



OUR
UNRIVALED
APPROACH TO LEARNING TRANSFORMS LIVES



VCU School of Education

UNRIVALED

Empowering Futures by Strengthening Urban Communities

At the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Education, we're continuing our promise to renew and re-energize the teaching, leadership, counseling and learning professions. During the emerging challenges of the past three years, our faculty, students and graduates stood on the front lines, looking for creative ways to keep young minds engaged and focused on the future.

Our success in that journey required the unwavering dedication of our faculty, staff, and students and the invaluable support of our generous donors and friends. At the heart of our accomplishments is our commitment to serving communities, schools, families, and children, particularly in urban and high-needs environments.

This past year, we continued to soar in national rankings, solidifying our reputation as an education powerhouse. For 2023-24, *U.S. News & World Report* recognized us as the **18th best public graduate school of education** and the **#2 best education school in Virginia**.

Beyond accolades, **our external research funding surged past \$40 million**, reinforcing our position as the highest-funded academic unit on VCU's Monroe Park campus and **7th nationally in external funding per faculty member**. As an **urban-serving R1 institution**, our expertise in education catalyzes groundbreaking research and educational innovation which our graduates use to shape the future.

Our research endeavors are at the forefront of addressing societal challenges in high-need communities, delivering practical "research-to-practice" solutions. Our highly qualified graduates are equipped to be accountable, transparent and committed to constant improvement.

Each day, the School of Education family diligently prepares educators, counselors, and professionals who will engage with our community from early childhood through adulthood. With immense pride, we eagerly anticipate continuing our transformative and impactful work in the upcoming year.

We remain focused on closing gaps with teacher and counselor shortages, expanding the pathways for highly qualified exceptional education professionals, and implementing interventions to combat student absenteeism, bullying, suicide and mental health challenges. We're relentlessly creating more opportunities and fortifying the well-being of all students, especially those who are underrepresented.

In this year ahead, we're focusing on our theme of *belonging*. Every student belongs here. Our students, faculty, staff and alums make a difference. Reflecting on our 2022-23 accomplishments, we appreciate knowing that your unrivaled support and partnership will hold strong as we strive for excellence in education and community enrichment.

Warmest Regards,

Kathleen M. Rudasill, Ph.D.

Professor and Interim Dean, VCU School of Education



FACTS

Our vision

To be a leader in responsive, needs-driven and research-based educational practices that transform the lives of those we serve in our communities, especially those who have been historically marginalized.

Our mission

We advance learning and knowledge through impactful research, teaching and engagement to provide our students, professionals and communities with the tools to create progressive change. We prepare and support professionals to lead change and inform social, economic, health and educational policy and practice.

Leadership



Kathleen Rudasill,
Ph.D., Professor and
Interim Dean



Luciana de Oliveira, Ph.D.,
Professor, Associate Dean
for Academic Affairs and
Graduate Studies



Tomika Ferguson, Ph.D.,
Assistant Professor,
Assistant Dean for
Student Affairs and
Inclusive Excellence



Lisa Abrams, Ph.D.,
Professor, Interim
Associate Dean for
Research and Faculty
Development

Accreditations

Virginia Department of Education
Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation
Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related
Educational Programs
National Association for the Education of Young Children

In Appreciation

Andrew P. Daire, Ph.D., who joined VCU as dean of the School of Education in 2016, moved to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee after the 2022-23 academic year. He is serving there as provost and vice chancellor.

OUR STUDENTS

1,018
STUDENTS
(fall 2022)

Entering students students
in the 2022-23 academic
year came from

**13 STATES, THE
DISTRICT OF
COLUMBIA AND
5 COUNTRIES**

& FIGURES

36%

of entering undergraduate
students in fall 2022
identified as first-
generation students

34%

of undergraduate
students were
Pell Grant Eligible
in fall 2022

32%

of students identified
as underrepresented
minorities in fall 2022

49%

enrollment growth
in three years

#18 BEST

U.S. News & World Report

public school
of education



RESEARCH

\$147M*

in total new funding
for FY23

\$40.1 M

represents new funding
in FY23

45%

boost in external
funding in 5 years

#7

in funded research per
faculty member**

* represents the total cumulative amount
of all currently active awards as of FY23

** among 459 surveyed universities
granting doctoral education degrees

“Research is one of the most important ways that VCU serves our communities. In the VCU School of Education, my colleagues are finding answers to tough, complicated questions, including how to address the teacher shortage. Our teaching and research mission is thriving thanks to our innovative faculty researchers, who are developing transportable best practices for the next generation of teachers, with a focus on transforming often underserved urban schools. As a public research university, we have the ability to effect lasting real impact by engaging with our communities to find new ways to solve long-existing problems.”

Michael Rao, Ph.D.

President, Virginia Commonwealth University

WHAT OTHERS SAY

U.S. News & World Report

#2 education school in Virginia

#2 online master's in education in Virginia

#28 online master's in education

#19 online master's in curriculum and instruction

Fortune

#7 online doctorate in education (Ed.D.)

#4 most affordable online Ed.D.

ShanghaiRanking of Academic Subjects

TIER 76-100
online doctorate in education (Ed.D.)

ALUMS

17,825

alums, including more than 60 from our new undergraduate programs

500

alumni graduating in the last three years employed in Virginia Title I schools

112%

increase in contributions over the past 7 years

PROGRAMS

Counseling*:

Ph.D. / M.Ed.

Leadership*:

Ph.D. / Ed.D. / M.Ed. / B.A.

Special Education*:

Ph.D. / M.Ed. / B.S.Ed.

Teaching and Learning*:

Ph.D. / M.T. / M.Ed. / B.S.Ed.

* also awards post-baccalaureate and/or post-master's certificates

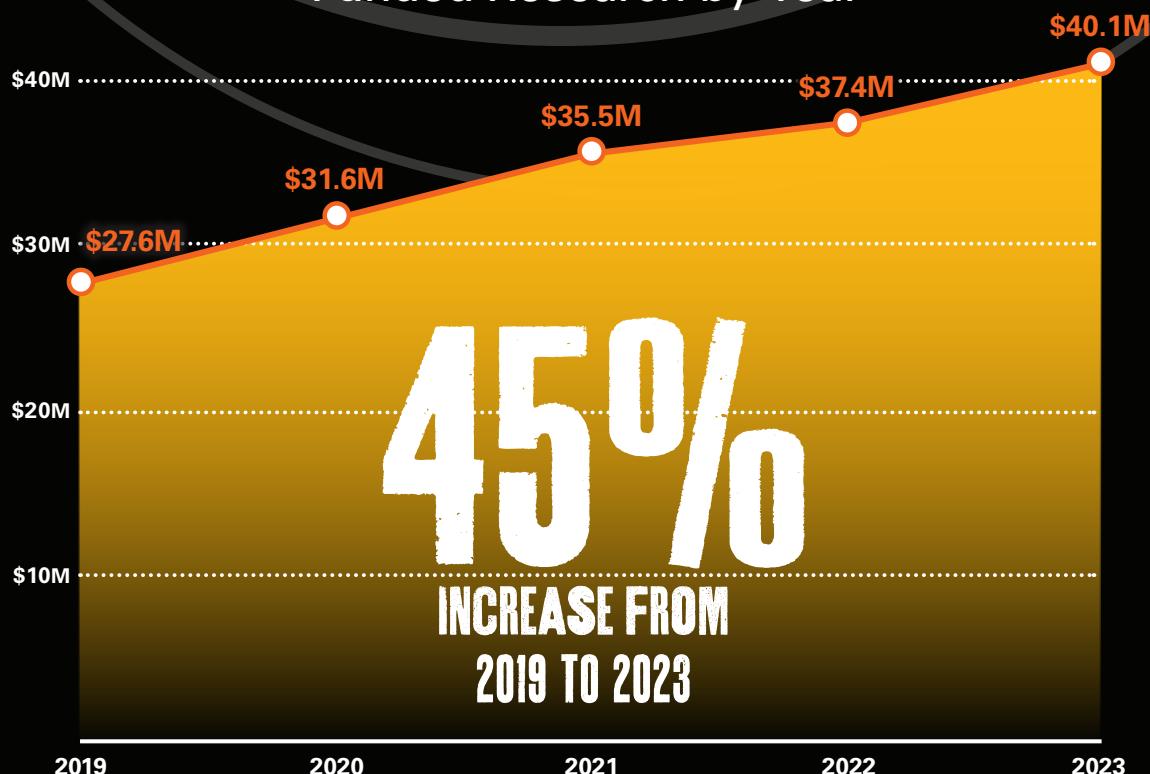
RESEARCH

Unparalleled Commitment to Delivering Solutions

School of Education faculty and programs generated **more than \$40 million in new sponsored funding** for fiscal year 2023, representing **8.6% of the annual record of \$464.6 million awarded to VCU researchers**. That includes schools across the university's Monroe Park, Medical College of Virginia and Qatar campuses.

The increase underscores the university's commitment to its One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan and its investments into four key research initiatives led by innovative and high-impact teams across its three campuses. Our campuswide research initiatives capitalize on VCU's growing national leadership in many fields of research and scholarship and accelerate transformative innovation.

VCU School of Education Externally Funded Research by Year



About VCU

FY23 SOE Sponsored Research Funding Highlights

Virginia Department of Education

Project SEARCH | **Judy Averill**, M.Ed., Principal Investigator (PI) | \$2,300,000, annually | In collaboration with employers, Project SEARCH supports young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who seek competitive employment. VCU's Center on Transition Innovations supports the project in 19 Virginia communities, and participants achieve a competitive employment rate of 76% one year after program completion.



Administration for Children and Families

Promoting Social Emotional Development of Head Start Children | **Chin-Chih Chen**, Ph.D., (PI) | \$99,400 | Identify the family and classroom practices and experiences of Head Start programs that best promote children's social-emotional development.



Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Partnership for People with Disabilities, University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service | **Parthenia Dinora**, Ph.D., (PI) | 5-year, \$3,165,791 | Serve as Virginia's federally designated interdisciplinary center to advance intellectual and developmental disability research, public policy and practice so that people with disabilities can live as full members of their communities.

Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute

Building a United Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Agenda Together | **Parthenia Dinora**, Ph.D. (PI) | \$99,978 | Create collaborations among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, families and interdisciplinary researchers at VCU to promote increased stakeholder-engaged research.

Record
\$464M
in new sponsored research

TOP 20
most innovative
public universities
by *U.S. News & World Report*

5-TIME
Diversity Champion
by *INSIGHT in Diversity*

TOP 50
public research
university by
National Science Foundation

1 OF 65
public universities
classified by the
Carnegie Foundation
as an **"R1 Doctoral University – Highest Research Activity"**

National Institutes of Health

Pathways for Authentic Teaching of Health Sciences | **Elizabeth Edmondson**, Ph.D., (PI) | \$268,000 (funding for one year of a 5-year grant) | Support teachers in fostering interest in health sciences careers among high school students in Virginia's underserved urban and rural areas.



National Science Foundation

Building Capacity in STEM Education Research | **John Fife**, Ph.D., (PI) | \$249,000. Use an innovative psychological model, Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory, to explore how contextual variables can predict STEM interests, attitudes and resilience among underserved middle school students.



Templeton Foundation (Stetson University)

Spirituality and Client Outcomes: Investigating the Mechanisms of Religious and Spiritual Competence Training in Mental Health (SCT-MH) | **Daniel Gutierrez**, Ph.D., (PI) | \$73,000 (funding for one year of a two-year grant) | Examine the dynamics and outcomes of counselor participation in spiritual competency training in mental health to enhance competence and multicultural orientation, as well as client well-being.



U.S. Social Security Administration

Social Security National Training and Data Center | **John Kregel**, Ed.D., and **Susan O'Mara**, (Co-PIs) | \$4,925,000 | Train and support a national cadre of 900 "benefits counselors" in 74 local projects who assist Social Security disability beneficiaries to enter employment, maintain health care coverage and increase their economic self-sufficiency.



U.S. Department of Education

Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence | **Kim McKnight**, Ph.D., (PI) | \$1,600,000 | Recruit and support more teacher candidates from diverse backgrounds and provide them with the skills to teach in high-need schools through the RTR Teacher Residency.

Centers for Disease Control

Rigorously Evaluating Approaches to Prevent Adult-Perpetrated Child Sex Abuse | **Charol Shakeshaft**, Ph.D., (PI) | \$145,000 | Examine the relationship between training on prevention of school employee sexual misconduct, school policies, hiring practices, reporting, supervision and actions and/or beliefs related to stopping or preventing school employee sexual misconduct.



U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs

Project PIRR: Preparing Interdisciplinary, Responsive and Reflective Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education Professionals and Social Workers | **Yaoying Xu**, Ph.D., (PI) | \$249,000 | Equip future professionals with evidence-based practices to improve family and early childhood mental health for children of all abilities from high-need communities.

Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

Pre-Employment Transition Services | **Paul Wehman**, Ph.D., (PI) **Judy Averill**, M.Ed., (Co-PI) | \$3,100,000 | Develop standard training and support for pre-employment transition service providers and secondary special educators to successfully assist students with disabilities who are transitioning from school to work and adult life.

National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment of Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities | **Paul Wehman**, Ph.D., (PI) and **Jennifer**



McDonough, M.S., CRC, (Co-PI) | \$2,500,000 | Reduce high unemployment among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by conducting multiphase studies to examine critical variables

that could potentially improve competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

Real Pay for Real Jobs: Education, Partnerships, Individualized Services, Capacity Building (EPIC) Project (Subcontract) | **Jennifer**



McDonough, M.S., CRC, (PI) and **Paul Wehman**, Ph.D., (Co-PI) | \$1,500,000 from October 2022 to September 2027 | Assist Virginians with disabilities to engage with state vocational rehabilitation agencies to obtain competitive, integrated employment.

Research to Classroom: Downloadable Briefs on Bullying, Absenteeism, Artificial Intelligence & More

The School of Education's **Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium** (MERC) published a wide range of research briefs on the emerging issues of PK12 education, including several that explore the immediacy of pandemic-related topics. Each brief provides a review of the literature, coupled with key takeaways and recommendations for policy and practice:

- Addressing School Bullying Since the Onset of COVID-19
- Administrator Feedback to Teachers
- Adolescent THC Usage in Virginia: Post-Legalization Challenges and Strategies for Schools
- Balancing the Benefits and Risks of AI Large Language Models in K12 Public Schools
- Cell Phones in Schools
- School Division Policies Related to Suicide Prevention and Response
- Strategies for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism in the Post-Pandemic Era
- Teacher Retention Policy Coherence: An Analysis of Policies and Practices Across Federal, State, and Division Levels
- Teaching Writing to Middle School Students with Disabilities
- Who Takes Dual Enrollment Classes?

Scan QR to access PDFs



URBAN SERVING School of Education

New Chairs Expand Research Portfolio and Invigorate Instruction

Bringing extensive research portfolios and profound experiences in preparing future practitioners, two faculty members have joined the School of Education to serve as department chairs and drive innovation within the school and its expanded community partners.

A world-renowned scholar in applied developmental science, **Thomas Farmer**, Ph.D., leads the Department of Foundations of Education. He joins VCU from the University of Pittsburgh, where he served as department chair, and brings extensive experience in leadership and research, including directing federally funded multi-university research centers.

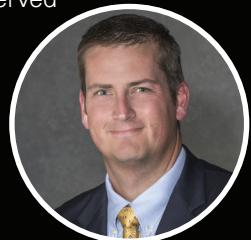
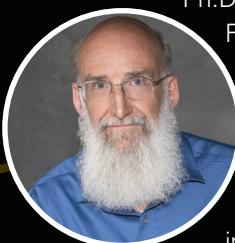
Farmer's research focuses on the intersection of educational psychology, human development, special education and teacher preparation. His work fosters social inclusion and promotes how minoritized and marginalized youth adjust to school.

Farmer has been a pioneer in studying children's social lives at school and the role of teachers in the classroom ecology. Through collaborations among educators, school leaders and community stakeholders, he has created professional development programs prioritizing students' strengths, needs and individual characteristics. Farmer's robust

research-practice partnership framework has attracted federal funding, leading to more than 20 impactful community projects nationwide. His role as a presidential officer of the Division for Research of the Council for Exceptional Children underscores his commitment to driving research-based, positive change in education.

Patrick R. Mullen, Ph.D., who studies school counseling and counselor education, now chairs the Department of Counseling and Special Education. He joins VCU from the College of William & Mary, where he served as program lead for school counseling.

Mullen has been a driving force in enhancing school counseling programs and promoting professional well-being within the education community. His research in school counseling, counselor education and supervision has garnered national recognition. He also holds editorial roles with the *Journal of Counseling and Development* and the *Journal of School-based Counseling Policy and Evaluation*.



Study Reveals Teacher Perceptions of Student Relationships by Race

Teachers rated their level of perceived conflict with Black boys as nearly 40% higher in kindergarten than their level of perceived conflict with white girls.

Teachers — regardless of race — perceived the most conflict with Black boys and the least conflict with white girls in their classrooms, according to a research team led by VCU Interim Education Dean



Kathleen Rudasill, Ph.D. Teachers also perceived their relationships with Black boys as increasing in conflict

at higher rates

than with white and female children across kindergarten through second grade, according to findings published in summer 2023 in the *Journal of School Psychology*.

The team analyzed data from 9,190 teachers who evaluated relationships with their students regarding perceived closeness and perceived conflict toward the end of the school year in the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics' Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010-2011.

Teachers rated their level of perceived conflict with Black boys as nearly 40% higher in kindergarten than their level of perceived conflict with white girls. The gap increased from kindergarten to second grade: Teachers' perceptions of conflict with white girls, white boys and Black girls stayed nearly flat, but their perceptions of conflict with Black boys increased by 8%.

"We were surprised at the disparities in teacher perceptions of their relationships with Black and white boys and girls at the start of formal school," Rudasill said. "This is the point in the school experience where teacher-child relationships are typically at their most positive, so the fact that Black students — Black boys in particular — are starting at such a disadvantage in terms of teacher perceptions was discouraging."

Rudasill said the study uncovers how systemic racism and white privilege in society unfold in the U.S. educational system.

"Although some studies have examined child and teacher race as variables in teachers' perceptions of teacher-child relationship quality, there has not been a focus on systemic racism as potentially impacting teacher perceptions," Rudasill said. "Given the historical and current educational disparities between Black and white

"Although some studies have examined child and teacher race as variables in teachers' perceptions of teacher-child relationship quality, there has not been a focus on systemic racism as potentially impacting teacher perceptions."

— Kathleen Rudasill

students' opportunities and outcomes — and the critical role that teacher-child relationships have in predicting students' academic and social success in school — it is important to examine the extent to which teachers' perceptions of their relationship with students differ according to child race."

URBAN SERVING School of Education

VCU Team to Explore Education Policies in Today's Multiracial Democracy

A team of researchers from the School of Education and the University of California, Berkeley co-led by **Genevieve Siegel-Hawley**, Ph.D., VCU professor of educational leadership, is studying "Race-Conscious Education Policies and Adaptive Anti-Discrimination in a Divided, Multiracial Democracy."

A \$499,075 grant from the Spencer Foundation supports the work, which aims to better understand adaptive anti-discrimination and how related strategies can influence policies and practices to disrupt racism in public education.

"We are honored by this significant investment in better understanding adaptive anti-discrimination," said Siegel-Hawley, a Richmond native who graduated from and taught in the city's public schools.

"We define this as the strategies, collaborations

and policy formation to resist civil rights rollbacks and racist backlash in education. This work will deepen our understanding of how adaptive anti-discrimination strategies unfold and how these strategies might manifest in policies and practices that disrupt racism in public education."

"This work will deepen our understanding of how adaptive anti-discrimination strategies unfold and how these strategies might manifest in policies and practices that disrupt racism in public education."

– **Genevieve Siegel-Hawley**

Siegel-Hawley's research examines the scope and dynamics of school segregation and resegregation in U.S. metropolitan areas, along with policies for promoting intentionally integrated schools and communities. She teaches courses studying how and why equal educational opportunity is distributed unequally across urban, suburban and exurban districts.



New Programs Help Build Community Leaders' Skills

New School of Education programs are developing community leaders' skills in directing institutions and organizations — educational or otherwise — with a focus on equity.

An M.Ed. in educational leadership with a concentration in culturally responsive leadership and a graduate certificate in culturally responsive leadership can help leaders address challenges underserved communities face in the classroom, workplace and society. The program's first students enrolled in fall 2022.

"Our students in these programs gain leadership development experience that will help them make a difference beyond the classroom or

the board room," said **Lacey Seaton**, Ed.D., assistant professor of educational leadership.

Program graduates learn to analyze research related to race, ethnicity, culture and class; engage in critical self-reflection and action; develop relationships with school, community, nonprofit and other community-based organizations to advocate for transformative, justice-centered practices in education; and implement education strategies to empower communities for social change.

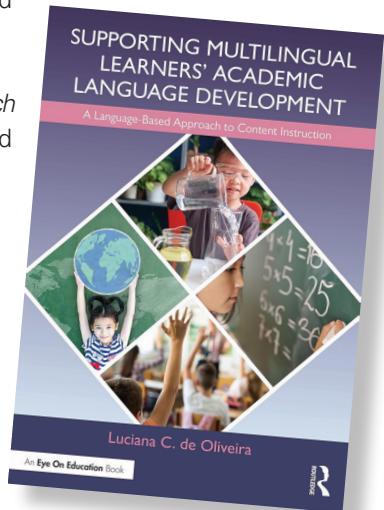


Books Offer Practices and Strategies for Teaching K-5 Multilingual Learners

Luciana C. de Oliveira, Ph.D., associate dean for academic affairs and graduate studies, wrote two books focused on teaching multilingual learners. *Supporting Multilingual Learners' Academic Language Development: A Language-Based Approach to Content Instruction* (de Oliveira, 2023), published by Routledge, offers a practical guide for teaching grade-level content and addressing the language demands of teaching English language arts, social studies, mathematics and science.



The second book, *Teaching Young Multilingual Learners: Key issues and New Insights* (de Oliveira & Jones, 2023), published by Cambridge University Press, uses the notion of culturally sustaining teaching practices to provide examples from pedagogy-informed research studies in early (K-3) and intermediate (4-5) grades. Both books combine de Oliveira's 30 years of research in K-12 classrooms.



A former K-12 ESOL teacher, de Oliveira is past president of TESOL International Association, the largest international organization for teachers of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL).

FACULTY/STAFF

News

Wilkerson Celebrated with Multicultural Awards

Faith Wilkerson, Ed.D., received two honors during the 2023 VCU Presidential Awards for the Community Multicultural Enrichment (PACME) program in April.

Wilkerson was presented the Riese-Melton Award, which is the capstone honor for the Presidential Awards for Community Multicultural Enrichment (PACME) at VCU. She also received the President's Inclusive Excellence Lifetime Achievement Award.

Wilkerson came to VCU in 2000, earned three degrees and began working for the university.

After serving in the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs for many years, she moved to the Minority Educators Recruitment, Retention and Equity Center, which recruits and retains Black educators through teacher residency programs to improve student outcomes. Wilkerson is now senior administrator for community engagement and inclusive excellence at the Center for Teacher Leadership.

“Dr. Wilkerson has been the epitome of what the university represents through its strategic plan and diversity initiatives.”

– **Fotis Sotiropoulos**, Ph.D,
VCU Provost

PACME recognizes VCU individuals and groups for making significant contributions to promote civility, build community, establish cross-cultural initiatives, advocate equity and nurture a welcoming and inclusive environment.





Chang and Hinchey Receive Ruch Award for Teaching Excellence

In December of 2022, **Kaitlin Hinchey**, Ph.D., assistant professor of counselor education, and in May of 2023, **Chi-Ning “Nick” Chang**, Ph.D., assistant professor of foundations of education, were honored with the Charles P. Ruch Award for Excellence in Teaching. The award recognizes faculty who consistently demonstrate exceptional teaching methods that motivate and engage students.



Hinchey is known for her student-centered approach to teaching and her high level of knowledge and creativity. Chang is noted for his compelling and accessible teaching style, he skillfully breaks down complex concepts, making them relatable and understandable to students of varying levels.

Wetzel Receives VCU Professional Integrity Award

Angie Wetzel, Ph.D., director of the school’s Office of Data Analytics, received the university’s 2023 Professional Integrity Award. Wetzel has served in this role since 2011, providing critical insights that help us continually improve the quality and impact of our programs.



Wetzel was described by a nominator as having the “work ethic, dedication, trustworthiness and integrity combined to make her one of the most trusted, admired and well-liked individuals in the School of Education.”

Her skills are widely appreciated, as noted by another nominator: “Angie’s leadership, integrity and honesty serve as a bridge that fosters schoolwide trust and allows opportunities for positive change. She is a creative problem-solver who can always be relied upon to combine big-picture systems thinking with detailed data to make recommendations.”

“She is a creative problem-solver who can always be relied upon to combine big-picture systems thinking with detailed data to make recommendations.”

— Award Nominator

MAKING NEWS

Faculty & Students

Undeniable Faculty Expertise

Each year, national, regional and local news outlets turn to our School of Education faculty members for their expertise on a range of topics related to education disciplines, mainly as they connect to emerging news and trends. Our faculty spoke with dozens of print, digital and broadcast outlets — and here are a few highlights:

CBS Reports, April 13, 2023



"It's not the student's job to set the boundaries. We're supposed to be teaching them the boundaries. These are kids. It's our job to teach them about the world and how to be safe; it's not their job to try to figure out how to be safe. There's no consent in schools — teachers

are the boss, students have to do what the teachers say. There's no equality. There's the teacher and the student, and it's a hierarchy."



Charol Shakeshaft, Ph.D., professor of educational leadership, speaking from her research on the prevention of educator sexual misconduct.

"

To paraphrase the great Jay-Z, school leaders have 99 problems, but NAEP scores ain't one.

Jon Becker
Education Week

Education Week, June 27, 2023

"To paraphrase the great Jay-Z, school leaders have 99 problems, but NAEP scores ain't one."

Jonathan D. Becker, J.D., Ph.D., associate professor of educational leadership, on challenges facing today's administrators.



Fortune | Education, September 22, 2022

"Our goal is to prepare educators to be better leaders. Our grad students might be teachers in the classroom who want to be principals in their schools, or we might have principals who want to advance to higher levels in district administration."

Kimberly M. Bridges, Ed.L.D., co-coordinator of the Ed.D. in Leadership program and assistant professor, on the value of an Ed.D. degree.



Students Honored for Academic Accomplishments at Commencement



Beth Paris, Ph.D. in education with a concentration in educational leadership, policy and justice, received the 2023 Distinguished Dissertation Award. Paris' dissertation, "Resident Assistants and Title IX: Perceptions, Beliefs and Experiences Impacting RA Help-Seeking Behavior," was grounded in Paris' experience as a former residence life professional and current Title IX investigator. Paris' work sheds light on the challenges faced by RAs who are survivors of sexual misconduct.

Katherine Hansen, Ed.D., **Heather Sadowski**, Ed.D., and **Martha Tomlin**, Ed.D., from the Department of Educational Leadership, were presented the 2023 Outstanding Capstone Project Award. "United We Stand: A Case Study about Increasing Equity in the Capacity Building Grant Funding Process for United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg" tackled systemic racism in grant funding within the nonprofit sector. The project focused on driving change by building bridges among small, emergent grassroots organizations. Their comprehensive plan described how the United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg could foster equitable access, improve relationships and dismantle racism within the grant funding process.



GRADUATES 2022-2023

38
Baccalaureate
Degrees

139
Master's
Degrees

64
Doctoral
Degrees

51
Post-
Baccalaureate
Certificates

26
Post-Master's
Certificates

17,825 TOTAL ALUMS
since the School of Education opened in 1964



Third-Generation Educator Helps Students Find Their Voice

For the past two generations, seeing someone from the Baugh family on the playground or in the classroom has been a common sight in Richmond Public Schools. But when **Darryl Baugh, Jr.**, graduated from high school, he wasn't sure he was cut out to follow in his father and grandfather's footsteps.

A few years in community college, a break from his education and a global pandemic later, Baugh completed his B.S. in special education and teaching in May to become a third-generation educator.

"One quote I've always told myself is: 'Each day is a day to learn something new,'" Baugh said. "Going through VCU, I've lived by that, and, as a teacher, I'm living by that. When we're in the classroom in college or in the classroom teaching, the kids teach you just as much as you're teaching them."

When he returned to his education, Baugh became a registered behavior technician, working with and tutoring students in special education courses at schools around Richmond. "That's where I found my passion," Baugh said. "I was that person walking around playing a guitar [for the students]. I used to sing songs and stuff like that. ... From there, I was like, 'I think I want to go to school for teaching.'"

After first enrolling at VCU in 2017, classes went virtual in 2020 as the pandemic arrived, and the social reckoning that followed the killing of George Floyd had Baugh rethinking his goals.

"I began thinking about all the Black and Brown boys that I could impact as an educator," he said. "That was my push. A lot of the work that I did within the program related to racial-ethnic minoritized people. I wrote research papers

about Brown v. Board of Education and how we still have a long way to go."

Baugh's passion for empowering students continued as he joined the inaugural Ruth Harris Scholars Program in 2022. That trained him to address the needs of students struggling with reading, spelling and writing, which supported his professional and personal interest in working with students on their emerging language skills.

It was a learning experience for Baugh before student-teaching during his last semester at Blackwell Elementary School, where he really found his stride.

"I had my microphone, and I had my turntables in there, and one of the kids who's emerging in language, she started rapping on beat," Baugh said. "She took the microphone from me, and she just started spitting. She wasn't saying any words, but what she was saying was on beat. That in itself was impressive because that means she can listen, and she can understand what's happening."

Moments like those helped Baugh realize the power he had to help his students find their voice.

"I want to work at a Title I or inner-city school. I always said I want to work somewhere where I'm needed and appreciated — I want to be somewhere where I can help make a difference," Baugh said. "But the goal is definitely to become a special ed teacher. ... I really want to teach because I've been in school and I'm like, 'I've got all the knowledge, all of the content.' Now I've got to go use it."

Students Serve as Inaugural Ruth Harris Scholars

A seven-student cohort served as the first Ruth Harris Scholars during the past academic year. The new program is part of a renewed emphasis and attention to the field of language learning/reading disabilities with a focus on dyslexia. The goal is to prepare graduates with tailored training to help schoolchildren with dyslexia and language learning disabilities succeed based on the structured literacy Orton-Gillingham approach.

"This training complements their VCU coursework and offers a unique experience for mentorship and hands-on application of their training," said **Lisa Cipolletti**, M.Ed., assistant professor and elementary program chair in the Department of Teaching and Learning. "The teacher-candidates graduate with the training on their resume, increasing their effectiveness as educators and their marketable skills."

Students also receive scholarship money when selected for the competitive program in their junior or senior years. The Ruth Harris Scholars are funded by the **Ruth Harris Professorship**, which was established in 2010 and funded by an endowment from Dr. Louis and Mrs. Ruth Harris.

Multicultural Leadership Earns Recognition for Student

Korinthia "Kori" Nicolai received the student honor during VCU's 2023 Presidential Awards for Community Multicultural Enrichment, presented in the spring. Nicolai, president of the **VCU School of Education Holmes Scholars**, is a doctoral student concentrating in educational psychology.

At VCU, Nicolai has built community, established cross-cultural initiatives, advocated for equity, and nurtured a welcoming and inclusive environment. Nicolai also is a national leader in conversations about race and racism and holds leadership roles in the American Psychological Association and the American Educational Research Association.



ALUMNIS

GLEN LEA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Shaping Young Minds Close to Home

In his role as principal, **James A. Gordon**, M.Ed., helped five elementary students earn full scholarships to Virginia Union University — earning a nod from the Walt Disney Company as a “Magic Maker” in 2021. VCU School of Education’s **Donte Sharpe**, academic advisor, nominated Gordon for the award. When Disney and ABC’s Good Morning America called Sharpe with the good news, they said that Sharpe’s essay about Gordon stood out from the tens of thousands of other nominations.

Now principal at Glen Lea Elementary School in Henrico County, Virginia, Gordon, who earned his educational leadership degree here in 2006, remains devoted to helping underserved youth in Metro Richmond.

On becoming a teacher: His mom couldn’t afford to finish teacher training at Virginia Union, so she went to community college and became a nurse. Gordon said he’s “fulfilling my mom’s dream. That is why I have worked with students from

economically challenged backgrounds. Glen Lea has 88% poverty; that means more than eight out of 10 scholars come from an impoverished or economically disadvantaged background. But they still have so much potential!”

On earning his master's degree at VCU:

Teaching sparked an interest in becoming an administrator, spending four years in Richmond before moving to the Henrico post. "I had the opportunity to have some great mentors along the way. They mentored me and helped to grow me," said Gordon.

On increasing the number of Black men in education:

It starts with being visible and present. "I have students here who approach me and say they want to be a principal one day. I don't take any credit for that," he said. One student who also wears locks told Gordon he wanted to portray the principal in a school program. "He said he wanted to be a principal. But he looks like me. They need to see it."

On helping Black teachers explore principal roles:

Gordon served on a group, funded by the Henrico Education Foundation, aimed at supporting African American males, but open to other minorities. "We did sessions on dressing for an interview, how to nail the interview, how to build a positive climate as a principal," he said. "We actually had people who got assistant principal gigs because of it."

On the satisfaction of being in education:

"I love to connect with the students and fellas. I love to connect with families. We must let the teachers know that we love them," said Gordon.

On where he sees himself in five or 10 years:

Gordon might be back in Oliver Hall as a professor. "I want to teach the things you don't learn in a book about how to be an educator," he said. "You need to know how to make connections and build relationships. You need to know how to navigate politics, how to initiate conversations. That happens everywhere."



Photo: WRIC-TV ABC 8

Education Graduate Named Richmond Teacher of the Year

Christal Corey, a science teacher at Franklin Military Academy, has assembled a long list of credentials in a relatively young career. Most recently, she added the accolade of Richmond Public Schools' Teacher of the Year for 2023. At the School of Education, she participated in the RTR teacher residency with Cohort 4, and then trained three future teachers in her classroom.

Corey comes from a long line of educators, as her mother, father and sister also have worked with the city school system. "I watched my dad work and saw the impact on students," Corey told the Richmond Free Press. "I wanted to be able to give that to my community and wanted to help steer students in the right direction."

MORE THAN 500

working in Virginia's Title I schools (public schools which receive federal funding to support high-poverty students).

School of Education graduates from the past three years are

COMMUNITY! initiatives

VCU Partners with Mexican and Colombian Schools to Boost STEM Education

Students from VCU and universities in Colombia and Mexico strengthened their STEM education during the summer of 2022 while exploring new cultures.



The program, **“Building a Collaborative, Innovative and Impactful STEM and Language Training Exchange Program Through Virtual and Study Abroad Partnerships,”** started with online instruction before students completed a weeklong campus visit at the three institutions.

Twelve VCU students — 11 of them from the School of Education — joined with 12 from the Universidad de Guadalajara (UDeG) in Mexico and Universidad El Bosque (UEB) in Colombia.

The School of Education and VCU’s Global Education Office secured a supporting program grant from the 100,000 Strong in Americas Innovation Fund, which emphasizes STEM and language development programs.

During their visit to Richmond, UDeG and UEB students had the opportunity to learn about the U.S. education system, as well as the cultural exchange.

Educational instruction, for example, included developing and teaching a class for children ages 2 to 5 at the School of Education’s Child Development Center. The VCU students then spent a week each in Mexico and Colombia during July 2022.

STEM



COMMUNITY! initiatives

Lee Bae Receives Prestigious Snow Award

In recognition of her early contributions to educational psychology, **Christine Lee Bae**, Ph.D., associate professor of foundations of education and affiliate faculty in the Department of Psychology, received the prestigious Richard E. Snow Award in fall 2022. The American Psychological Association's Division 15, which focuses on educational psychology, presents the annual award to an impactful scholar who completed doctoral work within the past 10 years.

"Partnering with science educators over the past 10 years has been and continues to be powerful for my teams to deeply understand and find solutions that address complex challenges in public schools," said Lee Bae, who also is an associate editor of the journal *Contemporary Educational Psychology*. "My



commitment to education for all students is rooted in my grandmother's belief that school can be a place to unlock new possibilities."

Lee Bae's research draws on sociocultural frameworks, engagement and motivation theories, and research-partnership models to make science engaging and relevant to students. Through the School of Education's Discourse and Learning Lab, Lee Bae and her team of postdocs and graduate students partner with Richmond and Chesterfield County public schools to expand opportunities for science learning in urban classrooms. She is midway through a National Science Foundation CAREER project, working with science teachers to develop and implement science talk activities related to critical topics such as the global pandemic and climate change.



Photo: Contributed photo

STEM



Photo: Contributed photo

Geometry Camp Makes Math Meaningful for Middle Schoolers

More than 40 middle-school students gathered in June 2023 for VCU Geometry Camp — held in VCU’s new STEM Building — to learn about symmetry, surfaces and knots.

The weeklong summer day camp was organized by the School of Education faculty and the Math Department in the College of Humanities and Sciences. The camp was made possible by a VCU Breakthroughs Fund grant, which supports transdisciplinary research and innovative approaches to societal challenges. Parents who enrolled their children agreed to participate in the research study, which focuses on the role of experiential activities in geometry education. Middle school is when struggles with mathematics can begin to escalate.

The camp, which ran from June 12-16, presented each of the three topics with hands-on learning activities. For example, students used pipe cleaners to investigate braids, created Platonic polyhedra out of paper, practiced drafting regular polygons using math compasses and straightedges. In another exercise students explored the role of symmetry in art by cutting and punching holes in twisted, rolled paper ribbons.

Christine Lee Bae, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Foundations of Education, is the School of Education faculty member on the project. Her research topics include engagement, motivation, and science teaching and learning.

CENTERS



Centers Connect VCU Faculty, Students with Practice

Eight affiliated centers and institutes connect School of Education students and faculty to the field of practice. Providing services to Virginians, our centers reach every corner of the state and beyond through research programs, training, resources and events.

Center for Innovation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Education (CISTEME)

Dedicated to cultivating a lifelong passion for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) among K-12 students in Central Virginia, CISTEME fosters a deep-seated passion for these subjects. Beyond building careers, its mission is constructing a brighter, more equitable world where opportunities are boundless and dreams are within reach.

Center for Teacher Leadership (CTL)

By advancing the concept of teachers as change agents, the CTL promotes and supports teacher leadership to improve teaching and learning. The high-quality training develops passionate, influential leaders, and promotes the sharing of teachers' knowledge, experience and insight with policymakers and other stakeholders.



Child Development Center (CDC)

With more than 100 years of history, the CDC is a full-day, inclusive young children's program that provides high-quality care and education. CDC serves as a learning lab for student pre-service experiences, faculty research, and community outreach and education.

Institute for Collaborative Research and Evaluation (ICRE)

ICRE improves outcomes for individuals, organizations and communities through its comprehensive research and evaluation services. As an extension of the Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium (MERC), ICRE provides support for nonprofit organizations, PK-12 school districts, private schools, governmental agencies, and institutions of higher education. ICRE's unique approach combines rigorous methodologies with collaborative stakeholder engagement, leading projects that address critical issues in education and community development.

Projects span areas such as teacher residency models, career pathways, student mental health and more, many with national funding from the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education.

International Educational Studies Center (IESC)

The IESC provides various educational and cultural opportunities for scholars, educators and students worldwide to explore foundational and culturally meaningful topics in education and related fields. The IESC strives for an educational community that encourages dynamic intellectual dialogues among all stakeholders responsible for educating individuals from every background.

Partnership for People with Disabilities (PPD)

The PPD is Virginia's federally-designated University Center for Excellence in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Operating 48 projects across various domains – including community living, early intervention, education and health – PPD empowers individuals with disabilities and their families to lead self-determined lives.

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC)

The RRTC focuses on transition and employment for persons with disabilities. Through its research, training and technical assistance, direct service, and dissemination activities, RRTC profoundly influences policy, practice and outcomes at both state and national levels.

Family & Community Empowerment Center (FCEC)

Launched in 2023, the FCEC brings together scholars from many backgrounds with the goal to empower community members, particularly individuals who have been historically marginalized, through collaborative action and mental health support. The FCEC provides services and programming, including counseling, with the goal to develop well-being and peace of mind with individuals, families, and communities.

CENTERS

Partnering with Communities to Drive Innovation

With more than \$23.7 million in new and continuing grants and contracts in FY23, the **Rehabilitation Research and Training Center** spearheaded multiple projects, including the Autism Center for Education, Business Connections and more. These projects improved the quality of life, community engagement and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. Through various courses, webcasts, technical assistance and professional development opportunities, the RRTC served more than 192,107 people, produced 30 peer-reviewed journal publications and one book chapter.

This year, the **Partnership for People with Disabilities** achieved several milestones, starting with maintaining its status as a university-level research center. They also trained more than 20,000 individuals through University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education initiatives and provided essential support to 700 families, with a significant focus on cultural and ethnic diversity. Their scholarly output included 21 peer-reviewed journal publications and one book chapter. Impressively, the Partnership was awarded \$11.3 million in new and continuing grants and contracts for FY23.

Parthenia Dinora, Ph.D., executive director of the Partnership for People with Disabilities, attended the “Communities in Action: Building a Better Virginia” at the White House in June. Dinora shared work and initiatives that address the unique needs of people with disabilities and their families with leaders and policymakers.



Photo: Kevin Morley, VCU Enterprise Marketing and Communications

In 2023, the **Center for Innovation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Education** hosted the Metro Richmond Science and Engineering Fair, sending winners to prestigious international competitions. VCU hosted the STEM Leadership Summit, generating recommendations for K-12 STEM education in cooperation with other Virginia universities. Also, in 2023, astronaut Leland Melvin encouraged 100 middle and high school students at the Student Innovation Series CS Showcase, highlighting the tech-based solutions that students delivered to real-world challenges.



Richmond Teacher Residency



Residency Program Prepares Better Teachers

Our **Center for Teacher Leadership's RTR Teacher Residency Program** recruits, trains, supports and retains teachers and school leaders in Virginia. The program is the most extensive and longest-standing teacher residency program in the state.

RTR pairs teacher trainees with mentor teachers in the classroom for one year. A 2020 evaluation found that RTR-trained teachers are better prepared, better reflect student demographics and have significantly higher retention rates; simultaneously, their students score higher on English, math and social studies end-of-year tests.

Over the past 13 years, RTR has generated more than \$35 million in support from federal and state agencies, individual school divisions, and local philanthropic organizations. In June, U.S. Sens. Mark R. Warner and Tim Kaine

of Virginia announced \$1.5 million in federal funding, through the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence Program, to RTR to address teacher shortages.

In exchange for a stipend covering the cost of their academic degree, pre-service teachers commit to teaching in high-needs schools for three years after completing the RTR program. The RTR Teacher Residency Program operates in 17 partner school districts across Virginia. RTR has prepared 314 teachers to work in high-needs schools and trained more than 239 mentors.

The **VCU x CodeRVA Lab School** — a joint venture project between the RTR Teacher Residency Program and CodeRVA Regional High School serving Greater Richmond — was approved by the Virginia Department of Education. Look for more updates in 2024.



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