OUR SCHOOL’S ENDURING IMPACT
Changing lives, making a difference

ON A ROLL!
VCU students put kids in the driver’s seat
DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

It has been a very exciting year! As you know, we held a groundbreaking ceremony for our new School of Allied Health Professions building in April. For 20 years, it has been my personal mission to unite our programs, which have occupied as many as 13 buildings over the past 45 years, in one building. We look forward to sharing the progress of the new construction with you in the coming months.

While on our quest to unite under one roof, the school is also taking a closer look at our alumni impact on the health care workforce. Earlier this year we sent out an electronic survey to help us glean information about our alumni, and we are pleased to share the results on pages 14-17. We’ll be analyzing the impact alumni are making in the workforce more thoroughly in the coming year, and we hope you will take part in that process.

The survey also asked about community service. Nearly 40 percent of respondents said they volunteer in the communities they serve. I, too, will get the opportunity to serve greater Richmond as a volunteer. In September, I will become president of the Downtown Kiwanis Club of Richmond, the eighth-largest Kiwanis Club in the world. Community service is a great way to give back.

In other news, our departments’ latest developments include cutting-edge initiatives with national significance. The Department of Physical Therapy received a multimillion-dollar award to join the national effort for cutting-edge initiatives with national significance. The Department of Physical Therapy received a multimillion-dollar award to join the national effort for

Sincerely,

Cecil B. Drain, Ph.D.
Dean and Professor
PT students take part in VCU’s Pre-Accelerator Program

Steven Ebeling and Cassandra Ford, Department of Physical Therapy doctoral students, are developing an app called TheraJournal that will allow physical therapists to capture video of the patient performing prescribed exercises and then format them to include instructions before uploading to an online portal. The online portal will allow patients access to their prescription, record adherence and tracking of symptom progression.

For their promising business idea, Ebeling and Ford received a $5,000 stipend from VCU’s Quest for Innovation Fund, which supports the entrepreneurial endeavors of VCU students. In spring 2017, the pair took part in VCU’s Pre-Accelerator Program, a three-month experience focused on guiding them through the challenging early stages of building a startup. Their startup was one of seven selected from 152 applications through a rigorous process in which 34 finalists had five minutes to pitch their ideas to a panel of officials from VCU’s entrepreneurship programs, the Virginia Biotechnology Research Park and Richmond accelerator program Lighthouse Labs. Todd Nuckols of Lighthouse Labs says the Pre-Accelerator Program and the companies emerging from it are playing an important role in Richmond’s entrepreneurship scene.

“The Pre-Accelerator Program is critical to the continued sharpening of VCU and the community’s focus on developing our startup ecosystem,” he says. “It provides a safe environment for students to pursue dreams and consider the elements necessary to succeed in startup life.”

The Pre-Accelerator Program is part of Venture Creation University, VCU’s strategy for ensuring that all students are exposed to innovation and entrepreneurship and have access to various entrepreneurial pathways.

Who’s making waves? Well, we are of course. Here’s just a taste of the awards, publications and research news generating buzz around the School of Allied Health Professionals and beyond.

VCU part of national $3.4 million award for research on infants with delayed skills

Thanks to a $3.4 million award from the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, a team of researchers that includes Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Physical Therapy faculty has begun work on an initiative program to rehabilitate infants with motor skill delays.

The START-Play program is one of the largest national clinical trials of its kind. The project’s purpose is to evaluate the effectiveness of a fully developed intervention that targets sitting, reaching and motor-based problem solving in infants. VCU is one of four intervention sites across the United States.

Stacey C. Dusing, P.T., Ph.D., associate professor in the VCU Department of Physical Therapy in the School of Allied Health Professions, is the primary investigator on the project. Emily Marcinowski, Ph.D., is a VCU postdoctoral fellow in charge of recruitment and assessment. The study will take place over four years and will include students from the Department of Physical Therapy, the Department of Psychology in the College of Humanities and Sciences and the interdisciplinary Ph.D. program in rehabilitation and movement science.

“We are excited to be part of this effort because the research we’re conducting will contribute to research going on around the world on this topic,” Dusing says. “One goal of the study is to advance the motor and cognitive skills of enrolled children in order to better prepare them to learn in preschool and beyond.”

Patients, who are recruited from the community and the Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU medical clinics and therapy departments, were typically born prematurely or had brain injuries close to the time of birth. During the 12-week intervention, children in the group receive a specialized therapy based on their ability to perform childlike skills such as crawling and reaching. Sessions take place in families’ home, and parents are encouraged to do exercises with their children between START-Play sessions. Additionally, five assessment visits are scheduled over the course of one year. The children range in age from 7 months to 16 months.

“Typical therapy services do not focus on the loss of opportunity and learning skills early in development,” Dusing says. “That is why this type of intensive therapy, and the funding to do it, is so important.”

Gerontology assisted living program to offer fall classes

The Department of Gerontology’s assisted living administration concentration received academic accreditation from the National Association of Long Term Care Administrator Boards (NAB) in June 2017.

“This accreditation has opened VCU Gerontology’s door to students across the country who want to become licensed assisted living administrators, by providing them a quality educational experience that has been endorsed by those who create the national standards,” says Jennifer Pryor, program co-director of the assisted living administration concentration.

The accreditation makes VCU Gerontology the only NAB-accredited program in Virginia, and the first-ever accredited program in assisted living administration. NAB is the nation’s leading authority on licensing, credentialing and regulating administrators of organizations along the continuum of long-term care.
PT holds white coat ceremony

The white coat ceremony in the health professions marks a commitment to the ethical and professional standards of their chosen field of study and is traditionally held at the beginning of the students’ professional program. The Department of Physical Therapy held its annual white coat ceremony for its new D.P.T. students on Sept. 9, 2016. Sharon Dunn, PT, Ph.D., president of the American Physical Therapy Association, gave the keynote address. She welcomed the new students into the profession and encouraged the students to always take the time, as students and physical therapists, to listen carefully to what their patients tell them and always remain observant in their clinical work. She cited examples from her own long clinical career to reinforce the importance of attending to those details. Excellent advice for the new and future clinicians!

PT Robert Lamb Distinguished Lecture

Alan Jette, PT, Ph.D., FAPTA, gave the 2016 Robert L. Lamb Distinguished Lecture at VCU faculty, students and area clinicians. Jette is a professor of health law, policy and management at the School of Public Health, Boston University, and director of the Health and Disability Research Institute at that institution. His presentation was titled “Systems thinking to thrive in a changing health care environment.” The event was held on Oct. 11, 2016.

CARES Clinic at VCU opens

The Department of Physical Therapy students saw their dream of a student-run, pro bono physical therapy clinic become a reality as they cut the ribbon on their new clinic on Sept. 21, 2016. The clinic, which was conceived of and run by the students, serves uninsured and underinsured members of the Richmond community by providing physical therapy care that targets functional limitations and optimizes movement. Physical therapy is provided by the students of the D.P.T. program under the supervision of a licensed physical therapist.

Since opening, 43 VCU D.P.T. students have volunteered their time to evaluate and treat patients. Twenty-two licensed physical therapists, including eight VCU alumni from the Richmond community, have shared their expertise with and supervised these students. Conditions treated include accident and work-related injuries, arthritis, overuse injuries, sports injuries, sprains, strains and fractures.

The CARES Clinic provides an excellent opportunity for students to enhance their learning and clinical skill development while concurrently meeting unmet community needs. The clinic is located within the Center for Healthy Hearts in Richmond.

Four students receive VCU Black History Maker awards

Claire Jones, KC Ogbonna (M.S.H.A. ’17) and Mitchell Harris (M.S.H.A. ’17), all students in the Department of Health Administration, and Clara Owens, a student in the Department of Patient Counseling, received the VCU Black History Maker Award presented by the Department of African American Studies. Black History in the Making was founded in 1983 by Daryl Dance, the distinguished scholar of African-American and Caribbean literature who served as program coordinator during the 1983-84 academic year. Dance established Black History in the Making to recognize the achievements of African-American students.

In 1983, Dance invited academic units and organizations to “recognize a student who has made an important contribution.” Since 1983, more than 550 students have been recognized by more than 50 departments and organizations. Nominees generally have stellar academic records; a history of community service; and intern, professional or work experiences that place them at the forefront of their careers.

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New DNAP program for Nurse Anesthesia

VCU’s full-time entry to practice Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP) degree program accepted its very first cohort of 40 students in January 2017. This 36-month program is designed to train registered nurses (RNs) in advanced-practice nursing while meeting the requirements for national certification as a certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA). The new entry to practice DNAP program offers students a hybrid schedule format using a combination of on- and off-campus content delivery methods during the first two semesters. During this time, students are able to continue working as RNs. The Department of Nurse Anesthesia accepted its first Master of Science in Nurse Anesthesia cohort in fall 2016.

VCU leads Marquette Challenge

The students in the Department of Physical Therapy compete annually in the Foundation for Physical Therapy Marquette Challenge in raising money to fund physical therapy research. Each year the winner of the challenge serves as the title sponsor alongside Marquette University for the following year.

In 2016, competing against 150 PT and PTA schools nationwide, the VCU students placed first — winning the challenge and securing VCU as the title sponsor for the 2016–17 year. The students raised over $53,000, and their contribution pushed their total giving over the past 22 years to over $180,000.

This year the students competed to hold onto their top spot, hosting numerous events, including a corn hole tournament, basketball tournament, golf tournament, percentage nights at local restaurants and several continuing education events. They took second place in the 2016-17 Marquette Challenge by raising over $37,000. The students also moved into the Collegiate Society of Philanthropy Circle for raising over $200,000 over the course of their years of participation in the challenge. Both awards were announced and presented on June 22.

VCU Allied Health

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Faculty and staff accolades/awards/honors

Tim Ford, instructor in the Department of Patient Counseling, was one of seven individuals selected nationwide for the first cohort of the Chopra Research Foundation program as a John Templeton Foundation grant.

Theresa Mayhew was named a Catherine Wethingham Fellow of the American Physical Therapy Association in June 2017. The association’s highest membership category, fellows serves as inspiration for all physical therapists to attain professional excellence. This honor is eligible to APTA physical therapist members or life member physical therapists who have demonstrated unsurpassed efforts to advancing the physical therapy profession for more than 15 years, prior to the time of nomination. Mayhew’s notable contributions include service to the Virginia chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association in the roles of treasurer and delegate; participation in the effort to create the American Council of Academic Physical Therapy; and serving on the inaugural board of directors; and service as a mentor in the Education Leadership Institute of the American Physical Therapy Association. Mayhew’s contributions as a faculty member were described well by one of the nominators, who stated, “Mayhew has provided both teaching and research expertise in anatomy, neuroscience and neurobiology to numerous students now professional as physical therapists. Hs excellent leadership has enabled faculty to remain forward thinking.”

Stacey Reynolds and Tony Gentry were awarded OT Fellowship status at the annual American Occupational Therapy Association conference in April 2017.

Daniel Biddle was appointed by the director of the National Institutes of Health to serve a two-year term as chair of the Neurological, Aging and Musculoskeletal Epidemiology Study Section. This study section evaluates the scientific quality of research grants covering the epidemiology of aging, neurology and musculoskeletal science and submitted for review to the NIH.

Clinical Laboratory Sciences


Gerontology


Health Administration


Nurse Anesthesia


Co-authored paper “Meaningful or meaning- less? Physician perspectives on use of EHRs.”

Kelly Fried: Foster McGaw Scholarship, Association of University Programs in Health Administration

Shelby Murphy, Courtney Harlow and Rachel Hill: Second place, Ohio State Student Case Competition

Occupational Therapy

Kelli Williams Gary: Mayo Sverteer Merit Fellowship, National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research

Tony Gentry: Fellow, American Occupational Therapy

Stacey E. Reynolds: Fellow, American Occupational Therapy

Clinical Laboratory Sciences

Savannah McPherson: ASCLS Student Forum Travel Grant

Riley Dang: Johns Hopkins Pathology Tuition Scholar Award

Kathleen Pierce: AAC Clinical Chemistry Student of the Year

Physical Therapy

Stacy Dusing: 2017 Stephen M. Haley Research Award, Academy of Pediatric Physical Therapy

Blaise Williams: 2017 NCA Task Force on Sleep and Wellness, NCA Sports Science Institute

Shawn Soper: 2017 Emerging Leaders in Interprofessional Faculty Award, VCU Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care

Allison Owens: Dr. Richard J. Wilson University Service Award, VCU Division of Student Affairs

For the 2017 fiscal year, 18 different faculty members in the School of Allied Health Professions received a $2.9 million total in grant funding for research, training and other initiatives to enhance knowledge and spur discovery in a variety of fields, from biometric workforce development, geriatric medication management, transition medicine, nurse anesthetics training, research for chalpons, knee replacement utilization and long-term training in rehabilitation.

2017 SARF Grant Awards

NEWS

PROFESSOR OF NURSE ANESTHESIA TAKES TOP HONORS

Nicole Dennis, Ph.D., CNA (B.S. ’97, M.S.N.A. ’99/NA, Ph.D. ’14) was presented with the William R. McCue, M.D. Professor of Nurse Anesthesia Distinction Faculty Teaching Award in May. She joined the Department of Nurse Anesthesia faculty in 2010.
Clinical laboratory sciences students graduate with key skill

In a May, a cohort of 24 undergraduates in the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences was the first at Virginia Commonwealth University to complete the new mass spectrometry curriculum. VCU’s program is the first nationally to teach students both the theory behind mass spectrometry and how to use the technology firsthand.

Mass spectrometry is one of the most accurate analytical techniques used today in clinical diagnostic laboratories, and workers who know mass spectrometry are in high demand. Despite this trend, college students across the country don’t graduate with the necessary knowledge of how to apply the technology.

To fill this educational gap, William Kosun, Ph.D., associate professor of clinical laboratory sciences in the School of Allied Health Professions; Honya “Shanaka” Wipasinghe, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Pharmacy and Outcomes Sciences in the School of Pharmacy; and Lorin Bachmann, Ph.D., associate professor of pathology and co-director of clinical chemistry, VCU-HSC, have teamed up to create coursework that teaches mass spectrometry to C.S. students. The partnership also received a donation of software used in mass spectrometry from SCICE, a leader in mass spectrometry sales and services. An R&D fund created to support this project was made possible by the school’s partnership with CIFER.

A SCICE mass spectrometer. Photo courtesy SCICE

If you have any questions, comments, or feedback, please feel free to contact us. Our email is info@vcuhealth.org.
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

A snapshot of our Allied Health graduates

BY HEATHER MILLAR AND CARLA DAVIS

In his State of the University address last winter, VCU President Michael Rao described the university’s brand as one “of positive impact.” We, at the School of Allied Health Professions, couldn’t agree more. Through research, teaching, health care and service, our faculty, staff, students and alumni have a long tradition of making a difference where we learn, work and live.

Dr. Rao’s remarks got us wondering about the thousands of alumni who have come through our nine programs. What are they doing now? And where? To find out, this spring we invited more than 8,500+ alumni to fill out an online survey — in short, to fill us in on their lives post-graduation. Their 466 responses provide an insightful snapshot that we share below.

Top five cities in which respondents work:
1. Richmond, Va.
2. Charlottesville, Va.
5. Washington, D.C.

VCU Alumni Services data indicates 65 percent of VCU alumni live in the commonwealth. More VCU alumni have remained within the Richmond area than those who have moved out of Virginia.

Almost half of responders are in a leadership or management position.

The School of Allied Health Professions’ academically vigorous programs prepare graduates for leadership and management roles. Some of the respondents’ job titles include CEO, CDO, owner, president, vice president, division head, department head, chief, director, trainer, consultant, principal, manager and supervisor.

Top five classes represented by number of respondents:
1. 2015
2. 2010
3. 2012 and 2013
5. 2002 and 2014

Total respondents spanned 70+ years.

Who responded?
Programs of study represented
Health Administration (HA) − 27.5%
Physical Therapy (PT) − 15.7%
Nurse Anesthesia (NA) − 11.6%
Occupational Therapy (OT) − 10.7%
Clinical Laboratory Sciences (CLS) − 10.5%
Rehabilitation Counseling (RC) − 7.9%
Gerontology (G) − 6.2%
Radiation Sciences (RS) − 6%
Patient Counseling (PC) − 1.7%
Ph.D. in Health Related Sciences (Ph.D.) − 1.7%

Responding with class
Top five classes represented by number of respondents:
1. 2015
2. 2010
3. 2012 and 2013
5. 2002 and 2014

Total respondents spanned 70+ years.
Learning from afar

9% of respondents were VCU distance-learning students
Each of our nine departments offers distance-learning opportunities.

Top 3 distance-learning sites
1. Richmond, Va.
2. Northern Virginia
3. Abingdon, Va.

19% of distance-learning respondents stayed in the region where they were educated
Many of our School of Allied Health Professions graduates stay in their communities to fill health care jobs where there are critical shortages.

Doing even more!

38% of Allied Health grads are also volunteering

Many Allied Health grads are involved with activities outside of their employment that benefit underserved populations, including children with autism, veterans, the homeless, impoverished and orphaned children, the underserved, people with eating disorders, refugees, rural and minority patients, at-risk youth, college students, victims of natural disasters, children and adults with disabilities, the elderly, illiterate adults, cancer patients, immigrants, felons, people with HIV, people with mental health issues, and addicts.

Welcome aboard!

27% of respondents were hired by their current employer following an internship, clinical rotation or residency there.
Each of the school’s nine departments has cultivated relationships with employers who know they’ll get a trained, experienced employee — ready for the challenges of 21st-century medical care — when they hire a VCU graduate.

Top employers
Top five employers of respondents:

- University of Virginia
- Sheltering Arms
- HCA Virginia Health System
- Bon Secours
- VCU/VCU Health

Thank you, responders!
Thank you to everyone who responded to our electronic survey! Nearly seven percent of School of Allied Health Professions alumni (of those for whom we have accurate e-mail addresses) responded to our questions and helped provide a snapshot of our impact in the health care environment. While the majority of respondents came from VCU alumni employees, the School of Allied Health Professions would like to take a deeper dive into the impact of our alumni workforce. Please be on the lookout for a new alumni survey in the mail (and online) this fall as we prepare a more in-depth approach and review.

Thank you, employers!
41% of respondents or their employers host VCU interns
Many of our alumni serve as preceptors or mentors at their workplaces.

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VCU Department of Gerontology graduate student Lori Kvam isn’t amused when she sees birthday cards for older people. The images and inferences to aging as lackluster, pitiful and dreaded are distasteful and dehumanizing, she says.

“I have never liked cards that made fun of turning say 40, 50, 60, with a kind of ‘poor you, hope you make it’ kind of message.”

In response, Kvam is co-founder of Wise Guys Greeting Cards, a birthday card startup. Messages penned within the cards will embrace and promote positive aging. On April 28, 2017, the Department of Gerontology hosted a “Shred Party” to tatter examples of what they consider ageist birthday cards.

Wise Guys Greeting Cards is one of the central, tangible efforts within the department’s recently launched #DisruptAgeism campaign. The crusade is designed to demystify and disrupt ageism, that aging is a journey, not a disease,” says Department of Gerontology chair E. Ayn Welford, Ph.D.

Since the campaign’s inception last year, students and faculty have taken to the community to promote its message. Students have given presentations at Senior Connections and the Capital Area Agency on Aging, and have participated in a gathering at Mont Gallery, where they displayed poster presentations of their work with #DisruptAgeism. As part of the Department of Gerontology’s 40th anniversary celebration last year, department members wore #DisruptAgeism T-shirts at a Day of Disruption event in Carytown.

On the national front, after attending the White House Conference on Aging, Department of Gerontology professor Tracey Gendron, Ph.D., collaborated with Welford and Ph.D. in Health Related Sciences candidate Jennifer Jaker on a paper titled, “A Theory of Relational Ageism: A Discourse Analysis of the 2015 White House Conference on Aging.” The team subsequently presented the information at a November 2016 #DisruptAgeism symposium at the Gerontological Society of America’s annual meeting in New Orleans.

Feedback from the event was confirmation that they were on the right track, Gendron says.

“The reviews came in from Facebook, Twitter and around the world [where we presented],” she says. “Gerontologists across the country lauded the analysis and the movement message. It was exciting, validating. It felt good to know that our work was reaching a deeper level.”

In January, the article was published in The Gerontologist, a bimonthly journal of the Gerontological Society of America. The exposure took a social media hashtag and put ageism on the national agenda, Gendron says.

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by 2030, more than 20 percent of U.S. residents are projected to age 65 and over, compared to 13 percent in 2010 and 9.8 percent in 1970. Some reasons for the upswing in life include recent public health campaigns that encourage behavioral changes in habits like smoking and bad eating choices.

“A key part of what VCU Gerontology does is connecting with people around the idea that aging is a journey, not a disease.”

The rising numbers are cause for concern Gendron says, among both those who serve the aging population and those within it.

“Since we are all aging individuals, ageism is universally applicable, yet we often talk about agingism as limited to older adults. We realized that even as practitioners, the work to defeat ageism starts in our own language and actions,” she says. “We may also mistakenly think that older adults cannot, themselves, be ageist because they are often the targets of ageism. Older adults can be ageist to themselves, for instance, by refusing to refer to themselves as an old person. Or, they may refuse to socialize with other people their age because they consider being old bad. Or, they might distance themselves from other old people with whom they do not identify.”

Citing research from the Journal of Gerontology, Gendron says people with negative attitudes to aging live, on average, seven years fewer than people with a positive attitude toward aging.

WE’RE ALL AGING

Rachel Andricosky, 24, is a graduate student in the Department of Gerontology. She cultivated a love for older adults after working in a memory care facility, and works with the #DisruptAgeism campaign.

“The bonds I created with the people living there touched me in a way that made me realize I wanted to spend the rest of my life working with, and advocating for, older adults,” she says. “Also, I’m personally linked to this cause because, I’m aging. We’re all aging. I feel that I have a duty to promote optimal aging, and informing people about ageism is a great place to start.”

In addition to infiltrating the community with their message, the Department of Gerontology has also worked with the VCU Brandcenter. Now, when creating their own campaigns, VCU Brandcenter students are incorporating strategies outlined by #DisruptAgeism that ensure their messages are inclusive and not offensive to specific age groups.

“Having that discussion about ageism really makes people reflect on their own aging and start to see any biases they might hold against older adults,” Andricosky says.

Hanging fresh eyes on this type of topic is a good way to ignite the issue publicly, Gendron says.

“Students are an integral part of the #DisruptAgeism movement and act as powerful and important disruptors,” she says.

Before beginning the Department of Gerontology program, Ann Rhodes, 26, spent 10 years working in the long-term care industry. Her role in the #DisruptAgeism campaign is to deliver the evidence-based content the department creates through research.

She has presented on the topic at the Henrico County Council of Aging and the Greater Richmond Age Wave Coalition meeting. The Greater Richmond Age Wave is a collaborative group that works to address opportunities and challenges within the region’s growing aging population.

“This cause is unique from some other social movements because it applies to every person on the planet,” Rhodes says. “We are all getting older. So, my devotion to this cause comes from my awareness that it affects everyone.”

In her work with older adults, Rhodes observed that services catered to them could be designed and delivered more efficiently.

“I enjoyed the interaction and involvement with older adults, but I wanted to do more,” she says.

“I specifically chose the VCU Department of Gerontology because of their work in the aging industry and the partnerships that they had developed. I moved all the way from Denver to be a student,” she says.

Aging should be on the forefront of the minds of every generation, says Gendron, who likens the issue to a public health crisis.

“Thomas has been building evidence that ageism leads to adverse health outcomes, including increased risk for chronic disease, increased dependency and reduced recovery from illness” she says.

“That’s why this work is so important. ‘Our goal is also to help people see that aging is natural, beautiful and very individualized.'”

Gendron says. “Aging is neither good nor bad. It is simply a reflection of our individual journeys through life.”
While chaplains are often on the front lines of patient care, professionals in the clinical sciences work behind the scenes. Even so, their contributions are vital because it’s estimated that laboratory test results drive at least 80 percent of patient care decisions.

Roxanne Mercer (B.S. ’88; M.S. ’08/CLS) is the director of operations for the Department of Pathology at VCU Health System. She trains Richmond-based students in the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences how to apply the analytical techniques and principles of quality control that they learned in student labs to the operation of an accredited clinical lab.

Kimberly Sanford, M.D. (B.S. ’91; M.D. ’01), on the other hand, gives students a different perspective. As the department’s medical director of transfusion medicine, she takes students on rounds to see patients. “It helps them to see the patient connection,” she says. “Not every technologist in the laboratory setting has that chance.”

Students in the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling also directly impact the lives of Richmonders — in this case, underserved clients of the Health Brigade (formerly the Fan Free Clinic). The students provide one-on-one mental health and vocational counseling to clients on issues such as pain management, anger management and empowerment.

These contributions are among the many made by VCU School of Allied Health Professions students every day. Through the internships, residencies and clinical rotations they perform in pursuit of their academic goals, they impact their communities and the national economy in countless ways. Here are some of their stories.

Impacting lives close to home

The vision of the school’s Department of Patient Counseling is to fill the world with highly skilled spiritual caregivers. In early 2017, Valerie Mayo (Cert. ’17/PC) was one of those caregivers. She worked as a chaplain intern at VCU Health Community Memorial Hospital in the small town of South Hill, Virginia, where she just happens to have family.

Mayo worked in the acute and long-term care settings of the hospital as part of an interdisciplinary team, providing spiritual support to patients and their families. Joanne Bedford, M.Div./M.A.C.E, was Mayo’s supervisor and mentor. “It was an absolute pleasure,” she says, “to witness her pastoral presence in a community she is connected to in so many facets of her life.”

While chaplains are often on the front lines of patient care, professionals in the clinical sciences work behind the scenes. Even so, their contributions are vital because it’s estimated that laboratory test results drive at least 80 percent of patient care decisions.

Roxanne Mercer (B.S. ’88; M.S. ’08/CLS) is the director of operations for the Department of Pathology at VCU Health System. She trains Richmond-based students in the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences how to apply the analytical techniques and principles of quality control that they learned in student labs to the operation of an accredited clinical lab.

Kimberly Sanford, M.D. (B.S. ’91; M.D. ’01), on the other hand, gives students a different perspective. As the department’s medical director of transfusion medicine, she takes students on rounds to see patients. “It helps them to see the patient connection,” she says. “Not every technologist in the laboratory setting has that chance.”

Students in the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling also directly impact the lives of Richmonders — in this case, underserved clients of the Health Brigade (formerly the Fan Free Clinic). The students provide one-on-one mental health and vocational counseling to clients on issues such as pain management, anger management and empowerment.

Muriel Azria-Evans, Ph.D. (M.S. ’14/RC) is the organization’s director of mental health and wellness. “Our staff is quite small, so much of our good work is done by mental health volunteers, including VCU interns,” she says. “At the estimated cost of $26.09 an hour, the work of our volunteers in 2016 is valued at $132,589.”

Serving locally on issues with national reach

In several of the school’s departments, students are working locally to proactively confront issues of growing national importance. The Department of Nurse Anesthesia, for example, is addressing a predicted shortage of anesthesia providers across the U.S. Because a lack of anesthesia providers can be dire for small hospitals in rural and underserved areas, the department established its rural nurse anesthesia distance education program over a decade ago.

Since then, the department has placed over 70 students in the coalfields of Appalachia, where safe and cost-effective anesthesia services are urgently needed. A full 87 percent of those students have stayed to work in the region after graduation, earning substantial salaries that they spend in their adopted communities.

Students in the Department of Gerontology are addressing another
AT A GLANCE

INTERNSHIPS, RESIDENCIES AND CLINICAL ROTATIONS

When the VCU School of Allied Health Professions sends students into the community for their internships, clinical rotations and residencies, it’s a win-win for both the students and their location sites. The students get the hands-on training required of their programs of study, and their location sites — educational, health care and social service organizations — get committed, skilled workers eager to learn and contribute.

Here’s a quick look at our internships, clinical rotations and residencies, all of which must meet the standards of an accrediting body:

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS: Students must have a minimum GPA and a passing grade on a qualifying exam that tests them on the knowledge and skills they’ll need to make a substantiative contribution to the site or project.

TOTAL HOURS: Time commitments vary by program, but generally students can expect to spend up to 2,000 clock-hours or more (not all of that is client contact).

DURATION: Based on their program’s length, students may spend up to three years in internships, clinical rotations or residencies.

SITE LOCATIONS: Most are concentrated in metro Richmond, in Virginia and the surrounding states of North Carolina, Maryland and Tennessee. They include, and often target, rural and medically underserved areas. Placement sites are approved by each program’s accrediting body. Students select the sites based on their interests.

TYPES OF SITES: Generally, sites fall into the categories of educational, health care and social service organizations. They include, but are not limited to: assisted living and long-term care facilities, area agencies on aging, home and community-based service providers, government agencies, school divisions, hospital systems, community programs, private practices, sub-acute rehabilitation facilities, long-term care facilities and clinics.

POPULATIONS SERVED: Students have access to and serve all populations: children, youth, adults and seniors.

VCU ALUMNI INVOLVEMENT: Many VCU School of Allied Health Professions alumni work for organizations that are strong community partners with the school. Some alumni have helped us secure and keep our affiliates. They may serve as preceptors, mentors and resources to students.

“Their work has the potential to improve human health at the community level as well as globally.”

evolving, national issue. The growth of the country’s senior population is creating a great need for administrators in the field of long-term care.

Danielle Orr (M.S. ’17/G) is one of the young professionals in the field who may one day fill in the gap. In 2016, Orr completed 360 intern hours toward earning her license as an administrator at St. Mary’s Woods senior living community in Richmond. She also developed a creativity challenge for people with early dementia, demonstrating how to use art to enhance quality of life.

The work of the Virginia Center on Aging is also senior-focused and critically important, given that 10,000 people in the U.S. turn 65 every day. One of its major initiatives is to address the growing problem of elder abuse. The abuse takes many forms, including physical assault, domestic violence and control of victims’ lives. What’s more, elder abuse triples the risk of both hospitalization and premature death in its victims.

Bristol and Washington County in Southwest Virginia were ready to tackle this issue head-on. VCoA worked with them through the Abuse in Later Life Project for four years. The first-rate model of community engagement brought together the many agencies that were working separately and enabled them to work collaboratively. As the project grant was ending, VCoA assisted them in finding continuation funds for an Abuse in later Life specialist position to ensure older victims continue to receive the services they need.

Advancing health care on a national and global scale

In some cases, the work of allied health students has the potential to move health care forward on a national — even global — scale. Third-year residents in the Department of Health Administration, for example, are making a national impact through their work with Igboh, a Richmond-based startup. The young company has been likened to transportation innovator Uber for its mobile approach to health care, bringing on-demand services to people wherever they happen to be. Since Igboh’s formation in 2015, VCU students have played an instrumental role in its launch and growth into over 180 markets in the U.S. In fact, VCU student Blake Webman (M.H.A. ’15/H.A.) went on to become Igboh’s vice president of external operations.

“I Without question, VCU students like Blake have helped launch a technology platform that delivers integrated care around the country,” said Paul Spicer (B.S. ’90), Igboh’s vice president of marketing and public relations. “They are making personalized medicine possible for everyone. They are the future of health care.”

No matter how far the work of allied health students extends, it all starts in Richmond, with their education. “The commitment of our students to scholarship, innovation and research is a source of pride for me,” says Cecil B. Drain, Ph.D., dean of the School of Allied Health Professions. “Their contributions have helped make the school one of the most successful allied health educators in the country.”
Students from the VCU department of Physical Therapy pair with a licensed physical therapist to make each cycle a perfect fit. At the April giveaway at the Greater Richmond ARC Park, second-year PT student Cara Whiting worked on Joe’s tryke: moving the seat, positioning the backrest and fine-tuning the handlebars and pedals for maximum comfort and safety.

“I think it’s a great program,” says Whiting, an avid cyclist. While many PT students fulfill service-learning hours through REACHcycles, Whiting is long past needing the credit. She participates simply because she loves giving the kids an opportunity to explore their world.

For Joe, riding a bike would’ve been impossible without REACHcycles. Since infancy, he’s been in physical therapy for poor muscle tone and coordination, symptoms of an unidentified genetic syndrome. His therapist mentioned REACHcycles to Joe’s parents, Lia and Patrick, and recommended him for the program. Adapted trykes offer riders therapeutic benefits like improved motor skills, strength development and coordination.

What’s more, they’re designed to look like bikes, not medical equipment. As Patrick maneuvered Joe’s tryke from a rear handgrip, Lia crouched on the pavement with arms wide and coaxed her son to pedal. “He seems right at home on the bike,” she marvels.

Second-year PT student Zachary Jackson put his bike shop experience to work as he hunkered over a tryke, adjusting the pedal length. “I’ve never seen bikes like this before,” he says. “It’s cool to see how they can be adapted.”

First-year PT student Greg Delano isn’t a bike enthusiast like some of his classmates, but he couldn’t pass up the opportunity to work with children with disabilities. In high school he played sports with mentally and physically disabled students, and missed the interaction. “It’s nice to get out and give back to the community,” he says. “I can see the kids are enjoying it.”

April’s giveaway was second-year PT student Emily Glasson’s fourth time volunteering with REACHcycles. “It’s a lot of fun,” she says. “The kids really enjoy their bikes. Now they’re able to ride with their siblings.”

Or, ride with other kids in the neighborhood, as Joe’s mom, Lia, notes. With warmer weather, it’s “perfect timing” for Joe to have his own set of wheels. Until he received his tryke, Joe got around in an adapted stroller.

REACHcycles, or Richmond Empowering Abilities for Children with Cycles, is a chapter of AMBUCS, a national nonprofit that provides AmTrykes (adapted cycles) to the disabled community. With a large initial donation from a group of disabled veterans, REACHcycles was able to buy and present its first five AmTrykes in 2014. A physical therapist must submit an evaluation before REACHcycles can provide a cycle for an individual. Many of those recipients have been denied adapted bikes by their insurance companies.

REACHcycles founder James Howard says his organization fills that
gap. Howard, a former U.S. Army captain, suffered a diving accident that left him a quadriplegic. He received an AmTryke cycle at a veterans event, which gave him renewed purpose and an opportunity to be with fellow veterans.

Each AmTryke, which costs REACHcycles $800 on average, requires skilled volunteers to assemble and adapt it for riders with various diseases, disabilities or disorders. "They can't ride a normal bike," Howard says. For each of the 15 to 25 bikes available at the quarterly giveaways, students and REACHcycles volunteers assist with initial evaluations and then the hands-on fitting — adjusting seat heights, headrests, pedals and handlebars.

Additionally, VCU physical therapy students, occupational therapy students, faculty, staff and alumni help out by attending REACHcycles' board meetings, registering families at events, even making license plates for the cycles.

The partnership with VCU’s School of Allied Health Professions has been invaluable, Howard says. "It’s such a noble cause and is meeting a need in the community.""I love how involved VCU is and it’s such a noble cause and is meeting a need in the community." HEATHER MILLAR, DEPARTMENT OF NURSE ANESTHESIA

The partnership with VCU’s School of Allied Health Professions has been invaluable, Howard says. Heather Millar, director of marketing, communications and development for the VCU Department of Nurse Anesthesia, volunteers her time by putting her marketing and fundraising skills to work to secure grants for REACHcycles. "It’s my way of paying it forward," she says. "Another PT student and I were connected with REACHcycles through our professor Stacey Dusing as a potential leadership project idea." "We went to a couple bike giveaway events and loved REACHcycles’ mission," Nockengost says. "We decided to design a student internship position that would ideally be a sustainable volunteer position for one to two committed PT students year to year in an attempt to meet their volunteer need." Nockengost and her classmate organized two bike giveaway events. They coordinated volunteers, collected data about the recipients to assist with grant proposals and created a detailed project guide to hand off to the next group of student interns.

After she graduated, Nockengost joined the REACHcycles board as secretary. Today she serves as a liaison between the board and the VCU Department of Physical Therapy. "I love working with our kids and our families, and helping to bridge the gap between their dream and their reality," she says. "Riding a bike as a kid is so much more than a physical activity. It facilitates participation and socialization with peers and family, and it gives these children mobility with independence, the value of which is often underestimated or taken for granted by able-bodied individuals." Dusing, who met Howard in May 2014 and introduced the PT students to REACHcycles, says they understand the importance of using their skills to help the community. "Our PT students are working with therapists who get to see that our students think community service is valuable," she says. "It demonstrates that we’re not just academic."

Above: James Howard, president and founder of REACHcycles, welcomes families to the organization’s spring 2017 giveaway.

VCU PT students helped at the spring 2017 REACHcycles giveaway. Pictured, from left: Emily Glasson, Cara Whiting, Morgan Backsinger; Michael Greaves, Clare Simasek, Greg Delano and Zachary Jackson.

VCU PT student Greg Delano (right) works with physical therapist Robert Oldham (D.P.T. ’16) to adjust an AmTryke.
Alumni News and achievements

Keep in touch! With so many alumni out in the world doing wonderful things, we need your help to round it all up. Submit a note online at sahp.vcu.edu/alumni or mail your news to Virginia Commonwealth University, MCV Alumni Association of VCU, Box 980156, Richmond, Virginia 23298-0156.

Bruce Weiner chosen president-elect of the AANA

Bruce Weiner, M.S., CRNA (C.R.N.A. ’84), took office as the 2016-17 president of the 50,000-member American Association of Nurse Anesthetists during the AANA Nurse Anesthesia Annual Congress, Sept. 9-13, 2016, in Washington, D.C. Weiner is a CRNA at Florida Hospital, Carrollwood, in Tampa and a guest lecturer at the University of South Florida Nurse Anesthesia Program. He has long been active in nurse anesthesia, serving in many capacities in professional associations and boards of directors at the state and national levels. Weiner has a particular passion for clinical excellence, patient safety, advocacy and technology. He is also an active member in the Florida Nurses Association and the Sigma Theta Tau National Honor Society. A CRNA for more than 30 years, Weiner is currently pursuing doctoral studies at the Medical College of Virginia and a bachelor’s degree in nursing from the University of Delaware.

From left: Janet Coon (‘59), Dee Saller (‘55), Elizabeth (Bee) Wright (‘55), Melissa Sherrod, CRNA (M.S.N.A. ‘10/D.N.A.P. ‘11), the department’s Alumni Advisory Council chair, provided remarks about alumni goals for the year and honored two alumni from the Class of 1979, Ann Winer and Cathy Harrison.

Clinical Laboratory Sciences 90th anniversary


IN MEMORIAM

Rosita Wellinger

Sister Rosita Wellinger (M.N.A. ’69) died Nov. 10, 2016. She served in various leadership positions in the Bon Secours Health System and as a preceptor to many students, including those at VCU. She was a member of various professional organizations throughout her career. Sister Rosita was a teacher, administrator and wise friend to many in her life of service.

Tom Whedbee

Tom Whedbee (M.H.A. ’85) died Nov. 20, 2016. He began his career in health administration as vice president of operations at New Hanover Memorial Hospital in Wilmington, N.C., and his family moved to Huntington, Maryland, in 1959 when he began working at Calvert Memorial Hospital as vice president of operations. He was deeply devoted to his family and is survived by his wife, five sons, daughter and daughter-in-law.

Influenza A (H1N1) pandemic

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced a flu pandemic for the fall of 2009. 

Bruce Weiner 

IN HER OWN WORDS KERRY CROPPER (B.S. ’07/RS)

I began my journey toward becoming a radiation therapist in 2003. I arrived at VCU, the first of my immediate family to pursue a bachelor’s degree, knowing exactly what I wanted. My interest began many years before, after losing my dear friend Pearl to cancer. I knew I wanted to spend my life helping others beat the disease. It was by far one of the best decisions I would ever make. While at VCU, I found my calling, formed a desire for lifelong education and formed relationships with students and staff that continue growing strong 10 years later.

Upon graduating, I began working for Inova Fairfax Hospital, where I obtained an abundance of hands-on experience. My goal was to be the best radiation therapist that I could. It was a large, busy center, offering a variety of procedures not seen at most smaller centers. I wanted to know everything. In addition to administering radiation therapy treatments, I sought opportunities to improve the patients’ experience, implement new technology and prevent errors by always volunteering for any extra projects.

The days were long, and I would often work on my extra projects at home. When the opportunity to help open a new cancer center at Inova Fair Oaks Hospital (IFOH) was presented, I went for it. In 2004, I became the chief radiation therapist and had the exciting opportunity to open a new center.

The new center provided me with a clean slate to focus on the patient experience. No one wants cancer, but too many people face the diagnosis every day. My goal for someone who is facing radiation therapy treatments is to make it easy for them. Everything I do is toward providing the best, accurate care, with a focus on the unique needs of the patient. VCU motivated me to do more than just work. It has inspired me to contribute to my profession. I’m constantly seeking ways to make what we do better and then share what I know. That also means remaining open to innovation, attending conferences, participating in forums, listening to the needs of our patients and providing opportunities for radiation therapy students and my new team.

I’m enjoying being the chief radiation therapist. I get a thrill from having a full plate and figuring out how I will get it all done.

From left: Christine Celi (M.S.N.A. ’00), Anida Yataw (M.S.N.A. ’09/D.N.A.P. ’11), Tiffany Yhip (M.S.N.A. ’11/D.N.A.P. ’13). The department’s Alumni Advisory Council chair, provided remarks about alumni goals for the year and honored two alumni from the Class of 1979, Ann Winer and Cathy Harrison.
Lowndes, Daniel Hooker, Gloria Sanders, Barbara Eavis Garman, Deborah Talbot, Suzanne Gaskins Verbeke attended the alumni brunch, where they received their 50-year recognition. From left: Barbara Grantham Robl, Nancy Steele Moseley, Barbara Shilling.

Summer 2017

PHYSICAL THERAPY CLASS OF 1967

The Department of Physical Therapy Class of 1967 gathered for its 50-year class reunion over the weekend of April 7-8, 2017. The class participated in tours on campus, joined the current DPT students for a barbecue lunch at their annual golf tournament (a fundraiser for the Foundation for Physical Therapy) and attended the alumni brunch, where they received their 50-year recognition. From left: Barbara Grantham Robl, Nancy Steele Moseley, Barbara Shilling.

PT grants lifetime achievement awards

The Department of Physical Therapy granted lifetime achievement awards to two individuals in the Class of 1967: Gloria Sanders, PT, M.S., D.P.T., and Daniel Hooker, PT, M.S., Ph.D. Both have had active and noteworthy careers as physical therapists, and are still actively engaged in practice after 50 years of service.

Gloria Sanders earned her B.S. in physical therapy in 1967, her M.S. in rehabilitation counseling in 1976 and her D.P.T. from Simmons College in 2004. She taught physical therapy at East Carolina University until 1985 as an associate professor. She continued as an adjunct professor at ECU and at the University of North Carolina in 1985. He has been a board-certified sports physical therapy specialist since 1987 and has led the Atlantic Coast Conference Sports Medicine Association as president and secretary. He has contributed to several textbooks and researched back pain and concussion in retired NFL players. He received the Most Distinguished Athletic Trainer Award in 2002 from the National Athletic Trainers Association.

Daniel Hooker earned his B.S. in physical therapy from Simmons College in 1967, his M.S. in counseling in 1976 and his Ph.D. in education from the University of South Carolina in 1985. He has been a board-certified sports physical therapy specialist since 1987 and has led the Atlantic Coast Conference Sports Medicine Association as president and secretary. He has contributed to several textbooks and researched back pain and concussion in retired NFL players. He received the Most Distinguished Athletic Trainer Award in 2002 from the National Athletic Trainers Association.

Both Hooker and Sanders have had active and noteworthy careers as physical therapists, and are still actively engaged in practice after 50 years of service.

Chris and Greg Dadlez share a familiar, and rewarding, path

After interning with finance groups where his job was to help rich people make more money, Greg Dadlez (M.H.A. ’12/HA) decided he wanted a more fulfilling career path. He didn’t have to look far for inspiration. Greg followed in the footsteps of his father, Chris Dadlez (M.H.A. ’79/HA), and earned his Master of Health Administration from the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Allied Health Professions. It wasn’t hard for Greg to see that his father loves his job. During his more than 30-year career in health administration, Chris climbed the ranks of hospitals and health systems. He helped to create one of the largest health care providers in New Jersey, merging 10 hospitals and becoming executive vice president of the 23,000-employee organization. He has spent the past 12 years in Connecticut with St. Francis Care, a major teaching hospital and the largest Catholic hospital in New England. In 2015, St. Francis merged with Trinity Health, one of the largest multi-institutional Catholic health care delivery systems in the nation. Chris now serves as CEO of Trinity Health New England and says he wakes up every day excited to go to work. “Our focus is to make a difference in the lives of the people we serve and take care of, and that’s extremely fulfilling,” Chris says. “So I’ve had a tremendous amount of fulfillment over the years in making sure that we’re doing the best for our communities.” His son has also found the industry rewarding. As director of operations for Ochsner Accountable Care Network and Ochsner Physician Partners, based in New Orleans, Greg enjoys working directly with physicians and takes pride in knowing that he makes a difference in the lives of patients. “While I’m not directly providing patient care, I’m helping to enable those who do, to perform as efficiently and effectively to take care of our patients,” Greg says.

Both father and son are grateful for their VCU degrees, which gave them a strong foundation and a reliable network in the industry. “I’m still able to reach out to some of my professors, all of my classmates,” says Greg, who often consults classmates who are performing similar roles in other health systems. “It’s a lasting resource that sticks with you.”

This article by Sarah Lockwood appeared in the fall 2016 VCU Alumni magazine. Active, dues-paying members of VCU Alumni receive a subscription to the magazine as a benefit of membership. For more information, visit vcualumni.org.
ACHe honors three HA professionals
During the April 2017 Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association’s spring meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia, the American College of Healthcare Executives held its annual luncheon. ACHe Regent awards were presented to distinguished alumni from the VCU Department of Health Administration:

Teresa (Terrie) Edwards (M.H.A. ’84) received the Senior Executive Award. She serves as corporate vice president for Norfolk, Va.-based Sentara Healthcare’s Peninsula and Western Tidewater regions.

Roberta Tinch, FACHE (M.H.A. ’09) received the Regent’s Award for Outstanding Service. She serves as chief operations officer for HCA’s Spotsylvania Medical Center in Fredericksburg, Va.

Alexa Warner (M.H.A. ’14) received the Early Careerist Award. She manages the strategy and marketing department of VCU Health.

On April 20, 2017, 11 members of the M.H.A. Class of 1977 gathered in Richmond to celebrate their 40th anniversary. The festivities kicked off at the annual spring Paul A. Gross Landmarks in Leadership alumni reception and program at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. After an evening of reconnecting and reminiscing, they attended a class breakfast on Friday morning, which was hosted by the department. Cindy Watts, chair of the Department of Health Administration, provided an update on the various activities of the programs, and Beth Williamson Ayers, director of external relations for the Department of Health Administration, led a tour of the medical campus. The tour included the site of the new School of Allied Health Professions building, which is currently under construction, other new facilities on campus and a visit to their former classroom in the Randolph Minor Annex. On Friday night, they held a special dinner at Amuse Restaurant, where they were joined by former department chair Jerry Norville. The classmates celebrated 40 years of friendship, and shared stories about their careers and families.

Two nurse anesthesia alumni create endowment
VCU Department of Nurse Anesthesia alumni Daniel P. Frasca, CRNA, DNAP (M.S.N.A. ’92, D.N.A.P. ’10) and Kevin R. Baker, CRNA (M.S.N.A. ’05), have created the APEX Anesthesia Review Endowment fund. APEX Anesthesia Review, a joint business venture between Frasca and Baker, launched in 2014. APEX is an online course that prepares students for boards and makes it easy for CRNAs to earn class A continuing education credits.

Frasca has been a practicing CRNA for 24 years. As a recipient of the Agatha Hodgins Award, he graduated at the top of his class at VCU with a 4.0 GPA. Frasca was a member of the Virginia Association of Nurse Anesthetists’ board as District 5 director from 2010-14. He is a charter member and previous chair of the District 5 Winter Workshop, an annual meeting offered to CRNAs and SRNAs. Affiliate faculty at VCU, Frasca is the recipient of both the Herbert T. Watson and, most recently, the Department of Nurse Anesthesia’s Outstanding Alumnus award for his efforts and dedication in furthering student education. He was worked with students for over 20 years. As a recipient of the Agatha Hodgins Award at VCU, Baker graduated at the top of his class at VCU with a 4.0 GPA. He also scored in the 100th percentile on the National Certification Exam. In 2016, Baker left full-time clinical practice to devote himself to APEX. He continues to provide clinical anesthesia services on a PRN basis in Richmond. In addition to serving a preceptor and adjunct faculty at VCU, Baker has been published in the AANA Journal. Additionally, he has delivered a variety of invited presentations. Baker was named the VCU Clinical Instructor of the year for 2012-13.
Nurse Anesthesia graduate establishes scholarship

Coffee Bourne, CRNA (M.S.N.A. ’16/D.N.A.P. ’17), interviewed for a spot in the prestigious VCU Department of Nurse Anesthesia Class of 2016 while pregnant with her third child. She graduated from that class while pregnant with her fourth.

Knowing the demands of the No. 1-ranked nurse anesthesia program, Coffee worried about getting through clinicals with a family. “I was really nervous,” she says. “I was afraid everyone would be harder on me for attempting such a rigorous program while pregnant.”

Instead, she felt incredibly supported, from peers and professors alike. “They would check in to see if I was doing well with the demands of the program,” she says. “They were very considerate.”

Inspired by the warm reception she received at VCU, Coffee and her husband, Adam, established the Bourne Family Scholarship to be made available for full-time nurse anesthesia students with dependents.

“The idea is to help someone who has children,” Coffee says, “and show that although the nurse anesthesia program consumes you, VCU wants you and supports you.”

“Our hope is to make life a little easier for them, the way so many have helped us,” Adam says.

Coffee, who came to VCU with master’s degrees in nursing and health administration from the University of Texas, says scholarships made her 13 years of education possible. “The entire time I was in school, I knew I wanted to give back,” says Coffee, a certified registered nurse anesthetist at St. Mary’s Hospital in Richmond. “We’ve benefited over the course of our life from others,” adds Adam, vice president of finance for CIT Bank. “We’re in a position now that we can make that happen for someone else.”

New scholarships established

New scholarship funds have been established at the VCU School of Allied Health Professions. In the Department of Physical Therapy, the Barry Williams Jr. Scholarship was funded by Barry Williams Sr. in memory of his son. In the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling, the Blair Craig Memorial Endowed Scholarship was funded by Craig’s mother, Mary Bradshaw. In honor of their colleague, the Department of Health Administration, along with alumni and friends, endowed the Yasar A. Ozcan Scholarship Fund.

And, in honor of her colleague in the Department of Patient Counseling, adjunct faculty member Ani Charlescraft funded the Alexander F. Tartaglia Supervisory Clinical Pastoral Education Scholarship, for excellence in the patient counseling MS Supervisory Education program. The Tartaglia award was presented by department chair Russell Davis to students Caitlyn Bailey and Rebecca Hightfield at the Department of Patient Counseling’s annual Prest Lecture on June 9, 2017.

MCV Foundation scholarship event honors donors

The 12th annual MCV Campus Endowed Scholarship Event was held in February at The Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, Va. The event is a celebration of the generosity of donors and the educational achievements of our scholarship recipients. More than 240 guests attended the dinner, which pairs benefactors with their scholarship recipients for the evening. Each year, many health care sciences students graduate with a debt load exceeding $100,000. More than 75 percent of students on the MCV Campus receive some type of financial aid, which can make the critical difference between having a dream and being able to pursue it.

Inspirational speakers that evening included VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D., and MCV Foundation Board Chair Harry Thalhimer. School of Nursing Dean Jean Giddens, Ph.D., R.N., and her husband, Jay Corazza, spoke about how their experience as students motivated them to establish the Giddens-Corazza Endowment to assist VCU nursing students.

Inaugural Parrott Healthcare Lecture held

The Inaugural Jim and Sally Warden Parrott Healthcare Education Fund Lecture was held in March 2017. The event was made possible through an endowment created by Sally Warden Parrott and Virginia Premier Health Plan to honor Jim Parrott, who died in September 2015. He was CEO of Virginia Premier for many years and was a popular preceptor for VCU M.H.A. residents.

Sheldon Retchin, M.D., M.H.P.N., an affiliate professor in the Department of Health Administration, was the speaker. Retchin was former vice president for health sciences at VCU and CEO of the VCU Health System, and the inaugural Seymour and Ruth Perlin Professor of Health Administration and Internal Medicine. An audience of more than 300 attended his presentation, “The Impact of ACA Repeal: A Covenant in Jeopardy,” and the reception that followed.
Breaking ground

Nearly 250 students, faculty, staff, alumni, elected officials and community members gathered beneath a white tent bordered by mounds of dirt and bulldozers on April 28, 2017, at the future site of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Allied Health Professions. The event attendees, many of whom had been working toward the day for decades, assembled at 600 N. 10th St. in Richmond to celebrate the groundbreaking of the school’s new 154,000-square-foot building. The eight-level facility, which will open in fall 2019, will, for the first time, centralize all 11 of our school’s units under one roof. “I am proud that we will now be able to unite them,” says Michael Rao, Ph.D., president of VCU and VCU Health System, “so that they can benefit collaboratively from all of the great innovation that they have already been doing in their own locations.” Visit the school’s Facebook page to see more photos from the groundbreaking.

Left to right: J.D. Drasbek, Master of Health Administration Class of 2019; Marsha Rappley, M.D., CEO of VCU Health System and vice president of health sciences; Michael Rao, Ph.D., president of VCU and VCU Health System; Cecil B. Drain, Ph.D., dean of VCU School of Allied Health Professions; Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe; Delegate S. Chris Jones; Harry Thalhimer, board chair of the MCV Foundation.

Phlebotomy flashbacks

Clinical laboratory scientists have been trained on the MCV Campus since 1927; however, the Department (formerly school) of Medical Technology was not formally established until 1952, at which time the curriculum included six months of didactic experience with lectures and laboratory sessions, followed by a six-month rotation through the clinical laboratories. In 1994, the department name was changed to the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences.
We’re on the way!

Thank you for your support of the School of Allied Health Professions’ new building. We’ve long dreamed of a designated, unified space where our programs can thrive under one roof, and in 2019, that dream will become a reality.