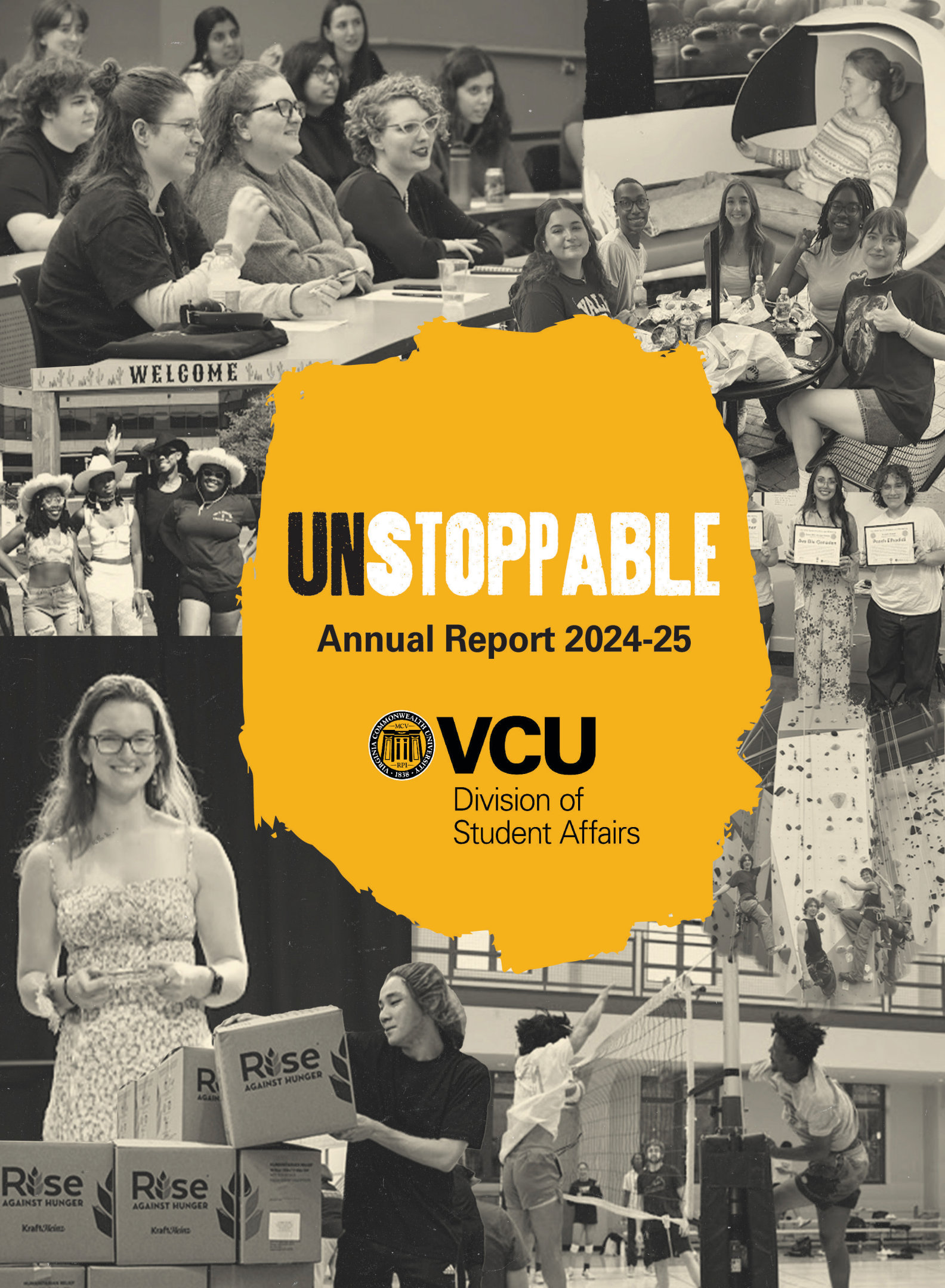




UNSTOPPABLE

Annual Report 2024-25



VCU

Division of
Student Affairs



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EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM



Aaron J. Hart, Ed.D.
Vice President



Joslyn DiRamio Bedell, M.Ed.
Special Assistant to the Vice President and Director of Strategic Initiatives



Curt Erwin, Ed.D.
Associate Vice President for Engaged Communities



Jimmie Gahagan, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President for Transformative Student Experiences



Melanie Goodman, M.P.A.
Associate Vice President for Finance and Innovation



Charles Klink, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President for Holistic Well-Being



Gabe Willis, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President and Dean of Student Advocacy



Yiyun Jie, Ph.D.
Executive Director of Assessment

WELCOME FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT AFFAIRS



It has been a truly remarkable year for the Division of Student Affairs, and I am proud to share our 2024-25 Annual Report with you. Our commitment to providing students with unequaled transformative student experiences remains stronger than ever.

In this report, you'll discover how our team facilitated 155,000 intentional student interactions, allowing us to engage with over 22,000 unique students—nearly 80% of the entire VCU student body.

The report also highlights the dynamic work of our Residential Life and Housing team, which collaborated with campus partners to assist students during the January 2025 water crisis and weather emergency. You will also learn about the new climbing wall at RecWell, the new relaxation corner in the Commons, and the \$150,000 grant secured by Rams in Recovery to support students in recovery.

While awards are not our primary motivation, we were honored to be named one of the "Most Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs" for the second consecutive year. This prestigious national recognition reflects our commitment to supporting both our students and staff.

I'm incredibly proud of our team, which consistently goes the extra mile. Our staff across the division worked tirelessly to impact students by hosting leadership conferences, facilitating volunteer opportunities, and providing comprehensive mental and physical well-being support. Our Dean of Student Advocacy team continues to provide hands-on support for students facing challenging situations.

Most importantly, we are committed to building meaningful relationships with students and partnering with them to shape their VCU experience. I'm especially proud of the Student Leadership Executive Board (SLEB), now in its third year and composed of student leaders from across campus. I think you'll enjoy reading about this initiative and its positive impact on our students.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report.

Dr. Aaron J. Hart

Aaron J. Hart, Ed.D.
Vice President for Student Affairs

Division of Student Affairs

- Office of the Vice President
- Dean of Student Advocacy Office
- Fraternity and Sorority Life
- Office of Student Advocacy
- Office of Student Involvement
- Office of Student Leadership and Engaged Learning
- Office of Multicultural Student Affairs
- Recreation and Well-Being (RecWell)
- Residential Life and Housing
- Shared Services
- Student Accessibility and Educational Opportunity
- Student Conduct and Academic Integrity
- Student Media Center
- University Counseling Services
- University Student Commons
- University Student Health Services

students.vcu.edu

RECWELL SOARS TO NEW HEIGHTS

At 55 feet tall, the new climbing wall at the Cary Street Gym is one of the tallest climbing facilities in Richmond.

After three years of pandemic-related construction delays, the new Cary Street Gym Climbing Facility began operation in August 2024, replacing the original 2009 wall and flooring. The original wall had reached the end of its life cycle, having developed issues that required intensive maintenance. Climbing at VCU is a very popular activity, and the decision was made to replace the aging structure with a larger, state of the art climbing wall that would be much easier to maintain and reset.

The first thing that most visitors to the gym notice is the large flat surfaces of the wall, reflecting the current climbing industry standard. At 55 feet, the new wall is one of the tallest climbing facilities in Richmond, extending into the gym's atrium. Climbers are able to literally reach new heights. The overall climbing space is much bigger, offering 22 lanes, versus the previous six. It has much more varied terrain, appealing to both beginner and advanced climbers.

The new features, such as a variety of shapes and the ability to use larger holds, has made the overall climbing experience more enjoyable and engaging, and student response has been overwhelmingly positive. Since August 2024, usage has nearly doubled to approximately 10,000 climbs per year. Unique users at the facility have also increased by more than 30% within the first year of programming.

The expanded wall reflects RecWell's commitment to student development, skill building, and well-being. Sam Albert, Senior Outdoor Adventure Coordinator in Adventure Leadership and Teambuilding explains, "This really is a teaching facility. Now we can offer more classes and clinics to help climbers improve their personal skills. We can teach everything from beginner belay clinics to advanced technical courses that prepare people to climb in the outdoors. All of these new features allow climbers to challenge themselves in more ways while they learn and grow in the sport."

He adds, simply, "It also just looks super cool."

RECWELL CLIMBING WALL

 **+34%**
increase in
unique climbers

1,894
total unique climbers

Percentage of climbing wall users that feel...

98%
...more confident
to climb safely

85%
...connected with
other climbers

RECOVERY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Rams in Recovery Secures \$150,000 Grant from Anthem Foundation



Rams in Recovery has been awarded a significant \$150,000 grant from the Anthem Foundation to continue funding its impactful Recovery Scholars Program. This program has seen remarkable growth, expanding from 17 students in 2019 to 110 participants in academic year 2024-25. Tom Bannard, Assistant Director for Substance Use and Recovery Support, collaborated with Suzanna Storah and the VCU Foundation to secure this highly competitive funding.

Bannard shared his appreciation, stating, "These scholarships show students in recovery how much we value them as part of the larger VCU community and allow them to prioritize their well-being. Despite having faced huge challenges with substance use in the past, our students thrive academically and are deeply involved in service in our local community."

Students in the Recovery Scholars Program receive a \$500 scholarship each semester. They also participate in weekly seminars covering topics like recovery, mental well-being, social justice, outdoor adventures, and creativity, while actively contributing to the recovery community. This program offers a vital lifeline to students with substance use disorder, providing financial aid, social support, and opportunities for personal growth during their academic journey. The Anthem grant will sustain and expand the program over the next three years, benefiting even more students.

The profound impact of the program is evident in student testimonials. One Recovery Scholar noted, "Someone like me (being both a single parent AND in recovery) experiences so many barriers to entering higher education that it feels hopeless. Scholarships like this one give individuals a bit of encouragement that they belong, they matter, in addition to the tangible help it provides." Another participant shared, "I didn't feel very connected to the VCU campus until I joined the scholarship program. The weekly seminars help me form relationships with other students."

A representative from the Anthem Foundation formally presented the check to Tom Bannard and Rams in Recovery at the Recovery Scholars Breakfast in November 2024. Held at the VCU Institute for Contemporary Art, the breakfast was also sponsored by the Anthem Foundation and featured inspiring speeches from students and supporters. This annual event continues to be a crucial opportunity for fundraising and fostering community within the program, consistently filling the room with pride and gratitude.



RAMS IN RECOVERY

PEER RECOVERY
 **495**
meetings
↓
17,651
meeting participants

RECOVERY SUPPORT
 **298**
meetings
↓
2,656
meeting participants

RECOVERY ALLY TRAININGS
 **27**
trainings
↓
798
training participants

 **106**
Rams in Recovery
scholarship
recipients

RLH Leads Way Through Water Crisis

Residential Life and Housing (RLH) at VCU is one of the most equipped teams on campus to handle crisis situations. This was put to the test in January of 2025, when a winter storm descended on the city of Richmond and left havoc in its wake.

In addition to dangerous travel conditions caused by snow and ice, the cold weather caused a power outage that disrupted the City of Richmond’s water reservoir system. As a result, the VCU campus was unexpectedly without water service for several days.

The immediate priority was for the safety of the 550 students living on campus over winter break. In addition to the unexpected and sudden loss of water, the hall fire suppression systems were temporarily impacted. Campus partners quickly united to develop a plan to keep residents safe and to provide access to clean water.

Gavin Roark, former executive director of VCU RLH, stated, “We have been working with our campus partners in facilities services, dining and strategic enrollment management and student success. We have been focusing on getting water to those students and also telling them where they can pick up drinking bottles of water.”

The RLH team worked around the clock to keep students on campus abreast of the situation and inform them of where to acquire bottled water provided by VCU. Additionally, RLH quickly developed a plan for the close to 5,000 students set to move back on campus for the spring semester. With an all-hands-on-deck approach, they implemented a plan to delay spring move-in and communicate the delayed opening to returning students. As students prepared to return to campus, RLH staff walked every room with VCU facilities staff to test water in all bathrooms and kitchens, and ensured that all fire suppression systems were back online.

“In those critical days, our team showed what true dedication looks like. Staff were out in the thick of it with moving pallets of water, setting up beds for temporary shelter, and hanging boil order signs to keep everyone informed and safe. At the same time, we were pivoting quickly. Staff were communicating with incoming residents and shifting move-in plans by a few days to make sure everything was ready for students to return to campus post the Richmond water crisis. It wasn’t easy, but the way we supported each other and our students showed the resiliency of the RLH team,” stated Dr. Megan Becker, executive director of RLH.

The swift emergency response by RLH and campus partners reflects an unwavering dedication to students and the entire VCU community. With student safety at the forefront, residents returned to campus for the spring semester with safe conditions and the water crisis resolved.



“In those critical days, our team showed what true dedication looks like.”



REST AND RECHARGE IN THE COMMONS

New Nap Pods Boost Student Wellness

A student-led initiative has brought innovative wellness resources to the VCU campus. Last year, freshman Anirudh Mepperla’s “Project Z” — a research project for his Focused Inquiry courses focused on college student sleep and wellness — garnered financial support from VCU’s Division of Student Affairs and the Student Government Association.

Word of Project Z soon reached Commons Director Carole Dowell, who was already exploring ideas for a student relaxation area featuring nap pods. “The Commons is always looking for ways to meet students’ needs and improve their well-being and academic success,” Dowell stated. This common goal led to a collaboration between The Commons, Professor Kirk Richardson (Mepperla’s instructor), and Mepperla himself to bring nap pods to VCU. Dowell highlighted the partnership, noting, “This student-driven initiative to install a nap pod in The Commons and in Harris will allow students to take a moment to relax and rejuvenate—whether that’s for a power nap during the day, in between classes, or while studying.”

The new Relaxation Corner, featuring the nap pods, has been a resounding success. Between November 12, 2024, and May 14, 2025, students took 1,546 naps, totaling 13,531 minutes of rest. An anonymous survey response from April described the corner as “best to relax and take a quick nap from classes and work.” Commons staff observations confirm the pods are in use throughout most of the day. Data reveals that approximately 23% of naps last between 17 and 24 minutes, with the average rest duration being 10 minutes and 18 seconds. As Dowell affirmed, “The nap pods provide students with a dedicated space to rest and recharge between classes, supporting their overall well-being and contributing to their success at VCU.”



NAP POD USAGE



Percentage of students satisfied with:



THE COMMONS

Percentage of students that agree the Commons is:

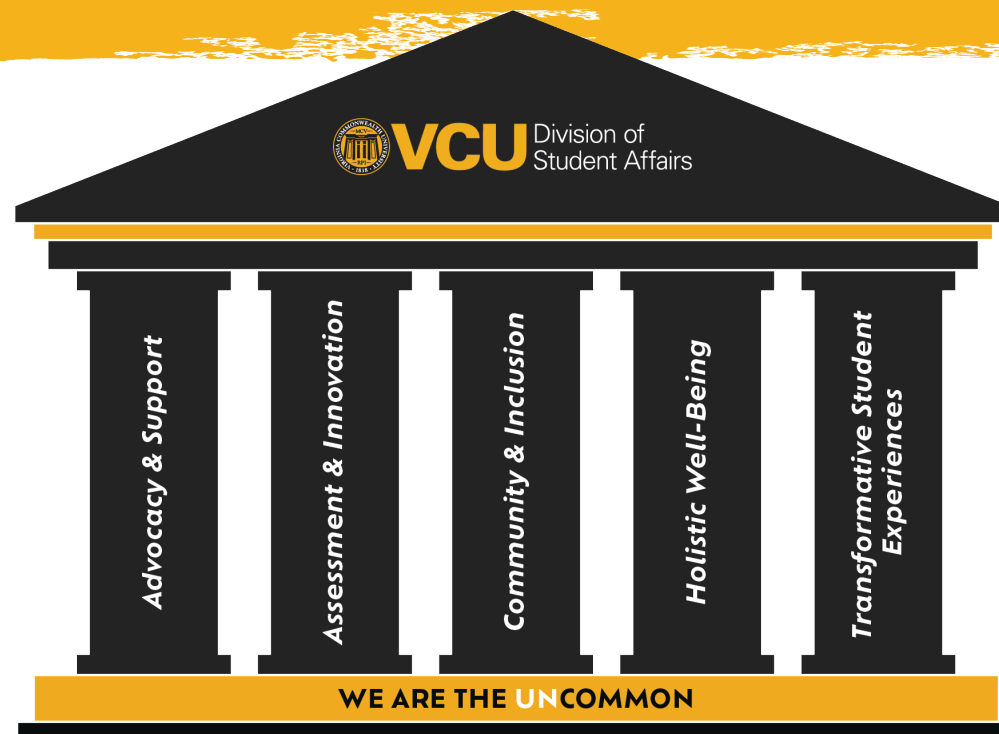


MISSION, VISION, VALUES

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

BACK-TO-BACK:

DSA Earns National Award for Second Consecutive Year



VALUES

Belonging

Collaboration

Stewardship

Student-Centered

Ram Proud!

MISSION

VCU's Division of Student Affairs fosters students' intellectual, social, emotional, cultural, and personal growth toward their full potential.

VISION

Pursue operational excellence through data-driven practices and innovation. We focus on student-centered, evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement.



91%

Agreed that DSA encouraged participation in professional development

80%

Rated the division's Family Friendliness as High/Moderately High

For the second year in a row, Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) Division of Student Affairs was named one of the Most Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs. This prestigious honor is awarded to student affairs divisions that create dynamic and inclusive workplaces while fostering work-life balance, professional growth, and equity for their staff.

"Receiving this national award is a testament to VCU and the Division of Student Affairs for fostering an environment where both our students and staff can thrive," said Dr. Aaron J. Hart, vice president for student affairs. "It's a

reflection of the culture we've intentionally cultivated—one that prioritizes innovation, equity, and the well-being of every individual."

VCU was one of only six institutions among the 22 winners to achieve this distinction for two consecutive years. The recognition was based on employee surveys evaluating areas such as family friendliness, salary, benefits, and career support.

"Earning this national recognition for a second consecutive year underscores the consistency of our efforts and the dedication of our team," Dr. Hart added. "It's an honor that places us among a select group of institutions setting the standard for excellence in student affairs."

Dr. Myriam Kadeba, director of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, led the team's effort to secure the recognition again this year. Collaborating with Dr. Yiyun Jie and Ijuanze Isom, they all played a pivotal role in compiling the division's submission.

Reflecting on the collective mission of the team, Mr. Isom remarked, "Every individual who works in student affairs—whether IT analysts, nurse practitioners, or HR coordinators—is here for the students. They are at the center of everything we do, and that shared sense of purpose is evident in all our interactions with colleagues."

The award was formally presented at the ACPA Annual Convention in Long Beach, California, in February 2025.



PILLAR 1: ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

Hazing Prevention: A Top Priority for VCU's DOS Team

The Dean of Student Advocacy Office (DOSA) is leading the way in hazing prevention. Working closely with the VCU-wide Hazing Prevention Coalition, the university provided programming and training to 676 students. In addition, DOSA hosted Adam's Day of Remembrance in partnership with the Love like Adam Foundation with a focus on training student leaders in ethical decision making.

A highlight was the educational campaign that revealed VCU's hazing rates (18%) are significantly lower than the national average (55%). This success is due to collaborative efforts and students' commitment, with 98% of students in selective organizations completing mandatory training. Assistant Dean Rachael Tully says this work "empowers students to call out behavior that puts their organizations...at risk." VCU's ongoing dedication to this vital work is making a tangible difference in student safety and well-being.

"Our team doesn't just go the extra mile for students...they run the full marathon alongside them. We're here to ensure students feel heard, supported, and empowered to succeed!"

—Lynanne Jamison, Associate Dean and Director of Student Advocacy

In 2024–25, OSA assisted 3,042 students through case management, Ram Pantry visits, housing support, and emergency funds. OSA recently expanded its team to meet demand by adding two new Assistant Dean roles—focused on Basic Needs Support and Student Well-being and Family Support—and a full-time Coordinator of Food Access Initiatives.

Supporting Off-Campus Rams

Stephanie Coats, VCU's Assistant Dean of Basic Needs Support, works with her Office of Student Advocacy (OSA) colleagues to help students transition to off-campus life by simplifying the housing process and connecting them to key resources. OSA provides essential services like lease reviews, budgeting tools, and mediation for roommate disputes.

Based on student feedback, two Housing Fairs were hosted in 2024–25—one in the fall and another in the spring—to offer earlier guidance. The most recent fair connected 195 students with 18 property management companies showcasing over 50 properties. The team actively works with neighborhood associations and local properties that rent to students, believing that a community-wide effort is crucial for addressing housing insecurity. This approach helps empower students to succeed navigating off campus life.



Make a Difference: Enhancing the Student Experience on the MCV Campus

To strengthen support for students on the MCV Campus, the Division of Student Affairs welcomed Dr. Noel Cortez in 2024 as the new Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Graduate and Professional Student Initiatives. As a first-generation college student and recent Ph.D. graduate, Dr. Cortez brings a deeply empathetic, student-centered approach to his role.



In his first year, Dr. Cortez built key relationships across campus and created new initiatives to directly engage students. His accomplishments include launching the Forward Focused newsletter for graduate students and establishing VCU Visionaries, a working group that provides vital student input.

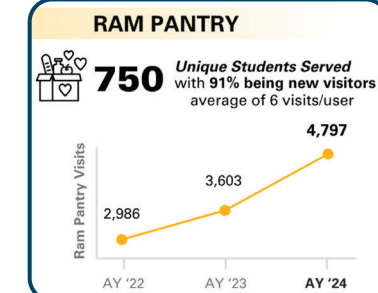
Looking ahead, Dr. Cortez is set to launch the new Foundations of Leadership for Graduate and Professional Students digital badge program. This initiative will empower students to develop core competencies in areas like emotional intelligence and communication. Dr. Cortez's commitment to fostering an inclusive and empowering environment is already making a significant impact on the VCU community.



3,042
Students
supported by OSA

The Ram Pantry: Combating Food Insecurity at VCU

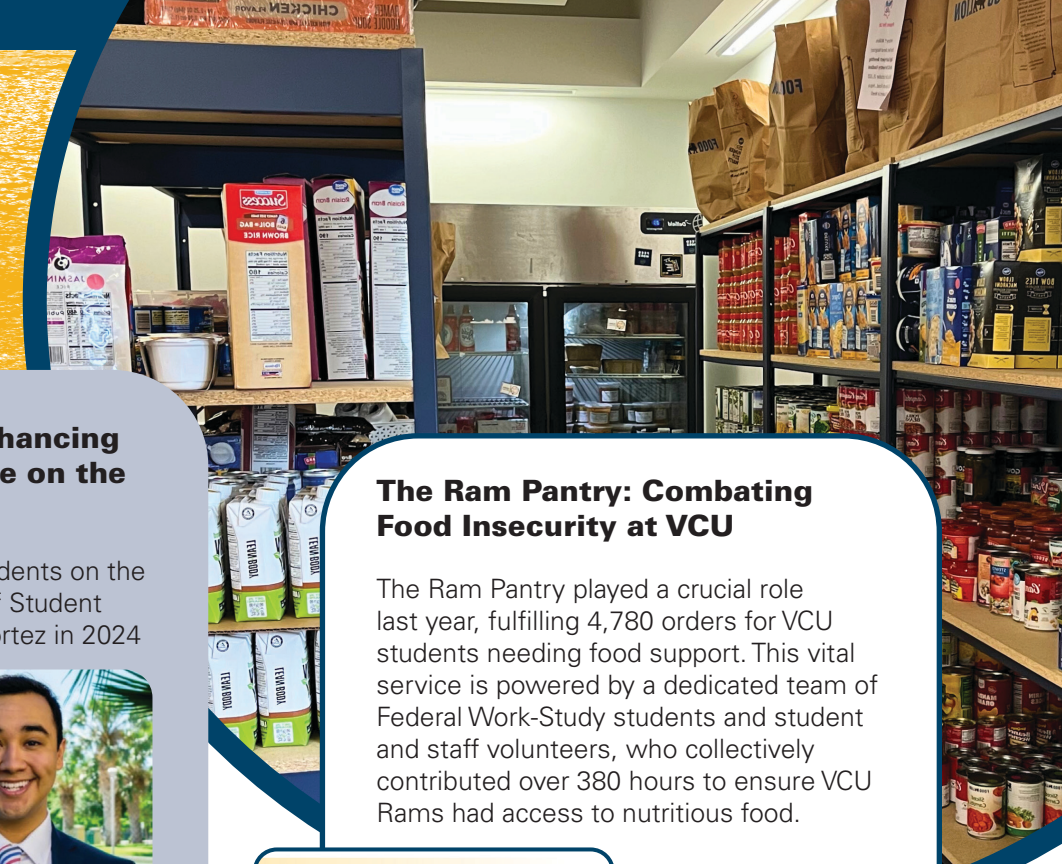
The Ram Pantry played a crucial role last year, fulfilling 4,780 orders for VCU students needing food support. This vital service is powered by a dedicated team of Federal Work-Study students and student and staff volunteers, who collectively contributed over 380 hours to ensure VCU Rams had access to nutritious food.



Brooks Baker, Food Security Specialist, emphasized that the pantry operates entirely on grants and donations, both in-kind and monetary. Last year alone, community partners such as Birdhouse Farmers Market, Feedmore, Ram City Market, and the College of Health Professions generously donated approximately 49,750 pounds of product. Additionally, VCU Finance & Administration, including VCU Business Services, VCU Dine, and Aramark, have been invaluable financial partners. The pantry's continued operation relies heavily on the support of all these contributors.

When asked about his passion for his work, Baker shared, "I love that I have been able to turn my lifelong passion for community service into a career. Working as the Food Security Specialist for VCU allows me to support VCU students so that they can succeed in all aspects of their lives."

Looking forward, Baker believes the recently passed Hunger Free Campus Bill will provide dedicated funding, but he stressed that the most impactful action VCU students, staff, faculty, alumni, and local community members can take is to donate to the Ram Pantry.



UNEQUALED REACH
to students

22K+
unique students served

155K+
total student interactions
Events - Support - Services

79%
of the VCU student body

PILLAR 2:

ASSESSMENT AND INNOVATION

ADVOCACY THROUGH INDIVIDUAL CARE AND SUPPORT

31.5K+ total support interactions

GENERAL CARE & SUPPORT

+35% increase in
ADVOCACY & CARE SUPPORT
referral cases

2,966 Total Cases

TOP CONCERNS SUPPORTED
Wellbeing || Finances || Academic

SUPPORTING BASIC NEEDS

+33% increase in
RAM PANTRY VISITS

4,797 Total Visits

750 Unique Users Served

661 Housing Help
including Off-Campus Housing assistance interactions and On-Campus Housing Accommodation requests

STUDENT CONDUCT SUPPORT

Code of Conduct Cases ----- 627
Academic Integrity Cases ----- 357
Other Conduct/Housing Cases ----- 1,192

7,358 STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL CONVERSATIONS



TOP SUPPORTED TOPICS

- Academics
- Connection to others
- Career/Jobs/Internship Prep

HEALING & EMPOWERMENT

SUBSTANCE RECOVERY PEER SUPPORT

793 Meetings

20,307 Total Attendance

SURVIVOR SUPPORT SERVICES

84 Non-Clinical Support Meetings

46 students met with professional staff

CRISIS & EMERGENCY

+12% increase in
MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS CONSULTATIONS

859 Total Visits

“When I was going through a hard time, I reached out to VCU Counseling...They were so helpful and pointed me to an abundance of resources...It changed my experience at VCU!” —VCU student

ENGAGEMENT DRIVES CONNECTION AND BELONGING

65K+ captured attendance with 11,259 unique participants

7K+ events
+9% increase

BUILDING COMMUNITY

533 Active Student Orgs
⬆️+17% increase

2,219 Student Org. Leaders

22 Sorority & Fraternity Chapters

624 Members

of Student Orgs

AY '21 331 AY '22 380 AY '23 481 AY '24 553
a 3-year consecutive increase!

ENGAGEMENT BOOSTS BELONGING & CONNECTION

90% of students feel they belong & can be themselves at VCU

95% of OMSA & RecWell participants feel connected to their peers

92% of Weeks of Welcome participants feel they belong at VCU



Student counts from departments working with students in confidential settings were included, which may result in slight overestimation of the total unique students reached.

Data are drawn from multiple systems and surveys; sample sizes and response rates for surveys varied. Methods and sample details available upon request.

Unless otherwise specified, all percentage increases in this report reflect one-year changes.



PILLAR 2 CONTINUED:

ASSESSMENT AND INNOVATION

HOLISTIC WELL-BEING AND QUALITY SERVICE

57K+ total service interactions

TRANSFORMATIVE STUDENT EXPERIENCES

ACCESSIBILITY & ACCOMMODATIONS

+10% increase in unique students registered with SAEO with a total of **3,400 unique students**

+14% increase in proctored exams & accommodation requests processed
Total of 8,801 exams & accommodations

HEALTH SERVICES

21,722 total clinic visits for **7,511 unique students**

DSA FACILITIES

STUDENT CENTERS

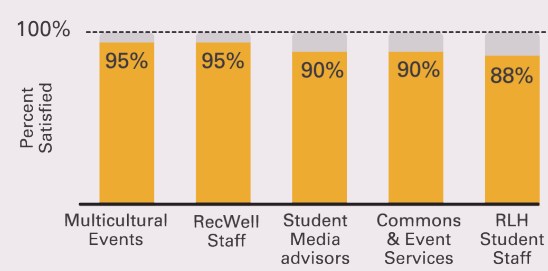
1.5M+ total traffic to 2 student activity centers

7,102 average weekday traffic to the Commons

4,337 Event Bookings with 51% of bookings from Student Orgs

SUPPORTIVE STAFF, SATISFIED STUDENTS

Percentage of Students who are satisfied with:



COUNSELING SERVICES

10,483 total attended clinical appointments for **1,940 unique students**

RESIDENTIAL LIFE & HOUSING

5,708 Students living in 11 Residence Halls

RECWELL FACILITIES

+12% INCREASE in Total Foot Traffic across 2 RecWell Facilities: **632K+ visits**

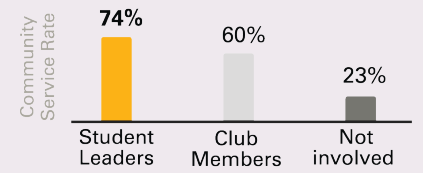
15K+ unique student facility users

LEADING & SERVING IN ACTION

+18% INCREASE in hours of leadership, community & services contributed by Transform & Emerging Leaders

10.5K+ Total Hours

Students active on campus give back to their communities at much higher rates.**



CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

937 DSA student employees contributed over **225K HOURS**

96% RecWell student employees agreed that they were supported by supervisors

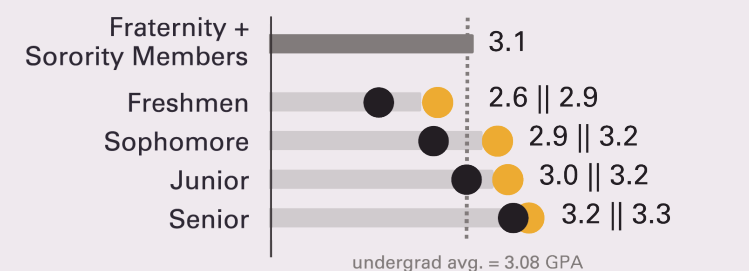
THRIVE & PERSIST AT HIGHER RATES

96% = AVERAGE 1-YEAR PERSISTENCE RATE OF:

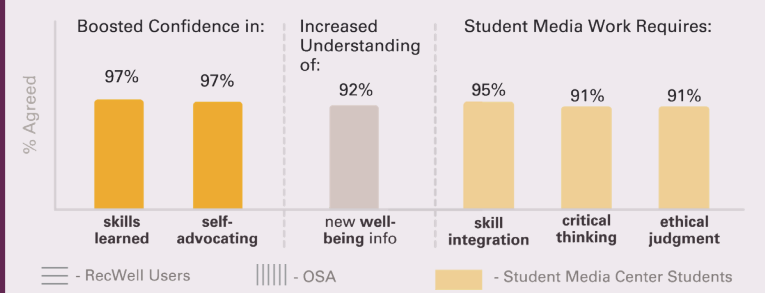
Student Org leaders, Fraternity & Sorority members, and Student Media students

COMPARED TO VCU'S AVERAGE 1-YEAR RATE = 88%

HIGHER GPA FOR:



LEARNING & DEVELOPING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM**



“Desk staff are so helpful. They provide safety to members during inclement weather and try to assist to the best of their ability with a positive attitude.” —Cary Street Gym user



PILLAR 3: COMMUNITY AND INCLUSION

OMSA's Continued Support for Local Indigenous Communities

The Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (OMSA) continued its mission to build community both on and off campus by deepening trust and relationships with local indigenous communities and offering volunteer opportunities open to the entire VCU community. This past year, OMSA partnered with the Office of Sustainability for two volunteer events at the Upper Mattaponi Tribal Garden. Staff and students engaged in hands-on service, including planting and weeding, which provided invaluable support to a key community partner.

These collaborative efforts have expanded the cultural knowledge of the OMSA team and increased a sense of belonging among Indigenous VCU students, staff and faculty. Feedback from student volunteers highlighted how the experience deepened their understanding of the Upper Mattaponi people. By building these connections and fostering allyship, OMSA is creating a more supportive campus community. The office is committed to continuing this important work through ongoing service and student involvement.

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity Raises Over \$40,000 for Cancer Research

Driven by a desire to make a profound impact, VCU's Phi Gamma Delta (FIJI) fraternity raised an amazing \$42,101 for the Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center.



The culmination of a week-long philanthropy drive, which included a golf tournament, contributed to this remarkable success.

FIJI chose the Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center for its powerful mission and strong community ties, a collaboration praised by Massey's Olivia Van Nuys who noted the fraternity's "inspiring" and "extremely motivated" efforts. The week's events raised \$22,000, while the golf tournament contributed \$20,000. As FIJI President Thomas Tetsuka stated, "change begins when students come together to make an impact."



SAEO's New Software Boosts Student Support

In response to student feedback, the Student Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (SAEO) team launched a new software system, AIMS (Accessible Information Management System), in Spring 2025. This move was a collaborative effort with the Division of Student Affairs IT department and included student testing to ensure a smooth transition.



AIMS provides a more intuitive interface, streamlining the process for students to request accommodations and communicate with their case managers. For faculty, the system simplifies the receipt of accommodation letters by sending them directly to their email. By enhancing communication and internal operations, AIMS ensures a more secure and efficient experience for the entire VCU community, with future plans to include online student scheduling.

Family Council Continues Herd, Hugs, and High 5's to Connect with Students

Last year, Herd, Hugs, and High-Fives quickly grew into one of our most anticipated student well-being events. What began as a simple idea—families offering hugs, high-fives, and free snacks—has turned into a campus favorite, with students eagerly sending their friends once they recognize the bright yellow signs and welcoming smiles.

The heart of the event is its simplicity: a hug, a high-five, or even just a granola bar reminds students they're seen, supported, and cared for by the VCU community. As Assistant Dean Kenlee Andreu shared, "I've never seen a student interact with the event and not walk away with a smile." One of the most memorable moments came when a hesitant student declined a hug at first but returned minutes later, grinning, and asked, "Okay... can I try one now?" From laughter to heartfelt thank-yous, these small gestures continue to create lasting connections for every Ram.



COMING SOON!

New On-Campus Housing Project Planned to Open Fall 2028

VCU has authorized the development of a new housing project on West Grace Street. The new development reflects the priority given to providing on-campus housing. Graduation rates of on-campus students are higher than their off-campus peers.

96%
Fall census
occupancy rate



5,708
Students
On-Campus



11
Resident Halls



"Gear Up for College" Showcases Accessibility to High School Students

More than 70 high school students with disabilities from across Virginia attended "Gear Up for College" on March 27, 2025. This initiative, driven by VCU's SAEO, Level Up Virginia, and ACE-IT, aimed to demystify the college transition by highlighting VCU's supportive environment and resources.

Led by Sarabeth Dreis of Gear Up Virginia, VCU's ACE-IT program coordinator Jan Shea, and SAEO Associate Director Dr. Brandi

Levingston, students toured campus, visited residence halls, and heard from VCU leaders and current students with disabilities.





PILLAR 4: HOLISTIC WELL-BEING

The Stall Seat Journal: A VCU Fixture for Health and Wellness

For over two decades, the Stall Seat Journal (SSJ) has been a consistent presence at VCU, creatively delivering vital health and well-being information to students. Published since 2001, the “Number 1 Toilet Paper” can be found in over 1,300 stalls across three campuses, including VCUarts Qatar.



This unique publication is a team effort. The health promotion team from RecWell, including Dr.

Mia Liadis and Starr Robinson, drives the content. Emily Tompkins, Health Communications Coordinator for Student Affairs, and Emily Leary, a Marketing and Communications Assistant, bring the monthly design and illustrations to life. Their popular Ram characters help share important info in a fun way.

The SSJ’s tone is based on the P.I.E. model—positive, inclusive, and empowering—to ensure content is delivered without judgment. The publication encourages students to take control of their own health habits, seek social connection, and utilize VCU resources, demonstrating a commitment to supporting student growth and well-being.



UCS Uses Large Scale Events to Connect with More Students

University Counseling Services (UCS) hosted two highly successful large-scale events this past year to connect with students beyond traditional clinical services.

In September, the Mental Health Fair reached over 150 students. In November, two Paws for Stress events attracted more than 370 students, giving them a chance to interact with therapy dogs.

These events provided mental well-being education, connect students with resources, and offer immediate stress relief.

VCU Sport Clubs: Soaring Participation, National Recognition

VCU’s Sport Club program, led by Assistant Director for Sports Programs Delaydia Frink, continues to be a cornerstone of student life. In 2024-25, the program expanded to 27 active clubs, adding Men’s Basketball and Pickleball. Participation remains strong at 1,473 unique members in Fall and 1,223 in Spring.

VCU sport clubs achieved exceptional competitive success:

- Men’s and Women’s Volleyball and Swimming competed at national championships.
- Women’s Basketball reached the NCBBA national tournament.
- Cross Country/Track & Field earned a 7th-place national ranking, with 26 All-Americans.
- Crew and Roundnet (also known as spikeball) also represented VCU at national events.
- VCU secured six victories at the 8th Annual Capital Cup against the University of Richmond.



RecWell Aquatics and Risk Management Program Partners with VCU OHS to Keep Campus Safer

RecWell Aquatics and Risk Management has partnered with VCU Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) to significantly enhance campus safety by expanding First Aid/CPR/AED training. Recognizing that immediate response to emergencies like cardiac arrest drastically increases survival rates, OHS secured grant funding to deploy more AEDs, naloxone, and bleeding control stations, alongside offering crucial training.

Mat Scott, RecWell’s Aquatics and Safety Coordinator, has been instrumental in this effort, leveraging his extensive CPR training expertise. RecWell provided 150 training vouchers and has since trained over 40 VCU Facilities Management staff and four University Student Commons staff as CPR instructors. RecWell now also offers naloxone and Stop the Bleed (STB) training to lifeguards and low-income Richmond communities. Collaborating with VCU Police and other departments, these initiatives, including Campus Safety Days, are making VCU safer.



Rams in Recovery Expands Outreach to Community Colleges

Rams in Recovery is expanding its reach to local community colleges with free coffee and naloxone bike use. The bikes serve as a mobile awareness tool, allowing the baristas to have casual, organic conversations about substance use recovery while grinding beans and serving coffee.

Established at VCU in 2013, Rams in Recovery supports students on their recovery journeys. Peer Recovery Specialist Danielle Beale was inspired by their own journey from Reynolds Community College to VCU to strengthen the connection between VCU’s program and area community colleges.

UNPARALLELED CARE

Students Praise USHS’ Kindness, Attentiveness, and Clear Communication

University Student Health Services (USHS), a nationally accredited primary care provider, continues to excel in its mission to serve VCU students.

Led by Director Dr. Shannan Green, the USHS team has consistently earned a remarkable 96% positive patient satisfaction rating over the past several years.



PILLAR 5: TRANSFORMATIVE STUDENT EXPERIENCES

VCU's New Civic Engagement Plan: Fostering Active Citizenship

In Fall 2024, VCU and DSA launched a new Civic Engagement Plan to foster active citizenship and democratic participation. This initiative, co-chaired by Dr. Jimmie Gahagan, Associate Vice President for Transformative Student Experiences, and Dr. Jacqueline Smith-Mason, Senior Associate Dean and Director of Academic & Faculty Affairs in the Honors College, brought together VCU students, faculty, and staff to develop a comprehensive plan aligned with the university's Quest 2028 goals.

As a result, VCU was recognized as one of the nation's Most Engaged Campuses for Student Voters, and a VCU Votes student leader was named to the prestigious ALLIN Student Voting Honor Roll. This success is already strengthening voter engagement and training student leaders to engage in productive dialogue. Next steps include launching a university-wide Civic Engagement Committee and celebrating national civic holidays.



VCU Hosts the National IMPACT Conference

VCU had the distinct honor of hosting the National IMPACT Conference from February 27 to March 1, 2025. As the largest annual conference dedicated to college student civic engagement, IMPACT brought together hundreds of students, faculty, and professionals to share best practices and inspire social change.

Guests from across the country enjoyed three dynamic days featuring inspiring keynote speakers, numerous community service opportunities in Richmond, engaging social events, and over 50 workshop sessions.



"Discussing ideas and concerns with Dr. Hart allowed us to truly workshop student issues and find real solutions to help everyone on campus."

—Jo Adams, President of the Student Government Association

Now in its third year, the Student Leadership Executive Board (SLEB) is made up of student leaders from a variety of student organizations and serves as a vital link between VCU students and administrators, including the Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Aaron J. Hart.



VCU Emerging Leaders Program Heads into 20th Year Building Community and Developing Student Leaders

The VCU Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) is a selective, year-long scholarship program that cultivates first-year students into confident leaders through a blend of academic coursework and hands-on, co-curricular activities. ELP is facilitated by the Office of Student Leadership and Engaged Learning,

ELP participants contribute thousands of leadership and volunteer hours annually to both the VCU and Richmond communities, gaining skills that extend beyond the classroom. The program fosters a vibrant and supportive community, emphasizing peer mentorship and meaningful dialogue with 800 alumni.



VCU Recognized as One of the Most Engaged Campuses for Student Voters

VCU has been named one of the most engaged campuses for college student voters, a direct result of the student-led VCU Votes Initiative.

VCU Votes operates through a partnership with students, VCU Academic Affairs, and the Office of Student Leadership and Engaged Learning within the Division of Student Affairs. Assistant Director Kelsey Jones credited the students' "voices, passion, and tireless efforts" for the achievement.



Weeks of Welcome Goes Western

Weeks of Welcome (WOW) 2024, themed "Welcome to RAM Rodeo," successfully engaged new and returning VCU students from August 16 to September 9, 2024. This multi-week campus wide program series, organized by the Office of Student Involvement with over 30 campus partners, hosted 95 events, attracting 6,776 registrations and 8,250 check-ins.

The Western-themed "RAM Rodeo" resonated strongly with students, aligning with a culturally relevant moment and Beyoncé's iconic style. Marketing efforts included popular giveaways like boot-shaped mugs and bandanas, which were a hit. Faculty and staff also embraced the theme, fostering relaxed interactions and discussions about campus life. Students overwhelmingly praised the theme, appreciating the fun energy it brought to campus and its successful integration into all promotional materials. This year's WOW proved highly effective in welcoming students and boosting campus spirit.

WEEKS OF WELCOME

93 Events | **6,586** Total Attendance | **2,119** unique student participants

Percentage of Weeks of Welcome attendees who...

- 92%** ...felt welcomed and included
- 91%** ...felt more confident navigating campus
- 86%** ...learned valuable VCU resources & services
- 82%** ...felt prepared for the start of the academic year

STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND AWARDS

National Awards

Residential Life and Housing

- Ishmeal Allensworth, Hall Director, Tamara Greenfield King Equity and Inclusion Scholarship, Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA).

University Commons

- Carole Dowell, Director, ACUI Values Award, Association of College Unions International.
- Carole Dowell, Director, Who's Who in America, Marquis Who's Who.
- Lauren Gyurisn, Assistant Director for Operations & Facilities, Don Rohel Scholarship, Association of College Unions International.

National Presentations

Assessment

- Rachel Siefing, Assessment Specialist; Yiyun Jie, Executive Director of Assessment. (2024, October). Does personality matter? Examining the interplay of personality, campus involvement, sense of belonging, and persistence. 2024 IUPUI Assessment Institute, Indianapolis, IN, United States.

Collaboration Between Units/External Partners Presentations

- Kimberly Bradley, Assistant Director of Residential Life (VCU); Deanna Hughes, Associate Director of Residence Life (USF). (2025, June). Two mamas earned a doctorate: Real talk about lessons learned. Association of College and University Housing Officers–International (ACUHO-I) Annual Conference, Columbus, OH, United States.
- Theresa Franklin, Assistant Director of Residence Life; Ra'meer Roberts, Assistant Dean of Students; Gabe Willis, Associate Vice President. (2025, March). A house is not a home: Creating a culture of care through residential life and housing and student advocacy. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Annual Conference, Seattle, WA, United States.
- Jessica Clary, Director of Student Media VCU; Elizabeth Smith, Director/Faculty Adviser for Pepperdine Graphic Media at Pepperdine University. (2025, May). Assess for success: A discussion and deep dive into campus media assessment. College Media Association, Monthly Featured Presentation (Selected).

Executive Leadership Team

- Aaron Hart, Vice President for Student Affairs, Inaugural Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAO) Convening at the AFA Annual Meeting, Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (AFA) Annual Meeting, Indianapolis, IN December 2024.
- Aaron Hart, Vice President for Student Affairs, Embracing Change: Cultivating Leadership in the Evolving Landscape of Student Affairs, Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (NASPA) Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA March 2025.

Residential Life and Housing

- Megan Becker, Executive Director for Residential Life and Housing. (2025, June). Inventory optimization: Rethinking space, student needs, and staffing. Association of College and University Housing Officers–International (ACUHO-I) Annual Conference, Columbus, OH, United States.
- Kimberly Bradley, Assistant Director of Residence Life and Ainsley Hallenbeck, Assistant Director of Operations. (2025, June). From sour to sweet: Resolving large staff conflicts with the Lemon Squeeze method. Association of College and University Housing Officers–International (ACUHO-I) Annual Conference, Columbus, OH, United States.
- Kimberly Bradley, Assistant Director of Residence Life; NyAsia Shaw, Assistant Director of Residence Life. (2025, June). It's giving super-vision. Association of College and University Housing Officers–International (ACUHO-I) Annual Conference, Columbus, OH, United States.

- Ainsley Hallenbeck, Assistant Director of Operations. (2025, June). PowerPoints to passion projects: Reimagining methods of student staff learning. Campus Home. Live! 2025, Association of College and University Housing Officers–International (ACUHO-I), Columbus, OH, United States.
- Kenzel Hill, Assistant Director of Residential Life. (2025, June). Mid-level mastery: Navigating career crossroads and strategies for successful transitions. ACUHO-I One Institute, Association of College and University Housing Officers–International, Columbus, OH, United States.

Student Accessibility and Educational Opportunity

- Chris Parthemos, Associate Director. (2025, July). Creating access for graduate students: A panel of perspectives [Panel presentation]. AHEAD Equity and Excellence Conference, Baltimore, MD, United States.

Student Media

- Jessica Clary, Director of Student Media. (2025, February). Advising 201: Recruiting, training, and retraining [Panel presentation]. ProCon 25, College Media Association, New York, NY, United States.
- Jessica Clary, Director of Student Media. (2025, February). Doing assessment to get what you want from admins, and more! ProCon 25, College Media Association, New York, NY, United States.

National Professional Involvement

Dean of Students Office

- Rachael Tully, Assistant Dean of Students, Collegiate Regional Director for Region 4 of Pi Beta Phi Fraternity for Women.

Executive Leadership Team

- Gabe Willis, Associate Vice President and Dean of Student Advocacy, Faculty Member for the New Assistant Vice President Institute, Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (NASPA).
- Gabe Willis, Associate Vice President and Dean of Student Advocacy, Faculty Member for the New Professionals Institute, Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (NASPA) and Southern Association for College Student Affairs (SACSA).

Fraternity and Sorority Life

- Lyssa Johnson, Assistant Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, National representative for Chi Upsilon Sigma to the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO).
- Lyssa Johnson, Assistant Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, Awards Committee for the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (AFA).
- Joe Wheelless, Assistant Dean and Director, Research Writers' Retreat Coordinator for the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (AFA).
- Joe Wheelless, Assistant Dean and Director, Volunteer member of the Research Committee for the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (AFA).

Student Media

- Jessica Clary, Director, National College Media Association's representative to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS).
- Jessica Clary, Director, Board member for the College Broadcasters Inc. National Student Media Convention.

University Student Commons

- Lauren Gyurisn, Assistant Director for Operations & Facilities, Region VI Director for the Association of College Unions International (ACUI), serving on the national volunteer leadership team.

Invited Speakers

- Rachel Siefing, Assessment Specialist; Yiyun Jie, Executive Director of Assessment. (2025, February). Does Personality Matter? Examining the Interplay of Personality, Campus Involvement, and Sense of Belonging. Division of Student Affairs Leadership Team, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI, United States.
- Yiyun Jie, Executive. Director of Assessment. (2024, September). Non-academic Unit Assessment. Institutional Effectiveness Annual Kick Off, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, Albuquerque, NM, United States.

Degrees/Education

- Kimberly Bradley, Assistant Director for Residence Life, Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Theresa Franklin, Assistant Director for Residence Life, Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Felicia Fowler, Administrative Assistant, Bachelors in Religious Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Aaron Hart, Harvard Institute for Educational Management (IEM), Harvard Graduate School of Education – Professional Education, July 2024.
- Kenzel Hill, Assistant Director for Residence Life, Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Lauren Powell, Assistant Director for Recovery Support, Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Miguel Siles, Finance Technician, Bachelors in Accounting, Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Samantha Thibodeaux, Budget Analyst, Masters of Business Administration, Virginia Commonwealth University.





VCU Division of
Student Affairs

Division of Student Affairs

901 Floyd Avenue | Box 843017
Richmond VA, 23284
804-828-8940

dsa@vcu.edu | students.vcu.edu

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UNEQUALED REACH to
students

22K+
unique students
served

155K+
total student interactions
Events - Support - Services

79%
of the VCU student body

**EXPERIENCES
AND ACTIVITIES**

65K+ captured attendance with
11,259 unique participants

7K+ events
+9% increase

SERVICE

57K+ total service interactions

32K+ health and counseling clinic visits

2M+ total traffic and visits to RecWell
facilities and student centers

SUPPORT

31.5K+ support cases
individual conversations, advising, mentoring

Data are drawn from multiple systems and surveys; sample sizes and response rates for surveys varied. Methods and sample details available upon request.



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