



VCU offense stalls in A-10 championship loss

A-10 EXCLUSIVE
SPORTS SECTION

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Despite a run to get back into the contest late in the game, the Rams could not overcome a large deficit to clinch their second straight A-10 championship.

BRYANT DRAYTON
Sports Editor

SARAH KING
Executive Editor

VCU's lack of offensive tempo put an abrupt halt to head coach Will Wade's dream scenario of accomplishing an Atlantic 10 tournament title in his first championship game against Saint Joseph's Sunday. The Hawks defeated VCU, the reigning A-10 tournament champions, in an 87-74 game at the Barclay's Center in Brooklyn — a tough conclusion to VCU's wins against UMass in the Friday quarterfinals and Davidson in the semis on Saturday. "Our guys have fought all year," Wade said. "To St. Joe's credit, they showed up ready to go." The Hawks came out firing, led by Isaiah Miles and DeAndre' Bem-bry. The St. Joe's offense shot 64.8 percent from the field, connecting on 35-54 shot attempts. VCU's typically-stingy defense couldn't find an effective answer to stopping the two A-10 studs. "Miles and Bem-bry were phenomenal tonight, Wade said. "They absolutely killed us." Miles registered 26 points and 12 rebounds on the afternoon. The 6-foot-7 athletic forward was named the most outstanding player of the tournament. His frontcourt partner Bem-bry, went on to tally 30 points, five rebounds and four assist, and

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OPINION

The Complexities of Casting A Vote

SIONA PETEROUS
Contributing Columnist

It's easy to get carried away in the drama of certain demagogue figures or intrigued by a Democratic-Socialist. But for now, let's focus on the most crucial part of any democratic election: voting. More specifically, the prevalence of increasingly restrictive voting regulations. In thirty-three states, a form of identification is required in order to vote or receive a ballot for an election. The current Voter ID laws however, violate the Voting Right Acts creating an unconstitutional poll tax and discrimination against minorities. Judge Catharina Haynes from the Fifth Circuit stated at a panel discussion, "The State's stated purpose in passing SB 14 centered on protection of the sanctity of voting, avoiding voter fraud, and promoting public confidence in the voting process... We recognize the charged nature of

accusations of racism, particularly against a legislative body, but we also recognize the sad truth that racism continues to exist in our modern American society despite years of laws designed to eradicate it." Lawmakers like Hayes claim these regulations are crucial in preventing voter fraud. This could make sense, except for the fact that there is practically no proof of significant voter fraud in U.S. elections. As preliminary elections take place before the November election, the fear is that the use of these "protective" voting laws will mainly impact the political participation of minorities who traditionally vote in favor of the Democratic party. I agree with the use of a basic photo ID or a provisional ballot if one needs more time to get a photo ID. I am also aware that some issues, like homelessness or lack of public transportation on

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ILLUSTRATION BY JIAQI ZHOU

Richmond supports their own: Lucy Dacus packs Broadberry

AUSTIN WALKER
Spectrum Editor

The sultry Lucy Dacus took the Broadberry stage on March 4 to kick off her tour and the release of her debut album "No Burden." Hundreds of excited faces eagerly waited for Dacus to drop the first beat of her nine-track album. This attention is a long time coming for this born-and-raised Richmonder, who has been performing throughout the city for years. Garnering praise from NPR, Pitchfork and other prominent publications, Dacus began her latest tour on March 7. Her band will be making stops everywhere from Toronto to Idaho, includ-

ing a performance at the South by Southwest Music Festival in Austin, Texas. At the start of this momentous night, Dacus stood front row in the crowd as her friends and opening band Spooky Cool played a 45-minute set. She went backstage as they were followed by the big-noise band Rikki Shay. Both groups gave a big shout-out to Dacus for the invitation. "It was a next level moment," Dacus said. "I thought I had a concept of how many people would be there at the album release but when I got on the stage it was double what I thought." Many of the performers' friends and family were there cheering Dacus on as she took the stage. At one point, someone

shouted from the crowd that she had "made it." "People have said that at every next thing," Dacus said. "We had made it to that point, we're making it to another point and now we had made it our full-time job." Dacus chuckled and said she wouldn't feel like she had "made it" until she had a bobblehead of herself. Still, she said she feels as though she and the band have made serious progress. "I'm super happy with how everything is going," Dacus said. "There's a lot of stuff that we haven't even announced yet that blows my mind." Dacus' two-month tour is the longest of her career, as well as some of her bandmates, includ-

ing bassist Tristan Fisher. "It's definitely a privilege to be here," Fisher said. "I'm very aware of what a great opportunity this is and even back in high school, before Lucy was even really doing anything with her music, I never really thought she was going to take it to this level." Fisher, like many of the other members of the band, was familiar with Dacus before joining forces with her. Before his recruitment, Fisher was working extensively with Jack Maycock of Richmond band Manatree. Fisher said that working with the singer-songwriter has been different than anything he's done in the past.

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Students arrested in coal ash wastewater protest

JOE JOHNSON
Contributing Writer

While protesting the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's recent approvals of wastewater permits to Dominion Virginia Power, 17 students were charged with trespassing on state property. On March 7 at around 10 a.m. student activists from the Virginia Student Environmental Coalition staged a sit-in at the VDEQ headquarters in Richmond. Members of the Coalition came from several Virginia colleges, including The University of Virginia, The University of Mary Washington, The College of William & Mary, Virginia Tech and Virginia Commonwealth University. The Richmond Police Department gave the protesters an ultimatum: leave by 1p.m., or be arrested. The department confirmed that 17 students who refused to leave were charged with misdemeanor trespassing, which can carry a year in jail, or a fine of \$2,500. "As students, we fight for fossil fuel divestment while simultaneously working to prevent Dominion from further endangering our



Students from various colleges attended a protest at the DEQ headquarters on March 7.

safety," said VCU junior sociology major Aaron Tabb. Protesters in VDEQ's lobby demanded that Director Dave Paylor repeal the permits and agree to reissue them only after performing an investigation of the alleged 2015 dumping of untreated industrial wastewater into Quantico Creek in Prince William County.

In addition to an investigation, the activists urged that a party separate from VDEQ be in charge of water monitoring in order to ensure that Dominion abides by the standards set in place by the Clean Water Act, which limits the levels of pollutants that are allowed to be dumped into waterways. "If David Paylor cannot adequately meet the health and safety

needs of Virginia residents, then he is not fulfilling his role as DEQ Director, and we are prepared to demand his resignation," said Kendall King, Virginia Student Environmental Coalition Chair. VDEQ recently approved the renewal of permits held by Dominion that allow the release of coolant water from power plant

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PHOTO BY DANIEL ARANGO



In this section:
Dominion protest. VCU housing. Children’s pavilion. Deadliest city. Study abroad. Lead pipes. Insurance conference.

AP briefs
NATIONAL

Trump’s rough handling of rally dissenters stirs questions

To Rakeem Jones, flanked on all sides by uniformed sheriff’s deputies, it was more than just the shock of being ejected from a political rally for Donald Trump. The black man felt as if he was being transported back in time.

“It’s not the America they portray on TV,” the 26-year-old said, the day after he was wrestled to the ground by officers and punched in the face during the campaign event in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

But to friend Ronnie Rouse, who caught the incident on video, it was “totally American.”

“This is the America everybody wants to ignore,” the music producer told The Associated Press Thursday. “This is the America, when people tell you, ‘Oh, racism doesn’t exist.’ It’s here.”

What should we make of scenes like this Wednesday evening at Crown Coliseum?

They have become a regular thing at Trump rallies, and while security experts say Trump has every right to quash dissent at events he’s paying for, they say the Republican front-runner is playing with fire by not tamping down uncivil behavior and assault.

Nancy and Ronald Reagan, inseparable in life, together again

Nancy Reagan called her husband’s presidential library “the shining city on the hill,” using a phrase that President Reagan had borrowed from history to describe his aspirations for the nation.

Inseparable in life, they will be reunited again on that hilltop, side by side.

The former first lady will be buried beside her “Ronnie” Friday at the library they loved, after being mourned and celebrated by family and hundreds of friends from Hollywood, Washington and beyond in a private service.

She was “just a beautiful lady,” said John Sandoval, who with his wife, mother and infant daughter joined a crowd of over 1,000 Thursday at the library to see the flower-draped casket.

“I think it was just the unity they shared through his governorship, through his presidency, that brought people together,” Sandoval added.

Forecasters warned that Thursday’s brilliant skies could be replaced by thunderstorms and wind. A tent was erected over the site of the service.

US-Pennsylvania-Congressman Indicted

New lawyers for indicted U.S. Rep. Chaka Fattah are expected to ask a judge to throw out a corruption case set to go to trial in May.

The 11-term Philadelphia Democrat is accused of accepting bribes and misusing campaign funds and charitable grants to enrich his family and friends.

He has pleaded not guilty and is running for another term. Several Democratic challengers have jumped into the April 26 primary to try to unseat him.

Fattah has brought in big firm lawyers to take over for a small firm that said it could not finance the case when Fattah stopped making payments.

Fattah says he’s focused on campaign fundraising.

The new lawyers set to appear Friday are Mark Lee, Bruce Merenstein and Samuel Silver of Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis.

LOCAL

Police: Fugitive fatally shot in encounter with officers

Police in Virginia say a fugitive described in an alert as armed and dangerous was fatally shot when officers confronted him.

Norfolk police spokeswoman Cpl. Melinda Wray says two officers on routine patrol around 4 a.m. Friday spotted a man walking in the road. She says they confirmed the man was a wanted fugitive and an alert described him as armed and dangerous.

Wray says when officers confronted the man, at least one officer fired, striking and killing the man. She didn’t know what prompted the shooting or whether the man had a weapon. The officers weren’t injured.

Wray says the officers were wearing body cameras but she didn’t know if they were activated. She did not know the race of the man or the officers.

State Del. Glenn Davis to run for lieutenant governor

Republican Del. Glenn Davis is running for lieutenant governor in Virginia.

The former Virginia Beach councilman announced Thursday he’s running to “turn-around” the state’s economy.

Davis joins a growing field. State Sens. Jill Vogel and Bryce Reeves have already announced their bid to be the Republican nominee for lieutenant governor in the 2017 election.

Briefs by Associated Press



A protestor displays an obscene gesture while holding the fine issued to him by the Richmond Police Department for trespassing during a sit-in.

Environmental groups seek second meeting on Dominion Coal Ash Permits

ANDREW CRIDER
Print News Editor

The State Department of Environmental Quality will host a second meeting to discuss coal ash permits after violent storms interrupted a meeting in late February.

The permit in question, Permit 609, would discuss a proposed landfill for coal ash waste. The proposed landfill, known as the Chesterfield Power Station FFCP Management Facility, would be forced to comply with federal solid waste rules. The rules set by the EPA define how the coal ash landfills must be enclosed and separated from land to prevent coal ash from seeping into the groundwater supply.

The Virginia Peoples Climate, a chapter of a larger environmental organization known as the Blue Ridge Environmental Defence League, submitted a letter to the DEQ requesting an additional hearing to discuss the permits issued to Dominion earlier this year.

No ACP, an organization against Dominion Resources Inc, recently joined VPC in this endeavor.

“We are requesting that an additional public hearing be scheduled prior to the close of public comments and any final decision on this permit,” said Emeline Phipps, member of the BREDL, in his letter to the DEQ.

Coal ash waste is the byprod-

uct of burning coal to produce power. It contains chemicals such as lead, arsenic and other toxins that can be harmful to human and environmental life.

The DEQ will host meetings to give the public an opportunity to voice concerns about the permit. The meeting for Permit 609 was scheduled Wednesday Feb. 24. On that day, violent storms killed four people in Southeastern Virginia.

We called the library again and were informed by library staff that the public hearing was being postponed because hardly anyone from the public had arrived.

— WHITNEY WHITING

“Many people who were planning to attend the hearing were deterred due to these very obvious safety concerns,” Phipps said.

According to Phipps, the meeting was scheduled to be held at the Chesterfield County Public Library. However, after the state of emergency was declared by Governor Terry McAuliffe, Phipps said that citizens who were on their way to the meeting were misinformed by library staff that the hearing

had been postponed.

According to the letter, Justin Miller, land protection manager and permit writer, had acknowledged a miscommunication with the library staff prior to the meeting.

“We were just a few miles from the library when our phones started alerting us to take shelter immediately,” said Whitney Whiting, community organizer for the BREDL. “We called the library again and were informed by library staff that the public hearing was being postponed because hardly anyone from the public had arrived.”

After the phone call, Whiting spoke with an acquaintance who was at the meeting who informed her the meeting went on as scheduled.

According to an email from Bill Hayden of the Public Affairs Office for the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the DEQ has scheduled a second public hearing on Dominion’s application for a coal ash landfill at the Chesterfield power station.

“This is not for discharging coal ash wastewater. Rather, it is for disposal of coal ash in a solid waste landfill,” Hayden said.

This hearing is in addition to the one held Feb. 24 when the tornado warning occurred. Four people spoke at that meeting in opposition to the permit.

Citizens previously had until March 10 to voice concerns

about the permit before the permit can be issued. Now the public will have until March 31 to offer comment.

This is not the first permit issue the DEQ has faced this year. In January, The DEQ received public outcry and protest over permits that would allow Dominion to dump coal ash wastewater into the James River.

Coal ash waste water is the product of mixing solid coal ash debris into water for storage. There are 11 coal ash ponds in Virginia that must be drained in order to meet new federal regulations implemented by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Currently, Dominion plans to dump the waste water into Virginia’s waterways before excavating the coal ash and placing it into sealed landfills, like the one planned in Chesterfield. Dominion has also promised to chemically treat the wastewater before dumping it into the James.

Bill Hayden, spokesperson for the DEQ, said the DEQ will amend permits based on public criticism if the criticism is significant.

“If we get significant public comment, we can make changes to the permit,” Hayden said.

“DEQ looks at the application and sees how well its adheres to the laws and regulations, we hold public hearings, we have a public comment period, and we draft the permit.”

17 students charged with trespassing

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condensers into the James River and Quantico Creek. Embedded in the permit is Dominion’s plans for compliance to a recently updated Environmental Protection Agency regulation that requires on site coal ash retention ponds to be drained and filled in.

The permit’s requirements allow Dominion to drain the water from coal ash ponds and place it into the river system. Protesters shared their concerns about the possibility of oversight or abuse of the permit standards.

“David Paylor can’t keep his story straight regarding the wastewater dumping that took place last summer. If this is because he is covering for Dominion’s illegal activities, then how can we trust him to make future decisions regarding our environmental safety?” said UMW sophomore, Sarah Kinzer. “If this is not the case, then why is he failing to address the issue now.”

Despite their demands, the activists were not able to speak with Paylor.

The DEQ could not be reached for comment.

Update: according to multiple sources, VDEQ Director David Paylor has asked to meet with members of VSEC. No additional details were given.

VCU Housing renovations will displace hundreds of freshmen

SOPHIA BELLETTI
Staff Writer

Gladding Residence Center I and II, two student housing facilities used mostly by freshman, will close for construction in the fall and are expected to reopen in 2018.

Curtis Erwin, Executive Director of Residential Life and Housing said the main goals of the master plan are to address the quality of GRC I and II and ensure all freshmen have housing accommodations on the Monroe Park Campus.

Currently, more than 400 freshmen live on the Medical campus in the Cabaniss and low rise residence halls located in downtown Richmond. These students must commute to the Monroe Park Campus by the campus connector bus system.

“The closer you live to the center of campus is better for freshmen and they’re more engaged,” Erwin said. “The type of facility matters to freshmen, so traditional and semi-suite is where we want all our freshmen to live if at all possible.”

According to fall 2014 data,

freshmen and sophomores who live on campus have a higher GPA than those who live off campus.

Design and site plans are due to the Board of Visitors later this spring, along with the operating agreement.

857 beds will be lost during the two year reconstruction. During that time, Cary and Belvidere, which is currently only open to upperclassmen, will become a freshman residence hall.

In addition, Ackell, West Grace South and Grace and Broad will also house freshmen.

Once the renovation of the GRC I and II buildings are complete, these dormitories will return to being upperclassmen-exclusive dormitories.

After the renovations are complete, half of the rooms in GRC I and II will be suites that will include traditional double rooms with a common area and a shared restroom. The other half will be semi-suites, which will have bathrooms within the unit that are shared between two rooms.

The renovations are still in design, however the new building will house 1,500 beds and is



The renovations are scheduled to begin next year, and will be completed in the fall of 2018.

estimated to be 12 stories high.

The construction of GRC I and II is the first phase of the \$100 million VCU Housing Master Plan, which is a 50-year agreement with a private developer.

In 2014, VCU’s Department of Residential Life and Housing

developed a Housing Master Plan for the Monroe Park Campus and MCV Campus. An agreement allowing American Campus Communities to proceed with preliminary development planning was approved Feb. 29 by the executive committee of VCU’s

Board of Visitors.

Under the public-private partnership agreement with the private developer, VCU will own the land; the company will pay construction costs and own the new residence halls for 50 years. Building ownership will then revert back to VCU.

Children’s Pavilion consolidates pediatric care

SARAH KING
Executive Editor

Brianna Burke was one of the youngest people at a ceremony outside a new facility of the Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU on Wednesday – but the gregarious 10-year-old undoubtedly had one of the most important jobs.

Alongside Gov. Terry McAuliffe, VCU President Michael Rao and other public officials, Brianna unabashedly cut the pink ribbon at the grand opening of the Children’s Pavilion at 1000 E. Broad St.

The \$200 million, 15-story facility boasts 640,000 square feet, 83 exam rooms and 600 parking spaces. It will have more than 350 doctors, nurses and other experts specializing in the care of young patients. The pavilion will open to children and families on March 21.

“It was awesome,” Brianna said grinning after the ceremony. She especially likes the pavilion’s playful features, such as an interactive floor and kid-friendly lighting.

“When you’re in the waiting room, you can step on the fish and they’ll run away,” Brianna said. “And there are chandeliers you can bang on and they make music. And there’s an outside part, and lots of windows and really big comfy chairs in the infusion room.”

The Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU is a network of facilities, some located on Brook Road in North Richmond and others on the VCU Medical Center campus downtown. The Children’s Pavilion, five years in the planning, is the newest part of that network. The facilities are part of VCU Hospitals, the teaching hospitals associated with the

Medical Center.

John Duval, the chief executive officer of VCU Hospitals, said the vision for the pavilion was informed by a changing health-care landscape. Experts saw that the demand for outpatient children’s health services which make up 10 percent of all pediatric care has outpaced the need for inpatient care.

The pavilion is divided into more than ten clinical and diagnostic pods, each specializing in a different area of care. The facility consolidates a number of outpatient services – such as specialty clinics, surgery, radiology, dialysis, lab testing and infusions – under one roof.

“Why come to Virginia? Because we now have the best children’s outpatient facility in the United States of America,” McAuliffe said at the ribbon-cutting ceremony. “The connection between healthy children, a healthy workforce and a healthy economy cannot be overstated.”

VCU officials say the pavilion is the largest and most advanced outpatient facility in the region. It will provide comprehensive care for children with medical problems and more flexibility for parents like Nicole Houser, Brianna Burke’s mother. Houser and Brianna have been traveling to Richmond from their home in Hampton for the past two and a half years.

“We come to the hospital about once a month – sometimes a little more than that,” Brianna said. “Then I get my infusions, and I go to dermatology and sometimes they check my heart.”

Houser said until now, Brianna’s appointments required a long day of travel in the car, then more commuting back and forth across



VCU President Michael Rao greets children and patients at the new Childrens Pavilion in an opening ceremony held March 9.

the VCU Medical Center campus for various appointments. Houser said this is especially taxing for Brianna, who uses a wheelchair, and at times proved dangerous in poor weather or bad traffic.

“But my sisters always help me and play with me,” Brianna said. “Sometimes I play teacher because they say, ‘Brianna, can you teach me math?’ But now they have a waiting room where they can play while me and mommy go to the doctor.”

The Children’s Pavilion includes the Ronald McDonald House Sibling Center. It will accommodate the brothers and sisters of young patients – like Brianna’s 8-year-old twin sisters, who often take part in her daylong trips to Richmond.

VCU officials said the pavilion will enhance the reputation of the university’s medical school and hospitals.

“It is part of the recognition

that ours is a nationally premier medical center that’s on par with the best in the country,” Rao said. “But most importantly, it is a place that makes a profound difference in the lives of children and their families.”

Houser said her daughter has come a long way since coming to the Children’s Hospital of Richmond.

“I know Brianna’s medical condition is not by the textbook

PHOTO BY SARAH KING

Richmond ranks among nation’s deadliest cities



The state capital joins two other Virginia cities in FindtheHome’s ranking of the United States’ murder capitals. In Nov., VCU was named the “most walkable” neighborhood in Richmond by Redfin Real Estate.

FADEL ALLASSAN
Print News Editor

Richmond is among the nation’s “murder capitals” according to a set of new data that listed three Virginia cities as some of the most deadly cities in America.

The River City, which has a population of more than 200,000, was number six in a ranking of the 30 cities and counties with the most murders in the country. Washington, D.C. was named the city with the 10th highest murder rate, according to the findings.

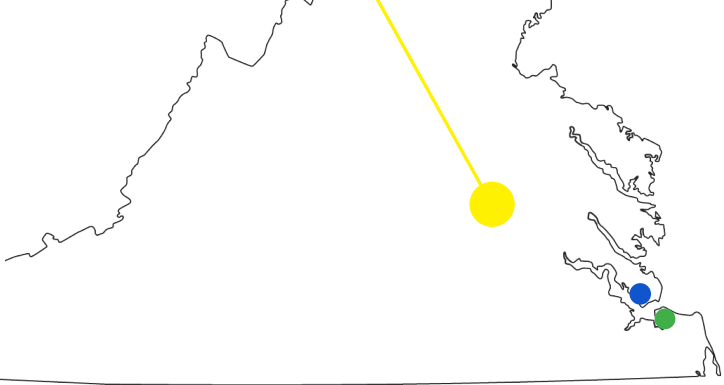
The information was gathered by housing market website FindTheHome.com. According to the site, the data is based on a 2014 FBI Uniform Crime Report and a 2014 data release of the American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau. Only counties and cities with populations of 50,000 or more were considered.

In its report, the housing market website said the rate of total crimes has been decreasing in large cities despite rising murder rates. Various sources, including the Brennan Center for Justice, reported a drastic jump in murder rates in large cities across America from 2014 to 2015.

The site said popular theories among experts for a spike in murders include the rise of income inequality, loose gun regulations and less active policing by officers, who are acting more cautiously in the wake of events such as the Ferguson shooting.

- #8 — D.C.**
Murders per 100,000: 16.57
Total murders: 105
Violent crime per 100,000: 1232
- #25 — Newport News**
Murders per 100,000: 13.78
Total murders: 25
Violent crime per 100,000: 431.7
- #28 — Norfolk**
Murders per 100,000: 12.67
Total murders: 31
Violent crime per 100,000: 523

- #6 — Richmond**
Murders per 100,000: 19.43
Total murders: 41
Violent crime per 100,000: 594.1



Despite a decrease in killings from 2006 to 2014, according to the data, Richmond’s murder rate stood at 18.9 murders per 100,000 citizens, more than four times higher than Virginia’s average which was 4.1 murders.

Virginia’s murder rate was comparatively smaller than the country’s average, which stood at 4.5 murders per 100,000.

The rate is significantly lower than it was in 1994, when Richmond’s crime rate peaked and the city ranked second in the murder capital rankings with 77.2 killings per 100,000. In 1997, Richmond held the title of “murder capital” with the highest murder rate in the country at 67.2 per 100,000. The city is one of six to have had the highest murder rate in the country between 1985 and 2012.

In 2008, the state capital recorded its lowest murder rate since 1971 with 31 murders, a rate of 15.5 per 100,000. The rate has not exceeded the teens since 2007.

“We’re making progress in reducing the murder rate in Richmond, our strategy is aggressive enforcement and investigation,” said Richmond Police spokesperson Gene Lepley. “We work very hard to close these cases with arrests and we believe the success is because of the cooperation we get from the community.”

Lepley gives credit to efforts by the police such as the Fugitives and Firearms Initiative (FFI), an annual effort to target wanted persons and illegal weapons which the department started in 2005. It ran annually from May to August until current Police

Chief Alfred Durham took office in 2015 and launched an additional round of FFI that ran from November to December.

According to the department, the initiative has recovered nearly 240 firearms since it was first launched. A total of 802 illegal firearms were recovered in 2015 by additional efforts of officers and detectives, an increase from 2014.

At a press conference in January, Mayor Dwight Jones announced that the rate of all violent crimes in Richmond was at its lowest point in 45 years. The rate decreased by 30 percent since 2009 and 12 percent since 2014 which was the largest year-to-year crime reduction rate in the past seven years.

Legislation makes study abroad programs more transparent

ANDREW CRIDER
Print News Editor

A new piece of legislation, proposed by Sen. Kenneth Alexander (D-Norfolk), requires increased availability of safety records for study abroad programs has passed the House and Senate.

Virginia is the second state to pass a transparency law for study abroad programs. Minnesota was the first state to pass the law in 2014.

Much lobbying went into getting this bill passed. One group that took part in the process was Clear Cause, a Minnesotan organization that promotes increased safety and education for study abroad programs.

Another adamant lobbyist was Richell Dabney, a mother and a constituent in Alexander’s district. A year and a half ago Dabney’s son, Damion Wikins, a junior biology major at Old Dominion University, died of a heart attack while studying abroad in Peru.

Wikins told the Virginian Pilot that there had been not been enough transparency with the study abroad program about her son’s death and the medical treatment of the heart attack.

“I’m not saying anything was done wrong,” Dabney said. “But the program should have been more transparent. We don’t know what happened. All I know was he had a heart attack. We can’t get any more medical information.”

In 2012, USA TODAY reported the death of Casey Schulman, a University of Virginia student who was killed by a small boat in the last few days of her semester at sea. According to USA TODAY, it was difficult to get exact numbers of deaths and incidents on study abroad programs simply because no one kept track of them.

Since then, the Forum of Education Abroad has been assembling a database of deaths and injuries that occur overseas.

Sheryl Hill is an executive director of Clear Cause, an organization that started the Safe Journey Academy in honor of her son, Tyler, who died at 16 in Japan during a 2007 high school study abroad trip.

“We know the best how wonderfully exciting, romantic and impactful international studies can be, but we also know the worst of them,” Hill said. “My passion is to make sure we all depart smart, but it came from my passion for youth exchange.”

According to Hill, there has

been a lack of transparency with study abroad programs.

“You’ll never hear from any program site what happens to the thousands of students that study abroad, so when they are not wonderful we get phone calls,” Hill said.

Currently, Safe Journey is raising money before it can commence operations. By going to their website you can donate, or take a preparedness quiz to assess your study abroad safety.

“It is my opinion and the opinion of many mothers whose children died preventable deaths abroad, (that) there should be some duty to inform when schools are escorting students to countries where the United States have a active travel warning, or when the Peace Corps have withdrawn,” Hill said.

This summer, VCU will send 450 students abroad to locations such as Czech Republic, Morocco, China, Mexico, Austria, Barbados, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, England, Ireland, Scotland, Jamaica, Japan, Peru, South Africa and more.

Stephanie Tignor, director of Education Abroad said that some of these locations include nations where travel warnings exist.

“Yes, occasionally we do allow students to study in countries where the State Department has issued a travel warning,” Tignor said. “When programs are proposed to the Global Education Office, we look closely at the language used by the State Department to determine whether to offer a program in a country with a travel warning.”

Tignor said VCU analyzes security concerns for every study abroad location, and that safety is a top concern for VCU for all students going abroad, not just those going to travel warning countries.

“So before students depart we make sure that they are registered with the State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program,” Tignor said. “They attend pre-departure orientation, at which we address safety, health and other pre-trip essential information.”

VCU students are advised to visit student health, and read state department literature prior to departing.

“We also provide insurance for all study abroad students,” Tignor said. “VCU has invested in a blanket insurance policy that covers emergency medical evacuation for all university students and employees through AIG Travel Assist.”



IMN United Founder, President and CEO Joel Erb gives a lectures about technology and insurance risk at the 10th annual RISC Trends Conference. The confrence included lectures from nine other speakers who taught VCU students and professionals.

VCU hosts conference to discuss future of tech and insurance

ANDREW CRIDER
Print News Editor

The VCU School of Business held its 10th annual RISC Trends Conference Tuesday, March 8. The event was designed to connect local insurance professionals and students to discuss this year’s theme on “emerging technology and risk taking.”

The conference featured many speakers well established in the industry. This included Joel Erb, CEO of INM United; Charlie Kingdollar, vice president of General Reinsurance; and Robert Bradshaw, CEO of the Independent Insurance Agents of Virginia, among others.

“Never has it been less true that the past has been predictive of the future,” Kingdollar said in his lecture to the conference. “The science of today will not be the sci-

ence of 5 years from now, so something that’s perfectly safe today 5 years from now may not be.”

According to Tim Cook, Director of the Risk and Insurance Studies Center at VCU, technological advancements create an ever changing landscape for the insurance industry as insurers adapt to risks caused by new devices.

“So much is happening in technology that the industry is having to respond to,” said Cook. “Today’s conference is bringing in industry experts as well as technology folks and having a discussion on how technology and insurance can work together.”

The event allowed the university’s Risk and Insurance Studies Center to strengthen working relationships with local insurance agencies.

“Every year we promote to the local industry an emerging risk or a

new idea that’s coming out, and we have a conference built around that,” Cook said. “We have this synergy and collaboration with our local group, so it allows this interaction.”

The event also allows students to build professional relationships with local insurance professionals.

“We are basically creating the employees of the future by them coming through the program and having them interact our industry professionals,” Cook said.

According to Cook, this year’s conference was the largest one yet. Seniors Granton Clem and Woody Stanchina, president and vice president of Gamma Iota Sigma, respectively, said the conference allowed them to interact with potential employers.

“It’s a chance for our students in our program to come out with professionals in our industry and learn about new emerging risk,”

Stanchina said.

Despite being held the week of spring break, many students were in attendance at the conference.

“Some of us are using this as our business start, keeping our business hats on,” Clem said. “The students here at the VCU School of Business in our risk department are very driven and we are ready to get into the industry. Having that 15 students here shows their dedication to launch their careers.”

Planning for next year’s conference is expected to begin next month.

“In April we will have our committee gather and start planning for next year’s conference, coming up with a theme, finding speakers and building the conference for next year,” Cook said.

Older Richmond homes may have contaminated water

LOGAN BOGERT
Contributing Writer

Cities with lead piping may be bringing contaminated water into Richmond homes, according to Virginia Tech civil engineering professor Marc Edwards.

In April 2014, Edwards traveled with a team to Flint, Michigan to conduct research on the water supply just as the Flint Water Crisis was in full swing. Edwards announced their work was complete in January; however, this month the team received an \$80,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to re-test the lead levels in 271 Flint homes.

“Federal lead and copper corrosion control rules were not being followed (in Flint) and the state primary agency was covering it up and endangering the public,” Edwards said in an email.

Angela Fountain, public information manager for the Richmond Department of Public Utilities, said service lines in Richmond houses beyond past a certain age may contain lead.

According to the EPA, homes built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes and fixtures. This may affect many Richmond homes, especially those built prior to World War II when lead was commonly used in water mains and service lines.

“The DPU has information on our website and printed on bills on lead contamination,” Fountain said. “If lead is found, we will replace up to where it becomes the home-

owner’s responsibility.”

According to Fountain, the area that the city is not responsible for – that is the “homeowner’s responsibility” – is the space between the water meter and the home.

Edwards said that although he has no specific knowledge of lead contamination being a problem in Richmond, he does believe water with high levels of lead is a “national problem.”

“Many cities with lead pipes are regularly delivering water to taps that exceeds the 15 ppb (parts per billion) action level, especially for water sitting in lead pipes,” Edwards said. “Unfortunately, the current sampling program does not detect this lead risk as well as it should.”

Edwards said the belief that replacing lead pipes is the homeowner’s responsibility is not uncommon.

“This is the position of many utilities,” Edwards said. “I think it is a bad position because in most cities the homeowner purchased the lead pipe not by choice but because the city required it in the plumbing code.”

The DPU’s website recommends minimizing the potential for lead by flushing the tap for 15-30 seconds or until the water reaches a steady temperature before cooking or drinking. DPU also recommends that those concerned about lead in their water call the “Safe Drinking Water Hotline” at 1-800-426-4791 for more information on lead in drinking water, testing materials and steps to minimize exposure to lead.

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STAT OF THE WEEK VCU will compete in the NCAA tournament for the sixth straight year—the longest streak of any team from Virginia.

VCU’s defense key in A-10 quarterfinal win

BRYANT DRAYTON
SARAH KING
Sports Editor and Executive Editor

Without a stellar shooting performance, VCU was still able to tame the University of Massachusetts in the Atlantic 10 quarterfinals by a score of 85-70 on Friday night.

The Rams move on to the semifinals at 4 p.m. Saturday against Davidson, which defeated St. Bonaventure, 90-86, at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn. VCU beat Davidson twice during the regular season.

“You always want to win the first one,” VCU head coach Will Wade said after the Rams’ victory over the UMass Minutemen.

The Brooklyn nets – no pun intended – weren’t too keen on capturing VCU’s open jump-shot opportunities throughout the entirety of the game.

The Rams made only one 3-pointer in 16 attempts. Overall, VCU shot 40 percent from the field, connecting on 29 of 72 shot attempts.

Senior Melvin Johnson led VCU in scoring with 19 points. Although his shot wasn’t falling, the Bronx native was able to drive to the basket at will, which created free throw opportunities for the team.

But Johnson created a moment of uneasiness as he limped off the court in the closing moments due to an apparent ankle injury.

Wade said a definite status on

the injury will not be clear until later. But he said the situation will not change how he plays Johnson or the rest of the team for the rest of the A-10 men’s basketball tournament.

“We will play whoever we need to play tomorrow to win the game,” Wade said. “Nothing for sure, we will deal with everything else after that.”

VCU was able to attempt 72 shots on the evening thanks to second-chance opportunities. The Rams were the beneficiaries of 16 second-chance points compared with the Minutemen’s six.

On the offensive glass, junior Mohamed Hamdy dominated during his nine minutes of play. Hamdy recorded six rebounds and eight points that helped the Rams’ lead continue to grow.

But the star of the night came from the increased play of sophomore Justin Tillman. Although a wild card of productivity in the season, Tillman stepped up enormously, catalyzing some of the night’s most pivotal moments for VCU.

Tillman registered 10 points and nine rebounds during his 24 minutes of action. Flirting with his fourth double-double of the season, Tillman was the key for VCU’s comfortable lead throughout the game.

“He makes things happen when he’s out there,” Wade said. “He’s not timid. Something is going to happen, and we need some of these guys to step up.”

Senior Mo Alie-Cox contribut-

ed eight points and seven rebounds in his 31 minutes on the court. The senior was in a jovial mood post-game as he was in the middle of a heavyweight battle with UMass’ 6-foot-11 freshman Rashaan Holloway – all 335 pounds of him.

“It took all my energy just to get in front of him. But once I got in front, they would hold the ball for so long, so I just tried to do my best to hold position,” Alie-Cox said.

A good portion of VCU’s most faithful supporters showed up and showed out for their Rams. Black and gold cloaked the Barclays Center, and the players felt the impact.

“It was most of our fans out there, so we got a lot of our energy from them,” Tillman said.

VCU’s defensive pressure on the UMass offense caused the Minutemen’s attack to become stagnant, even non-existent at times.

UMass senior guard Trey Davis felt the pressure the most.

Davis scored 20 points in his team’s win against Rhode Island on Thursday night, and he registered 20 points against VCU in two regular-season games. During the teams’ last matchup on Feb. 11, VCU lost, 67-62.

Davis claimed another 20 points Friday, but he was held to just four first half points.

“I thought we played extremely hard,” Wade said. “Moving on, we’ll take it. I thought it was a good win.”



PHOTO BY BROOKE MARSH

VCU’s infamous cheer “Mo says no!” was heard in abundance in the Ram’s Atlantic 10 championship matchup against UMASS. The Rams took the win 85-70.



PHOTO BY BROOKE MARSH

The Rams defeated the Wildcats for the third straight time in a rematch of the 2015 Atlantic-10 tournament championship. VCU went on to play in the A-10 finals for the fourth straight year.

VCU defeats Davidson in A-10 semifinal game

BRYANT DRAYTON
Sports Editor

In a game that had upset written all over it, VCU left little doubt in a 76-54 win over Davidson Saturday evening at the Barclays Center. The Rams are primed to compete for their second consecutive Atlantic 10 Tournament Championship tomorrow at 12:30 p.m.

“We did a good job on the glass and a good job contesting three’s against them,” said VCU Head Coach Will Wade. “Very proud of our guys; they’ve earned it. Now we have to turn the page quickly and get ready for tomorrow.”

With senior Melvin Johnson battling an ankle injury from Saturday’s matchup against UMass, fellow senior Korey Billbury came through in a big way. Totalling 17 points and a team-high of seven

rebounds, the Tulsa native did not shy away from big moments in the Big Apple.

“He stepped up big time,” Wade said. “He was the one making the shots to increase our lead, which gave us the opportunity to rest up guys late.”

VCU claimed its third win of the year over Davidson and marked the second consecutive year the team knocked the Wildcats out of the semifinal round of the conference tournament.

The Rams’ defense capitalized on a sputtering Davidson attack — the Wildcats shot only 37 percent from the field. And at times, they struggled to find open looks. The Wildcats All A-10 guard Jack Gibbs was silenced for the majority of the contest, and did not register any points in the second half.

Often compared to NBA star

and Davidson graduate Stephen Curry, Gibbs averages 24.4 points per contest. But the agile Davidson guard could do no right against a stingy VCU backcourt led by junior JeQuan Lewis and sophomore Jonathan Williams during this contest.

“We just wanted to contain him,” Lewis said. “He’s a great player — a great shooter — it’s like cutting the head off a snake when you take him out.”

The Wildcat offense had its lowest points total of the year, while VCU senior Mo Alie-Cox repeatedly dominated the Davidson big men.

Alie-Cox had 13 points and four rebounds throughout the evening, but it was his relentless energy on defense against Nathan Ekwu and Peyton Aldridge created his most memorable performances during the three matchups this season.

“They don’t have the bigs that can matchup with me,” Alie-Cox said. “They doubled me a lot — when they show me that kind of attention then I can use my pass and get other guys involved.”

Breaking through ball screens were pivotal for VCU to stop Davidson. The Wildcats shot nearly 40 percent from 3-point territory this season, but tallied a meager 21.7 percent during the semifinal tonight.

“Their ball screens give us problems even though we’ve had success against them in the past,” Wade said. “We downed Gibbs on the left side where he is much less efficient.”

Defending A-10 Tournament champions VCU will tip-off against Saint Joseph’s tomorrow at 12:30 p.m.

The Rams defeated St. Joe’s in their only matchup of the season on Jan. 5, when the Rams traveled to

Philadelphia and beat the Hawks on their home court 85-82.

The Hawks benefit from having the A-10’s player of the year DeAndre Bembry, who registered 17 points in the January matchup. The player who gave VCU the most trouble that game was not Bembry, but forward Isaiah Miles who exploded for a 31 point performance on 11-14 shooting.

“We haven’t seen them in a month and a half so we will put together a gameplan and be ready to roll at 12:30 p.m,” Wade said. “The tougher team sets the rules and we will see how that goes.”

During the waning moments of Saturday’s semifinal game, the VCU crowd took to their feet chanting Wade’s name in unison. Just a year ago Shaka Smart led this team to a tournament championship — tomorrow Wade has

his first chance at cutting down the nets in Brooklyn.

“The pressure is on us,” Wade said. “The fans have really taken to our team this season and hopefully we can give them a great moment tomorrow.”

Tomorrow’s game will be VCU’s sixth conference final since 2011, when the team did not win the CAA but made it to the Final Four round of the NCAA. In 2012, VCU won the CAA championship, and lost the A-10 title in 2013 and 2014 at the Barclays Center to Saint Louis and Saint Joseph’s respectively. Last year, the Rams beat Dayton to claim their first A-10 Tournament championship.

VCU offense stalls in A-10 championship loss

—continued from page 1

was named to the A-10 All-Championship Team.

Offensively, VCU senior Korey Billbury and junior JeQuan Lewis were the Rams most productive assets.

Lewis recorded 19 points and seven assists; his best outing of the weekend. Billbury continued his hot tournament shooting with 19 points and a spot on the A-10 All-Championship Team.

Matched against Bembyry for the majority of his time on the court, Billbury found himself in a dogfight to gain position on drives to the basket.

“We knew what we were supposed to do,” Billbury said. “It wasn’t them, it was us.”

The Rams’ offense shot a promising 41.2 percent from the field, but another poor shooting day from 3-point territory was the reason VCU was unable to shorten the Hawks’ lead for the entirety of the game. The Rams only connected on seven of their 29 attempts.

At the 8:32 mark in the second half, the Hawks Papa Ndao was given a flagrant-1 for mouthing-off to the official after a foul was called against him. As he walked to the bench, Ndao raised his arm in dismay at the official, said something again, and was thrown

out of the contest.

Ndao ejection was the break VCU fans were waiting for all game.

“We were able to get (the point deficit) within single digits and I was proud of the way our guys battled,” Wade said. “Maybe if one of those three’s had fallen when we got it back to seven or nine might have been a different deal.”

Two questions face a dejected VCU awaiting the Selection Sunday decision: what seed and location will the Rams get, and how is the health of senior Melvin Johnson, who limped off the court as the buzzer sounded during Friday’s quarterfinal matchup against Davidson?

Johnson only had five points on 2-7 shooting from the field. VCU will need their top assassin at 100 percent to fortify the Rams’ hopes of making a NCAA Tournament run.

VCU is rumored to be an eighth seed in the tournament, and the Rams could find themselves playing in the ideal Raleigh East Coast region.

“We’ll be ready to go wherever they send us,” Wade said. “We need to rest a little bit and get ready to go later on this week.”

Selection Sunday airs on CBS at 5:30 p.m. Sunday.



Despite 19 points from senior guard Korey Billbury (above) and junior guard JeQuan Lewis, the Rams were subdued by a resilient St. Joe’s defense. Lewis also added seven assists to his performance in the championship game.



VCU clinched the tenth seed in the NCAA tournament, their lowest seed since 2012 when the Rams were seeded at no. 12.

10-Seed VCU set to play Oregon State in NCAA matchup

BRYANT DRAYTON
Sports Editor

Just hours after St. Joseph’s robbed VCU of its second consecutive Atlantic 10 Tournament title in a double-digit loss, the Rams had an opportunity to celebrate in Brooklyn.

VCU’s season isn’t over yet --the Rams made the NCAA tournament for the sixth year in a row as a 10--seed on Selection Sunday, following a tough 87-74 loss to the Hawks in Brooklyn’s Barclays Center. The Rams now face 7--seed Oregon State on Friday in Oklahoma City.

“We feel a lot better even though the loss is still kind of fresh,” said senior Oklahoma native Korey Billbury. “I’m excited to get back and play in front of my home town.”

Billbury’s tone was markedly different after the team learned they were an automatic bid in the tournament than just hours prior after the A-10 championship loss.

The transfer player was one of the Rams’ prime offensive as-

sets against St. Joe’s, registering 19 points and a spot on the A-10 All-Championship Team.

“We knew what we were supposed to do,” Billbury said after Sunday’s final game. “It wasn’t them, it was us.”

First-year head coach Will Wade was confident his team would make it to the tournament, even just minutes after the loss in the A-10 final, but said he was thrilled to know the team would be competing in Oklahoma next week.

“Give our guys credit they rallied,” Wade said. “Korey came to us for one season now he gets to play in the tournament in his home state.”

While for Billbury, the first round of the NCAA tournament signifies a homecoming and for Wade, a big moment as a first-year coach -- it is perhaps most symbolic for senior Melvin Johnson, who will be competing in his fourth-straight NCAA tournament.

“Hearing our name called, guys were excited and smiling again,” Johnson said. “It’s a relief to see our name up there as an automatic bid. You have to

be really fortunate to be in this position.”

Former head coach Shaka Smart’s team, 6--seed the University of Texas Austin, will also be competing in Oklahoma City on Friday against 11--seed Northern Iowa -- meaning if VCU and Texas were to brush paths it could potentially happen in a Sweet 16 matchup.

In the meantime, the Rams are preparing one day at a time. Wade said the team will be sure to get some well deserved rest before turning its attention to March Madness.

“It’s nothing special as the way you prepare,” Johnson said. “It’s not like it’s the World Series. It’s just big time basketball.”

Oregon State finished 19-12 on the season and Beavers return to the tournament after a 26 year hiatus from being selected.

“They are a good team, we will need to play well but we are excited about the opportunity,” Wade said.

VCU Lacrosse falls short after cutting a nine-goal deficit

SOPHIA BELLETTI
Staff Writer

VCU women’s lacrosse nearly came back after a nine-goal deficit in the second half against the University of Detroit Mercy on Friday, but the Rams could not complete the ultimate comeback and lost 12-10.

The Titans recorded their first win of the season with this game, as VCU Head Coach Jen O’Brien and to the Lady Rams traveled all the way to Titan Field in Detroit, MI.

“We proved to ourselves today that no matter what the score is, we are never out of a game,” O’Brien said.

Freshman attack Molly Barcikowski, freshman midfielder Sofia Emond, redshirt-freshman midfielder Sky Hyatt and redshirt-freshman attack Megan Williamson each scored two goals in the game, respectively.

Emond is averaging two goals a game in VCU’s last four matches

Detroit scored two goals early in the first half. It wasn’t until 16 minutes in that Hyatt found the back of the net, assisted by Williamson, to put VCU on the scoreboard for the first time that night.

The Titans went on a five-goal run before the Lady Rams connected another shot -- freshman Mackenzie Galli’s eighth goal of the season. With two minutes left in the first half, VCU was down 7-1.

Just over a minute later, Williamson found the back of the net and cut the Titans lead to four with just 28 seconds to play.

Unfortunately for the Rams, that was enough time for the Titans to sneak one extra shot in before half time. VCU ended the half trailing Detroit 8-3.

VCU’s backfield shut down the Titans in the second half, only allowing Detroit to rip 10 shots, compared to the 17 in the first half.

In the first 10 minutes of the second period, it looked like game over for VCU. Detroit extended the lead to 12-3 with four quick goals.

With 20 minutes left in regulation, Emond found the net for the eighth time this season to kick-start the Ram’s unmatched, seven-goal run.

Less than a minute later, Emond assisted Barcikowski for a 12-5 score.

A minute later, Barcikowski added her second of the day and Emond answered with her second to cut the lead to five.

Williamson goal in the 47th minute brought the Rams within a four goal difference. Neither team scored for another eight minutes as both defenses refused to relent.

With five and a half to go, red-shirt-freshman defender Morgan Pergolini recorded her first goal of the season off a free position goal.

Following Pergolini’s inaugural goal, Hyatt made it a two-

score contest with her second goal of the game.

As time ran out, VCU was unable to complete the ultimate comeback and fell to Detroit 12-10.

The Lady Rams’ defense kept the Titans off the boards for the last 20 minutes of regulation.

“We are fighters,” O’Brien said. “As coaches we can do a lot with a never say ‘die’ group like we have. We were competing against the clock in the second half, in addition to a determined Detroit Mercy team, and in the end, we just ran out of time.”

Hyatt, the reigning Atlantic 10 Conference Player of the Week and leading goal scorer for the Lady Rams, has scored 12 goals in the Black & Gold’s last three games and has scored a goal in every game this season.

Barcikowski recorded hat tricks in back-to-back contests last weekend and just missed the mark again on Friday. The freshman trails fellow Carroll County native Hyatt by one for the team lead in scores.

“Fortunately, we have little time to dwell on the loss as we have to immediately shift our focus and prepare for Central Michigan, another first year program,” O’Brien said. “We need to be a little more disciplined with our possessions and limit fouls defensively on Sunday.”

Game time at Central Michigan was set for 1 p.m. Sunday but results were not final in time for publication.

GAME STATS			
	VCU	vs.	U Detroit
half time score	8		3
final score	12		10
SAVES	5		4
TURN-OVERS	14		17
SHOTS	20		27
SHOTS	34		32

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THE PRESS BOX

Rams gon’ be OK



BRYANT DRAYTON
Sports Editor

As I watched the guys leaving their hotels to head back to Richmond, you could see the despair still on their faces, but the news of a good tourney spot has brightened the mood. Still unsure of what Oregon State brings to the table is a good thing. For once, the guys can enjoy a bus ride home knowing they aren’t faced with a daunting task of guarding a stud in the first round such as a D’Angelo Russell of Ohio State like last season.

Oregon State will be a challenge, however. The Rowdy Rams may not be in full-swing as expected, due to the utter random, and boring-ness, of the city selected in Podunk, Middle of Nowhere. But all in all, VCU is in good shape. The loss hurts, but the boys still have basketball to play — it could have been worse.

Plus a Sweet 16 matchup with Shaka Smart and Texas could hypothetically present itself. I wouldn’t expect Wade or Shaka will keep their jackets on long in that one.

I’m still in disbelief. Not because VCU lost the championship game, but more so because of how they lost. For every made-basket by St. Joe’s, I just knew the next one would not be successful — but it never was. Back-to-back threes rained down from all angles on the Rams.

The Hawks executed a perfect gameplan and defeated our beloved Rams on an afternoon where, quite frankly, VCU wasn’t the better team. Melvin’s ankle injury and Mo’s lack of length in the long-run were the Achilles heel to a dream scenario of coach Wade getting to cut the nets in a season no one expected that it would happen.

If any Ram fan thought DeAndre Bemby was non-deservant of conference player of the year, you were wrong. The guy can score with the best of them. Teaming up with Isaiah Miles quickly put VCU in a match-up nightmare.

But I’m also in disbelief because I will be flying to Oklahoma City come Thursday. Do you know what the only thing to do in Oklahoma is? Think. No, I’m not looking for a response. I actually mean thinking is the only thing to do in Oklahoma.

Bryant is a sports advocate who’s always smiling. He is a senior print and online journalism major aspiring for a career as a professional or college football columnist. Bryant currently covers high school football games for the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

draytonbo@commonwealthtimes.com



Sophomore Mitchel Lacey helped the Rams sweep the Wagner College Seahawks last week.

Baseball bounces back from early losses

ZACH JOACHIM
Contributing Writer

Despite a relatively slow start to VCU baseball’s season, the team led by a veteran offense has taken a turn during a seven-game home-stand.

A 3-4 start in which the Rams gave up 67 runs A veteran offense is expected to carry the team.

The Rams swept Marist College in a three game weekend series from March 5-7.

VCU won the Saturday opener 3-0. The Rams got an early lead when junior Darian Carpenter belted a moonshot over the left-center field fence in the bottom of the second.

The single run was all starting pitcher sophomore Shaun Thompson would need. Thompson went seven shutout innings while giving up two hits, walking three and striking out six. Donko came in out of the bullpen to shut the door with a 1-2-3 ninth inning.

A Sunday matinee turned into a marathon matchup as the Rams and Red Foxes went 13 innings before a winner prevailed.

Junior Sam Donko provided 5.2 innings of shutout relief, coming in during the eighth inning after Marist took a 6-5 lead. Both

senior Cody Acker and freshman Brody Cook recorded three hits on the day.

Senior outfielder Jimmy Kerrigan scored the walk-off run for the Rams in the bottom of the thirteenth inning on a throwing error. Kerrigan’s elite speed allowed him to take the extra base on the play and pull out the win for his team by a score of 7-6.

A Monday contest that closed out the weekend series was a pitcher’s duel, much like the first game.

Junior Brooks Vial tossed a complete game shutout for the Rams. He allowed five hits while striking out four and throwing only 87 pitches. The Delgado Community College transfer lowered his season ERA to 3.27, and has been a standout success in the early goings this year.

Sophomore third baseman Mitchel Lacey led the VCU offense on the day with two hits and one RBI. The Rams came out on top by a score of 3-0.

The boys were brought back down to earth on Wednesday, March 9 in a 3-1 loss at the hands of Old Dominion University despite four strong innings by junior center fielder Logan Farrar, who had two singles and Carpenter went deep again, but the Rams were not able

to generate enough offense to hang with the Monarchs.

The Rams closed out their home-stand with a three game set against the Seahawks of Wagner College.

Friday, March 11 saw VCU pull out a 3-2 victory in a quick-paced and well pitched affair.

Sophomore Sean Thompson finished with a no decision but pitched effectively over six innings. Thompson fanned five Seahawks while spreading out five hits and limiting Wagner to just two runs.

Freshman Jack Alkire earned the first win of his VCU career in a relief appearance. The big blow came in the bottom of the seventh when Nick Rabat’s two-run homer gave the Rams a one run lead after they had fallen behind in the top of the sixth.

VCU pulled out another hotly contested win of 9-5 against Wagner on Saturday, March 12.

In contrast to the first game of the series, the second was an offensive exhibition. The Rams jumped out to an early lead by posting three runs in the first inning, highlighted by a Kerrigan two-RBI double down the left field line.

The Seahawks spread out ten hits on the day, but were never able to take the lead. VCU pitchers repeatedly limited damage by working out

of pressure-packed situations with runners in scoring position.

Southpaw junior Brooks Vial collected another win. He went six and a third innings while yielding three runs on seven hits and striking out three.

The Rams completed the sweep in an early contest on Sunday, March 13 by a score of 4-3.

Kerrigan and Acker had two hits apiece on the day to lead VCU. Lacey provided the key hit in the contest during the fourth inning with a two-RBI base-knock that gave his team a 3-0 lead.

Wagner had 14 hits on the day but again struggled to push base runners across the plate. Jonathan Ebersole got the win by posting six innings of shutout work. The Seahawks made things interesting by scoring three runs late off of Alkire and Donko, but the Rams bullpen ultimately prevailed.

The Rams appear to be back on track after a seven game home-stand that saw their young pitching come up clutch in pressure situations. They are now 9-5 on the season, and will continue their 2016 campaign at the Virginia Military Institute on March 15 at 6 p.m.

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Cultural Passport course makes students city-savvy

JOSHUA BUCK
Contributing Writer

A student living in Richmond, it isn't always easy to keep up with the happenings around the city as concerts, festivals, gallery openings and more seem to take place every single day.

This is what inspired VCU's Cultural Passport course, created by John Freyer and Jill Ware of the Cross Disciplinary Media department in VCUarts in collaboration with ALT Lab, aims to show students and faculty some of the exciting and sometimes-obscure events within the university and around the city.

Though the course number falls under the ARTS banner, it's open to non-department students as well — something the instructors have found especially gratifying.

"They're excited about things going on in the art world that they had no idea about," Freyer said. "It's fun to introduce them."

This is also the only course which allows students in a non-arts program to pick up credits that apply to their major through an arts class.

Throughout the course of the semester, students are charged with creating and maintaining the event calendar on the dedicated RVAarts website, which normally details a dozen or more art events a day.

"They're posting about shows at Strange Matter, or a show in a thrift shop or an exhibition that a friend is doing in their house," Freyer said.

Students are also tasked with writing reviews and responses to various events and art pieces. Unlike the calendar, these events are not immediately available to the public. The idea is to create an intelligent and lively conversation around the art, with some of the reviews and responses being published to the site after editing.

The course is structured as a hybrid, with work being able to be accomplished from home and in the classroom. Tuesdays, however, are reserved for a pair of alternating in-person sessions.

The first of these are the "In Conversation" events, where a pair of creatives are invited to the Depot to discuss their craft in front of the class and the public.

The other Tuesdays feature "co-working nights." At that time, people can email-in or hop on Skype or Google hang-outs, with Freyer and Ware there to assist. It provides both a real-world and cyberspace group work session. Like the rest of the course, co-working nights are meant to extend out to the public, and as such feature an open door policy to anyone who wants to come in.

This was a key part of the class' inception. Ware had been wanting to teach a course like this for years — one where they could ditch the traditional classroom setting to provide an augmented learning experience.

"I've wanted to do this forever...I looked into doing as a lecture course when I first started at VCU," Ware said. "When I found out about the Online Learning Experience I thought 'It's my time.'"

Freyer and Ware see this as a movement that will spread past VCU and into the city at large. With a Facebook group boasting over 200 members, they're already well on their way.

Freyer said their goal is to create ambassadors for the arts who will create a dialogue between artists in the city and members of the university.

"The arts have given so much to me, and this means so much to me," Ware said. "For other people to experience the arts...I want the pathway to be there for them."



The Coalition Theatre a 8 W. Broad St. has a troupe of 50 performers who regularly have improv and sketch comedy shows.

AUSTIN WALKER
Spectrum Editor

If you're looking for belly-aching comedy and fresh entertainment, Coalition Theater is the way to go.

Founded by a group of long-time performers in 2013, Coalition provides a mixture of sketch comedy and improv. The founders had their own humble comedic beginnings in Richmond, performing in spaces like Gallery5, Art6 and more.

Matt Newman, the executive director who's been a part of Coalition Theater from the beginning, said the theater has provided the performers a space to exercise their art without limitations.

"We're in control of everything," Newman said. "When we have some weird ideas that we want to try, we have the space for it... If you have an idea and you need an audience for it, we'll give

you the time."

Newman, a Richmond native, has been performing improv for nearly 15 years and studied at iO — formerly known as ImprovOlympic — in Chicago. Notable alumni from iO include Tina Fey, Stephen Colbert, Seth Meyers and Amy Poehler.

"I think we have a really strong, diverse group of people, especially in terms of theatre background," Newman said.

Coalition offers classes on stand-up, improv, sketch comedy, writing and more. According to Newman, it's not unusual for graduates of Coalition's teaching programs to join the regular performers. In fact, he said performances by those who are new to the improv scene are almost consistently his favorite.

"The energy is so triumphant when these people get off stage," Newman said. "It's a different sort of show than people who have

been doing it every week or every other week for years."

Students enroll in courses for many reasons, from working on overcoming personal fears to

It is theatre and it is an art form and it can get really incredible to see. It's kind of like this lightning-in-a-bottle, tightwire act to watch these people

improving communication skills in professional settings.

Newman was adamant, however, that the benefits of participating run deeper than that.

"The sorts of things we work on in terms of communication, being

emotionally available, actively listening to people, being aware of your own emotions...not knowing what's going to happen next and being in a position of power because you've experienced that," Newman said. "All of those things we build up...I think everyone could benefit from it."

Overall, Newman said the audience is at the crux of any improv performance. At every show, audience members play a huge role in shaping the show.

"The audience is 100 percent a part of the show," Newman said. "Because we are creating it with them, the audience's response to something, or lack of response, all sort of shapes the rest of the show."

A comedy show is there to be appreciated in whatever way the audience wants, Newman said. Laughing and enjoying yourself is an appropriate response to the performances. Some audience

members, however, may glean something more substantial than cheap laughs.

"It is theatre and it is an art form and it can get really incredible to see," Newman said. "It's kind of like this lightning-in-a-bottle, tightwire act to watch these people...it's different from some sort of narrative comedy where something has been written and honed and is being presented."

Coalition holds shows throughout the week. For information on performances, visit the theater's website at RVAcomedy.com.



PHOTO BY EMILY HINES

Richmond supports their own:
Lucy Dacus packs Broadberry

Dacus is known for her impactful lyrics coupled with the warm sound of her latest album, "No Burden."

— *continued from page 1*

"I feel like Lucy works very linearly with the words and the message coming before anything else," Fisher said. "It's the absolute paramount thing, Melodies, phrasing, rhythm and all that is secondary and obeys the whim of the message. It's very interesting to me."

Dacus already has plans to record a follow-up album, although there are no concrete

release dates yet. Until then, she'll be travelling coast-to-coast promoting "No Burden," which received a 7.8 out of 10 review by Pitchfork's Brad Nelson.

"Now that we actually have a plan of action that we can just drive and do, I think the nervousness part is over," Dacus said. "I'm not really nervous at this point."

Shaferbird Feature

Shafer Bird is part of the Mesh Media Network, a division of VCU Student Media. The Shafer Bird team works to bring the VCU community menu updates and original content, including reviews of on- and off-campus restaurants. www.shaferbird.com

Gwar Bar: It's Gwar-met

[Heavy metal gastropub]

"The menu overwhelmed me at first, not because there were too many options but because everything sounded so good. They had everything from poutine tots to a chicken and waffle sandwich. All of the dishes were a creative mixture of junk food meets gourmet."

— Amelia Heymann

Gwar Bar takes lessons from their parent band in style, but their food is not as grotesque as the group's costumes.

Students shred the radio waves in WCVF's specialty shows



WCVF DJ Helen Rai broadcasts from the station's studio in the Student Media Center. Her show "Music Motifs" airs Thursdays from 6-7 p.m.

ADRIEL VELAZQUEZ
Contributing Writer

Students are blasting their favorite music, comedy and personality to the city every day from a sound-proof studio on Broad Street.

WVCW, VCU's student radio station, is housed in the Student Media Center and allows students to host and broadcast their own show both online and on 102.9

FM.

Alan Booth, the programming director at WVCW, is responsible for determining and directing the station's on-air content. His job involves consolidating many creative ideas into a single, functional station.

To host a show on WVCW, Booth said potential DJs must first undergo a training process to get acquainted with the equipment and learn the rules of radio. These

include no swearing or discussing sex, drugs or alcohol on air. The equipment includes a soundboard, music software, multiple microphones and more.

Before a DJ can begin broadcasting, however, they start off with what is known as a "format show."

These shows involve a predetermined selectino of songs by music director Katherine Peterson.

Each format show must be recorded on the computer in the studio. Booth listens to every show to decide which DJs are ready for the next level.

"After learning how to speak on-air and becoming more comfortable with broadcasting techniques, DJs and hosts are given the option to host their own show," Booth said.

This is what is called a "specialty show," during which DJs are no longer required to adhere to a format. At this point, DJs can now play music of their choosing, or dedicate the entire show to commentary — so long as they adhere to FCC regulations.

Specialty shows have a huge range of focus; anything from music therapy to talk radio are set apart by each individual DJ's unique voice.

Eryn Brandt, host of "Sweet Sounds of Cinema," plays movie soundtracks and discusses films, as well as general cinematic concepts.

"I wanted to have a radio show because my dad had a show in college and he always spoke fondly of it," Brandt said. "I figured it would be a good way to meet like-minded people and develop a cool, unique skill."

Some DJs, like Daniel Gaita-

nis, come to WVCW through the HUMS 291 radio class offered at the university as a topics course.

"I actually started off in the radio class as an elective...the professor told me I should do a specialty show, where I could play whatever music I wanted to," Gaitanis said. "I emailed the programming manager at the time and asked if I could have a slot and he said yes. The rest is history."

Gaitanis hosts "Number the Stars," a variety show that airs on Thursdays from 8-10 p.m. He plays music mostly from the 60s and 70s, and talk breaks involve Gaitanis' commentary on the selections.

Several shows at WVCW have two or more hosts, including Frederick Thornton and Rebecca Tackie's show "An Hour Of Insight."

"I decided to do a show on WVCW because I was introduced to a fellow DJ who wanted a co-host, but did not have (a show)," Thornton said. "Rebecca wanted to bring unconventional knowledge to the masses around VCU. I knew a lot about 'unconventional knowledge,' such as spiritual sects, unknown political alliances, etc."

The dynamic between multiple hosts in a show often dictates its direction.

"We talk about everything from music to politics to conspiracy theories. Fred and I argue a lot and sometimes it gets pretty heated between us," Tackie said. "I think that's what makes our show distinct."

Each DJ brings a unique perspective to the station, and students don't even have to be studying radio to get their own show. Brandt, for example, is an English major; Gaitanis is in the School of Mass Communications; Thornton studies elementary education.

Google recruits VCU alum through LinkedIn

MARY LEE CLARK
Contributing Writer

Imagine being recruited by one of the world's leading technology companies without even sending in an application. It sounds too good to be true, right?

Guess again. That's exactly what happened to recent VCU graduate Allen Calderwood, 2015 VCU graduate with a degree in computer sciences and mathematics, when a recruiter from Google hired him based off his LinkedIn profile.

Calderwood's past internship with Android is what caught the recruiter's eye and set his profile apart from the rest. The recruiter said they were impressed by Calderwood's credentials and asked if he would like to interview for Google.

"I was like 'Oh man, maybe I'm not ready for this interview process yet,'" Calderwood said. "They were really nice about it."

Calderwood started the interview process the semester in the fall of 2015. He now lives in San Francisco as a Google software engineer and will soon complete his year-long residency to officially join the Google team.

LinkedIn, a site that promotes professional networking, is one of social media's fastest-growing platforms with more than 414 million registered users. Forty million of its users are college students and recent graduates — LinkedIn's current fastest growing demographic.

Despite the number of registered users, not all students are confident the social media platform is worth the upkeep effort.

"I know very little about LinkedIn," said Loren McAdam, an elementary education student at VCU.

McAdams said at this point in her life, she doesn't find professional social media sites to be important and that LinkedIn is not helpful in finding a job.

According to Calderwood, however, taking the time to work on a LinkedIn profile can surely pay off.

On his profile is a list of his internship experiences and awards he has achieved during his time at VCU.

Prior to his recruitment, Calderwood was active on LinkedIn and made sure to keep his profile up to date. Calderwood said he would regularly "like" a video or comment on a recent update from a friend to make sure other users noticed him.

"If you're on LinkedIn and you don't ever do anything on LinkedIn, you will never get noticed," Calderwood said. "Every month or so I would put something up."

Calderwood said the most important part of LinkedIn is posting your activity outside the classroom.

"Having a good resume and having a good LinkedIn gets you an interview," Calderwood said. "Having the skills gets you the job."

Matthew Woolman, VCU's executive director of entrepreneurship, said LinkedIn is an important way for young professionals to communicate and work with others.

"LinkedIn has matured into an important communications platform that serves as a living professional dossier," Woolman said.

For students who don't know where to begin with building a resume, or just want some help with networking, VCU Career Services holds workshops and one-on-one appointments. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.careers.vcu.edu/>.

Monday

- 1 with U**
w/ Elena Correa
- The show features personal favorite tracks that are generally ambient and instrumental specifically by undiscovered or underrated artists on soundcloud. (4-5pm)
- Coffee Stains**
w/ Rachel Broadwell
- Hosted by Rachel Broadwell, here listeners can find swirls of indie folk and rock with a sprinkle of surf pop and maybe even The Shins. (7-8pm)
- The Fever**
w/ J. Akan-Etuk & S. Konkus
- Joshua and Sarah talk about the arts and life when they aren't playing music from bands like Beach House and Death Grips. (9-10am)
- The Monday Mashup**
w/ David Sporn AKA Dook
- This is an Electronic Dance Music based radio show with an emphasis on the underground and upcoming events. (10-11pm)

Tuesday

- Just Jammin'**
w/ Kiara Walker
- The show features electronic, fusion, jazz, funk, rap, and R&B. Walker also talks about things happening around Richmond and some music news. (4-5pm)
- Pop Therapy**
w/ Shaun Jackson
- Conceptualized as an advice show, listeners can submit questions about life, love, school, work, and everything in between, while jamming to the latest and greatest tunes of every genre while questions are answered live. (10-12pm)
- Sweet Sounds of Cinema**
w/ Eryn Brandt
- Brandt plays movie soundtracks while talking a little bit about the movie. Talking points include plot, actors, trivia, why she watched the movie in the first place and how she felt about it. (8-10pm)
- The Beacon Hill Project**
w/ Brandon Herbin
- One of the longest running shows on WVCW. The Beacon Hill Project has been on air for close to 8 years. You'll hear songs that are thought-provoking, songs that will make you dance, and songs that'll take you back to the golden era of hip hop. (6-8pm)
- The Selector**
w/ McKenzie Joseph
- Each Wednesday a genre of music is spotlighted with songs hand selected by guests and the host. The segment has had appearances from some of VCU's very own musical talent. (5-7pm)

Wednesday

- An Hour of Insight**
w/ Rebecca Tackie and Fred Thornton
- A talk show in which the hosts discuss a variety of topics, ranging from politics to philosophy. Tackie and Thornton are known to get into heated debates, but that's all part of the fun. (4-5pm)
- The Katelyn Moody and Tiffani Hill Show**
- The show is a combination of the two hosts personalities infused with media and current events. (2-4pm)
- No Order**
w/ Mikeala Reinard
- No Order focuses primarily on rock music and shows in the area. Reinard goes to many concerts and likes to play music that has been performed at those concerts. Bands that she has played include The Pretty Reckless, The Offspring, and Rush. (6-9pm)
- No Scrubs**
w/ Corey Nolan
- No Scrubs represents playing music that is written, produced, or performed by women. Most talk centers around info on the artist, info on local shows, or women's issues in the news. (10-12pm)
- Speaking Sounds**
w/ Dylan Reddick
- A genre blending hour of tunes, commentary and musical recommendations, led by host Dylan Reddick. (8-10pm)
- The Lift**
w/ Nikki Harmony
- The Lift is a show centered around surf rock, lo fi pop, and chillwave. (6-6pm)

Thursday

- Music Motifs**
w/ Helen Rai and Kayla Pangilinan
- The show features a selection of songs inspired by a specific theme or "motif", primarily within the indie genre. (6-7pm)
- Number the Stars**
w/ Dan Gaitanis
- Number the Stars is a variety show playing music mostly from the 60s and 70s, with some 80s and 90s, and occasional music from today. Talk breaks involve sports or whatever is on Dan's mind at the time. (8-10pm)
- Up Sorta Late**
w/ Alex Sommer
- Sommer talks about the weirdest news stories each week and gives his own personal insight on current trends and events. (10pm-12am)

Friday

- Break Breaker**
w/ John Lundquist and Sarah Postic
- Breaker Breaker is a music radio show with comedic sketches. The music is focused on rock and folk. Sarah and John write a few sketches each week for Breaker Breaker and enjoy having guests in their sketches and featuring their music as well. (1-2pm)
- Crate Diggers**
w/ Thomas Brownell
- Crate Diggers incorporates a fresh mix of new music, oldies, goodies, and the truest bangers. Featuring hits and b-sides from Motown, soul, hip-hop, and r&b every week. (12-1pm)
- Galactic Overdrive**
w/ James Randall
- Galactic Overdrive showcases various electronic artists, typically from the vaporwave, future funk, or chillwave genres. Anything goes as long as it's spacey, retro, or fun. (11-12pm)
- Ramunition**
w/ Hayden Molchan
- The show features personal favorite tracks that are generally ambient and instrumental specifically by undiscovered or underrated artists on soundcloud. (4-5pm)
- Live from RVA!**
w/ Rodney Steppe
- The music selections are mixed and requested by the listeners and can range anywhere from hip-hop to rock to EDM and anywhere in between. (9-10pm)
- The House of Flying Elbows**
w/ Brice Maddox
- A weekly source for pro wrestling fans to get the latest news in the world of pro wrestling. (6-7pm)

Saturday

- Courtney's Queue**
w/ Courtney Miller
- This show has a heavy focus on music with as little talking as Miller can get away with. When she does talk, Miller discusses feminism, movies, or music news. (1-2pm)

Sunday

- I Need Answers**
w/ Erica Dabney
- Dabney discusses topics including news on a universal scale, pop culture news, and her own commentary. (3-4pm)
- Nostalgia Hour**
w/ John
- Looking back at things from the past that we loved growing up as children. John discusses video games, films, television, comics, technology, and any other media. (4-5pm)
- The Aftermath**
- Listen in as Douglas Wyatt, Scott Wyant, Phil Marcello, and Dempsey Griffin bring you their analysis of all sports from VCU Basketball to the NFL and everything else in the sports world. (6-7pm)
- The Come Up**
w/ Nia McLeod
- This is a hip hop and R&B show about music that's grazing just below the surface. (2-3pm)
- The Girl's Room**
w/ Fiona Penn and Grace Hoffman
- This show features music meant to attract a large audience with diverse playlists. The hosts work hard to create playlists that cater to many musical tastes. (8-9pm)

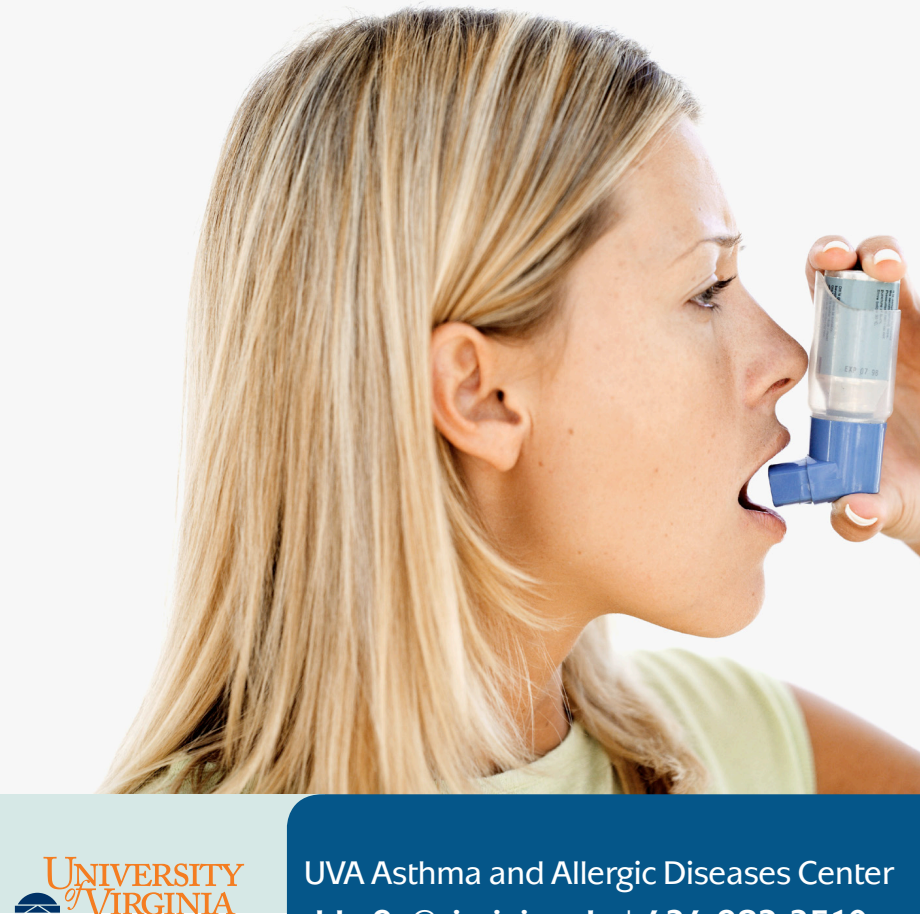
Clinical Trial | Asthma Study

Do You Have Asthma?

Asthma Study Participants from VCU Needed

- Volunteers are needed for a study about asthma and the common cold.
- You must have asthma, not smoke and be 18-40 years old.
- Screening at UVA is in progress now and involves 2 visits (\$40 for the 1st visit; \$60 for the 2nd). \$30 reimbursement for gas mileage for VCU participants will also be provided. Those who qualify can participate with payment of up to \$1,870 for completing the study.

For more information, please contact the UVA Asthma and Allergic Diseases Center via email at ddm9q@virginia.edu or 434.982.3510. (HSR#12656 and 14427)



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Everything we are seeing reveals they want to protect the strength of their party while diminishing the influence of as many Americans as necessary, even if it means completely undermining the democratic process and the whole concept of “equality for all.”

— Siona Peterson

By skirting laws, puppy mills ruin lives

EMILY HIMES
Contributing Columnist

There’s no denying that a dog can be the best friend and confidante you will ever have. Their loyalty, honesty and unconditional love makes them desirable to more than just the casual dog owner; it’s what fuels pet stores, and consequently fills puppy mills’ pockets.

What new dog owners do not understand is that often the eight-week-old puppy they just brought home is a product of a vicious, bloody cycle of irresponsible breeding and bad business.

Puppy mills can be found anywhere from your neighbor’s backyard to large-scale breeding farms, and can house anywhere from tens to thousands of dogs. Most are licensed by the United States Department of Agriculture and can legally house hundreds of dogs in cages to conduct more lucrative business. These businesses breed dogs at dangerously unhealthy rates, leaving them infertile before they hit adulthood. Once a dog stops being profitable it is swiftly abandoned or killed.

According to the animal’s rights organization PAWS, nearly 90 percent of all animals in pet stores come from mills. Any shopper that has strolled into a pet store can recognize the look of a puppy mill dog. Whether it be a miniature schnauzer or German shepherd puppy standing on mesh black mats, under harsh LED lights, fighting for attention and drinking through an oversized hamster feeder, you can guarantee it has been produced by a commercial breeder.

This process is completely legal. It wasn’t until 1966 with the implementation of the Animal Welfare Act that breeders had to be USDA-licensed. This doesn’t solve much, as only 21 states actually regulate breeders, and there is no

legislation as to how many dogs a licensed breeder can own. The standards they have to abide by are little to none; breeders have minimal obligations to their dogs besides offering minimal food and water.

The AWA isn’t enough to actually protect the welfare of dogs within the care of breeders nationwide. There is so much more that goes into breeding than simply putting dogs of the opposite sex in the same room. Dogs must be tested for genetic disorders, should never be overbred and, just like humans, they need adequate prenatal and post-puppy care. In addition, the average age a puppy mill removes a dog from its mother is six weeks. The physical and physiological trauma of being taken from their mothers at an early age, as well as residing in its own feces while having little to no time in the sunlight, is immeasurable.

Students, families or anyone who wants to add a dog into their home cannot, with good conscious, purchase a dog from a pet store.

— EMILY HIMES

No pet store is safe. Showcasing a license is not a guarantee that the puppy in question came from a responsible breeder. With “Six Month Guarantees,” pet stores recognize that their puppies may be prone to life threatening diseases and crippling genetic disorders; moreover, they prove that their only motivation is making as much money as possible. Students, families or anyone who wants to add a dog into their home cannot, with good conscious, purchase a dog from a pet store.

Common statements used to justify buying from a store are that

“someone has to do it” or “I felt so guilty leaving it there so I had to take it home.” Purchasing anything from a store that sells puppies allows them to continue to outsource dogs and abuse them for profit. It is not adoption, and by purchasing one dog you have allowed many more to continue to be born into suffering.

The goal is to end puppy mills by ceasing support from their main point of profit: pet stores. Ending mass dog breeding and puppy store sales will provide owners to currently homeless dogs and allow animal rights activists to take puppies out of puppy stores/mills and put them in the care of humans who prioritize their well-being.

SPCA representatives say that if you must buy from a breeder, then you have to be careful, stating “the only way you can be sure that a puppy came from a reputable source is to see where he or she came from yourself.” Another tip is to avoid online puppy sales entirely, “responsible breeders would never sell to someone they haven’t met,” the SPCA said.

Pure-bred dogs are available at rescue shelters and can be obtained at similar prices through an adoption process that any reputable breeder would also abide by. Shelters across the nation are eager to find homes for loving companions at a variation of ages. Rescuing is a rewarding, kind and economic decision that will not only brighten your life, but save the life of a lucky animal.

The exploitation of these beautiful animals needs to be taken more seriously by dog owners, buyers, and our government. Stricter regulation needs to be instated to protect dogs from being overbred and sold for profit. With so many dogs already homeless, it is irresponsible to breed at extreme rates and buying into this process only make it worse.

Do the right thing and adopt.



ILLUSTRATION BY MEGAN JAMES

The complexities of casting a vote

—continued from page 1

an inability to get documents providing citizenship, are not uncommon. However, Virginia ID laws leave no room for these very real issues low-income and minority Virginians face.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is rightfully-praised as a cumulative and tangible result of the Civil Rights Movement. There are two key parts of the VRA: section 5 requires states and localities with a history of extreme racial oppression to receive federal approval from the U.S. Attorney General before making changes to voting requirements, and section 4(b) created the criteria for which states should be considered for the laws oversight. These sections helped stop the numerous attempts to block minorities from voting in the decades since the VRA has passed.

In June 2013, however, the Supreme Court reached a 5 to 4 vote and struck down section 4(b) in the landmark case Shelby County v. Holder. The justices believed the section was no longer applicable to modern America and was now a threat to the “equal sovereignty of the states.” The decision also made section 5 of the VRA null and void. Suddenly, for the first time in nearly 50 years, politicians were given free reign to limit who had access to votes without having to be accountable to the Attorney General or the DOJ.

This repeal has affected states in a variety of ways, including Virginia. The state implemented the new restrictive voter ID laws quickly and failed to properly give citizens the appropriate amount of time to adjust to this change. A mandate like this should have been given out at least a year before it was enacted into the law.

If a citizen shows up without a photo ID, they are still allowed to vote and their vote will be counted as long as they provide proof of ID by noon on the Friday following the election. Yet there are still increasing reports that citizens without an ID were turned away without being presented this option. This shows a manipulative use of power and information by those running the booths.

Furthermore, CityLab found that in the 2014 Midterm election, around 197,000 Virginians did not



ILLUSTRATION BY JIAQ ZHOU

have an ID to vote. According to data, the state election department has only issued around 4,000 cards since then. This huge difference highlights how the rhetoric of “protecting the vote” is overshadowed by the attempts to curb the vote.

A more familiar and controversial perpetrator of disenfranchisement is former Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell. Among a series of other charges, McDonnell is facing a Supreme Court trial for his role in promoting racial gerrymandering. The case, Wittman v. Person-huballah, argues that McDonnell and other Virginia lawmakers redistricted Congressional District 3 to overpopulate the area with a primarily black population so their vote would result in minimal influence in elections while also diminishing their representation in the rest of the Commonwealth.

According to an exit poll done by the Brennan Center of Justice, since

the Republican party in Virginia began placing restriction of voting initiatives in 2010, the Democratic vote has dropped by 20.9 percent while the Republican vote increased by 109 percent.

This trend has been repeated throughout the country. The extremely disproportionate numbers confirm that the shuffling of civic tools from disenfranchised, minority and Democratic-leaning areas into more affluent, white and Republican-leaning areas, has been done to benefit those who claim to be protecting the integrity of American voting.

Everything we are seeing reveals they want to protect the strength of their party while diminishing the influence of as many Americans as necessary, even if it means completely undermining the democratic process and the whole concept of “equality for all.”

College doesn’t provide you the skills to succeed

MONICA HOUSTON
Opinion Editor

As my senior year at VCU comes to an end, I can’t help but wonder where post-graduate life will take me. Will all the knowledge I’ve accumulated over the years in college be applicable to my career? Will I feel like it was worth the stress, debt and doubts?

Taking courses that interest you and build toward a career is the incentive to attend college. Having to overpay for that information, however, is what makes the college experience overrated.

When students enter college, there are certain skills they must obtain in order to be successful. However, many courses are not set up to teach, correct and apply skills but rather tell, grade and hope students succeed.

I take education very seriously, yet I feel trapped by the structure of the system as many students in this generation have come to feel. The idea remains that hard work in academics and quality of effort will lead to success.

At the level of academia most universities offer, the expectation load of professors is overbearing. Every teacher expects their class to set priority over all others. While these expectations may never be stated, the evidence lies within the syllabus.

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, in 2010, the average faculty expectation for study time was 16.5 hours per week, only two hours higher than what students reported. But when asked how much time they believe students actually spend preparing for class, faculty provided a low estimate of nine hours per week. The

faculty’s perception was that students were studying about 7.5 hours less per week than they should.

Along with general education courses, many required curriculum courses require at least two or more hours of study. An average credit load of 15 credit hours requires at least 30 hours of studying. While this may seem achievable to many professors, reality reveals that many students fall behind, only spending between 10 to 25 hours studying.

I take education very seriously, yet I feel trapped by the structure of the system as many students in this generation have come to feel. The idea remains that hard work in academics and quality of effort will lead to success.

— MONICA HOUSTON

According to the AACU, spending hours memorizing facts in order to perform well on an exam may earn a good grade, but it is not likely to result in long-term retention or the ability to apply what was learned in novel situations. And isn’t retention of information the point of going to college for a career?

Many of the courses I received an average grade in, was due to the consistent frequency of exams. Many students suffer from test anxiety which many therapists, according to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, say is

caused from lack of preparation, fear of failure and poor test history. All these categories place blame on the student and lack evaluation of teachers.

If a university is going to offer general education courses, exam preparation and essay building are essential skills to develop. In your first two years of college, you figure out how you are best assessed. Am I a competency-based learner or a project-based learner?

I am currently enrolled in a course that is a requirement for the English degree. Unfortunately for me, this class is largely quiz and exam based. There is a quiz every Wednesday, a mid-term and final. Between lectures and readings, students are expected to read, obtain and memorize information from multiple readings averaging 20 to 100 pages to earn an A on each assessment.

This would be an obtainable goal for students if they were enrolled in perhaps one or two courses. However, at a high school and college level the concept of a quiz seems highly unbeneficial when taking 12-15 credits.

In order for students at any age to be successful and truly benefit from their college experience, they must have access to the knowledge and the resources to help them strive. Not all students learn the same way and they should not have to compromise their interests for a GPA.

Being overlooked for a job because of a grade point average instead of based on the level of knowledge obtained, is discouraging and unbeneficial to students, teachers and employers.



comics

Letter to the Editor

In her article entitled “Women Don’t Need Your Blessing,” Emily Himes claims that the CDC is trying to regulate when women stay sober or drink and when they have or deny sex, citing a “very intentional subtext” in the information that was given. To give credence to this conclusion, Ms. Himes states that the information given in the infographic was already “common knowledge,” and that “alcohol does not cause STD’s, pregnancy, or violence; men

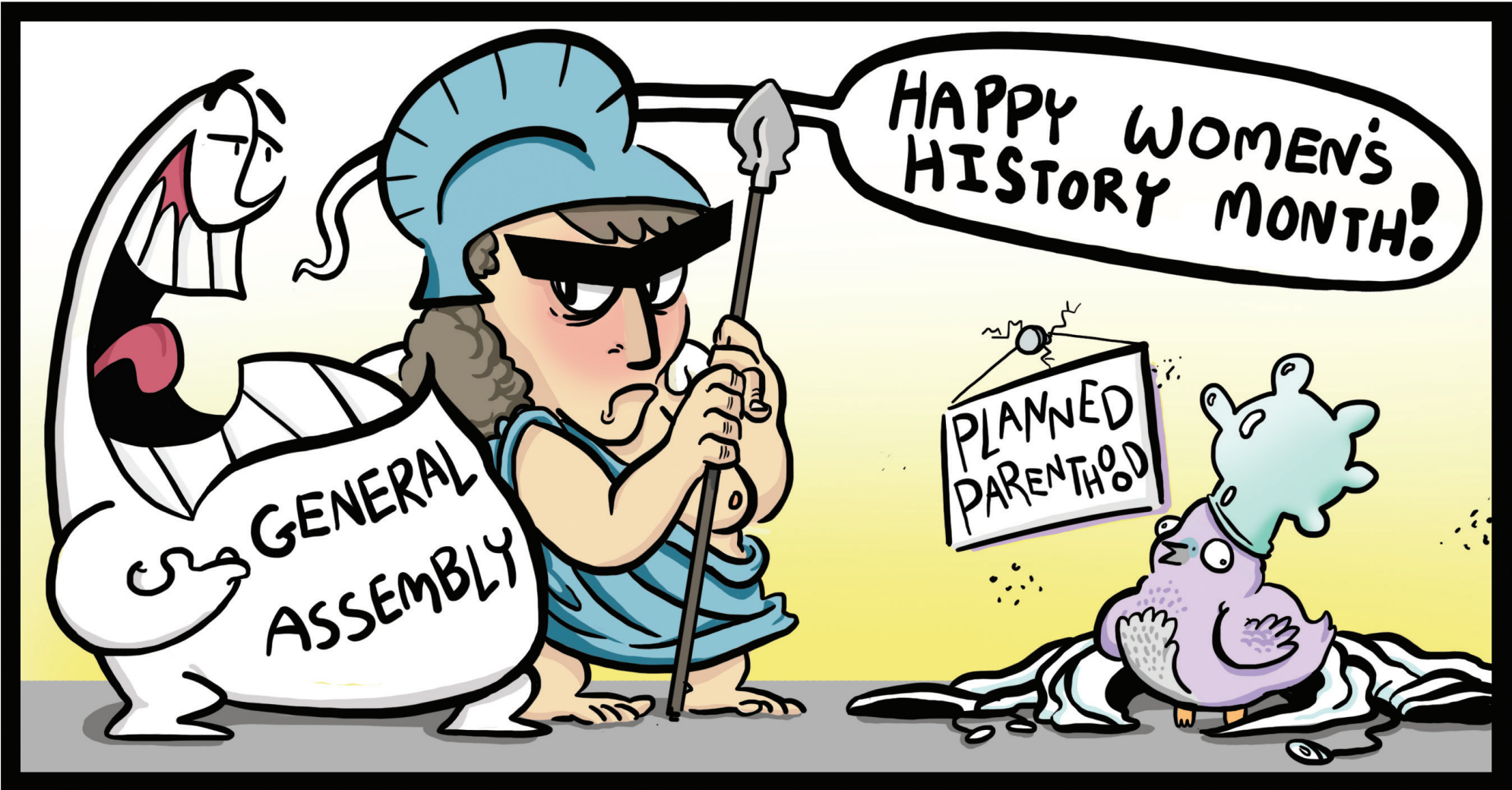
and women without self control [sic] do.” However, the CDC infographic never claimed that alcohol “causes” any of these things, rather it cites these as “risks” of alcohol consumption. In much the same way that skipping breakfast does not “cause” you to order a bigger lunch, it certainly encourages that behavior. If skipping breakfast causes you to be hungrier, and being hungry leads to you ordering a bigger lunch, skipping breakfast would thereby have

caused you to order a bigger lunch. Ms. Himes states that a lack of self-control causes STD’s violence or pregnancy. Alcohol is known to decrease one’s self control. Therefore, could it not be said that alcohol can cause these things? Although it is understandable that the infographic could be seen as slighting or even blaming solely women’s drinking on causing these problems, concluding that the CDC should not be warning women about the effects of

alcohol consumption on their actions because it can be seen as “playing dad” is unfounded since alcohol is in fact a cause for these negative effects by Ms. Himes’ own logic.

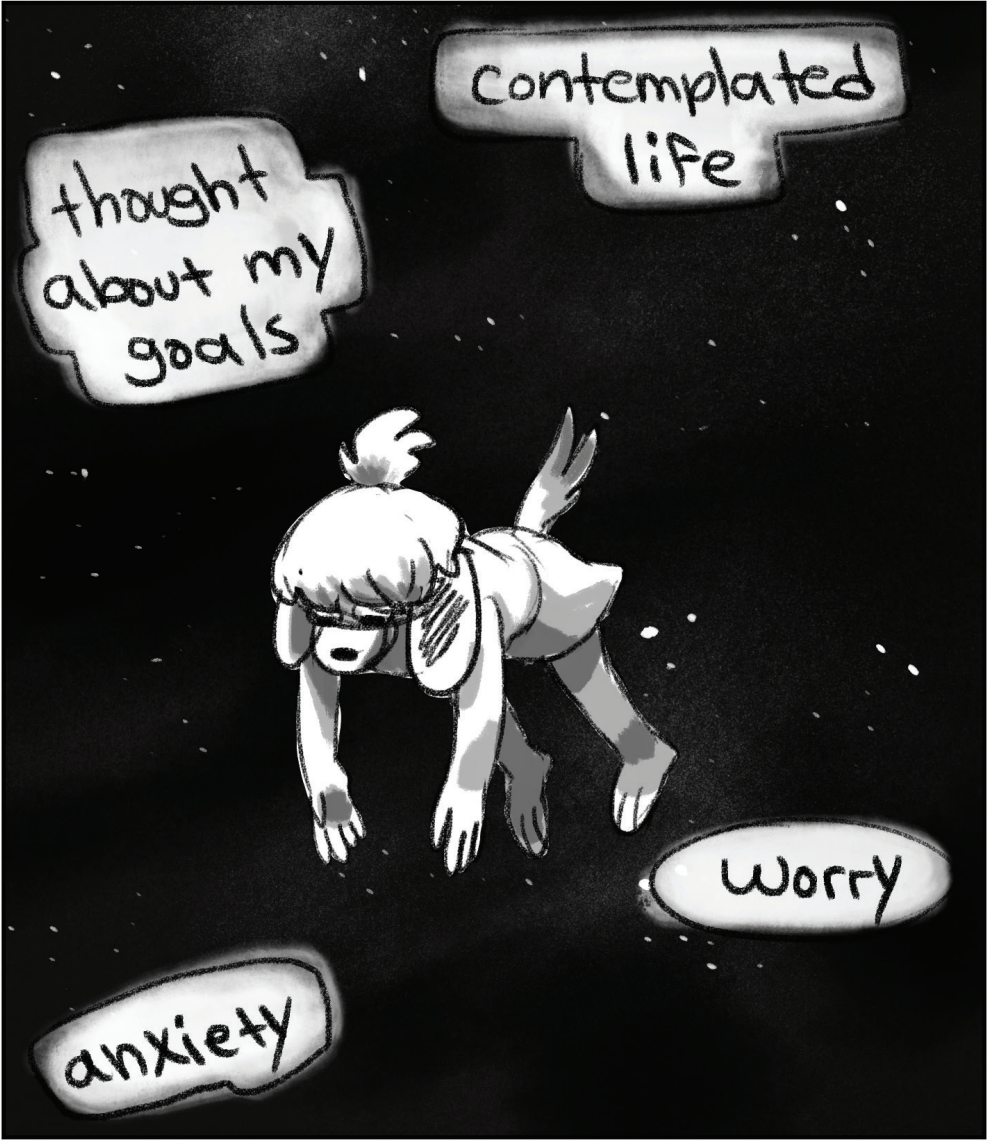
Keegan Edgar
Phil 230
Sec 702

Sick Stupid Tyrants by Gareth Benthall



On March 7th, 2016 the Virginia General Assembly passed House Bill 1090, under which women’s health care centers were defunded. Governor McAuliffe vetoed the decision.

Spring Void by Christine Fournon



THE CT STAFF

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The Commonwealth Times strives to be accurate in gathering news. If you think we have made an error, please call Sarah King, executive editor, at 804-828-5317 or email her at kingsa@commonwealthtimes.org.

Corrections will appear on the Opinion page or online at www.commonwealthtimes.org.

Opinions expressed are those of individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Commonwealth Times or Virginia Commonwealth University. Unsigned editorials represent the institutional opinion of The CT.

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ADD YOUR VOICE

The opinion pages of The Commonwealth Times are a forum open to the public.

Clear, concise and compelling contributions are welcome by email at houstonm@commonwealthtimes.org, by mail or in person at 817 W. Broad St., Richmond, Va. 23220-2806.

RamBikes

VCU RamBikes is your campus resource for biking safely and enjoyably around campus. The RamBikes facility consists of a full service repair shop that allows students, faculty and staff to work on their personal bikes or utilize our own RamBikes technicians for free.

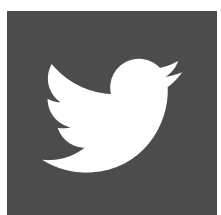


Bike Loans

Rent a bike for free at the James B. Cabell Library and Tompkins-McCaw Library.

Fixit Stations

VCU has 8 Fixit Bike Self-repair Stands. They are free to use, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



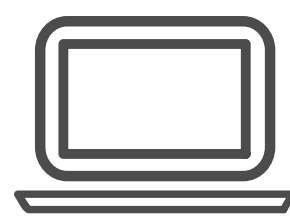
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