

Health Sciences and Health Careers Pipeline Programs

Annual Report 2012-13



VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY



The following report exemplifies the benefits of diversity and collaboration in action. Since the conception of the Virginia Commonwealth University Health Sciences and Health Careers Pipeline — also called VCU Pipeline — in 2005, a host of VCU and community stakeholders have worked tirelessly to shape what is now a dynamic arrangement of programs and resources that work collectively to identify, prepare and nurture future health care professionals.

What you will find in this report:

Student success. Our students are truly our greatest and most prized asset. As highlighted throughout this report, both participants in programs and students who instruct them show an impressive commitment to excellence. This commitment is expressed in the classroom and in the community through an eagerness to make a difference in their lives and the lives of others. We encourage you to read the piece on Page 16 as it introduces the work of the Inter Health Professionals Alliance, a student-conceived and -led organization on the MCV Campus. You will learn that this group is making a real difference in the lives of others as it increases access to critical health screenings for local residents, all while continuing to excel in their respective programs of study.

Institutional alignment. The VCU Pipeline is well-aligned with the university's strategic plan, Quest for Distinction. Program efforts span across themes I, III and IV of the plan and reflect a natural affinity to core values such as diversity, innovation, service and achievement. Page 17 highlights the successful launch of the Summer Academic Enrichment Program. SAEP is the first VCU Pipeline program that is formally based on an interprofessional framework and is inclusive of dentistry, medicine, pharmacy and physical therapy. Although in its infancy, SAEP has shown early promise as a viable resource for student preparation.

Community engagement. The partnership between the Division for Health Sciences Diversity and the Division for Community Engagement continues to evolve as both units have capitalized on opportunities to further engage Richmond Public Schools. "On the horizon" on Page 20 highlights a number of efforts that are expected to introduce Richmond Public School students to the wealth of opportunities that exist at VCU.

With this tremendous tailwind, the VCU Pipeline is further positioned as a prime contributor to the success of students who aspire toward a health professions career. Many thanks are due to VCU faculty, staff, students and community partners who give generously of their time and talent to advancing diversity. Continue to make it real.

The VCU Pipeline model is a product of the 2005 cohort of The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute.



“[D]iversity and inclusion efforts move beyond numbers of students or numbers of programs as end goals. Instead, they are multilayered processes through which we achieve excellence in learning; research and teaching; student development; local and global community engagement; workforce development; and more ...”³

VCU Health Sciences and Health Careers Pipeline: A value proposition for inclusive excellence

For more than three decades, VCU has sponsored programs and initiatives intended to diversify the university’s health sciences schools. These efforts have been commonly referred to as health professions pipeline programs and have culminated in the current VCU Health Sciences and Health Careers Pipeline, also called VCU Pipeline. As captured in this report, the VCU Pipeline offers an array of programs and services aimed at improving the academic and experiential profiles of participants. As our analysis reveals, the VCU Pipeline has shown to be effective at increasing diversity across each of the VCU health sciences disciplines. In other words, our programs have had a discernible impact on our schools’ compositional diversity. While this work is essential, our pipeline programs also offer a broader value proposition with regard to advancing inclusive excellence.

The VCU Pipeline operates within the nexus between inclusive excellence and diversity. According to Patricia Gurin, Ph.D., Nancy Cantor Distinguished University Professor Emerita of Psychology and Women’s Studies at the University of Michigan, higher education institutions must foster the concept of diversity beyond the empirical makeup of the student body into the classrooms and curriculum, as well as in the everyday informal interactions that also define the student experience.¹ As classroom diversity pertains to our pipeline programs, targeted academic enrichment in subjects such as math and the basic sciences are infused with topics such as health disparities, cultural competency and issues facing the underserved. The material is often delivered in a seminar format but more increasingly in the form of case-based discussions among interprofessional student settings. Students are engaged in this approach across our high school, pre-matriculation and college-level programs with the expectation that they will enter our health sciences schools acculturated to and in demand of an integrative, culturally relevant education experience.

Many of our VCU Pipeline students are actively engaged in shaping the university’s cultural DNA. This quality is intentional, as volunteerism and service are critical selection factors for many of our programs. Students are further encouraged to extend beyond being consumers to catalysts and innovators of social experiences. These qualities are nurtured within our programs and have yielded a number of opportunities for sustained interaction among students from richly diverse backgrounds.

Institutions must give attention to a broader set of factors that impact campus climate such as the institution’s legacy of inclusion or exclusion of racial and ethnic groups, perceptions and attitudes shared across groups, and dynamics of intergroup interactions.² With the emergence of unprecedented numbers of students from diverse backgrounds, VCU has committed to activating all of its resources to better meet the academic and cultural needs of all students using diversity as a tool to enhance learning.³ The VCU Pipeline is an example of this commitment as it helps to prepare future health professionals to address issues that exist across increasingly diverse patient populations.

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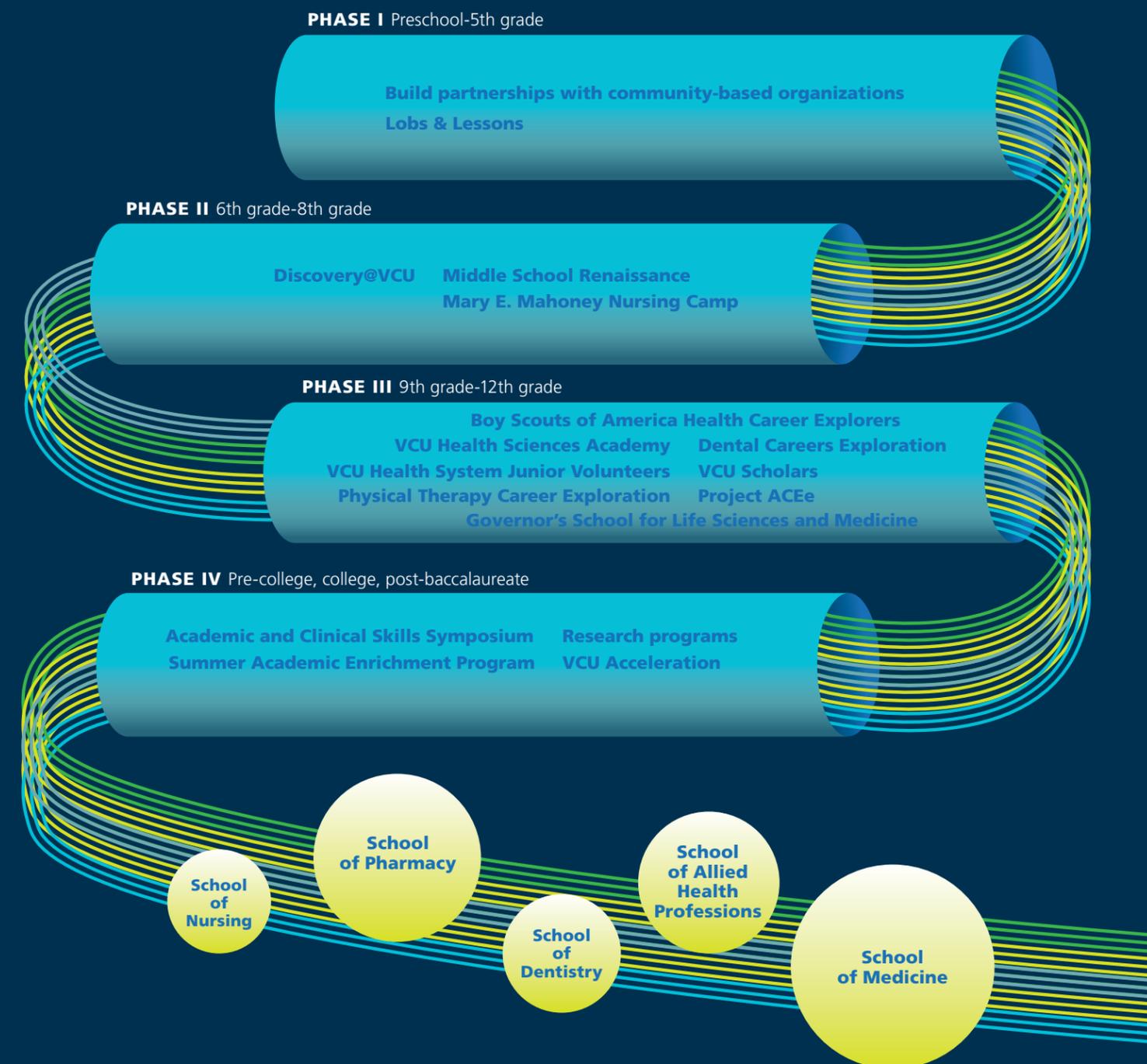


VCU Pipeline goals and objectives

The VCU Pipeline endeavors to increase student diversity within each of the VCU health sciences schools with the purpose of creating a culturally competent health care workforce. The importance of diversity in health care is well-documented as practitioners continue to face increasingly diverse patient populations that have a wide range of cultural, economic, social and geographical factors influencing health outcomes. Research also suggests that sustaining a critical mass of students from groups that are historically underrepresented in the health professions is important for broadening and enriching the discourse in which all students benefit within the education and training enterprise. To this end, the following strategic objectives address the myriad of factors important to preparing students for success in the health professions:

- Increase the awareness and utilization of programs and resources encompassed within the VCU Pipeline.
- Expose students to cutting-edge medical technologies within simulated and multidisciplinary practice scenarios.
- Expose students to prominent educational and training pedagogy, such as interprofessional education, competency-based models and case- and problem-based learning models.
- Increase awareness of issues of cultural competence, health disparities and social determinants of health.
- Equip students to accurately self-assess knowledge, skills and abilities requisite for success within health education programs.
- Facilitate student engagement in community-based outreach, service-learning, volunteering and health education activities.

What is the VCU Health Sciences and Health Careers Pipeline?



Since the centralization of the core pipeline efforts, the true effectiveness of the pipeline has begun to emerge, effectively 'handing-off' students to the next academic phase in the pipeline.



Qasim Kazmi VCU Acceleration VCU School of Medicine Class of 2017

Pipeline programs, specifically VCU Acceleration, were incredibly influential programs for me throughout my career as an undergraduate at VCU. Acceleration allowed me to jump-start my college education with a summer transition program that instilled in me motivation to hit the ground running once my first semester started. The diversity of students in the program was one of the best aspects of Acceleration. There was diversity with ethnicities but, in addition, an incredibly vibrant diversity with ambitions. I had peers who wanted to be radiation scientists, pharmacists, doctors, nurses, dentists, clinical lab scientists and beyond. This allowed us all to be more aware of the incredible diversity that health care holds within it. At the end of my freshman year, when I established a vision to start an organization unifying future health care professionals of all backgrounds, I hoped to mirror the diversity that Acceleration held. From the very beginning, Acceleration was incredibly supportive of Emerging Healthcare Leaders. Since the first day, we have always had a large amount of Acceleration students in the organization.

Beyond that, the living-learning community was an experience like no other. There truly is no way to measure the effects that this experience had on all of us. Living with students who had similar aspirations was inspiring and re-inspiring each and every day. Every day we would remind each other of upcoming assignments and exams. We all studied together, attended classes together and ate together. We had a very tight-knit community that was certainly stronger than any other in our building. You would rarely see any of us alone because we would always travel in big groups. People oftentimes asked many of us how we were always eating and walking in such big groups and the answer was simple, "That's my Acceleration family."

**"The diversity of students in the program was one of the best aspects of Acceleration. There was diversity with ethnicities but, in addition, an incredibly vibrant diversity with ambitions."
– Qasim Kazmi**

VCU Pipeline and Quest for Distinction

VCU has an extensive record of commitment to recruiting, admitting, retaining and graduating individuals from diverse backgrounds into the health professions. The VCU Health Sciences and Health Careers Pipeline is the central coordinating resource for initiatives that support this commitment. The VCU Pipeline complements Quest for Distinction in a number of strategic and programmatic areas, and aligns with Quest's fundamental aspiration to achieve national recognition as a fully integrated research university with a commitment to human health. Specifically, the VCU Pipeline directly supports Theme III's goal of increasing "the number and quality of initiatives that prepare students for careers that advance health care, improve health status and contribute to STEM-related fields."

The VCU Pipeline has primarily identified one of the program's goals as educating and exciting students from diverse backgrounds about careers in the health professions. During the past year, the VCU Pipeline has strengthened its alignment with the goals and metrics in Quest to be able to adequately communicate our dedication to student success and community involvement.



The VCU Pipeline has primarily identified one of the program's goals as educating and exciting students from diverse backgrounds about careers in the health professions.

Quest goals	Quest metrics	VCU Pipeline initiative	Current progress/threshold
I.A Recruit and retain talented and diverse students who will graduate at a higher rate and will contribute to a highly skilled workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduation rates Retention rates Percentage of underrepresented minority students Percentage of undergraduates going on to graduate or professional school 	VCU Acceleration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduation rates Retention rates Percentage of undergraduates going on to graduate or professional school 	Retention rate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2010 cohort: 34 of 36 (94.4%) retained 2011 cohort: 35 of 38 (92.1%) retained Graduation rate (6-year) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2005 cohort: 19 of 23 (82.6%) 2006 cohort: 24 of 36 (66.7%)
III.A Increase the number and quality of initiatives that prepare students for careers that advance health care, improve health status and contribute to STEM-related fields.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of pre-health and STEM students who matriculate into a health-related degree program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCU Acceleration and SAEP metrics include tracking students who matriculate to a health-related degree program (see pp. 12-13; P. 17). 	VCU Acceleration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently, at least two students enrolled in each of the health sciences schools at VCU (Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy) VCU RAMPS/SAEP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently, more than 20 previous participants enrolled in dental school
III.B Increase interdisciplinary/interprofessional scholarship and practice focused in areas of public health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of interdisciplinary/interprofessional national/international publications Number of students and faculty who engage in interdisciplinary and inter-professional projects in public health-related areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCU SAEP provides interdisciplinary education for students interested in dentistry, medicine, pharmacy and physical therapy. 	VCU SAEP has run for two summers. Opportunities for additional collaboration through pipeline structure
IV.B Create university-community partnerships with a focus on the key targeted areas of K-12 education (with a focus on middle school), access to health and economic development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of students engaged in service-learning, practica and internships in Richmond area K-12 schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middle school outreach through the "Mini Medical Days" and Middle School Renaissance Program with Richmond Public Schools Expansion of the Cosby High School Health Sciences Careers Exploration Course to Richmond Public Schools (Richmond Community High School) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 563 students participated in Middle School Renaissance Program in 2012-13; additional grade level and two more schools slated to return for 2013-14 21 students enrolled in RCHS Health Sciences Career Exploration Course during spring 2013 (10 from John Marshall High School, 11 from Richmond Community High School)

VCU Pipeline enrollment in health sciences programs

VCU Health Sciences schools

Other institutions

VCU School of Allied Health Professions

9

Bachelor of Science in
Clinical Laboratory Sciences

3

Bachelor of Science in
Clinical Radiation Sciences

1

Master of Science in
Rehabilitation Counseling

1

Doctor of Physical Therapy

VCU School of Dentistry

22

Doctor of Dental Surgery

2

Bachelor of Science
in Dental Hygiene

VCU School of Medicine

5

Doctor of Medicine

1

Master of Public Health

VCU School of Nursing

8

Bachelor of Science
in Nursing

1

Master of Science in Nursing

VCU School of Pharmacy

12

Doctor of Pharmacy

1

Master of Science in
Pharmaceutical Sciences

Dental Hygiene

1

Old Dominion University

Dentistry

19

University of Arizona, East Carolina
University, Howard University,
University of Maryland, Meharry
Medical College, New York University,
University of North Carolina at Chapel
Hill, University of Michigan

Master of Public Health

3

Eastern Virginia Medical School,
Harvard University,
University of Texas Health
Sciences Center

Master of Science in Nursing

1

Salisbury University

Medicine

3

Harvard University, Ross University (2)

Physical Therapy

1

Radford University

Pharmacy

2

Campbell University,
University of Maryland

Occupational therapy

1

Howard University

Osteopathic medicine

1

Philadelphia College
of Osteopathic Medicine

Post-baccalaureate programs

11

Columbia University, George Mason
University, University of North
Carolina at Greensboro, VCU (7),
Virginia State University

All matriculants: 109

Note: Numbers include projected 2013 matriculants.



Asia Owens



Tenesha Bottoms



Laura Zalles



Kierra Cooke

Our graduates: Where are they now?

The VCU Acceleration program was featured in the 2010-11 VCU Pipeline annual report, especially related to student outcomes, including student retention, graduation rates and the number of students entering into health professions educational programs. During fall 2012, at least one VCU Acceleration student began his or her first semester in each of the five health sciences schools: Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy. The interdisciplinary nature of the program combined with the flexible advising and support structure provided by faculty and staff involved with the program — including the Office of Pre-health Sciences Advising and the Division for Health Sciences Diversity — appears to have afforded students in various disciplines the necessary means for success.

A major part of the VCU Acceleration program includes introducing students to the rigors of the pre-health curriculum at VCU, including math, biology and chemistry. “The VCU Acceleration program prepared me for nursing school by exposing the reality of college and how much patience you need to achieve your goals,” says **Asia Owens**, a senior in the baccalaureate program at the VCU School of Nursing. “With the preparation provided by the Acceleration program, I am thriving in nursing school.”

This academic support, coupled with introducing students to the many health sciences programs at VCU, clearly identifies admissions requirements so that students understand what is required of them. **Tenesha Bottoms**, also a senior in the nursing program, echoes the emphasis on clear expectations. “After talking to the VCU School of Nursing representative, I was able to understand what they were looking for in their applicants, so I could decide what I needed and wanted to do during my first year of school before applying,” she says.

Students also identify support from other students in the program who are always willing to give back and provide assistance to students as they enter VCU. “I began the program with several friends already in my classes who would also live on my [residence hall] floor,” says **Laura Zalles**, a second-year student at the VCU School of Medicine. “I already had a group of friends to explore campus and form study groups with. I continued to study with my VCU Acceleration classmates throughout all four years in undergrad and consider some of them my closest friends today.”

Many other students agree with this sentiment. They expected to receive support from faculty and staff involved with the program, but were surprised by the amount of support they received from students in their class and how this impacted the transition to their first year at VCU. **Kierra Cooke**, now a graduate of the clinical laboratory sciences program in the VCU School of Allied Health Professions, and currently working at the VCU Medical Center, recalls her transition to VCU and the support she received from her peers. “Acceleration was the reason why the transition from high school to college was so easy for me,” she says. “I rarely got homesick, I never had a bad semester and I never thought about dropping out of VCU. I knew that I always had a support network and the right tools to be successful due to having my peers in the program.”

Although students’ experiences and pre-health interests have differed in the program, it appears clear that they have benefitted from it and have gained skills and built relationships over several years. VCU Acceleration will continue to introduce students to the health professions by using its unique design, which combines a summer pre-matriculation program and academic-year support through a structured living-learning community during freshman year. VCU Acceleration program graduates offer this advice to students who are thinking about applying — get your application in!

“VCU Acceleration gave me the confidence and support that allowed me to enjoy my undergraduate years and successfully enter medical school upon graduation,” says Zalles. “I would wholeheartedly recommend this program to anyone interested in a pre-health program.”

“The VCU Acceleration program prepared me for nursing school by exposing the reality of college and how much patience you need to achieve your goals.”

– Asia Owens

Interprofessional education and health professions pipeline programs: Leaning forward

In 2003, the Institute of Medicine shared its vision statement for health professions education:

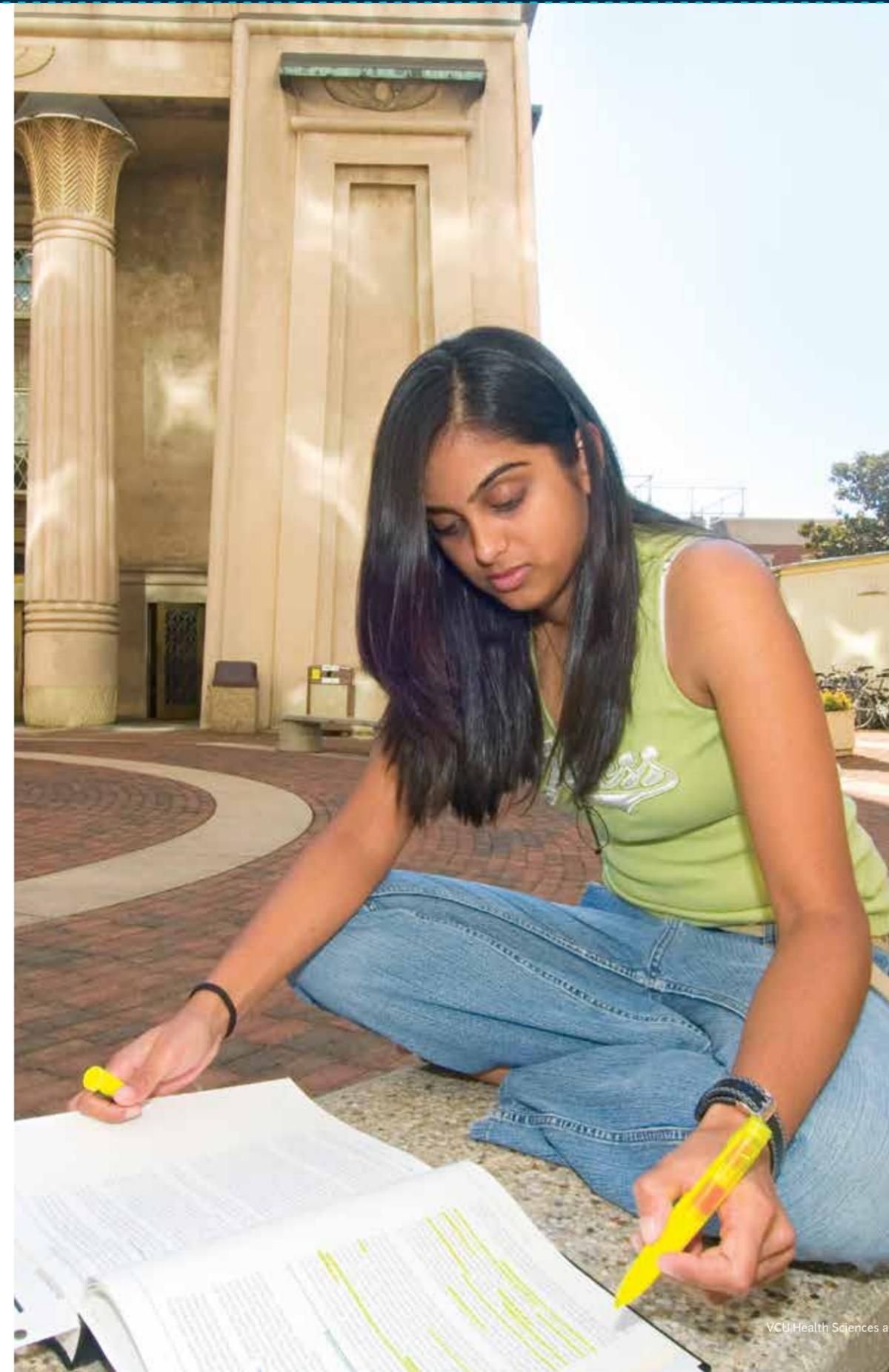
“All health professionals should be educated to deliver patient-centered care as members of an interdisciplinary team, emphasizing evidence-based practice, quality improvement approaches and informatics.”¹

This vision statement acknowledges the value of giving students early learning experiences with, from and about other health professions² and also prompted a number of funders to advance interprofessional learning and practice through curriculum development and demonstration projects.³ However, interprofessional education continues to be the exception in health professions education programs^{3,4,5} and, from available literature, appears to have limited penetration among preparatory initiatives commonly known as health profession pipeline programs (pipeline programs). It could be that one of the positive externalities of pipeline programs is their potential role in advancing interprofessional education.

It is generally accepted that a diverse health care workforce practicing in interprofessional teams is needed in order to improve patient safety and patient-centered outcomes.³ According to Sullivan (2004), many health institutions struggle with the attempt to build cultural competence within their organizations; consequently, excellence in health professions education is difficult to achieve. When an institution lacks cultural diversity, the overall quality of health professions education is diminished and patient outcomes are adversely affected.⁶

A diverse health care workforce can only be achieved by recruitment and retention of a health professions and an allied health professions student body rich in diversity. To address this need, more than 30 years ago the federal government began allocating resources toward increasing diversity of applicants to health professions and allied health professions schools. Public Law 92-157 created the Health Careers Opportunity Program. Other stakeholder organizations such as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation also created programs to help diversify the health care workforce. Collectively, these initiatives' primary purpose is to intervene in the educational pipeline to enhance opportunities for students from underrepresented groups to enter careers in the health professions.⁷

VCU is no stranger to this work and demonstrates its commitment to both student diversity and interprofessional education through institutional investments that push the frontier of opportunities in each domain. The Office of the Senior Vice President for Health Sciences hosts the Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care and the Division for Health Sciences Diversity. The center looks at how increased collaboration among health professionals can improve patient care and how to teach team-based competencies that foster effective interprofessional practice.⁸ In turn, the division serves as a hub for universitywide pipeline initiatives designed to increase diversity in the VCU health professions schools and, to some degree, writ large. The possibilities are limitless as VCU continues to explore interprofessional education models and also continues to advance the ideals of a diverse, culturally competent workforce. Moreover, our communities are the ultimate benefactors as this nexus prepares the next generation of health care professionals whose adeptness in practicing in well-functioning, collaborative teams is matched by their commitment to address health concerns of a diverse patient population.



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The importance of interprofessional interaction

A student perspective

Lynn VanderWielen, M.P.H., Ph.D. candidate, VCU School of Allied Health Professions, and member of the Inter Health Professionals Alliance



The Inter Health Professionals Alliance is the only interprofessional student-led group on VCU's MCV Campus. The IHPA, housed in the VCU Division for Health Sciences Diversity, was formed in 2009 by eight students who wanted to engage in interprofessional education and collaboration while studying at VCU. More than 200 members from the schools of Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Social Work, and the Dietetics Internship directed by the VCU Health System, engage in four main IHPA activities: community health outreach events, interprofessional education sessions, monthly newsletter collaboration and pre-professional health student mentoring.

Community health outreach events

Each month, the IHPA decides on a health topic and screening that would be of benefit to our target populations, which include VCU students and underserved populations that shop at local grocery stores. These topics are based on the goals of "Healthy People 2020" and a formal community-needs assessment conducted prior to outreach event initiation. At previous outreach events, we have provided free screenings for blood pressure and BMI, as well as healthy food tours. Additionally, we give out information about our monthly health topic through our collaborative newsletter.

Interprofessional education sessions – "Educate then Advocate"

IHPA hosts monthly, hourlong educational sessions prior to our outreach event focusing on the monthly topic. These sessions aim to educate our outreach volunteers and greater membership on the health topic so that they are better able to serve outreach customers. The "Educate then Advocate" session also gives IHPA students the opportunity to engage with fellow VCU colleagues. Each session utilizes case-based learning and greatly benefits from the interprofessional nature of the participants.

Monthly newsletter

IHPA students collaborate to create a newsletter focused on the topic of the month. Students write discipline-specific articles at an appropriate reading level to distribute during our events. Since these articles focus on various aspects of the health topic, they provide a holistic approach to health that not only includes the medical dimensions, but social and psychological components as well.

Preprofessional health student mentoring

The IHPA students collaborate with professional and pre-professional organizations to provide career panels and one-on-one mentoring opportunities for interested students.

Involvement in IHPA provides professional students with a variety of benefits, including improved knowledge and skills, professional competence, interprofessional networking, and role clarity. These skills will allow our members to provide high-quality health care in a true interprofessional team environment upon graduation.

Summer Academic Enrichment Program

VCU recognized the importance of interprofessional education in the university's strategic plan, Quest for Distinction, as well as the through the creation of the Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care. The VCU Pipeline noted the need for additional interdisciplinary interaction among students preparing to apply to the VCU health sciences schools and explored ways to provide this educational and enriching experience within the VCU Pipeline.

The Summer Academic Enrichment Program proposal was developed in fall 2011. The proposal expanded on the highly successful RAMpS program, developed and coordinated in the VCU School of Dentistry by Carolyn L. Booker, Ph.D., to an interprofessional model that would include students interested in dentistry, medicine, pharmacy and physical therapy. Data from the RAMpS program from 2008-10 was used in promoting the expansion of the program, including:

- **More than 60 percent of participants applied to dental school.**
- **Forty-six percent of participants enrolled in a school of dentistry.**
- **Of the participants enrolled in dental school, more than 60 percent had selected VCU as their first choice and were now enrolled in the VCU School of Dentistry.**



SAEP celebrated its inaugural year in summer 2012. Based on the RAMpS program, it focused on enhancing the academic preparation of junior, senior and recently graduated students who were actively pursuing admission to a health professions program, including dentistry, medicine, pharmacy and physical therapy. The curriculum was designed around an interprofessional framework that included significant interaction among the students in the four different health professions tracks, as well as specialized instruction in their field of interest. The program also allowed time for preparing for the application cycle and included admissions workshops, individual advising sessions and interview preparation.

Results from the first year of the program are very preliminary; however, several summer 2012 participants completed the application process to various health professions schools for the 2013 admission cycle. Currently, 12 students from the summer 2012 cohort are anticipated to enroll at VCU and other institutions during the fall 2013 semester, with additional students reporting that they are planning to apply during the 2014 application cycle. In a post-program survey, 96 percent of respondents indicated that they were "definitely interested in a career in the health professions and will pursue it as my future career," with 92 percent of respondents indicating that they were "very likely" to apply to a VCU health sciences school. In the open-ended questions provided on the post-program survey, several students identified the interprofessional design of the program as one of its strengths, noting that it provided preliminary support for students who have not yet entered into health professions programs but are interested in an interdisciplinary approach to their health professions education.

The program's second year welcomed a new group of students in summer 2013. New and innovative approaches to educating students about other health care disciplines were explored, including "discipline switch days," on which students participating in a particular track spent time in the other health sciences schools to learn more about the other fields and how each discipline contributes to the overall health care team. This approach allowed for a more in-depth understanding of each of the disciplines as students enter health professions education and, eventually, the workforce.



Extending our reach

From the onset, community engagement has been a primary goal of the Division for Health Sciences Diversity, incorporating community service and service-learning activities into the core VCU Pipeline programming. Community engagement ranges from outreach and volunteer efforts performed by VCU Pipeline students directly under the division, to supporting health sciences programming and events from other university divisions.

The VCU Pipeline directly oversees the VCU Acceleration and SAEP community service projects. In past years, VCU Acceleration and SAEP students participated in done-in-a-day community service projects at local Richmond city elementary schools. These projects, at the schools' requests, involved beautification of the school grounds, and included fun and educational aspects such as a map of the U.S. painted on the playground. This year, SAEP students were able to help Ginter Park Elementary School prepare for the new school year, working alongside faculty and staff to create space for the incoming kindergarten and first-grade classes. In addition to the 50 hours of community service during the academic year, this year's VCU Acceleration students had a separate summer service-learning project. Working in teams focused on leadership, community, environment and education, VCU Acceleration students crafted detailed and sustainable plans to foster growth in each area at Ginter Park Elementary School.

In addition to its own projects, the VCU Pipeline is also supportive of other community outreach programs that involve local youth. Among partnerships that the VCU Pipeline supports is the VCU "Mini Medical Day," which has impacted Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Richmond.

"The Interactive, hands-on activities were very interesting, and the chance to hear directly from health professionals was a unique opportunity," says Traci Pryor, former executive director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Richmond. "One Little Brother was thrilled to learn how to use a stethoscope and talked about that with his Big Brother all the way home from the 'Mini Medical Day.'"

Why is community engagement important to the division and VCU? At the 2012 VCU Pipeline and Diversity Scholars reception, the response was unanimous and clear: Be participants in local and global communities, become health professionals and be representative of the diverse populations you serve. The comments from Michael Rao, Ph.D., president of VCU and the VCU Health System, to student participants echoed the same message: Giving back is what the health professions are about. The division understands this, and with each passing year existing partnerships are strengthened and new programs are added in order to effectively live up to this goal.

"Giving back is what the health professions are about."

- Michael Rao, Ph.D.

Expansion will equate to more thoroughly informed pre-health students from diverse backgrounds and ultimately lead to a diversification of health care professionals.

Expanding the VCU Health Sciences Academy

In spring 2013, the Division for Health Sciences Diversity and the Division of Community Engagement piloted the VCU Health Sciences Academy in Richmond Public Schools at Richmond Community High School and John Marshall High School, expanding on the successful model in place at Cosby High School in Chesterfield County. Twenty-one students who wished to pursue careers in the health professions were selected to participate in the inaugural course. In order to successfully replicate the course at RCHS, subtle changes were made to the schedule while the key components of the Cosby High School Health Careers Exploration Course were maintained and applied.

The focus of the course aims to help high school students learn college success skills, make informed decisions about the health careers they wish to pursue and plan college-level courses and extracurricular activities in order to achieve their career goals. The class meets once a week, with half of the meetings at VCU and the other at RCHS. During the classes at RCHS, students enjoy time with their VCU mentors and learn about how to become a successful college student. The classes held at VCU are dedicated to introducing the students to the health sciences schools. Richmond Public School students have the opportunity to join the Cosby High School students on five full-day lab trips. Lab trips give students the unique, hands-on experience of a practicing health care professional in a number of areas. Completing all components of the course gives each enrolled student a 360-degree view of life as a pre-health undergraduate and a glimpse into the world of a health care professional.

The successful pilot of the Health Sciences Career Exploration Course within RCHS and John Marshall High School will strengthen VCU's connection with the community and open doors for further expansion of the VCU Health Sciences Academy. Expansion of the academy within Richmond and surrounding areas will equate to more thoroughly informed pre-health students from diverse backgrounds and ultimately lead to a diversification of health care professionals.

Health career exploration with Richmond Middle School Renaissance program

This year, the Division for Health Sciences Diversity along with the VCU schools of Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy, the VCU Health System Community Outreach and Workforce Development and the VCU Division for Community Engagement have partnered with the Richmond Public School's Middle School Renaissance program to bring more than 500 Richmond middle school students to VCU for an afternoon of health career exploration.

Richmond Public Schools, committed to engaging students in the world around them, developed the Middle School Renaissance program in 2011. Now in its second year, the program boasts 100 sixth- and seventh-graders at each school. Students enrolled in the program travel to VCU's MCV Campus for a two-hour encounter that includes an introduction to health careers by VCU Health System Community Outreach and Workforce Development staff and hands-on activities with the VCU schools of Dentistry and Medicine for sixth-grade students and with VCU schools of Nursing and Pharmacy for seventh-grade students.

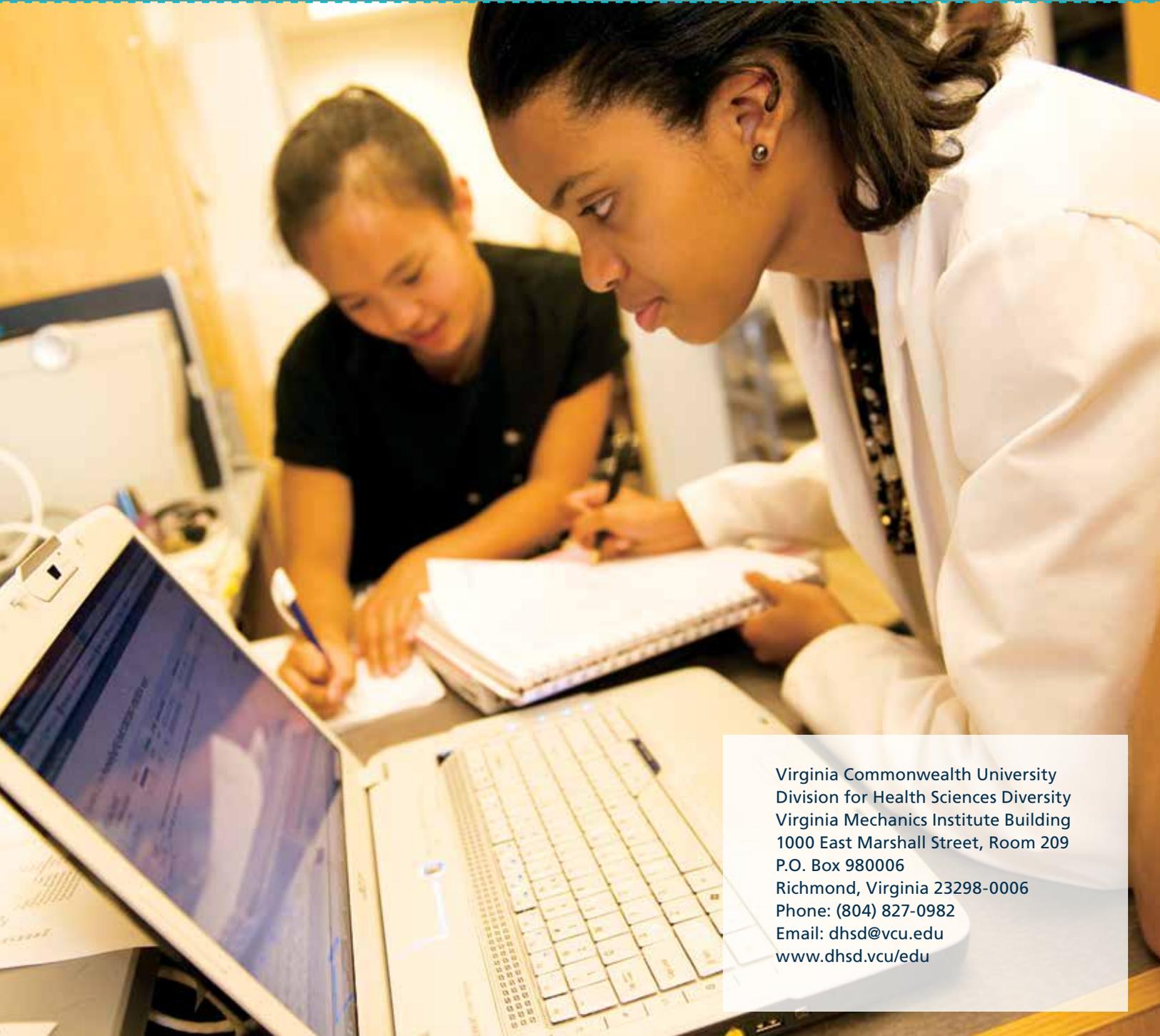
Servicing all nine Richmond city middle schools, the division looks forward to continuing the program next year, with the addition of eighth-graders to the program.



Special thanks

The many collaborators and supporters of this important work are too numerous to name, but no less resounding in impact. We are in a transformational time in health care, as well as in engaging the communities surrounding VCU. The hope is that each person who reads this report finds the resolve to remain committed to the work, inspired to engage even deeper and dedicated to the Quest for lasting impact.

“Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.” – Andrew Carnegie



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