REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

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Be a part of Allied Health!
This magazine is for you, as a member of Virginia Commonwealth University’s School of Allied Health Professions. But, try as we might, we can’t keep you abreast of all the latest happenings in one single issue. So, don’t be a stranger. Head on over to sahp.vcu.edu, check us out on Facebook and LinkedIn, and stay on top of the latest news, research and advances happening every day.

And support the School of Allied Health Professions by visiting support.vcu.edu/give/alliedhealth.
Mark your calendar. Sept. 22-24, 2016

…is launching this September.

Make it ambitious.
The largest fundraising campaign in Virginia Commonwealth University’s history…

Make it timely.
…is launching this September.

Make it matter.
Join us as we kick off this momentous occasion with a celebration of how VCU makes it real.

Make it real.
A daylong showcase of VCU’s finest talent, past and present.

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Genuinely sponsored by the MCV Foundation and the VCU Foundation.

Dear Alumni and Friends,

It is with a tremendous amount of excitement and gratitude that I formally announce the approval of a new building for Virginia Commonwealth University’s School of Allied Health Professions. Slated to open in 2019, the new building will be located at 10th and Leigh streets, across from the MCV Campus bookstore and the Larrick Student Center. Construction on the new building will begin this summer.

We couldn’t be happier to finally have a unified, designated space for one of the most successful allied health schools in the country. Thanks to each of you for your support and patience along the way. And a special thank you to VCU President Dr. Michael Rao for his wonderful support throughout the entire approval process. Please enjoy reading about the new building in our feature article on Page 12.

In an effort to help inform students and alumni how the disciplines in the School of Allied Health Professions align with one another in the health care industry, I hope you’ll enjoy learning about “Jane” on Page 18. Jane is a fictional 72-year-old patient who is rushed to the ER with a badly broken ankle. Jane takes us along her journey through the different allied health professions.

DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to the School of Allied Health Professions. I continue to be humbled by your generous support. Please stay in touch and “like” us on Facebook so you can keep up with our latest posts. We’d appreciate it!

Sincerely,

Cecil B. Drain, Ph.D.
Dean and Professor

Let us support you. Make it real.

CAMPAIN FOR VCU
Blind athlete keeps running after visit to VCU RUN LAB

Seventy-two-year-old Charlie Plaskon, a legally blind retired teacher, began running at the age of 55 and hasn’t looked back. He has competed in more than 45 marathons and triathlons, including the grueling Ironman World Championship in Kona, Hawaii, in 2007. Nothing could slow Plaskon down until he suffered a back injury in 2015 that put his running career on hold. He was diagnosed with spinal stenosis, a narrowing of the vertebral canal that compresses the spinal nerves and can cause leg pain and difficulty walking. After a successful and rigorous rehabilitation and physical therapy, he was ready to start running, swimming and biking again.

Though he had never been on a treadmill before due to his visual impairment, after a little practice and a warm-up run, Plaskon was ready for the 30-second test, and at the end of the assessment, Williams told Plaskon what he wanted to hear.

“You have enough raw material to keep running and be competitive again,” Williams said, and while the data still need to be analyzed and sent to Plaskon’s doctor and physical therapist to allow them to make adjustments as needed, Plaskon is ready to hit the pavement once more.

The VCU RUN LAB — a collaboration between the Department of Physical Therapy in the School of Allied Health Professions and the Department of Kinesiology and Health Sciences in the College of Humanities and Sciences — is a national leader in running analysis, and Williams began by taking extensive measurements of Plaskon before putting him on the RUN LAB treadmill, which is elevated and surrounded by 3-D cameras to capture the intricate movements of the runner, who is fitted with numerous sensors.

Cloud technology enhances CLS students’ lab experience

To keep pace with technological advances in clinical laboratories, the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences has integrated cloud technology into the student laboratory, allowing students to better record and manage data using Google Drive during laboratory sessions. Through their use of mobile devices, students record, manage and analyze data from different devices and locations. Instructors can then access the student data, provide immediate feedback and enter laboratory report grades.

Since the introduction of Google Drive in laboratory sessions, preliminary findings indicate increased student organization, reduced transcription errors, improved understanding of data findings and quicker grading turnaround time. In addition, students have expressed their excitement about having access to familiar technology in the CLS student laboratory.

Coalition aims to stop elder abuse in Southwest Virginia

Elder abuse can take a variety of forms beyond just physical violence. Victims can have caregivers, family members or even friends and neighbors who may steal from their accounts, try to manipulate who they see, what they do and where they go, and even threaten pets and withhold food and medication.

With the aging of the Baby Boomer population, incidences of elder abuse have continued to climb, and southwest Virginia — whether due to higher rates of abuse or increased levels of reporting — has outpaced the state in both substantiated cases and higher rates of service to older adults by sexual and domestic violence agencies.

However, through the Abuse in Later Life Project (ALLP), coordinated by the Virginia Center on Aging in the School of Allied Health Professions and funded by a federal grant to the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, communities like Bristol and Washington County are marshaling the necessary resources to fight elder abuse.

Through a multiagency and multifaceted approach, the VCCA and its community partners in the ALLP aim to improve victim safety and hold offenders accountable, providing more than 1,330 hours of training for criminal justice professionals, victim advocates, government workers and caregivers in addressing abuse of older adults.

In addition, the ALLP funded a community needs assessment, established an emergency fund for victims in immediate danger and fostered the creation of an abuse in later life specialist position to manage care and coordinate services.

Since the ALLP’s initial funding grant runs out in September, however, the VCCA and the ALLP are currently seeking new funding to keep the project going. For more information, or to support the Abuse in Later Life Project through the VCCA, visit sahp.vcu.edu, click on departments and then on Virginia Center on Aging.

We’re No. 1! (And No. 3, No. 4…)

The VCU School of Allied Health Professions has some of U.S. News & World Report’s highest ranked programs in the country. Check out our 2015 rankings:

#1 Nurse Anesthesia
#3 Health Administration
#4 Rehabilitation Counseling
#17 Occupational Therapy
#20 Physical Therapy
Two students receive VCU Black History Maker awards

Chelsea Perry, a student in the Department of Health Administration, and Dexter Honora, a student in the Department of Patient Counseling, received VCU Black History Maker awards in a February ceremony. The award is presented by the Department of African American Studies.

Daryl Dance, the distinguished scholar of African-American and Caribbean literature who served as program coordinator during the 1983-84 academic year, founded Black History in the Making in 1983 to acknowledge the achievements of African-American students. Dance invited academic units and organizations to recognize a student who has made an important contribution. "The nominating units established criteria for selecting recipients. Since 1983, more than 50 departments and organizations have recognized more than 550 students. 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.

Faculty and Staff National Awards

Health Administration
Laura McClelland: 2015 Award for Outstanding Reviewer, Health Care Management Division, Academy of Management

Jessica Miller: 2015 Award for Outstanding Reviewer, Health Care Management Division, Academy of Management

Carolyn Watts: Dr. Watts and Dr. Jami DelliFranie’s chapter, "A Business Planning Model to Identify New Specialty Net Clinic Locations," published in Advances in Health Care Management, received the Outstanding Author Contribution in the 2015 Emerald Literati Network for Excellence.

Nurse Anesthesia
Michael Fallacaro: 2016 Distinguished Alumni Award, State University of New York at Buffalo, School of Nursing

Michael Fallacaro: Fellow, American Academy of Nursing

Patient Counseling
Angela Flack: 2015 Emerging Leader Award, Association for Clinical Pastoral Education

Physical Therapy
Cheryl Ford-Smith: 2016 Minority Initiative Award, American Physical Therapy Association

Peter Pidcoe: Invited to the Smithsonian to demonstrate his invention in fall 2015

Shawne Soper: 2016 Lucy Blair Service Award, APTA

D.S. Blaise Williams III: Fellow, American College of Sports Medicine

Radiation Sciences
Timmerie F. Cohen, Jeffrey S. Legg: 2015 J. Warren Perry Award, Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions, for peer-reviewed article of the year, "Factors Associated with HPV Vaccine Use Among Hispanic College Students"

Timmerie F. Cohen, Jeffrey S. Legg, Melanie C. Dempsey: 2016 Harold Silverman Distinguished Author Award, ASRT, for peer-reviewed article of the year (2012-13), "The Effect of Vertical Off-Centering on Breast Dose During CT Simulation of Accelerated Partial Breast Irradiation Planning"

Melanie Dempsey: Fellow, American Association of Medical Dosimetrists

Jeffrey S. Legg: Fellow, American Society of Radiologic Technologists

Rehabilitation Counseling
Christine Reid: Lifetime Achievement Award, International Symposium on Life Care Planning

Gerontology


Health Administration


Program helps visually impaired students prepare for a future in laboratory sciences

For the second straight summer, the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences at Virginia Commonwealth University hosted visually impaired high school students to help them prepare for college and the intricacies of working in a lab. The Learning Excellence in Academics Program, which is offered through the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired, allows students to participate in college-level courses while testing their college-readiness skills and familiarizing themselves with the demands of college life.

During lab sessions in the five-week summer program, the students performed hands-on techniques such as pipetting, reagent strip testing, venipuncture and streaking agar plates. In addition, students learned the blood donation process in a role-playing lab.

“So many of us think you have to be able to see chemical reactions to perform them,” says Lisa Perkins, MS, MLS (ASCP), a department instructor. “But there is so much more to science than what we can see, and these students remind us that sight is only one of our senses.”

According to Melody Roane, director of the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired, by working in a campus setting for a summer, the students become more attuned to the reality of maneuvering and succeeding on a college campus.

“Before attending the LEAP program, some of our students had false confidence in their abilities to deal successfully with the demands of college,” Roane says. “After attending the LEAP program, these students replaced that false confidence with a certainty based on experience that they could successfully navigate the expectations of college life.”

“There is so much more to science than what we can see, and these students remind us that sight is only one of our senses.”

Clinical Laboratory Sciences


Nurse Anesthesia


Gerontology department celebrates milestone anniversary

Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2016, the VCU Department of Gerontology has graduated more than 500 students from the master’s degree program and awarded graduate certificates in aging studies to gerontology practitioners from across the commonwealth. As the only university in Virginia to offer a Master of Science in gerontology, VCU attracts the future leaders of the field. Approximately 10 programs from the master’s degree program each year, and VCU is committed to ensuring that each of those students has a role in shaping the future of the discipline. As the U.S. population continues to age, the field will continue to grow.

One of the department’s primary goals for 2016 is to fight ageism. One of the department’s primary goals for 2016 is to fight ageism. One of the department’s primary goals for 2016 is to fight ageism. One of the department’s primary goals for 2016 is to fight ageism. One of the department’s primary goals for 2016 is to fight ageism. One of the department’s primary goals for 2016 is to fight ageism.

ADISSERTATION

In June 2016, the VCU Department of Gerontology chair E. Ayn Wellerfelt, Ph.D. is committed to ending ageism in Richmond. “Eldercare is a lifestyle beyond adulthood that we should all be preparing for and anticipating with a positive mind,” she says.

Radiation Sciences


Virginia Center on Aging


New faculty and staff members

Patricia Lavender, OTR/L, O.T.D., joined the Department of Occupational Therapy as its new Towham coordinator in July 2016. Lavender comes to the department following a full career in pediatrics and recently as program manager for Physical and Occupational Therapy Services in the Fairfax County (VA) Public School System. She chairs the Early Intervention and Schools Special Interest System of the American Occupational Therapy Association. She coordinates all levels of field internship for the department and teaches courses with pediatrics content.

Courtney O’Hara, M.S., is the project manager for the Central Virginia Task Force on Domestic Violence. In Late Life, a part of the Virginia Center on Aging. A local partnership of organizations working since 1998 to raise awareness and improve the community response to women aged 50 and older who experience domestic, sexual or family violence, the task force works directly with four cities and counties and offers technical support statewide. O’Hara works with multidisciplinary teams in three jurisdictions and does training statewide. Some of the workshops she’s conducted locally have been on such topics as community partnerships, protective orders and dynamics of domestic and sexual violence.

Brenda Watts, Ph.D., CRNA, joined the Department of Nurse Anesthesia in September 2015 as the director of interprofessional education. In this role, she works collaboratively across disciplines within as well as beyond VCU focusing on patient safety initiatives related to anesthesia delivery. Watts teaches M.S.N.A., D.N.A.P., and Ph.D. students and plans to expand her current clinical research. Her research interests include ethics and adult education.

Retiring faculty and staff

Tami Fauber, Ed.D., R.T. (R)(M), associate professor and chair of the Department of Radiologic Sciences, retired this summer after 31 years of service at VCU. Fauber has more than 25 years’ experience as a radiographer and educator. She is the author of the textbook “Radiographic Imaging and Exposure,” co-author of the textbook “Essentials of Radiographic Physics and Imaging,” member of the editorial board of the international journal Radiography and trustee to the ASRT Foundation Board. She has authored several manuscripts covering both technical and professional topics and is a recipient of the Distinguished Author Award.

Marjorie Goodwin retired from the Department of Nurse Anesthesia in December 2015 after 21 years with VCU. She has served in a variety of roles including classroom, clinical, and preceptor in both hospital and community settings.

Patricia Lavender

Courtney O’Hara

Brenda Watts

Tami Fauber

Marjorie Goodwin

Jayne Shepherd
The new School of Allied Health Professions building will unify faculty, staff and students for greater success

By Anne Dreyfuss

In the winter, first-year physical therapy student Carlin Tettelbach often only sees sunlight for an hour of her day. “We are pretty happy and positive people, but it can be gloomy at times,” the 24-year-old says of herself and her classmates who spend weekdays together at the Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Physical Therapy, which is housed in the basement of West Hospital on the MCV Campus. The perpetually cold and windowless basement is prone to flooding and often smells of mold. “It is a little dreary and very old, but we deal with it because we have such great professors and great classmates,” Tettelbach says.

For 16 years, students have endured the dark, damp and dreary environment in exchange for the opportunity to learn from the world-renowned faculty that the department recruits, but soon students will not have to sacrifice sunlight for academic pursuits. Last spring, the Virginia legislature and the VCU Board of Visitors approved plans for a new School of Allied Health Professions building that will bring all 11 of the school’s units under one roof. Construction for the new building is slated to start this fall, and it is scheduled to be completed by the fall of 2019.

“I have always had it as my goal to get a building,” says School of Allied Health Professions Dean Cecil B. Drain, Ph.D. “It is a phenomenally deserving school.”

A HISTORICAL UNDERTAKING

When Drain began leading the School of Allied Health Professions in 1997, the previous dean showed him an architectural rendering of a new building for the school that was drawn in 1985. “That was the last time we had a shot at a new building,” Drain says. Soon after starting as dean, he developed the school’s motto “Strength through diversity,” as the first step toward uniting the various departments. Drain also established the school’s grand rounds, which occur four times a year at the Egyptian Building. During grand rounds, students are presented with a complex patient case, and they take turns presenting to one another on how they would help the patient based on their individual disciplines. “The students started to figure out that it is all one team working together,” Drain says. “That was a method of madness on my part to try to draw them together on the one-building concept.”

Creating a unified space for the school and its top-ranked programs is a priority in VCU’s Master Site Plan, which was developed by university officials with stakeholder input. The plan includes development, renovation and construction on the MCV Campus that enhances academic instruction and health sciences research.

VCU began planning for the new building in the fall of 2013 with a study led by a school-appointed committee that includes faculty, staff and student representatives. In 2014 they conducted a preliminary study to develop a conceptual design of the building. Support from university leadership provided the necessary boost to turn the plan into a reality.

“Our nationally premier School of Allied Health Professions needed space that matched the remarkable talent of the faculty, staff and students who comprise it,” VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D., says. “Having these renowned researchers, educators and practitioners together under one roof will foster the interprofessional collaboration that represents the future of health care.”

School of Allied Health Professions Dean Cecil B. Drain, Ph.D., and VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D., discuss the architect’s model of the new School of Allied Health Professions building.
The new $87.3 million facility will unite the school’s academic units, the dean’s office and the Virginia Center on Aging, which have occupied 13 buildings in the past 45 years and are now scattered among five buildings on two campuses.

“With the new building, we will be a unified force,” Tettelbach says, adding that the only time she interacts with students from other departments is during monthly student executive board meetings. The majority of her classmates never meet students from other departments. “It will be a great way for students to interact interprofessionally and be able to practice what the professors are teaching us about working with other professions.”

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

The 154,100-square-foot School of Allied Health Professions building will be located at 10th and Leigh streets, across from the MCV Campus bookstore and the N Deck in the space currently occupied by the aging Bear, Rudd, Warner and McRae residence halls. The LEED Silver-designed building is going to be L-shaped, with a west-facing eight-story wing and a south-facing four-story wing. Each of the building’s eight floors will feature two casual spaces with tables, chairs and electrical outlets where students can mingle. “We will have numerous places for interaction among various disciplines,” Drain says. “When these students graduate and start working in hospitals and other health care settings, they will be prepared for working with other occupations.”

The building will also feature plentiful outdoor space, with a deck and garden on the fourth floor that will be open year-round for students to meet and study together. The dean’s office will be housed in one of the lower levels, and individual departments will largely be collected on the upper floors.

“The hidden curriculum of this building is to bring people together so that they have a chance to understand one another’s profession,” Drain says. “One of the major goals of the building is to facilitate interactions among the various professions.”

The first-floor lobby will feature an open-concept space with a student-centric focus and an auditorium capable of fitting 160 students. Classrooms will be furnished to maximize flexibility to accommodate various teaching styles and methods. They will have tables and chairs on wheels so that people can change the architecture depending on individual needs for each class. “The old-style classroom is a thing of the past,” Drain says. In addition to being adaptable, the new classrooms will have advanced telecommunications technologies, including two-way synchronous video conferencing and satellite downlinks. The school is a recognized leader in distance education both within the VCU community and nationally, having offered distance-learning programs for the past 20 years. Full programs are available in eight of the school’s nine departments, and all departments have courses that are available to distance learners. The plethora of new classroom technologies will increase the school’s distance-learning capabilities and make it even more appealing for students who don’t live in Richmond to enroll in VCU’s programs.

The technological advances will extend beyond the classrooms with a state-of-the-art simulation center that will include operating rooms, recovery rooms and patient exam rooms. The simulation center will have lifelike mannequins that simulate heartbeats, breathing and other vital signs to replicate real-life patient care situations. “We wired the new building to be as high-tech as it could be,” Drain says.

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Suggestions for new technologies, as well as other input for the building’s design, came directly from students and faculty, who have been involved in planning from the beginning. “They listened to us, and they know what we would like to have and what would benefit us,” Tettelbach says. She would advocate for physical therapy students’ needs during the monthly student executive board meetings. During the meetings, she would suggest the type of furniture they wanted in the classrooms and preferences for the layout on each floor. “Dr. Drain is always sharing updates about the building with us, showing us pictures and getting our input,” Tettelbach says. The school also sought faculty input during the architectural planning process. “I wanted to make sure that the needs of our students and faculty were met and to ensure that there would be room for our programs to grow,” says Teresa Nadder, Ph.D. (B.S., ’76; M.S., ’80; Ph.D., ’98). The chair and associate professor in the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences has been involved in planning from the beginning. She helped with developing the proposal that was sent to the Virginia General Assembly two years ago and has met with the building’s architects once a month for the past year to advocate for the specific needs of students and faculty from her department.

The predominant benefit of moving to the new building will be for students and faculty to have the opportunity to interact with other departments, Nadder says. The Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences has been housed at Randolph Minor Hall for more than 50 years. The historic building, which was constructed in the 1800s as the first African American Baptist church in Richmond, is located at the farthest edge of the MCV Campus at 301 College St. “In our current space, the CLS students have very
f ew opportunities for interaction with students from other
departments,” Nadder says. “The new building will be a wonderful
opportunity for that. It will allow for interaction with students’
from other departments as much as it will benefit clinical
laboratory sciences students. The department has the
opportunity to conduct clinical laboratory activities existing on research
studies that students and faculty from other departments might be working on. We can be helpful with any type of
research project that may involve correlation of laboratory
results with patient diagnosis, prognosis or treatment moni-
toring,” Nadder says. “But we have to advertise what skills we possess and what services we can offer to other departments.
This task will be easier when we are in one building.”

ROOM TO GROW
As with every other department in the school, the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences will benefit
not only from the change in location, but also from the
increased space of the new building. The new building will
allow for separate instructional and research spaces, which currently overlap in the department’s
7,000-square-foot facility. A recent study by an outside firm recommended an increase to at least 11,000 square
feet for the department to adequately meet the existing need. “Being in the new building with more space and
laboratory equipment will make it more attractive for
students to conduct research,” Nadder says.

“The increase in space will provide room for the
department to grow as well. As the Master of Science in
clinical laboratory sciences has continued to evolve over
the years, the program has outgrown the available lab space at Randolph Minor Hall. “We don’t have the space
downstairs to comfortably accommodate our master’s
students,” Nadder says, adding that the program will go from
having 32 bench spots to 48 when they move to the new building.

Drain estimates that the school will have about 20 percent more
assignable space with the new building than it currently occupies across its many buildings. The
increase in space will help to
expand enrollment, which is
limited primarily by space restrictions. The Department
of Health Administration, which is now housed in the William H. Grant House on the MCV Campus,
is limited literally by the number of chairs that can fit into the classrooms. “There are just
enough chairs there to fit
the number of students in the
program,” Drain says. “They
cannot physically fit in one more
chair.” With the new building, the
department will be able to
increase enrollment by 10 percent.

The appeal of the new building
combined with the ability to accept
more students will augment the school’s capability to attract and
retain the best students and faculty in a variety of health sciences
careers. “We get the top students now, but we are going to get even
better students with the new build-
ing,” Drain says. “We are going to
ability to play in the big leagues in
terms of faculty recruitment.”

Five of the school’s nine
programs are ranked among the
nation’s top 50 by U.S. News &
World Report, including nurse
anesthesia at No. 1, health
administration at No. 3 and reha-
bilitation counseling at No. 4. The
benefits of consolidating into one
building will bolster the success of
those programs, while further
improving the other departments
that are housed at the school.

“The new building is
gonna encourage the spirit of
the school immensely,” Drain says. “We are
headed into exciting times.”

Meet the architects
A Q&A with EYP Architecture & Engineering project designer Rob McClure, academic planner Jennifer Amster and project
director Eric Kern

Where did the design inspiration come from for the new School of Allied Health Professions building?
The design concept stemmed from the idea of creating a diagonal pedes-
trian path from the northwest corner
of the site to the southeast corner. A big
aha moment was when we developed
a strategy that created an eight-story
tower to the west and a four-story
podium to the east, which allow
for day-lighting from the south to make
its way into the new courtyard created
by the structure.

How will the building’s design support key values of the school such as interprofes-
sionalism and community engagement?
The goal from the onset of the project was to avoid planning one level that
was all offices and one level that
was all classrooms. This motivation to
mix up the different user groups
in the building is intentional because it
forces us to think and work differently about the design of the new school.

Education of health professionals
is toward team-based care, and
the design of the new building fully
facilitates that. The building will
significantly help to further modernize
VCU’s approach to the teaching of
the allied health professions in a
beautiful, well-located, convenient,
state-of-the-art new facility.
A PATIENT’S JOURNEY
THROUGH the ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS

BY MICHAEL MITCHELL

Health Administration

Health administrators work behind the scenes to coordinate day-to-day operations of complex health care organizations and ensure that the services of all departments are delivered with efficiency and cohesion. These skilled leaders are adept at crafting and overseeing implementation of the various policies and procedures needed to provide high-quality, collaborative patient care, including safety protocols, staff training and support systems, regulatory reporting and sound fiscal management.

Meet Jane, a 72-year-old woman who slipped at home and was rushed to the ER with a badly broken ankle.

Radiation Sciences

The team in Emergency Department radiography performs a front line investigation and gets Jane into medical imaging. Her compound fracture is immobilized, and she is made comfortable until surgery.

When working directly with Jane, an applied gerontologist may advocate for her and help her connect with a wide range of community resources to ensure practitioners are responding to those related to Jane’s physical functioning, to support her during and after recovery, including patient (and family) spiritual and emotional care and referring support resources.

VCoA’s Virginia Geriatric Education Center works with faculty from across disciplines to ensure practitioners are responding to patients like Jane with cutting-edge practices. And, by working to increase awareness of the prevalence of elder abuse, the VCoA can assist providers in screening for and reporting abuse accordingly. Victims of abuse are three times more likely to be admitted to the hospital, and learning to spot signs that Jane may be suffering from neglect or improper treatment is crucial to ensuring her continued well-being.

Physical Therapy (PT)

Physical therapists will play a critical role in Jane’s post-surgery recovery, restoring function, improving mobility, relieving pain and mitigating permanent disability based on a detailed plan of care.

Clinical Laboratory Sciences

Before Jane goes to surgery, certified clinical laboratory scientists working in the areas of clinical chemistry, hematology/hemostasis, immunology/transfusion medicine, microbiology and molecular diagnostics will perform laboratory testing to provide the information necessary for an accurate diagnosis or best course of treatment. Common laboratory tests ordered for a patient scheduled for surgery include a comprehensive metabolic profile; a complete blood cell count; and blood typing, antibody screen and crossmatch in case a blood transfusion is needed.

OT can comprise acute intervention if there are complicating health and behavioral issues, but in Jane’s case, therapeutic goal-directed, task-oriented lifestyle activities that enhance independence and function will build on the PT success she’s already established.

Patient Counseling

When working directly with Jane, an applied gerontologist may advocate for her and help her connect with a wide range of community resources to ensure practitioners are responding to those related to Jane’s physical functioning, to support her during and after recovery, including patient (and family) spiritual and emotional care and referring support resources.

Nurse Anesthesia

The certified registered nurse anesthetist is tasked with caring for Jane while she cannot care for herself during surgery. First, the CRNA will conduct a comprehensive pre-operative evaluation, review Jane’s medical history and current medications, discuss the risks and benefits of different types of anesthesia and obtain her consent for the anesthetic. During surgery, the CRNA will administer a cadre of anesthetic agents and adjust therapeutics to render the patient unconscious, anesthetize, immobile and pain free, while exercising extreme vigilance in providing blood and fluid replacement, as well as adequate oxygenation to ensure patient safety.

Rehabilitation Counseling

Rehabilitation counseling is focused on helping Jane adjust to any challenges by maximizing her sense of well-being, independent living and community inclusion. Individualization and a holistic approach to services, as well as full client participation, will get Jane back on track as quickly as possible.

A llied health professions are just that — allied — with each other, with the health care industry as a whole and, most importantly, with patients. Sixty percent of any hospital’s staff is made up of allied health professionals, offering the most-qualified, efficient care possible. At Virginia Commonwealth University, our allied health students are educated in some of U.S. News & World Report’s top-ranked programs in the country, including VCU’s No. 1-ranked nurse anesthesia program, No. 3-ranked health administration program and No. 4-ranked rehabilitation counseling program. Our goal is to get patients healthy, on the road to full recovery and back home with their loved ones.

To get a sense of what the patient experience is like in a clinical setting, follow along as our fictional patient, Jane, finds health care allies at every step of her journey.
EXPANDING AND ENHANCING OPPORTUNITIES

For more than 20 years, the School of Allied Health Professions has spearheaded diverse distance learning initiatives to impact more students and drive education and patient care forward

BY ANDY BATES

When it came time for Mary Culshaw, Ph.D. (Ph.D. ’15, HRS), to defend her doctoral dissertation, rather than come to campus, she adjourned to her living room in Alberta, Canada. There, she was able to log onto GoToMeeting, connect with her chair and committee members from across the globe and defend her original research one last time.

Does the work represent a meaningful contribution to the field? Was the research conducted and interpreted soundly? These are the types of questions any doctoral candidate must address. However, as Culshaw presented her answers, she found herself briefly interrupted by her son arriving home from school, who took a moment to offer encouragement before ascending the staircase.

According to Paula Kupstas, Ph.D., director of the Ph.D. Program in Health Related Sciences in the School of Allied Health Professions, Culshaw’s situation was unique, since most distance learners come to campus for their dissertation defense. Even though it was uncommon, the scene served as a poignant reminder of the power and scope of not just her program’s distance-learning initiatives, but those of the entire school — a concrete example of how the school works to establish and provide diverse ways to connect with those who may not be able to come to campus full-time.

As an umbrella term, distance learning encompasses a wide range of educational experiences. It can consist of online coursework, supplemented with discussion boards and on-campus sessions. It can entail establishing satellite sites for instruction to meet workforce demands in various industries. And it can mean crafting new and flexible approaches for delivering curriculum to meet the ever-changing needs of the allied health industry.

But regardless of the forms distance learning may take, the School of Allied Health Professions was one of the first in the country to recognize its value and place in the other education, and the school continues to lead the way in developing new approaches.

A PIONEER AND A MODEL MOVING FORWARD

In the mid-1980s, the Department of Health Administration began asking a few simple questions: Why should full-time working professionals have to leave their jobs to continue their education? Why couldn’t they instead continue to work in their respective fields and apply cutting-edge concepts and skills while they were learning them?

By 1988, the answers to those questions helped lead to the creation of only the second health administration graduate program with a distance-learning component in the country at that time — one that continues to draw a diverse array of students and combines six intensive weeklong, on-campus sessions with rigorous off-campus scholarship.

While in Richmond, students establish connections with their classmates, engage with faculty and tap into the school’s extensive on-campus resources. Then, through enhanced distance-learning technologies, the Master of Science in Health Administration program is able to create electronic classrooms for each of its courses, where students can view seminars and lectures (either in real-time or asynchronously), collaborate on projects and communicate with faculty and other students about various concepts, developments in the field and even personal experiences encountered in the workplace. This allows students to tailor a schedule and approach that best fit their needs, while also keeping them engaged with their classmates.

From the outset, this model proved effective, and in the mid-1990s, Cecil B. Drain, Ph.D., dean of the School of Allied Health Professions, saw an opportunity to replicate its success and meet the need for more highly trained researchers and professionals throughout the allied health industry.

Structured in much the same way as the M.S.H.A. program, the school launched the Ph.D. Program in Health Related Sciences in 1998, which draws students from the nine departments of the school — each with their own experiences and research interests — into cohorts.

As with the M.S.H.A. program, the Ph.D. Program in Health Related Sciences enables students to remain in their professional fields without having to leave their current positions or uproot their families, through a blend of online coursework and on-campus sessions.

“Being on campus at the beginning and end of each semester really gives them the chance to connect with each other, our doctoral program staff and the faculty in their specialty tracks in a way that would be much more difficult in a solely online program,” says Kupstas. “It’s important for them to bond in that way, because that’s where a lot of other support will come from.”

And for students like Culshaw, “That support lives on long past graduation.”

This is because her cohort included not only occupational therapists like herself, but also people in the fields of health administration, nurse anesthesia, rehabilitation counseling and others. As such, Culshaw says she was exposed to so many nuances of the health care system that she would not normally encounter, which led to vibrant discussions and relationships she still taps for insight.

However, getting those discussions to take off when students might be opposite ends of the globe requires commitment and showcases just how dedicated the program’s distance learners truly are, which Kupstas sees whenever she monitors a discussion forum.

“There’s a perception that ‘online’ means ‘easier,’” Kupstas says, “but I’ll see students weighing in on a problem or topic very late at night, or very early in the morning. Plus, it’s a continuing dialogue throughout a weeklong discussion forum, which I think affords them the time to really ponder, think deeply about an issue and have a rich dialogue.”

In a cohort like Culshaw’s, which included students from Washington, Baltimore and even as far away as Ireland, it’s paramount that the education they receive dovetail with their personal and professional lives, she says. But more than that, it’s the nurturing atmosphere of the program and the entire school that allows non-traditional students like her to thrive.

“They really took care of us,” Culshaw says. “There was a point where, for personal reasons, I had to take a semester off, and they really helped me sort that all out. So, it wasn’t just the final defense that was the end of the last four years, being part of a hybrid program and performing good research.”
That drive to connect with students is still a core principle that enables students to impact the communities they call home. For the past 15 years, for example, registered occupational therapists have been able to take advantage of the Department of Occupational Therapy’s online post-professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy program. Like the two aforementioned programs, the O.T.A. area of study not only allows students to gain an education while they work, but also encourages them to keep their capstone leadership projects to their interests and passions, which most often stem from the unique environments and patient populations they work in and with every day.

In this way, even as they learn, these students often find ways to improve patient health care services on the ground, which is also one of the main impetuses behind the Department of Nurse Anesthesia’s efforts in 2004 to spearhead its first distance-education site at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon, Va. At that time, says Corey Davis, Ph.D., CRNA (Ph.D. ’11/HRS), assistant professor in the Department of Nurse Anesthesia, health care centers throughout rural portions of Southwest Virginia were experiencing difficulty recruiting and retaining health care professionals, particularly in the field of nurse anesthesia. However, through enhancing the technological capabilities at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, department faculty were able to deliver curriculum using two-way high-definition videoconferencing, allowing people who call Southwest Virginia home to stay in the area, receive training and serve residents in their communities.

“I’m the poster child for why this is so important,” says Davis. “I grew up just outside of Martinsville, Va., came to college in Richmond right after high school, and I’ve never returned. This is a way for me to give back and a way for others to make a difference in their hometowns.”

Within a few years of graduating its first class from the Abingdon site, the department was approached to extend its services to Roanoke, Va., and then to Northern Virginia, which means that a professor like Davis can give a lecture in Richmond and have an audience at three other sites across the state.

Since 2004, the department has graduated 115 students from these distance-learning sites, with 87 percent of those students staying within the region where they were educated. This measurably impacts their communities, Davis says, with the economic impact alone of students staying in the Abingdon area totaling millions of dollars.

But it isn’t just in the field of nurse anesthesia that the School of Allied Health Professions has made inroads in these communities. Through another partnership with the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences is now in its second year of offering its undergraduate program to students in the Abingdon area.

According to the American Society for Clinical Pathology, rural areas served by smaller hospitals and health centers are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain qualified laboratory personnel, which negatively impacts the delivery of health care services across the spectrum and has contributed to deteriorating health conditions for residents in these areas.

For Joshua Williams, Ph.D., MLS(ASCP) CM, assistant professor in the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences and Abingdon program coordinator, some of that shortage can be chalked up to the relative invisibility of the field itself. After all, most people don’t encounter laboratory staff during a doctor’s visit. They may see a phlebotomist draw blood, but that’s usually where the exposure ends. In addition to that lack of recognition, Williams also points to a decrease in training programs available for students who are interested in the field as another main reason for the shortage.

“Over the last 40 years, the amount of schools who run clinical laboratory sciences programs has been cut in half,” he says. “There are only a handful of places you can go in Virginia for a good, quality bachelor’s program in this area of study.”

But the Abingdon site is helping to change that, and in order to make it even more appealing to local residents, the department has streamlined the admission process for community college students in the area. This means that if a student finishes an associate degree in a science track, he or she can go straight into the clinical laboratory sciences program to finish his or her bachelor’s degree, which Williams says greatly benefits lower-income residents in the community who may not otherwise be able to fund a four-year degree program.

MEETING NEW DEMANDS

Sometimes, however, it’s not a shortage of professionals in a certain field that can drive distance learning, but rather a need to enhance the training of those already in the workforce, as was the case with the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling when it followed with North Carolina, and over the next decade, the department received three large grants from the Rehabilitation Services Administration to extend what the department had been doing for counselors in Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina to counselors in need across the country via hybrid distance and on-campus programs, structured in much the same way as those offered in health administration and health related sciences.

In total, the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling has secured grants and state contracts of more than $5.5 million since 1999, educating more than 500 new federal law put into place by the Rehabilitation Services Administration’s Comprehensive System of Personnel Development mandated that counselors must have a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling or be able to obtain their certified rehabilitation counselor credential by a specified date, or risk losing their jobs.

To help with compliance, then-chair of VCU’s rehabilitation counseling department and current associate dean for research in the School of Allied Health Professions, Brian McMahon, Ph.D., entered into agreements with the states of Virginia and West Virginia to fund the education of 90 vocational counselors who were currently working in positions subject to the new law. A similar agreement soon began expanding its distance-learning curriculum in 1999.

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1998, Thomas Wan, Ph.D., then-chair of Virginia Commonwealth University's Department of Health Administration, saw an opportunity to create a vital partnership between two institutions on opposite sides of the globe. Now, 18 years later, Wan's vision and work in helping VCU team up with Kaohsiung Medical University in Taiwan to develop a weeklong workshop aimed at teaching international medical professionals how the United States health care system can be modeled overseas serves as the cornerstone for VCU's School of Allied Health Professions' initiative to expand its global visibility and enhance its reputation as a diverse learning environment.

In addition to its individual success, the KMU workshop, which integrates both learning and cultural experiences, has also helped pave the way for two other recently established programs in China — a joint teaching initiative with Shandong University and a student and faculty exchange with Jiao Tong Medical University in Shanghai — and School of Allied Health Professions Dean Cecil B. Drain, Ph.D., says providing opportunities for such multicultural experiences is part of the school's integrated curricula.

"In my 27-year career in the U.S. Army, I had the pleasure of serving overseas," Drain says. "I have experienced firsthand the opportunities offered for cultural exchange that are available to our students and faculty through agreements such as those associated with our partners in Southeast Asia. Those opportunities, bound by the common thread of academics, are what diversity is all about."

A unique learning experience

At the time of the KMU partnership's inception, Wan was consulting with the Taiwanese government over the country's move to a universal, single-payer health care system and recalls seeing an immediate need for training in the health
services management industry. And, since he grew up in the city of Kaohsiung and was familiar with the school, he was able to visit often, bringing new ideas, building relationships with the faculty and inviting key players to visit Richmond — all with one goal in mind.

"I wanted the VCU program to be replicated at KMU," he says.

The first group of KMU affiliates arrived at VCU in 2000, new groups have returned every year since, and last March, 32 Taiwanese graduate students and one professor from KMU arrived in Richmond to participate in the annual health administration workshop, which featured a well-rounded itinerary combining lectures, hospital visits and a taste of local culture.

For the past four years, Yasar Ozcan, Ph.D. (Ph.D. ’88/HA), VCU professor and current M.S.H.A. program director, has worked closely with Wan — who left VCU in 2003 and is now a professor at the University of Central Florida — to keep the partnership thriving through a robust academic portfolio and diverse lecture series, as well as visits to a mixture of nonprofit, for-profit, government and teaching hospitals. This year’s roundtrip included trips to the Veterans Administration Medical Center and the Richmond Ambulance Authority, as well as opportunities to tour local cultural and historical sights.

Such visits to VCU are required as part of the first-year curriculum in KMU’s two-year program, which culminates in students earning a Master of Science in Health Administration degree, and most of the graduate students are already employed in key management positions in the health care industry. One-third are practicing doctors, Wan says, and others are deputy superintendents, financial managers and insurance managers. As such, he adds, many of the program’s past participants are making big contributions of their own to improve health care management around the globe.

China reaches out

Spurred by the success of the KMU exchange, the Department of Health Administration launched another initiative in Southeast Asia: a three-year partnership with Shandong University, which is starting up its own Master of Science in Health Administration program in China.

A little less than two years ago, China began shifting away from government-run health care delivery toward a market-based approach, and the move has left Chinese health care professionals in desperate need of training, explains Jonathan P. DeShazo, Ph.D., a health care IT professor and the M.H.A. program director.

"The major universities in China are scrambling to set up these programs," DeShazo says. "The country needs 30,000 to 40,000 trained health care managers." Having heard about VCU’s reputation and seeing that VCU had graduated some of its faculty, Shandong University reached out, and although Wan’s influence was somewhat indirect, DeShazo points to a clear connection.

"Having a Chinese-speaking chair of the department at the time made it more attractive for Chinese nationals to get their degree through VCU," he says. "It helped our presence in China."

In early 2016, three VCU adjunct professors traveled to China, where they taught half a semester’s worth of classes over the course of one week before returning to campus and leading live, online instruction for the rest of the semester. Over the next two years, Shandong University faculty will gradually take over the bulk of the teaching duties, with VCU faculty assuming more of an advisory role.

Although the teaching arrangement wraps up in 2018, DeShazo says he hopes to continue the relationship between the two schools in the form of faculty and student exchange programs and apply the curriculum in other countries in the future.

"This partnership is an opportunity to create a hospital administration curriculum that transcends a country-specific agenda," he says. "We’re not teaching them U.S.-specific policy, theory and skills. We’re teaching them international concepts."

Building relationships overseas

Hospital administration isn’t the only field making inroads overseas, however, and Michael D. Fallacaro, D.N.S., CRNA, FAAN, chair of VCU’s Department of Nurse Anesthesia, helped establish a partnership with the Ninth People’s Hospital at Jiao Tong Medical University in Shanghai after he was invited to give a lecture at an international meeting in Beijing in 2009.

Nurse anesthesia is an emerging specialty in China, Fallacaro says, but there is currently no national certification, so the Chinese Ministry of Health is looking to codify a standard, using the U.S. as a model.

"I think the reason we got noticed is that our department has been internationally known for its expertise," Fallacaro says. At the time, VCU’s nurse anesthesia program was ranked No. 1 in the nation by U.S. News & World Report, an honor it recently reclaimed.

In 2013, VCU drafted a letter of intent to cooperate with Jiao Tong. R. McKenna Brown, Ph.D., of the VCU Global Education Office helped develop the exchange agreement, and in August 2015, the two schools formally recognized the agreement during a ceremony and lecture series in Shanghai. Fallacaro, along with faculty member Nickie Damico, Ph.D., CRNA (B.S. ’97; M.S.N.A. ’98/NA; Ph.D. ’14/HRS), spent 18 days abroad, where they were able to tour the hospital, go into the operating room and observe anesthesia being delivered, meet with the anesthesia students and consult with faculty and administration, Fallacaro says.

The pair also visited Sir Run Run Shaw Hospital in Hangzhou, another institution that has expressed interest in a partnership with VCU. The program they established with Jiao Tong is a four-to-six-week exchange of three students or faculty members each year, and the first group of VCU affiliates — two graduate students and one faculty member — will visit China in September, with the Chinese affiliates tentatively scheduled to arrive at VCU in November.

Long term, Fallacaro says he hopes to offer courses for Chinese students to take at VCU, but right now the exchange is purely observational, and the visitors do not participate in any hands-on patient care. Rather, this cultural and teaching exchange is a consult on curriculum and an effort to help Jiao Tong gain recognition by the International Federation of Nurse Anesthetists.

"In the future, I see the possibility of collaboration around distance-learning education," Fallacaro says. "It helps us have diversity in our curriculum and gain national and international recognition."
1970s

David L. “Dave” Bernd (M.H.A. ’73/HA) retired from Sentara Healthcare in March 2016. He started as an assistant administrator in 1973 and became CEO in 1985. Under his 31-year leadership as CEO, Sentara has become an innovative health system in the Hampton Roads area that is nationally recognized for quality and patient safety. Bernd’s commitment to excellence positioned Sentara to be recognized for 15 years as one of the nation’s top integrated health care systems. In his 43-year health care career, Bernd served as chairman of the American Hospital Association board of trustees in 2004 and chaired the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association in 1994-1995. In 2015, he was named by Virginia Business as one of Virginia’s 50 Most Influential Leaders. Bernd has served on a number of professional and community boards throughout his career.

Michael King, FACHE (M.H.A. ’78/3HA), who retired from Camden Clark Medical Center in Parkersburg, W.Va., was recognized for his successful career in the health care industry at the VCU Department of Health Administration’s Paul A. Gross Landmarks in Leadership alumni event held April 2, 2015. King serves on the board of governors of the American College of Healthcare Executives and is CEO of VCU’s Health System for the past 18 years.

Dara Riddle, Ph.D. (M.S. ’86/PT), Ph.D. (PhD ’87/E), the Otto D. Payton professor and assistant chair of the Department of Physical Therapy, was selected to serve as a member of the Neurological, Aging and Musculoskeletal Epidemiology Study Section of the Center for Scientific Review from July 2015 to June 2019. Members are selected based on their achievements in their scientific disciplines through research accomplishment, publications, honors and achievements, and other scientific activities. The Center for Scientific Review is the hub for all research and training grant applications submitted to the National Institutes of Health, ensuring that applications receive fair, independent and timely reviews to fund the most promising research.

Michael Robinson (M.H.A. ’85/HA) retired in October 2015 after more than 30 years with Bon Secours Richmond. He served as CEO of Bon Secours Richmond Health System, which includes the Bon Secours Richmond Health Care System, Richmond Community and Rappahannock Memorial General Hospitals.

Marjorie Tavenner** (B.S. ’83, M.H.A. ’89/HA) was named one of the 100 Most Influential People in Healthcare by Modern Healthcare magazine for the fourth year in a row. The program honors individuals in health care who are deemed by their peers and senior editors of the magazine to be the most influential individuals in the industry in terms of leadership and impact. Tavenner is CEO of America’s Health Insurance Plans, a national trade association representing the health insurance industry.

Henrietta Tseas-Kaskel** (M.S. ’80, M.S. ’81/E/52/HA) was named director of member quality at the United Network for Organ Sharing. In her new position, she is responsible for monitoring the performance of member institutions (transplant hospitals, organ procurement organizations and histocompatibility laboratories) in maintaining compliance with Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network policies and bylaws.

INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE. The VCU Alumni Association provides annual cash awards to reward and recognize the service and accomplishments of future alumni. Awards are presented to one student in each health science division. The Allied Health Professions student recognized in 2016 was James Furstein, Ph.D. in Health Related Sciences. He received a $1,000 cash award and a tote bag. Pictured (left to right) are Suzanne Wright, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Nurse Anesthesia; James Furstein; Cecil R. Dravis, Ph.D., dean of the School of Allied Health Professions; and Michael D. Facalman, D.N.S., CRNA, FAAN, professor and chair of the Department of Nurse Anesthesia.

1980s

Howard Kern (M.H.A. ’81/HA) was named CEO of Sentara Healthcare in March 2016 following the retirement of Dave Bernd. Kern has served as COO of Sentara for the past 18 years.

1990s

Esther H. Bucher (M.S. ’91/OT) has been volunteering in Duc Pho, a town in Quang Ngai province in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. This three-year service commitment is under the auspices of the social service organization of her church, the Mennonite Central Committee, and involves providing therapy to individuals and families impacted by Agent Orange. This is a natural extension of her long-standing interests in other cultures and desire to be of service. From 1970-74 she volunteered in rural tribal villages of Kalimantan/South Vietnam, both during and after the war, and later provided basic health and nutrition for six years in rural tribal villages of Kalimantan/ Borneo, Indonesia. Bucher recently closed her Mechanicville clinic, Therapeutic Sense Abilites, after 10 years of operation, so she could pursue this major new life adventure.

Neda McGuire (M.H.A. ’83/HA, M.S. ’10/G) won of Aging Matters in Washington, D.C., volunteered to help Syrian refugees fleeing to Greece and Turkey. McGuire, who speaks Farsi, traveled to the Greek island of Lesbos in December 2015 where she translated to medics the needs of the immigrants. She was moved to help the refugees when she saw a picture of a little toddler whose body had washed ashore after the boat he was traveling on capsized during the crossing from Turkey to Greece.

ABBREVIATION KEY
Allied health professions degrees are noted with year and department; other VCU degrees are designated by year.

Degrees
A.A. .........Associate of Science
A.B. ........Bachelor of Arts
A.F.A. .........Associate of Fine Arts
B.S. .........Bachelor of Science
Cert. .............Certificate
D.N.A.P. ....Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice
D.P.T. .........Doctor of Physical Therapy
D.P.H. .........Doctor of Public Health
H.S. ........House staff
M.A. .........Master of Arts
M.A.A. .........Master of Music in Nursing
M.A.H.A. ....Master of Science in Health Administration
M.N.A. .........Master of Science in Nurse Anesthesia
M.S. .............Master of Science
M.S.A. .........Master of Science in Occupational Therapy
M.S.O. .........Master of Science in Occupational Therapy
M.S.O.T. .........Master of Science in Occupational Therapy
* Member of the alumni association
** Life member of the alumni association
+ Member of the Virginia alumni association

OUTSTANDING ALUMNA

Suzanne Wright
The Alumni Advisory Council’s Outstanding Alumnus Award is presented to a graduate of the VCU nurses anesthesia program who has become distinguished in the nurse anesthesia profession and/or has made significant contributions to society. The inaugural awardee is Suzanne Wright, Ph.D. (B.S. ’87, R.N. ’97; M.S.H.A. ’10/HA, Ph.D. ’10). Wright has spent more than a decade advancing the specialty of nurse anesthesia and the profession of nursing. While she is primarily in academia, she remains a practicing clinician. Her commitment and dedication to the Department of Nurse Anesthesia overshadows her job requirement. She crosses professional fields and networks the passing of many health care providers from other disciplines by championing patient safety and interdisciplinary relationships. She supports and maintains involvement which provides cutting-edge topics and issues that emphasize current clinical practice and enhances the quality of care for anesthesia patients.

Wright was a speaker at the AANIA National Meeting/Annual Congress and delivered a standing room audience lecture on promoting patient safety. She is a leader in crisis management and teamwork training and developed a seminar for continuing education, “Anesthesia Crisis Resource Management,” to foster patient safety. For years, she has been closely involved with Nurse Anesthesiology Faculty Associates, Administration’s Alumni Advisory Committee, John Smalley (M.H.A. ’77/HA) and Christopher Durrer** (M.H.A. ’77/HA) also were recognized at the event for their loyal and consistent 30 years of giving to the department.

Suzanne Wright, Ph.D.
John Tobin (M.H.A. ’59/HA) was playing football during his senior year of high school when a player from the opposing team slammed into his left side during a game, breaking his fibula and tibia. “I didn’t know a thing about X-rays at the time, but I remember going to the hospital and getting X-rays on my leg,” the 86-year-old says. “That’s how it got me interested in health care.”

After graduating, John worked as an X-ray technician at VCU. It was there that he received word that he would soon be drafted to fight in the Korean War. “I enlisted in the Air Force and ended up being assigned as a medic.” From 1950 to 1954, John encountered administrators who were actually running the hospitals where he was assigned and spoke to the class,” he says. “It was very inspirational.”

For nearly 30 years, John served as an administrator at hospitals along the East Coast, eventually retiring as the executive vice president of operations for the Hospital Corporation of America in 1987. That was the same year that his son, Tim Tobin (M.H.A. ’87/HA), graduated from the VCU program.

“Tim came to me and told me that he was interested in going to the hospital and getting X-rays which is how he got interested in health care,” John says. “I thought it would be neat to follow in my dad’s footsteps.”

Three generations in the Tobin family attend VCU for Master of Health Administration degree

BY ANNE DREYFUSS

Jonathan B. Perlin, Ph.D., M.D., FACP, FACMI** (Ph.D. ’91; M.D. ’92; H.S. ’96), M.S.H.A. ’97(HA), president of clinical services and chief medical officer at Nashville, Tenn.-based HCA, was elected into the National Academy of Medicine, formerly the Institute of Medicine, in October 2015. Members are elected as recognition for making major contributions to the advancement of the medical sciences, health care and public health. Under Perlin’s leadership, research identified clinical practices that reduced bloodstream infections by 44 percent. Perlin also was named one of Modern Healthcare’s 100 Most Influential People in Healthcare for the second year in a row.

The program honors individuals in health care who are deemed by their peers and senior editors of the magazine to be the most influential individuals in the industry in terms of leadership and impact. E. Aye Welford, Ph.D.** (M.S. ’94/G; Ph.D. ’98), associate professor and chair of the Department of Gerontology, was honored in October 2015 as a Valentine Richmond History Maker for her work with the Greater Richmond Age Wave, a collaboration of public and private organizations, businesses and individuals, including older adults, working to prepare for the opportunities and challenges of the region’s growing aging population.

The annual Richmond History Makers Program, sponsored by The Valentine, pays tribute to everyday citizens and outstanding organizations that make significant contributions to the greater Richmond region.

2000s

Maria Delouxi, Ph.D. (Ph.D. ’95/HRS), received a Distinguished Professorship Award for excellence in scholarship from Youngstown State University, an urban research university.

Dolost, a faculty member in the university’s Department of Health Professions, is professor and director of clinical laboratory programs.

Alan Dow, M.D. (M.S.H.A. ’95/HA, H.S. ’94), assistant vice president of health sciences and professor in the Department of Internal Medicine in the VCU School of Medicine, was awarded the Seymour and Ruth Perlin professorship in healthcare quality. The professorship was established in 1998 to recruit and retain a distinguished faculty member with joint appointments in VCU’s departments of Health Administration and Internal Medicine.

Angela Duncan, Ph.D. (M.S. ’04; PC; Ph.D. ’11/HRS; Cert. ’11/PC), assistant professor and assistant chair of the Department of Patient Counseling, was honored in March 2015 with the Union Presbyterian Seminary Trailblazers Award.

William Haugh (M.H.A. ’08/HA) received Lifepoint’s CEO of the Year award. Haugh is CEO of Lifepoint’s Georgetown Community Hospital in Georgetown, Ky.

Shernina Sewell (M.S. ’02/RC), an assistant professor in the University of Kentucky College of Nursing at Lifepoint’s Georgetown Community Hospital in Georgetown, Ky.

IN MEMORIAM

Keith Wright

Keith C. Wright, M.S., CRC, LPC, born March 3, 1923, in Fluvanna County, Va., formerly of Richmond and Lancaster, died Dec. 16, 2015, at age 92. He was professor emeritus of the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling at Virginia Commonwealth University and a U.S. Army Forces veteran of World War II. He served at VCU for 32 years, participating in the founding and development of the department, in what was then the Richmond Professional Institute. This program was the first federally funded graduate program in rehabilitation counseling in the nation.

During his career at VCU, Wright served as president or board member of the Virginia Rehabilitation Association, Virginia Chapter of the American Counseling Association; and the Virginia Department for the Visually Handicapped. He also served on the boards of Richmond Goodwill Industries and the Mayor’s Commission for the Disabled. In retirement, he served as a life hearing officer for the Virginia Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Virginia Department for the Visually Handicapped.

Although his list of accomplishments is very impressive, it doesn’t begin to express the impact he has had on the profession of rehabilitation counseling. His legacy lives on in the lives of those students he taught for 32 years and all who were fortunate enough to have worked with him or called him friend.
specialty transition counselors in addition to carrying her own caseload. She also co-teaches two courses in new counselor skills training and provides training, support and guidance to vocational rehabilitation staff who serve consumers on the autism spectrum. As an adjunct faculty member of VCU’s Department of Rehabilitation Counseling, she has also taught graduate-level coursework in multicultural counseling.

Kim Van Eck, CT, COP (M.S. ’09/G), serves as community resource specialist for Humana Inc. on the Life Assistance Line of the Humana at Home division. In her role, she conducts research, creates and provides quality assurance for Humana’s Community Resource Directory, and provides phone support to Humana staff members across the country in navigating community resources at the local, state and national levels.

2010s

Edil Walker Butler, CT (M.S. ’14/G), instructor in the Department of Gerontology, received her Certification of Thanatology from the Association for Death Education and Counseling.

William Mainsier (M.H.A. ’10/HA), associate administrator and director of strategic planning and program development at VCU Health, received the Early Career Healthcare Executive Award presented by the Central Virginia Regents of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Adam Parsons (M.S. ’10/OT) and Nathan March were married in Richmond, Va., on Aug. 1, 2015. Adam is a therapist with All About Care, a Medicare-certified home health company that is part of the Care Advantage program and serves the entire eastern half of Virginia.

Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association held its spring conference in Williamsburg, Va. At the meeting, the American College of Healthcare Executives held its annual luncheon, which Dolores G. Clement, Dr.P.H., FACHE, Sentara Health, was named the 2016 Early Careerist Award winner. She is an active member of CVHEG in 2015.

Donna Clarkson Odom

It is with great sadness that we reflect on the passing of Donna Clarkson Odom, former chair of the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences, who will always be remembered for her kindness, positivity and willingness to help others.

Inducted into the CLS Hall of Fame as part of the department’s 85th anniversary in 2013, Odom began her career as a medical technologist in the chemistry laboratory at VCU Health. She became an instructor of medical technology in 1974 and continued to serve the department for 27 years.

She taught a variety of courses, including chemistry, body fluids, parasitology, and education and management, served as chair of the department from 1988 to 1999 and played an integral role in opening options for students to become medical technologists through the categorical track of the master’s program and the B.S. degree completion program for MTS.

At the national level, she served on the board of directors for the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Sciences and chaired its judicial committee. In addition, she served as regional director and president of the state society. Upon retirement in 1994, she was appointed associate professor emeritus and remained active within the department, serving on committees such as the Daria Downing Scholarship committee.
New endowment supports M.H.A. program

Bill Downey (M.H.A. ’85/HA), president and CEO of Riverside Health System, announced the creation of the Riverside Leadership Endowment at the school’s Landmarks in Leadership alumni event at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in April, with Dolores Clement, Dr.P.H., FACHE, director of dual degree programs in the Department of Health Administration, looking on.

Riverside Health System has been a long-term supporter of the Department of Health Administration, offering third-year residencies to M.H.A. students and employing many alumni. Downey and other VCU graduates at Riverside have been classroom speakers and have served on the Alumni Advisory Council (formerly the Alumni Executive Committee).

Over the years, Riverside has received numerous awards and recognitions for its outstanding commitment to the community, quality patient care and transformational industry leadership.
Annual MCV Foundation Scholarship Brunch

The MCV Foundation’s Scholarship Brunch, held Feb. 28 at The Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, Va., honored the medical campus’ scholarship benefactors and current recipients of endowed scholarships. More than 75 percent of students on the MCV Campus receive some type of financial aid to pursue their dreams of a career in the health sciences. Each year, many of these students graduate with a debt load exceeding $100,000. With the cost of tuition arguably one of the most difficult issues facing today’s students, a scholarship can make the difference between having a dream and living it.

Sean Tobin, a student from the Department of Health Administration in the School of Allied Health Professions, spoke at the luncheon, explaining how he and fellow students are grateful and honored to be scholarship recipients. He said he hopes to be able to give back later to help future students with their education. Tobin shared that his educational experience has been enjoyable and meaningful and that he appreciates the scholarship support. He was joined by his parents, Tim (M.H.A. ’87/HA) and Sue, who enjoyed conversation at the head table with VCU President and Mrs. Rao. All departments from the School of Allied Health Professions were represented at the luncheon.

MORE THAN 100 ALUMNI AND FRIENDS gathered to celebrate Marjorie Goodwin’s retirement celebration on Jan. 21, 2016, at the Boathouse in Richmond, Va. The highlight of the event was the surprise presentation of the Marjorie T. Goodwin Scholarship Fund to Goodwin and her husband, Mike. Goodwin spent 21 years in the Department of Nurse Anesthesia before retiring in December 2015. Pictured are Elizabeth Howell (left) and Marjorie Goodwin.

SCHOOL OF ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS

NEW NURSE ANESTHESIA FACULTY MEMBER ESTABLISHES ENDOWMENT

New faculty member Brenda Wands, Ph.D., CRNA, and her husband, Ed Woods, M.D., have established the Brenda Wands and Edward Woods Scholarship to provide opportunities for nurse anesthesia students to engage in leadership and professional development within the nurse anesthesia industry. Wands joined the VCU Department of Nurse Anesthesia in September 2015 as the new director of interprofessional education. In this role, she works collaboratively across disciplines focusing on patient safety initiatives related to anesthesia delivery.

Wands teaches M.S.N.A., D.N.A.P. and Ph.D. students and plans to expand her current clinical research. Wands was most recently an assistant professor at Bloomsburg University and program director for the Geisinger Health System/Bloomsburg University Nurse Anesthesia Program. As a CRNA for 22 years, Wands received her M.B.A. and Ph.D. in higher education administration. Her research interests include ethics and adult education.

Endowments never stop giving. The principal of your gift is invested and grows over time, while a percentage of this income growth is distributed annually to support the purpose you have specified. Endowments provide long-term financial stability, regardless of government funding and changes in the economy. Endowments also create a legacy at VCU in perpetuity. To learn more, visit sahp.vcu.edu/alumni/giving-opportunities.

Flashback

Students learn from beloved professor Sue Hirt, who chaired the physical therapy department from 1948-82. Hirt is remembered for her motivating and attention-grabbing teaching techniques. The Sue Hirt Fund, established after her retirement, assists physical therapy students. To learn more about the fund, contact Debra Ropelewski at (804) 828-7247 or daropele@vcu.edu.

1970

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Thanks to you, a dream becomes reality.

The Virginia Commonwealth University School of Allied Health Professions’ new state-of-the-art facility, slated to open in the fall of 2019, is more than just a building. It’s the product of years of foresight, dedication and input from faculty, staff, students and leaders throughout the university and greater community. It’s an opportunity to shape the future of our industry through streamlined collaboration, cutting-edge technology and enhanced learning and research spaces. It’s the culmination of many voices, forged into a singular vision.

And it quite simply could not have happened without you.