenth Muse"

59

Thin

61

Beneficiary

62

Publicity, slangily

63

"Goodies" singer

65

Resting places in cases

66

Magazine with a lagomorph logo

67

Rudeness

69

Here, to Henri

70

Printers' primary colors

73

__Kosh B'gosh

77

Cabinet mem.

80

Ancient region of central Italy

81

When tripled, song that begins, "Oh, the weather outside is frightful"

82

Lena of "Chocolat"

83

Martinique et Guadeloupe

85

Mariner's measures

86

Experienced, as fun

87

Quad building

90

Word after a drop

91

Responsive to treatment

92

"Westworld" aier

93

"Malcolm X" (1992) director

96

Feudal lords

97

Lacks the courage to

98

She, in Italy

99

Old-fashioned warning

100

Stick in one's craw

107

Contractors' figs.

109

Network with regular pledge drives

110

Little newts

112

"Laugh-In" segment

113

Munch Museum city

114

Convened

115

Leb. neighbor

117

Put on TV

118

NY airport named for a mayor

119

"Go team!"

Sponsored by

YOUR AD HERE

Contact Dominique Lee @ leeds3@vcu.edu

Outer Limits by Paul Coulter

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11		12	13	14	15	16	17
18				19				20						21					
22				23				24					25						
26						27						28	29						
			30		31		32			33	34	35			36			37	38
39	40					41			42					43					
44					45			46									47		
48						49	50	51						52	53	54			
55						56						57	58	59		60			
					61					62				63		64			
65	66	67			68					69					70			71	
72				73				74						75					
76						77			78					79				80	81
84												85	86						
88						89	90	91	92	93						94			
95						96	97							98	99	100		101	
102									103					104				105	
					106				107					108	109			110	
114	115								116	117	118							119	
120														122				123	
124														126					127

Sudoku

By The Mephram Group

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Complete the grid so each row, column, and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit sudoku.org.uk

	9			5			1	
3		2	9				8	
8								
4			5	3				
9	3		1	8		7	4	
			6	7				5
								7
	1			5	3		8	
				3			4	


© 2019 The Mephram Group. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency. All rights reserved.

Sponsored by

YOUR AD HERE

Contact Dominique Lee @ leeds3@vcu.edu

ADVERTISEMENT



Learning the craft of media through hands-on experience.

ADVERTISEMENT



 VCU Student Media Center

studentmedia.vcu.edu

 @VCUStudentMediaCenter  join@vcustudentmedia.com