

# Office of the President

## Annual Report

2010-11



# Contents

Quest for Distinction	6
Executive leadership team	7
Student success	8
Faculty success	12
Research accomplishments	13
VCU Health System	15
Other university successes	16
A look forward to 2012	18

# Excellence and impact

The 2010-11 year was one of remarkable accomplishments for VCU. As I began to compile this report, I was reminded that the number, the magnitude and the reach of our accomplishments across the institution are overwhelming.

The excitement of the men’s basketball team’s run to the Final Four not only highlighted the team’s talent and work ethic but also provided an unparalleled opportunity to showcase the many areas of excellence across the university, including VCU’s academic quality, faculty excellence, groundbreaking research and community engagement. VCU’s profile has never been brighter.

At every level and in every department, important events and discoveries occur every day that impact the lives of our students, our city, the nation and future generations. To try to capture all that occurs at this great university in an annual report is not possible, but I have attempted to summarize the most outstanding and most representative accomplishments of our students, our faculty members and our VCU team during the past year.

Sincerely,



Michael Rao, Ph.D.  
President, VCU and VCU Health System



# Executive summary

The adoption of Virginia Commonwealth University’s new strategic plan, Quest for Distinction, embodies a year of remarkable accomplishments and charts our vision to be the premier urban, public research university. Quest initiatives are launched and progressing, with the recruitment of a talented executive leadership team and key academic leadership focused on academic quality and student success at every level.

The success of our students remains our top priority, and actions to promote and support greater academic achievement produced stunning results, such as exceptional growth in degree production and the recruitment of the most diverse and academically talented of any entering class at VCU. Our students distinguished themselves and VCU at the national and international levels, garnering prestigious awards such as Fulbright, Goldwater and Boren scholarships at rates that surpass their Virginia peers. Our students’ successes reflect the excellence of VCU professors who earned Guggenheim Fellowships, Fulbright awards, a Jefferson Science Fellowship and a National Science Foundation Career award.

We deftly dealt with budget challenges of historic impact using highly strategic and effective fiscal management. VCU increased and dedicated revenues to help ensure that students receive a quality education. Internal student financial aid doubled and Excellence Funds from the tuition increase provided additional aid to reward merit and enabled the recruitment of 94 additional, national-caliber full-time faculty members.

VCU celebrated its largest federal grant in history when the National Institutes of Health awarded the university a \$20 million Clinical and Translational Science Award. VCU’s strength as a major research university was reaffirmed when the Carnegie Foundation elevated the university to the highest rating for doctorate-granting universities. Research expenditures grew by 5 percent and the forward momentum was boosted with three rounds of Presidential Research Incentive Program internal funding awards to support faculty members engaged in new, emerging or continuing research.

The VCU Health System achieved several awards for quality health care and workplace excellence while generating a strong operating margin, and the university continued to be a national leader in sustainability efforts.

VCU’s culture of excellence stands out as its most significant accomplishment. Faculty, staff and students are excited and committed to the vision charted. Their talent and tenacity will serve us well as we tackle the challenges ahead.

# Quest for Distinction

With input from the university, the health system and our community constituencies, we charted a new vision for the university — our Quest for Distinction. In the face of dwindling resources, the university reaffirmed its commitment to excellence. The board approved Quest at its May 20, 2011, meeting, and we are now fully engaged in its implementation. In pursuing excellence at every level, Quest focuses our efforts on the areas of greatest potential and responsibility.

Our Quest for Distinction launches a new vision for VCU — to be the premier urban, public research university distinguished by its commitment to the intellectual and academic success of a diverse student body; research and discovery that advances knowledge, inspires creativity and improves human health; and the global engagement of students and faculty and staff members that transforms lives and communities.

This commitment to advancing both knowledge and student success is exceptional among research universities and distinguishes VCU from other major research universities. We will report on our progress toward accomplishing these ambitious goals at each board meeting.



# Executive leadership team

We attracted a very talented group that shares our vision in Quest and whose skills and experiences complement the collective talents of the executive leadership team.

We completed national searches for three vice presidents. With the hiring of John Blohm as our vice president for development and alumni relations, Beverly Warren, Ed.D., Ph.D., as provost and vice president for academic affairs, and David Hanson, Ed.D., as vice president for finance, we attracted a very talented group that shares our vision in Quest and whose skills and experiences complement the collective talents of the executive leadership team.

We have refocused our leadership meetings to provide sharper emphasis and review of our Quest initiatives, and we will conduct semiannual leadership retreats to measure and reinforce our progress toward the themes and goals established in Quest.

We also filled several key academic leadership positions, including the deans of the College of Humanities and Sciences, the School of the Arts, the School of Dentistry and the School of Social Work, as well as the director of the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs.

To promote our vision and mission and enhance VCU's stature as a national urban, public research institution, I accepted local and national leadership positions with the Greater Richmond Chamber and a new alliance between the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities and the Association of Public Land Grant Universities. The USU/APLU alliance was formed to create and advance an agenda that recognizes and supports urban-serving universities and their city partners in trying to build a stronger America; I serve as co-chair of the alliance's Urban Health Strand.





# Student success

The success of our students is our top priority at VCU, and we initiated several actions to promote and support greater academic achievement by our students.

We are mindful of the governor’s focus on higher education and the mandates of the “Top Jobs” legislation. We are pleased that many of our initiatives for student success have been focused on preparing the next generation of leaders — graduates who will be prepared to be the producers of new ideas, new discoveries and new businesses to grow the state’s workforce and productivity.

We awarded a total of 7,192 degrees in this academic year, 448 more than in 2009-10. Of these new degree recipients, 4,379 were baccalaureate degrees — more than 300 over the previous year and more than 1,000 over the past five years.

This exceptional growth in degree production is evidence of the recruitment of an academically talented and diverse student body. This year’s freshman class was the most diverse and academically talented of any entering class at VCU. The university remains the most diverse in the commonwealth with 43 percent of all undergraduate students self-identifying as non-white.

We continue to value VCU’s historical commitment to access to higher education and have addressed this commitment with highly strategic and effective fiscal management. VCU increased and dedicated revenues to help ensure that students receive a quality education and also more than doubled the amount of financial aid available to students, particularly those students who were in the greatest financial need. More than 4,100 qualified students received need-based aid for the 2010-11 academic year. The Excellence Funds from the tuition increase also provided additional financial aid for merit-based scholarships.



In addition to increasing the financial aid available to our students, we expanded guaranteed admission agreements with Virginia’s Community Colleges, giving students the opportunity to feel more a part of the university at an earlier time — by providing access to the library, the ability to meet with transfer advisers and participate in school-related events, a VCU email account and discount admission to VCU sports and cultural events. We also committed to placing VCU counselors at two community colleges that have provided the largest number of transfers to VCU: J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and Northern Virginia Community College.

This year’s freshman class was the most diverse and academically talented of any entering class at VCU.

With the increasing academic talent of our diverse entering freshman classes, it is imperative that we engage students with high-quality learning experiences and offer a faculty that is committed to their success. Targeting our limited resources to our top priorities, we committed most of the funding from the tuition increase to recruit 94 additional full-time faculty members. We also provided one-year contracts for 57 new full-time faculty members who taught 390 course sections and provided close to 14,000 classroom seats in the fall 2010 and spring 2011 semesters, thus relieving the stress of too few seats in required undergraduate courses that students had experienced in recent years.

A major accomplishment in student engagement was the establishment of the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program, designed to bring the resources of a research institution to bear on student learning opportunities. The program offers guidance and support to engage our undergraduate students in research activities with an outstanding faculty member. As one example, the program provides 15 fellowships each summer to conduct research, allowing students to engage in active learning while conducting serious research under a mentor of their choice.





A framework was established to provide nationally visible living/learning residence models. Construction has begun on the West Grace Street Student Apartments – South, which will house the Community Engagement Living and Learning Program. The facility will provide an academically based community-building experience for students and faculty that focuses on community engagement themes. The coming West Grace Street – North facility will focus on global education as the learning component for that residence hall.

We also obtained funding for a new academic building at the corner of Linden Street and Floyd Avenue, which will house our School of Social Work and the Center for Teaching Excellence. This building will enhance our ability to engage students in a more active learning experience, and we expect the building to be a technology showcase that will serve as a model for other buildings across our campuses.

Our first Summer Online Course Development Initiative involved more than 40 faculty members and produced 35 new online courses. We have another cohort of 40 faculty members engaged in the program for the summer 2011 session. There are now 178 online courses scheduled for fall 2011, and we expect more than 4,600 students to enroll in those courses.

The number of students enrolled full time increased 2.1 percent from fall 2009 to fall 2010, and has increased more than 15 percent in the past five years.

Our efforts to engage our students in active and relevant learning experiences are bearing the desired results. The number of students enrolled full time increased 2.1 percent from fall 2009 to fall 2010, and has increased more than 15 percent in the past five years. Approximately 77 percent of all students attended VCU full time in the past academic year, compared to 64 percent in 2000. Additionally, the retention rate for our first-time freshmen rose to its highest level ever — more than 85 percent. These components provide a foundation for student success, which bodes well for our future graduation rates.

Our students continued to distinguish themselves at the national and international levels. We are proud that three VCU students have been named Fulbright Student Scholars for the 2011-12 academic year, and another student was selected as an alternate. Glenna Barlow (M.A. in Art History, May 2011); Maria McClintock (B.S. in Chemical and Life Science Engineering, May 2011); Bruce Park (B.S. in Psychology, May 2011, VCU School of Medicine Class of 2016); and alternate David Gude, a current M.D./Ph.D. student, will receive funding to travel abroad to conduct research or teach. McClintock and Park were both Honors College students. These awards increase to 17 the number of VCU students who have received Fulbright Scholarships in the past six years.

The Boren Awards, a National Security Education Program administered by the Institute of International Education, provide unique opportunities for students to add international and language components to their educations. Three VCU Honors College students received Boren Awards this year: Margaret Cotter, a senior studying international studies and political science; Bertrand (Yohannes) Mpigabahizi, a freshman majoring in international studies and economics; and Rachel Sine, a sophomore majoring in international studies. Their awards bring to 12 the total of VCU recipients in the past five years.

In addition, two VCU Honors College students — Anjali Hari Jr., a biology and Spanish major, and Grant Day, a biology major — were awarded the Goldwater Scholarship, the premier national scholarship for undergraduate math, science and engineering students.





# Faculty success

Two faculty members in the School of the Arts received Guggenheim Fellowships, one of the top honors available for artists in the U.S. Corin Hewitt is an assistant professor in the Department of Sculpture and Extended Media, and Stephen Vitiello is an associate professor in the Department of Kinetic Imaging. For two faculty members from one school to be so recognized speaks to the quality of research and scholarship in the School of the Arts. University faculty members also earned two Fulbright awards for the 2011-12 academic year. Brian Cassel, Ph.D., a senior analyst in the VCU Massey Cancer Center, and Michael Pitts, D.B.A., associate professor of management in the VCU School of Business, each will travel abroad during the 2011-12 academic year on Fulbright grants.

The U.S. Department of State selected Robert L. Balster, Ph.D., director of the VCU Institute for Drug and Alcohol Studies, as a Jefferson Science Fellow for the 2011-12 year. Jefferson Science Fellows advise and educate policy officials, including the secretary of state, about complex scientific issues and their potential impacts on U.S. foreign policy and international relations. Since 2004, when the program was established, 53 academic scientists and engineers have been named Jefferson Science Fellows; this is the third VCU faculty member so honored.

Yuichi Motai, Ph.D., assistant professor in the School of Engineering, received a highly competitive Career Award from the National Science Foundation. This marks four Career Awards for the School of Engineering faculty in the past five years.

Observing the need to provide a stronger foundation for the success of our department chairs, we piloted a Department Chair Development Program to prepare chairs for their leadership and management roles and responsibilities. The three-day pilot program was delivered through the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute and will become a required professional development series for all department chairs beginning in the 2011-12 academic year.



University faculty members  
also earned two Fulbright  
awards for the 2011-12  
academic year.

# Research accomplishments

The university received the largest federal award in its history when the National Institutes of Health awarded VCU a \$20 million Clinical and Translational Science Award. The award supports translational and collaborative research designed to bring laboratory discoveries to the bedside

and to train the next generation of clinical investigators. The award establishes VCU as one of only 60 CTSA centers across the country, and the only CTSA center in the commonwealth.

The Carnegie Foundation elevated VCU to Research University – Very High Research Activity, the highest rating for doctorate-granting universities. Combined with its Community Engaged designation, this makes VCU one of only 28 public universities in the country with academic medical centers to achieve both distinctions in 2011.

The third round of internal funding awards for the Presidential Research Incentive Program were announced. Awards totaling \$300,000 supplemented awards by the units of \$220,000 to support 23 faculty

members engaged in new, emerging or continuing research. The awards supported research across the institution, including medicine, allied health, arts, education, engineering, social work, dentistry, nursing, business, pharmacy, and humanities and sciences.

With the board’s approval in May 2010, we established the VCU Parkinson’s Disease Center. Through a combination of creative laboratory and clinical translational research and collaboration, we will slow and ideally stop the progression of Parkinson’s and related degenerative brain diseases of the aging.

Research expenditures for the year ended June 30, 2011, totaled approximately \$207 million, an increase of 5 percent over the prior year. Grants from the National Institutes of Health continued to dominate our awards portfolio, totaling \$94 million in FY11.







In addition to the CTSA award, our successes included a \$6.5 million award from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to work to reduce youth violence in Richmond and a \$5.1 million award from the U.S. Department of Education to improve science teaching and student learning.

We secured state support for a \$5 million appropriation for the VCU Massey Cancer Center, which will support our ongoing efforts to achieve the National Cancer Institute's Comprehensive Cancer Center designation for Massey.

Recognizing our fiduciary responsibilities for the significant level of research funding we receive, we are cognizant of calls for increased accountability and transparency. We are expanding and enhancing our research infrastructure. We are implementing measures to provide increased oversight and compliance of our research activities and we are strengthening our procedures related to responsible research conduct, clinical trials, conflicts of interest and research administration.

The university received the largest federal award in its history when the National Institutes of Health awarded VCU a \$20 million Clinical and Translational Science Award.

## VCU Health System

The VCU Health System received several awards for quality health care and workplace excellence. U.S. News and World Report ranked the VCU Medical Center as the Best Hospital in the Richmond area. The study recognized the medical center for four nationally ranked specialties (there were no other nationally ranked specialties in the Richmond area) and nine high-performing specialties.

In addition, the medical center received the Beacon Award, recognizing excellence in critical care services, placing our Intensive Care Unit among the best in the country. The health system also received many other quality awards, including re-designation as a Magnet hospital for our excellence in nursing care.

For the fourth time, the health system was recognized as Greater Richmond's Employer of Choice. The health system received several additional national and local workplace awards, including recognition as a Top 50 Company for Executive Women, designation as one of Working Mother magazine's 100 Best Companies and receipt of the Alfred P. Sloan Award from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for business excellence in workplace flexibility.

In spite of government cutbacks and increased uncompensated care, the health system generated a strong operating margin. That margin is critical to our ability to meet our safety net hospital responsibility, replenish our medical center with state-of-the-art facilities and equipment and attract the best physicians and researchers to our health system.





# Other university successes

We benefited greatly from the generosity of our alumni and donors in 2010-11. James and Frances McGlothlin donated \$25 million to the School of Medicine. And the Opportunity VCU campaign met its goal of \$12 million for scholarships.

But in the face of diminishing support from state and federal sources, we must sharpen and expand our development activities to support our mission and attain the goals adopted in Quest. Therefore, development is a top priority. We assembled a new strategy and vision for the development office and made new investments of almost \$1 million in the office to strengthen operations and build momentum toward our next campaign.

We worked successfully through the state’s budget process to reverse the governor’s proposed budget amendment that would have limited the university’s revenues from the 2010 tuition increase. But the governor’s action highlighted the need for more extensive education of our legislators and government officials about VCU’s service to the commonwealth, our students, their families and the associated financial challenges we face; we are already under way in those efforts.

In addition, I established and strengthened relationships with key stakeholders that enabled the successful resolution of the Shockoe Bottom parking lot issue as well as garnered state appropriations for the new academic building and Massey Cancer Center.



## 2010-11 truly was a year of remarkable accomplishments!



VCU continued to be a leader in sustainability efforts. The Sustainable Endowments Institute awarded VCU a grade of A- for our university-wide efforts, making VCU one of only 52 universities across the country to receive a score of A- or better. In addition, the U.S. Green Building Council awarded VCU’s Cary Street Gym the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Gold Certification, the fifth university building to receive LEED certification. Previously, the Rice Center’s Walter L. Rice Education Building, the School of Dentistry’s W. Baxter Perkinson, Jr. Building, the Molecular Medicine Research Building and the Larrick Student Center all received LEED certification awards.

And throughout all of these incredible events, our communications team worked tirelessly to promote the university, build our brand and let millions know of the successes and opportunities that await students at VCU and our VCU Medical Center.

Finally, while I have stressed accountability through metrics and performance plans, one of our most significant accomplishments of this past year is something that cannot be measured statistically — we have fostered a culture that is committed to excellence. Our university employees are caring people who are focused on quality and customer service. When you visit our campus and talk with our students and faculty and staff members, you feel their excitement and commitment to the vision we have charted. That talent and commitment will serve us well as we tackle the challenges ahead.

2010-11 truly was a year of remarkable accomplishments!



## A look forward to 2012

The 2011-12 year will be even more challenging than recent years. The nation's economic recovery remains slow and continues to have significant impacts on all aspects of our funding — state appropriations, grants and contracts, and philanthropic support. And we realize the hardships imposed when we necessarily increase tuition and fees.

But I am encouraged and energized by the accomplishments of 2010-11, which confirm that the influence of our Quest for Distinction is already taking root and has established a solid foundation for our 2011-12 activities.

We submitted our six-year academic and financial plans to the state on July 1, and will review those plans with the board and finalize them with the state no later than Oct. 1. Our six-year plans build on the fundamental principles and themes in Quest and position VCU to be a leading and unique university committed to advancing both knowledge and student success.

Finally, as we launch the 2011-12 year, we are poised for greater levels of success for our students and faculty members, more groundbreaking research discoveries and greater impact regionally and nationally.







A VCU Creative Services publication

an equal opportunity/affirmative action university  
110808-01