We bid a fond farewell to Dr. Shelly Lane. After 19 years, 13 as chair of the Department and 6 as Director of Post-Professional Education, Dr. Shelly Lane will leave VCU in June of 2015. While we will miss our friend and colleague and are sad that she will no longer be a part of our team, we wish her well. We are grateful for her years of commitment to VCU and excited for the opportunities that await her. Dr. Lane will take a new position as professor and mentor of research and teaching in occupational therapy at the University of Newcastle in Australia.

Dr. Lane became VCU’s 7th Department Chair and Program Director in 1996. Between 2005 and 2011, she served as Assistant Dean of Research for the School of Allied Health Professions while also holding the Chair position. Under her leadership, the Department moved the entry level program from the bachelor’s to master’s degree level, initiated online and hybrid post-professional masters and occupational therapy doctoral degree programs, and graduated 10 PhD students on the Occupational Therapy track of the School of Allied Health Professions’ doctorate in Health Related Sciences (HRS). The HRS program currently has 9 PhD students at various levels, 4 for whom Dr. Lane serves as primary advisor and dissertation chair. VCU OT students truly benefitted from her teaching, mentorship, and genuine interest in their professional growth. Fieldwork educators regularly credit her for how well prepared VCU OT students are in neuroscience and sensory integration.

Under Shelly’s leadership, the Department received full ACOTE accreditation for the entry level master’s degree in 2002. In an ongoing effort to maintain excellence in teaching and learning and keep its programs vibrant and up to date, the Department has made multiple curriculum changes, all following a system of program review, faculty development and strategic planning initiated by Dr. Lane when she served as Department chair. When she stepped out of that role, she graciously agreed to serve as Director of Post-Professional Education, increasing enrollment in the OTD and PhD programs and effectively revising course content in the process. In addition to the administrative responsibilities she held, Dr. Lane was the recipient of the first endowed research laboratory in the Department, the Kathryn Lawrence Dragas SPASE Laboratory, which is dedicated to the study of sensory processing and stress evaluation.

I could fill this newsletter by listing her awards and accomplishments - co-authoring of textbooks, the A.J. Ayres Award, the VOTA Award of Merit, the School of Allied Health Professions Award of Excellence, to name a few. However, I feel the Department will remember her best for her commitment to mentoring students and faculty, her passion for the field of occupational therapy, her love of neuroscience, the great jewelry she makes, and the amazing pumpkins she carves. Shelly’s analytical mind, knowledge of research and gentle prompting has helped faculty members as well as students and occupational therapists throughout the community to follow their dreams.

Dr. Lane, as you head out to “the place where the sidewalk ends”, remember words of Shel Silverstein you shared with us so many times:

- You’ll be on your way up!
- You’ll be seeing great sights.
- You’ll join the high fliers
- Who soar to high heights.

Please think of us often and fondly as we will of you. Thank you for making VCU your professional home for the last 19 years. We wish the best to you and your family.

Al Copolillo, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA
Associate Professor and Chair
Fiona Bessey-Bushnell (M.S., 2001) is complementing her career in occupational therapy with her involvement as a writer. She continues to publish in the Richmond Family Magazine, with her most recent article appearing in the October, 2014 edition. Entitled, “The New Active!”, Fiona’s story highlighted the ways in which work and school environments were being designed to encourage less sitting, and more standing and movement. The use of walk stations in home and professional offices, and balance ball seating for students in Hanover County, VA schools were highlighted.

Elise (Davenport) Kirby (M.S., 2011) has been working full-time at Atlanta Medical Center, a Trauma 1 and Stroke-Certified hospital. She primarily treats patients with SCI, TBA, CVA, gunshot wounds, and general/medical and elective orthopedic conditions, but treats patients in the ICU and Neuro ICU as well. She’s taken on one FWI and 2 FW II students, has been part of her hospital’s peer interview team, and was lead therapist in educating their rehab department on the transition from paper- to online-documentation. She has also maintained PRN weekend work at Shepherd Center on the brain injury/neuro specialty units, and was recently invited to work full-time on the brain injury unit. She also got married earlier this year!

Margie (Fox) Kwait (M.S., 1987) works in acute care at INOVA Fairfax hospital in Northern Virginia. She recently became a Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) through the National Association of Home Builders. She recommends to new practitioners that they be sure to keep their licenses active, as reactivation can be a difficult experience. She would also love to hear from her former classmates.

Otis Johnson (B.S., 1976) and his wife Lucille proudly announce the birth of their grandson, Rahmal, Jr. on September 8, 2014. They also have three granddaughters, ages nine, seven and one year(s), and continue to enjoy quality time with all of their grandchildren and through travel.

Deborah (Michaels) Kahrs (M.S., 2003) works as a PRN OT at Sheltering Arms in Richmond, VA and for the Virginia Commonwealth University OT Department as adjunct faculty. She and her wife Andy got married in “a very fun, unique ski wedding ceremony in New Hampshire in March, 2011.” She is an avid mountain biker and also camps, hikes, kayaks, skis and snowboards. Deborah also loves to travel whenever she gets the chance.

Linda M. Olson (SAHP Ph.D., 2011) is Acting Chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy at Rush University. She was recently appointed to the Board of Directors of the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Foundation, which works in partnership with the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association to promote wellness and recovery. Linda’s appointment was mentioned in the July 28, 2914 issue of OT Practice.

Visit VCU at the AOTA Expo
Table #8
2015 AOTA CONFERENCE
Nashville, TN
Blurring the lines of work and play is at the heart of pediatric occupational therapy. This is true for the faculty and students from VCU that have been able to conduct research while “playing” at the Children’s Museum of Richmond (CMoR). Extending the relationship with CMoR, the VCU OT department began piloting a Living Laboratory® research model this past spring. The Living Laboratory® aims to educate museum visitors about child development by immersion in the process of scientific discovery – meaning parents and children learn about research, the scientific process, and child development through participation in actual research at the museum. Researchers get direct opportunities to discuss their research with museum visitors and actively recruit new participants in their studies. Museum educators get to learn about current research topics. This model has been developed at the Boston Museum of Science, and with their training and support, we have started it at VCU!

Last Spring, OT faculty Carole Ivey and Shelly Lane along with CMoR’s Liz Pearce started the research lab at CMoR by conducting an OT research study, Praxis Development in Young Children. This research is focused on collecting normative data (learning how children typically score) on two assessments, the Motor Planning Maze Assessment and the Test of Ideational Praxis, that study motor praxis. Motor praxis is the ability of the brain to conceive of, plan, sequence, and carry out unfamiliar motor actions. Collection of this data began in 2012 in area preschools, but the pool of potential participants was limited by the number of children at a preschool and by age. Through expansion of this research at CMoR, Dr. Ivey’s team has been able to increase the number of participants in the study. Entry-level OT students, as part of their research course, were able to actively recruit participants, answer questions about research, praxis, and occupational therapy, then score and analyze the data – commenting that they were surprised at how fun research could actually be! Dr. Ivey and Dr. Lane will be continuing this research at CMoR throughout the spring. By conducting research in the moment, where children are, the researchers feel better able to capture what children are doing – which they hope will continue to inform their knowledge, teaching, and ultimately occupational therapy practice!
What is it like to be a student in the current entry-level master’s occupational therapy program at VCU? Thanks to Ricky Price, the answer to this question can now be found in the form of a YouTube video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waVcKqgLZ_U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waVcKqgLZ_U)

According to Price, his goal upon entering the VCU OT program was to enhance the community’s knowledge about what occupational therapy is and what occupational therapists do. In addition, Price wanted to help prospective students understand what the VCU department of occupational therapy has to offer. The video, which was developed by Price and fellow students Robbie Grauzlis and Alison Travers, was featured on the World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) website on World OT Day (October 27th, 2013) and has been viewed over 4500 times on YouTube.

The video isn’t the only way in which Price has shown his leadership abilities since arriving at VCU. In March Price initiated a partnership with Special Spectators, an organization which provides VIP game day experiences to children who have serious illnesses. In collaboration with VCU Assistant Professor Carole Ivey, Price was able to recruit children and families from the Children’s Hospital of Richmond to be part of a Special Spectators event at a VCU men’s basketball game on March 1st, 2014. According to Price, the event was a unique opportunity to have kids experience things that they may not otherwise have been able to do because of their special medical needs. At the game, children and their families got to meet and get photographs with the players, watch the game, and be part of special on-floor event during a timeout in the second half, where they received a rousing ovation from the crowd. VCU occupational therapy students volunteered during the event, making posters and assisting families. The event is something Price hopes will continue on an annual basis and talks are already in place for next year. The project provides a fantastic opportunity for VCU students to demonstrate leadership by collaborating with organizations like Special Spectators and Children’s Hospital of Richmond and advocating for families and children with special needs.

In addition to serving as class president, Price also serves works as a research assistant on a project led by VCU Associate Professor Tony Gentry. The research study Price is working on assesses the effectiveness of interventions, which use iPod and iPhone technology with Fitbits as a way to improve sleep quality and sleep hygiene in adults with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). As a research assistant, Price works directly with subjects to introduce the study, get consent, administer questionnaires, introduce the equipment and software, provide training, and collect data. When asked how he manages to balance his classwork, his role as class president, his job as a research assistant, and additional leadership projects, Price notes that he just finds a way. He notes “I feel this program has so many good things to offer and I want to make the most of the opportunity while I’m here”.
Alumni are invited to reconnect and get involved as active, dues-paying members and volunteer leaders of the MCV Alumni Association. MCVAA offers many ways to help you connect with fellow alumni, engage in activities that support the university and serve the community. Membership dues are critical to provide the funding necessary for effective alumni and student programming.

Membership Options

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**LIFE MEMBERSHIP – RATES CHANGING IN 2015**

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*(Installment payment plans available online only for $29/mo., for 18 months, visit [www.vcualumni.org](http://www.vcualumni.org) for this option)*

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*Senior Status: 40+ years since first VCU degree or age 65+.

Membership Options

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- VCU Alumni
- Parent, Friend (limited benefits)

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**Joint (same address)**

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- GOLD Annual $35

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LIFE MEMBERSHIP – RATES CHANGING IN 2015

- Life $495 (NOW)
- Life $695 (2015)

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- Senior Life* $225
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*Senior Status: 40+ years since first VCU degree or age 65+.

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Card number: ________________________________ Expiration date: ____ / ____
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Mail completed form to: VCU Alumni, Robertson Alumni House, P.O. Box 843044, Richmond, VA, 23284-3044
VCU OT’s and Virginia Mourn the Loss of a Great OT

Jane Case-Smith, Ed.D., OTR/L, FAOTA

It is with great sadness that we were informed that Jane Case-Smith passed away (July 30, 2014) at home with her family following a very aggressive cancer. This is a loss across Virginia and the OT world. Many of you knew Jane when she taught at VCU or you may have learned about Pediatric OT through her classic textbook, *Occupational Therapy for Children* or her numerous research articles.

Jane began her academic career at Virginia Commonwealth University in 1986 as a faculty member for a Maternal and Child Health grant. Jane first taught post professional students who were constantly challenged by her questions and ideas and her quest for research. Later, she taught some of the entry level students in special topics. Jane was an innovator and was the first faculty member to be constantly using the one computer that was in the department at that time. (Times have changed in 30 years!). She advocated purchasing Apple Ile computers for students to learn how to use technology with their clients, and helped set up the first Assistive Technology Lab in the department, with an emphasis on working with young children.

In four short years, Jane became involved with the State Early Intervention Council, the Virginia Occupational Therapy Association, the Richmond Pediatric Special Interest group, and worked one day a week in the NICU at the VCU Medical Center doing research while co-treating with clinicians. Jane was given the Award of Merit from the Virginia Occupational Therapy Association for her efforts obtaining certification for OTs in a regulation resistant state. Virginia now has state licensure due to Jane’s initial ability to connect with state legislators and officials and her persistence.

Jane’s contacts and networking during her years at VCU continue to open the door for the Department of Occupational Therapy to collaborate with others. While at VCU, Jane’s productivity did not stop with OT during this time, she had her first child, David, and drove over 90 miles every day to and from VCU for about a year until she moved to Ohio, to join the faculty at Ohio State University. She later became the Chair of the Department where she continued to mentor others, lead numerous AOTA committees, edit journals and books, and conduct research through numerous grants.

Jane was one of the most vibrant and productive persons in the profession. Always humble and generous in sharing information, Jane taught and mentored many current faculty members and students over the years. She was always gracious, willing to share her ideas and to ask you for yours. Jane will be missed by all for her brilliance, her quick wit and smile, and her inclusiveness in helping others learn to lead. VCU OT was fortunate to have her as part of our faculty in the late 80’s.
I am pleased to support the VCU Department of Occupational Therapy

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*If you have any questions please contact: Jessica F. Gurganus at (804) 828-3269 or jfgurganus@vcu.edu.*

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