The Department Welcomes
New MSHA Program Director - Rachel Fisher Haga

Rachel Fisher Haga (MHA ’10), recently joined the Department after spending several years working for health systems in North Carolina and Virginia in physician group management. She is eager to share her industry experience and perspective as the newest member of the faculty. We asked Rachel for a brief rundown of her career path and the choices that led her to academia.

Why the career change?
I have a passion for connecting with people and helping them plan for their next career steps. As a leader, I have enjoyed educating and mentoring the people on my teams and introducing them to new concepts or new network connections. I also really enjoy leading programs through improvement efforts, and I realized how eager our faculty, students, and alumni are to support growth and change that will continue to enhance the MSHA program. I saw this job as an opportunity to lean in to both of those passions. I want to ensure that mid-career students not only get access to the rigorous academic training that will advance their careers, but also to evaluate new products and services we can offer our alumni to keep them connected in meaningful ways to the Department long after they’ve graduated.

I am also bringing healthcare management skills to the MSHA program. We are building best practices into program management and focusing on supporting faculty development. We are also exploring new ways to ensure that our students maximize the value of this educational experience and that they receive valuable training in professional and soft skills in addition to the traditional academic disciplines.

What's your vision for the Department and your new role as Program Director?
My vision for the Department is that we evolve in educational content delivery. Currently, our courses function separately as silos, but students coming to us from the field knowing that you can’t separate operations management from analytics/decision-making, finance, or quality. I want to support us taking a new approach in delivering this content so that it’s more translatable into the workplace. I want to see us grow and build partnerships across the VCU campus in other schools. I’m a firm believer in the benefits from partnering with other institutions that do things really well, such as the Business School, the Wilder School, the Brand Center, the School of Nursing, etc.

Best advice ever received:
It was from Howard Kern (MHA ’81) during my residency year. He said to spend the first 10 years of my career trying different settings and different roles to get a thorough understanding of what I enjoy doing and what I don’t enjoy doing in order to more fully understand my strengths and weaknesses within staff and management roles. Then dig into a field I can build and grow over the span of a career. This advice has served me incredibly well! I’m looking forward to a long career ahead, and these years of taking Howard’s advice to heart have really prompted me not to settle into a role or department just because I can do it but continue to stretch myself to continue to try new things.

You can read the whole interview here on our new blog (which you will read more about later in this issue.)
In an academic setting, fall is the new beginning – new students, refreshed courses, and in 2017, new faculty and a refreshed strategic vision. First the new students: we have 24 new MHA students, with an average incoming GPA of 3.54, and 50% of them are from out of state! They join 18 returning students back from productive summer internships all over the country and 20 students starting out their residencies, again all over the country. In the MSHA program, we have 19 new students (including one from Nevada) with backgrounds as diverse as the industry itself. They join 16 returning students. The PhD program welcomes two new full-time students and one part-time student who will join the nine current students in various stages of obtaining their doctoral degrees. A third full-time student will join us as soon as he moves from San Diego, CA.

You met Dr. Christian Wernz in our last Cardwell newsletter. He spent the summer traveling and teaching in China. He is already building his research program at VCU, and will teach our decision analytics courses for both MHA and MSHA students in the spring semester.

We are delighted that MHA alumna, Rachel Fisher Haga (MHA ’10), has joined us as our new MSHA Program Director. She brings a wealth of knowledge about project management and strategic thinking as well as many wonderful connections from around Richmond and beyond. She talks about her philosophy in the interview on page 1. She and Carrie Thornbrugh, our relatively new MSHA Program Coordinator whom you will meet on page 13, are making plans for a variety of exciting initiatives aimed at strengthening the MSHA program and providing better value for our students.

Our refreshed strategic vision and its implications for this year’s goals are still a work in progress. At a recent faculty retreat, however, we agreed on the language that will represent our path forward:

*Building on our remarkable environment, our extraordinary networks, and our legacy of excellence, we provide the knowledge, skills, and connections for tomorrow’s healthcare leaders through our innovative and business-focused approach.*

Many of you provided input into our strategic planning process by talking with our consultants, SIR, or responding to SIR’s surveys. We learned that you want to hear more from us about our research, our classroom activity, and our thoughts about contemporary healthcare issues. We are delighted, and are looking forward to engaging in conversations with you about all of this and more. To that end, Carrie Thornbrugh has created a departmental blog titled *The HAD Standard*. Here you can read about Dr. Wernz’s China travels, Dr. Jonathan DeShazo’s thoughts about what the eclipse can teach us about healthcare reform, reactions of several alumni and our Nashville resident to Modern Healthcare’s Women Leaders in Healthcare conference, and what Dr. Michael McCue’s work on the impact of the ACA’s minimum medical loss ratio can tell us about the effects of its possible repeal. You can also get some reading suggestions from Dr. Gloria Bazzoli that may help you make some sense out of the reform discussions in Congress. Check back often, as we will be posting new material every month from our faculty, our students, and (we hope) you!

As a final note, our hearts go out to our colleagues in weather-ravaged areas across the country: California, Oregon, Montana, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and Puerto Rico; and our colleagues in Las Vegas following the horrific events of October 1st. We know how hard you are working, as leaders of essential services organizations, to help your communities cope with the devastating impact of these terrible events. We send you our very best thoughts and wishes, as well as our great admiration for all that you do.

Your thoughts and comments are always welcome. I can be reached at cwatts2@vcu.edu or 804-828-5222.
New Orleans, LA was the site for the 2017 AcademyHealth annual research meeting. In June, Drs. Gloria Bazzoli and Jan Clement attended the conference. Three PhD students presented posters: Dr. Jaya Khushalani (who graduated in August), Jennifer Palazzolo, and Sandra Lamm. The Department hosted a dinner at a local restaurant where several alumni and guests enjoyed delicious authentic New Orleans cuisine.

In July, Dr. Cindy Watts attended the Modern Healthcare Women Leaders Conference in Nashville, TN where executive leaders spoke about the challenges and strengths of being a woman in healthcare. Through the generosity of VCU Health, Dr. Watts attended the conference along with Nashville-based alumni: Jenese Camper (MHA '07), Katie Troxler (MHA '13), Carolyn Cardwell Sparks (MHA '14), Tiasha Bhowmik (MHA '16) as well as Sumter Armstrong (MHA '08) and MHA Class of 2018 resident, Ann Hancock. Nina Hobcroft (MSHA '95), Vice President of Strategic Alliances and Market Development at VCU Health, and Dr. Marsha Rappley, VCU Vice President for Health Sciences and CEO of VCU Health, rounded out the table of VCU attendees. Trish and Mike Sherrod, both alumni from the MHA Class of 2002, joined the VCU contingent for a dinner following the conference.
Marijo Lecker (MSHA ’93) was awarded Preceptor of the Year by the MHA Class of 2017. Dr. Jon DeShazo, Tracy Kemp Stallings (MHSA ’95) and Alexa Osborne (MHA ’17) surprised Marijo with the award at a lunch in Charlottesville, VA in August.

The Department hosted a retreat for faculty and staff in August to discuss strategic positioning language derived from data and analysis provided by our consultants at SIR that will kick-off our new strategic plan. Participants spent the afternoon in groups imagining the future state of the Department and setting goals to help get us there.

The Department hosted a happy hour for the PhD students at Postbellum in Richmond, VA in September. Faculty and staff mingled with students over appetizers and drinks.

The Yasar A. Ozcan Scholarship was featured on the VCU Campaign Giving site in September. Dr. Ozcan and three MSHA Class of 2017 alumni (Drs. Bethany Baker, Mitchell Harris, and KC Ogbonna), who were pivotal in planning and fundraising for the scholarship, were quoted in the article.

Former faculty member, Robert John Halonen, who taught the MHA core courses in health economics and finance and served as faculty advisor for MHA students, passed away recently at his home in Cincinnati, OH. The MHA class of 1976 invited him to their 40 year reunion activities last year, including the spring Paul A. Gross Landmarks in Leadership event and a department sponsored breakfast the next morning.

The construction of the new School of Allied Health Professions building is coming along! The SAHP is planning a topping off ceremony in October to celebrate the completion of the structural framework.

We’ve had enormous demand from both students and alumni seeking additional access to research, analysis, and professional opinions from our faculty and community partners on topics like healthcare, leadership, and business.

You asked for it, you got it!

Please visit our new blog, The HAD Standard at vcuhad.blog and feel free to comment and/or suggest possible blog topics and features.

PhD students at Postbellum (L to R): Martinson Owusu, Mary Cait Nannary, Steven Menzies, Kim Decker, Thomas Chon, Jennifer Pryor, and Jennifer Palazzolo
In the News

Dr. Alan Dow (MSHA ’05) used his extensive medical experience to administer CPR to a patron in cardiac arrest at a Richmond restaurant in May. Dr. Dow met with John Cummings, the man he helped save, and his family in August. You can read and watch the news story here.

Dr. Dow was featured in a VCU news article about an essay he co-authored in the New England Journal of Medicine entitled “Interprofessional Education - A Foundation for a New Approach to Health Care.” You can read the story here. Alan was awarded the Seymour and Ruth Perlin Professorship in Healthcare Quality in 2016. The professorship was established in 2008 by Dr. Jonathan Perlin (MSHA ’97) and his wife, Donna, to recruit and retain a distinguished faculty member with joint appointments in the Department of Health Administration and the Department of Internal Medicine.

Leadership Metro Richmond, a regional leadership development and service group, selected 70 people for its next Leadership Quest program. Natalie Maixner (MHA ’13) was among those chosen. She will participate in the 10-month program that will give participants a deeper understanding of the region and ways to be better engaged in the community.

Sheryl Garland (MHA ’88) was invited to give the June commencement address at South University in Glen Allen, VA.

Wes Campbell (MHA ’98) successfully defended his dissertation proposal in July entitled “A Comparison of Quality Indicators Between Medicare Accountable Care Organizations and Health Maintenance Organizations Using Publicly Available Data.” He is a PhD Student in the School of Allied Health Professions. Dr. Cindy Watts is chairing his dissertation committee.

The MHA Class of 1992 reunited in September in Richmond to celebrate their 25th reunion. Paul Miller and Ron Galonsky met with Dr. Jon DeShazo in the Grant House for breakfast and a campus tour. Later that evening, the two grads joined several of their classmates at The Boathouse in Rocket’s Landing for dinner.

Dr. George Joseph Stukenborg (PhD ’95) passed away in Earlysville, VA on July 21, 2017. Born in Louisville, KY, Dr. Stukenborg earned his Bachelor’s and Master’s Degree from the University of Louisville. George had a 20-year career as a professor at the University of Virginia, School of Medicine, Public Health Sciences.

Two alumni from the MHA Class of 1969 have passed away. Roger Allen Ford passed away at his home in Bonita Springs, FL. After he earned his MHA, Mr. Ford was drafted in the Army and was part of combat infantry in Vietnam. Roger worked as the CEO of Bertrand Chaffee Hospital and Nursing Home in Springville, NY from 1972 to 1998. At the age of 55, he retired and moved to Dunedin, FL. He moved to Bonita Springs twelve years ago and is survived by his daughters, son-in-law, and twin grandchildren. Don Patterson was living in Iowa when he passed. Before coming to Richmond, he graduated from Westminster College in New Wilmington, PA with a B.A. in Psychology.
Bon Secours Virginia Health System established a new leadership structure at Bon Secours Rappahannock General Hospital in Kilmarnock, VA, naming Chris Accashian (MHA ’01) as CEO of RGH. Chris currently serves as the CEO of Bon Secours St. Francis Medical Center in Midlothian, VA. He will serve as CEO of both hospitals.

Dale Alward (MHA ’05) was named the new Chief Executive Officer of Twin County Regional Healthcare in Galax, VA. Dale most recently served as CEO of Mercy Hospital in Miami, FL.

Cameron Atkins (MHA ’15) is the Director of Operations at Iggbo in Richmond, VA. His previous position at Iggbo was as Lab Enablement Manager.

Recent graduate Dr. Bethany Baker (MSHA ’17) started a new position as Clinical Pharmacy Manager at Children’s Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, MO. She was previously at VCU Health in Richmond, VA as a Health-System Pharmacy Administration Resident.

Cullen Brown (MHA ’14) was promoted to Vice President of Operations at Los Robles Hospital and Medical Center in Los Robles, CA. Cullen started his career with HCA at Spotsylvania Regional Medical Center in Fredericksburg, VA as an administrative resident, was promoted to Director of Operations, and last served as Associate Administrator.

Carolyn Carpenter (MHA ’98) is the new Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Sentara Norfolk General Hospital in Norfolk, VA. For the past three years, Carolyn served as the Chief Operating Officer for Duke University Health System in Durham, NC.

Justin Coury (MHA ’12) was named the Chief Operating Officer at TriStar Centennial Medical Center in Nashville, TN. He most recently served as the Chief Operating Officer and Ethics and Compliance Officer for Medical City Denton in Denton, TX.

Chris Dadlez (MHA ’79) announced in September that he will step down and retire as President and CEO of Trinity Health of New England in Hartford, CT at the end of the year. You can read about his decision here.

Lauren Krotz (MHA ’17) was promoted recently to Research Program Project Manager at Inova Schar Cancer Institute in Falls Church, VA. Lauren did her administrative residency in the Inova Health System.

Kenneth Sadler Meyers (MHA/MD ’12) is a surgeon at Sentara Careplex Hospital in Hampton, VA. He was previously a resident at Christiana Care Health System in Newark, DE.

Valerie Mondestin (MHA ’17) is now Operations Manager at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia in Philadelphia, PA. She did her residency at Riverside Health System in Newport News, VA.

Brent Palmer (MHA ’16) is a Legislative Policy Analyst for the State of Utah in Salt Lake City, UT. He was previously a Senior Health Policy Analyst for Leavitt Partners.

Spencer Snyder (MHA ’17) accepted a post-fellowship offer to stay with Providence St. Joseph Health as the Regional Manager of Strategic Services for Northern California in Santa Rosa, CA.

Brenda Williams (MHA ’76) retired after 38 years of service from Regional Medical Center in Orangeburg, SC. Her last post was Vice President of Strategy and Compliance. Brenda is a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, has been awarded numerous awards throughout her career, and is an active member of the Orangeburg community.
The Board of Directors of The Commonwealth Fund have awarded a grant to Dr. Mark Hall from Wake Forest University, and **Dr. Mike McCue** to continue their research on “Using Premium Rate and Medical Loss Ratio Data to Assess Insurers’ Financial Performance.”

**Dr. Chris Wernz** traveled to Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China in July to teach a two-week course on decision analysis to 24 industrial engineering students. The course provided a practical but systematic and rigorous approach to decision-making in complex situations.

**Dr. Jon DeShazo** will continue his four-year appointment as a Blick Scholar. This year, Dr. DeShazo is using his funding to pursue two research projects. One will test the effectiveness of using telepresence robots for remotely attending health management classes. The second will evaluate the use of face recognition and mood detection in the hospital to quantify the anxiety and stress levels of staff (nurses, house staff, hospitalists, etc.).

**Dr. Mike McCue** was interviewed by WalletHub for his expert insight on the future of the ACA. To read his thoughts on “2017’s State Uninsured Rates,” click [here](#).

**Drs. Dolores Clement and Jessica Mittler** traveled to Fairlee, VT in July to attend the Health Professions Educators’ Summer Symposium. The overall aim of the conference is to improve the quality of healthcare delivery and professional education.

The Academy of Management (AOM) Annual Meeting was held in Atlanta, GA in August. **Dr. Laura McClelland** presented at a session and was also the organizer and chair for two workshops. **Dr. Cheryl Rathert** was also a chair and facilitator for two workshops at the event.

**Dr. Cindy Watts** traveled to Kaohsiung, Taiwan, to meet with faculty and teach several class sessions for the first year MSHA students at Kaohsiung Medical University in September. During her nine-day visit, Dr. Watts also spoke with a group of hospital personnel at Antai Tian-Sheng Memorial Hospital and a combined undergraduate/graduate class in health administration at I-Sou University. While in Kaohsiung, she had the opportunity to connect with two HAD alumni, **Dr. Ester Hui-Min Hsieh** (PhD ′10) and **Dr. Hubert Herg-Chia Chiu** (PhD ′95). Both are KMU faculty members.

The Department looks forward to hosting the MSHA students in Richmond in March for their annual week-long visit that includes faculty and alumni presentations, local healthcare facility tours, and many informal interactions.
Dr. Jaya Khushalani (PhD ’17) successfully defended her dissertation in July entitled, "Racial and Ethnic Differences in Receipt of Immediate Breast Cancer Reconstruction Surgery: Do Hospital Characteristics Matter?" Congratulations Dr. Khushalani!

The incoming MSHA Class of 2018 had a full week when they joined us for their first on-campus session in July. The week started off with a "picnic" that had to be moved inside because of the sweltering Richmond heat. But students and faculty were still able to get to know each other and enjoy some BBQ. Later in the week, Dr. Dolores Clement accompanied the cohort to Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center where they toured the prosthetic and spinal cord injury departments, as well as the pharmacy.

Dr. Jon DeShazo published an article on LinkedIn comparing aspects of the Great American Eclipse of 2017 to healthcare reform. You can read it and other posts here.

Dr. Robert Graboyes wrote an article titled "10 Stray Thoughts on the Senate Healthcare Bill." It can be read here.

Dr. Michael J. McCue published an article, “The Financial Performance of PSOs During the First Year of the ACA Mandated Coverage,” in a 2017 issue of Journal of Health Care Finance.

Jeffrey Harrison (PhD ‘02) co-authored an article for the Journal of Health Care Finance entitled "Is Value-Based Purchasing the New Reality in Healthcare?"

Dr. Mei Zhao (PhD ‘04) co-authored an article for the online academic publisher, Frontiers. Her study was designed to explore nationwide dementia literacy among older adults in urban China, and to investigate the factors associated with overall dementia literacy. Dr. Zhao has also been named Chair of the Department of Health Administration in the Brooks College of Health at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, FL.

Dr. Jaya Khushalani presented a poster at AcademyHealth in June.

The MSHA Class of 2018 and Dr. Dolores Clement at the VA
During his summer internship, MHA Class of 2019 student JD Drasbek hosted an information session in Provo, UT for students interested in learning about the program. MHA Class of 2020 student Mackenzie Mummert shared her excitement about starting with VCU in the fall.

Orientation week for the MHA Class of 2020 began in the Grant House where new students met with faculty and staff and learned about expectations for their upcoming term. The following day the students teamed up to scale the towering heights at the ropes course. Later that day, the cohort met with MHA Class of 2019, faculty, and staff at Deep Run Park to relax, eat burgers, and compete in the third annual corn hole competition (MHA Class of 2019 student Maury Baker is the reigning king!). The week ended with orientation and breakfast provided by the School of Allied Health Professions and a volunteer activity at Shiplock Park in downtown Richmond.
MHA/MD student Katie Pumphrey was selected to represent the 6,000+ graduate students at VCU as a Graduate Student Representative to the Board of Visitors. Dr. Michael Rao presented Katie to the BOV last spring, and she officially began her role this fall.

Drs. Cindy Watts and Jon DeShazo, along with Director of Industry Engagement Tracy Kemp Stallings (MSHA ’95), have been zipping around the country over the last few months visiting with third year residents and their preceptors.

The Department hosted a group of interested VCU Health medical students for an MHA/MD dual degree information session in October. Dr. Dolores Clement and Dr. Alan Dow (MSHA ’05) spoke about the degree requirements and coursework, and current MHA/MD students Joanne Chiao and Dev Sahni provided their perspective on the application process and work/life balance.
Alumni Spotlight

Alan Dow, MD, MSHA (MSHA ’05) is the Seymour and Ruth Perlin Professor in Healthcare Quality and the Assistant Vice President of Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care at Virginia Commonwealth University. In these roles, he oversees the University’s Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care through which approximately 2,000 students and 100 faculty participate in programs each year to increase collaboration across disciplines in healthcare. These programs range from classroom-based to simulation-based, and from inpatient settings to the community. “First, we try to understand where our students and practitioners are in terms of understanding their roles in healthcare,” says Dow. “And then we try to provide them the training that helps them view their role more broadly and be more effective at working across disciplines to change the system and improve care.”

This year for the first time, health administration students will be joining 500 students from six other professions in IPEC 501, a one-credit course titled, “The Foundations of Interprofessional Practice.” Dr. Jon DeShazo is one of the course faculty.

“We’ve only had a couple of sessions so far and already the addition of the health administration students has been really positive,” Dow notes. “We talk about barriers to collaboration, and most students think about direct patient care. The students and faculty from health administration recognize the organizational and policy barriers, though. That’s a critical perspective.”

Alan is also one of the core faculty (along with Dr. Cindy Watts) involved in the Langston Quality Scholars Program, a program housed in the School of Nursing that mentors interprofessional teams of nurses, physicians, and other practitioners from the health system through year-long quality improvement projects.

Alan and his faculty have also guided student teams, including students from health administration, through work on quality improvement projects in the health system. “Much of what I do from day-to-day is mentor teams of faculty and students,” Dow noted. “My job is to help projects be successful and to develop impactful programs. In all of this work, I rely on what I learned during my masters in health administration coursework. You have to understand policy, financing, and organizational structures to be successful as a leader.”

The work of Alan and his colleagues has been recognized nationally. He recently published an invited commentary in the New England Journal of Medicine about interprofessional education and has published over a dozen articles over the past eighteen months. He is also a nationally sought-after speaker.

“MY job is to help projects be successful and to develop impactful programs. In all of this work, I rely on what I learned during my masters in health administration coursework. You have to understand policy, financing, and organizational structures to be successful as a leader.”

“It’s fun to talk about our work and the accomplishments of our students and faculty. VCU is really leading the way in interdisciplinary and interprofessional work, and I am proud to be a part of that. I really believe this work has a multiplicative effect. Working together better is our most promising approach for overcoming the challenges we face to the health of our communities.”
Dr. Vimal Mishra is an academic hospitalist, a physician informaticist, and a transformative health care leader at Virginia Commonwealth University Health System (VCUHS). As a physician providing hospital-based medical care, his work lies at the intersection of providing high-quality clinical care leveraging innovative health information technology.

As the medical director of telemedicine, he provides system-wide leadership, strategic direction and operational oversight for an enterprise-wide teleservices effort to enhance access, improve clinical outcomes, and gain clinical efficiency and effectiveness. Under his vision and leadership, VCU health has embarked on Virtual Health Initiative.

As a chair of the Computerized Physician Order Entry (Orders) Council, he oversees design, planning, and implementation of clinical orders, order sets, and standards to assure order sets are of high quality, evidence-based, and ones that meet the needs of clinicians and patients. In this role, he has helped VCUHS implement several projects and has refined a large number of orders and order sets to help guide appropriate care plans and promote delivery of best clinical practices. As a physician informaticist, he advises the health system on electronic health records (EHR) configuration, heuristics, design, workflow, adoption strategies, analytics, data strategy and implementation. As a physician member of the Data Integrity and Analytics Council and the Clinical Data Workgroup, he provides crucial input in analyzing and discovering insights from electronic health records (EHR) data creating clinical, research, operational, and business intelligence tools to support patient care.

His research interest focuses on complex health care processes and delivery, and the application of multidisciplinary approaches that integrate systems science, informatics, operations research and management methodologies to improve health care safety, quality, efficiency, and effectiveness. Dr. Mishra serves as associate director for VCU Program in Operations and Work Effectiveness Research.

Dr. Mishra completed his internship and residency in Internal Medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University. He is board certified in clinical informatics. He has completed his Master’s in Business Management and Clinical Informatics from Duke Fuqua School of Business. He is an assistant professor of medicine and holds an affiliate appointment with the Department of Health Administration, where he participates in a variety of teaching and research development activities.

---

If you have not done so recently, please take a moment to update your contact information in the Department’s alumni database. Our alumni database is our most important tool for keeping in touch. The information contained in the database is not made public and can only be accessed by Department faculty and staff and those alumni who have been verified and assigned a username. The sign in page for the database can be found here.

Can’t remember your log-in information? Don’t fret, just ask! Please send an email to healthadmin@vcu.edu with your request.
Carrie Thornbrugh, MA: Marketing and Program Coordinator, MSHA and Ph.D.

Carrie joined us in February as the program coordinator for the MSHA and Ph.D. programs, and departmental marketing manager. In the latter role, she has established a blog for the HAD community and manages our LinkedIn and Facebook presence.

On a quiet, cold, Monday night in January, our dusty, trusty, and tired Honda creaked its way up Broad Street to a bare garden apartment in Church Hill – the place we were now to call “home.” 2017 marks a series of rather momentous "firsts" for me. I'm 30 years old (not actually a first for me – I've been 30 for a couple of years now) and recently relocated to RVA from San Francisco, CA by way of Austin, TX. My partner and I just purchased our first home here in Church Hill, and I'm working within a totally new academic field of Health Administration. What a long, strange, trip it's been.

At no point in my life and career, did any signs point here to Central Virginia. I grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma and received my B.A. in English Literature from Texas A&M University before earning my M.A. in Contemporary Literary Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. My academic background and literary expertise is in modern American and European literature with a focus on gender theory, identity, and the cultural movements in art, philosophy, and society that shaped the twentieth and twenty-first century. This is all just a fancy and convoluted way to say that I really love a good story.

Professionally, I merrily skipped down the path of higher education and I’ve been incredibly fortunate to have had the opportunity to live, study, and teach in world cities with rich literary and historical significance such as London, Rome, and San Francisco. During a year-long sojourn in Austin, I decided to step away from higher-ed and use my writing skills for social media and content marketing for a fresh, young, start-up in Austin. Besides being the oldest and decidedly least hip employee there, I was able to put into practice the very kind of persuasive rhetoric that I teach in class, as well as assume a training/teaching role for the creative department.

As luck would have it, the winds of change picked me up once again, and my partner and I loaded up the Honda, drank our last beer, and waved goodbye to the warm weather and honkytonks of the Lone Star State. This time, opportunity presented itself once again in higher-ed and the brave new world of Health Administration. I still teach an online argumentative writing course with the Academy of Art University in San Francisco and I’m energized by my new challenge of navigating the complex state system of VCU and niche scope of HAD – it turns out, I’m not the only one who loves a good story. In my short time here, I’ve learned quite quickly that from the outside, Health Administration may seem like all hospitals, business, red-tape, and bottom-lines, but at its core, it is really about telling a story. These stories and voices are everywhere, intimately and delicately woven into every aspect – from patients, to doctors and nurses, to problem-solvers and researchers all working together as allies. I’m grateful this particular storybook has opened for me and I’m excited to turn the page.

**To read more about the myriad of stories, opinions, and perspectives of health administration, subscribe to our new blog, The HAD Standard.**
For those of you who don’t know me, I am the incoming Chair of the VCU Health Administration Department’s Alumni Advisory Council (VCU HAD AAC). I am a member of the MHA class of 1978 and recently retired as President & CEO of Camden Clark Medical Center, Parkersburg, WV.

Serving as a volunteer with the VCU HAD AAC for the last two years has given me the opportunity to give back to the department that gave me such a great education, for which I am sincerely grateful. This year, the Department has been engaged in a strategic planning process that identifies and advances the Department’s future vision, mission, goals and objectives, thus, providing stimulus to the Council on how to advance our organization as a more engaged and supportive one to this future.

The Department’s mission to create great leaders is one that we can all appreciate and embrace. There is no doubt that the need for innovative, compassionate, business savvy leaders…those that can reimagine what healthcare should be…will be in high demand in the future. That is the Department and the Council’s future challenge…i.e. creating great future healthcare leaders…together. It gives us all a mission that will require a greater engagement from all constituents...including the alumni.

The author Warren Bennis once said, “Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.” I believe that the Alumni Advisory Council can help the Department convert this new plan into reality. To that end, I’ll be working with the current Advisory Council (and the Department) to expand membership, refresh the governance structure, and accomplish the following goals over the next few years:

1. Create a sustainable student/alumni mentoring program.
2. Bring the experience of the field of practice to HAD classrooms.
3. Document the history of the Department and the field by gathering the stories of our alumni to share with all VCU HAD constituents.
4. Recognize alumni for their past and ongoing contributions to the Department and the field.
5. Assist the Department in building, promoting and maintaining a well-connected alumni organization.
6. Provide advice and support in matters relating to program curriculum, Departmental policies, and other matters as requested

VCU HAD’s alumni are a smart, motivated, talented group of people. We will need alumni to assist with this educational mission. You can help by expressing your interest via email to Beth Williamson Ayers (bwayers@vcu.edu), Dr. Cindy Watts (cwatts2@vcu.edu) or to me (mking12@aol.com). As we progress, I will keep you in the loop! My best to you and your families.

Michael A. King, FACHE
Class of 1978
Officers

Chair
Mike King, FACHE, MHA 1978
Senior Consultant, Healthcare Repass, Inc.
128 Timberlake Ct.
Mt. Gilead, NC 27306
Email: mking12@aol.com

Past Chair
Bassam Kawwass, FACHE, MHA 1980
President & CEO, Archer and Associates
925 Upper Hastings Way
Virginia Beach, VA 23452
Email: Bassam.Kawwass@ArcherAndAssociates.org

Members - at-Large

Chris Accashian
MHA 2001 - 3rd year
CEO, Bon Secours St. Francis Medical Center
13710 St. Francis Blvd
Midlothian, VA 23114
Email: christopher_accashian@bshsi.org

Matt Gitzinger
MHA 2008 - 3rd year
Director of Clinical Support Services, Vidant Health
211 Virginia Road; PO Box 629
Edenton, NC 27932
Email: matt.gitzinger@vidanthealth.com

William Haugh, FACHE
MHA 2008 - 2nd year
CEO, Georgetown Community Hospital
1140 Lexington Rd.
Georgetown, KY 40324
Email: william.haugh@lpnt.net

Alan Keesee
MHA 2009 - 3rd year
COO, Sunrise Hospital & Medical Center
3186 S. Maryland Parkway
Las Vegas, NV 89109
Email: Alan.Keesee@hcahealthcare.com

Jenifer Murphy
MHA 2009 - 4th year
Patient Safety Manager, VCU Health
Richmond, VA 23298
Email: jenifer.murphy@vcuhealth.org

Tracey Papas
MSHA 2011 - 3rd year
Director, Clinical Information and Reporting, Anthem
5729 Rolling Creek Place
Glen Allen, VA 23059
Email: Tracey.papas@anthem.com

Carrie Willetts
MSHA 2007 - 3rd year
President, Wellspan Ephrata Community Hospital
169 Martin Ave
Ephrata, PA 17522
Email: cwilletts@wellspan.org

Sam Williamson
MHA 2010 - 4th year
Director of Finance, Piedmont Atlanta Hospital
1968 Peachtree Rd NW
Atlanta, GA 30309
Email: samuel.williamson@piedmont.org
Be a part of something wonderful.

The School of Allied Health Professions at Virginia Commonwealth University includes 11 units, five of which U.S. News & World Report ranks in the top 20 programs nationwide; three of our programs (including Health Administration!) are consistently ranked in the top five.

Creating a unified space for the school and its exceptional programs is a priority in the VCU Master Site Plan, which was developed by university officials with stakeholder input. The new $87.3 million School of Allied Health Professions building will provide a consistent supply of excellent practitioners to address the needs of an aging health care workforce and serve the increased needs of an aging population. The new building will increase our capacity to grow high-demand programs; promote a culture of interprofessional practice to mirror the future of health care delivery; and facilitate organizational and operational efficiency in program administration.

Physical therapy alumna Janet Showalter, along with the support of her husband, Lee, kicked off our capital campaign with a generous matching gift of $100,000. Janet graduated from the MCV PT program in 1958. Janet and Lee’s daughter, Sarah Showalter Mays, graduated from the PT program in 1984. The Showalter’s gift provides a dollar-for-dollar match for all other contributions to the building campaign, giving their pledge twice the impact.

“Our nationally premier School of Allied Health Professions needs space that matches the remarkable talent of the faculty, staff, and students who comprise it,” VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D., says.

For more information, please contact Greg Prince, senior director of development in the School of Allied Health Professions, at (804) 828-3269 or tgprince@vcu.edu.