

## From the Dean



### Dear Friends,

All of us here at the VCU School of Education are committed to the quality of our programs, as well as the engagement and success of our students. One of the ways that we do that is by opening up opportunities for research and study that our students are looking for. In recognition

of that, we had another record-breaking year in FY21, with over \$35 million in grant funding, including a 24% increase in federal awards alone!

We also remain committed to meeting the needs of the communities that we serve in a way that is meaningful and engaging to our students and alumni. One of the most important ways that we do that is through the activities of the School of Education Alumni Council, which is enthusiastically committed to providing service and professional development opportunities to our school, our university, and to our local communities.

In February 2022, the Education Alumni Council will proudly present the inaugural Alumni College, a one-day conference-style event for School of Education alumni and Richmond-area educators to engage in professional development. Event sessions will provide professional learning that can be translated into practice, on topics that meet the needs of today's educators, counselors and students. All presentations will be delivered by School of Education faculty, staff, doctoral students and Richmond community partners, and will highlight the cutting-edge learning and mission of the school.

We continue to put all our efforts into meeting the needs of the children, families and communities that we serve. None of this would be possible without your continued support — so thank you on behalf of the entire VCU School of Education community.

### Andrew P. Daire, Ph.D.

Dean and Ruth Harris Professor,  
VCU School of Education

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!  
**SOE DAY at VCU Women's Basketball!**  
Join the loyal Ram Nation! Experience the excitement!

Attend a NCAA Division I basketball game **FOR FREE** when the VCU Rams women's basketball team takes on the St. Joseph's Hawks at the Stuart C. Siegel Center.



**Sunday, January 23, 2022 | 1 p.m.**

**VCU** School of Education 

**Momentum | Fall 2021**  
Owen Wachter, Editor Michael Lay, Designer

**Education Alumni Council Representatives**

Andrew P. Daire, Dean, VCU School of Education  
Edward G. Kardos, Executive Director, Office of Development, Alumni & Student Engagement  
Jared Crist, B.A. '14, M.Ed. '18 (President, Education Alumni Council)

The SOE Education Alumni Council welcomes its newest members: Kevin Bruny, Robin Liesfeld, Julia Baily. To view the complete Education Alumni Council roster visit:  
[go.vcu.edu/soe-alumni](http://go.vcu.edu/soe-alumni)

Momentum is a biannual publication of the VCU School of Education Office of Development, Alumni & Student Engagement.



# Alumni College

## One Day, One Place, Unlimited Learning

February 26, 2022 | Register today!

The VCU School of Education Alumni Council is proud to present the inaugural Alumni College, a one-day conference-style event for VCU SOE alumni and Richmond-area educators to engage in professional development.

Alumni College will provide professional learning that can be translated into practice, on topics that meet the needs of today's educators, counselors and students. Attendees will enjoy a keynote address, sessions in multiple tracks, and a panel discussion from the education experts. All presentations will be delivered by SOE faculty, staff, doctoral students and Richmond community partners, and will highlight the cutting-edge learning and mission of the school. K-12 teachers may use the Alumni College conference to potentially receive continuing education points toward their licensure renewal.\*

Alumni College will be held on Saturday, February 26, 2022, at Maggie L. Walker Governor's School, followed by a networking reception at the Science Museum of Virginia.

The registration fee for Alumni College will cost \$25 for non-alumni of the VCU School of Education. Alumni of the school will receive a discounted registration fee of \$15.

**Registration information:** [go.vcu.edu/alumni-college-2022](http://go.vcu.edu/alumni-college-2022)

\*The VCU School of Education Alumni Council does not guarantee that the Alumni College will be accepted for continuing education credits toward licensure renewal. Participants should consult with their respective district coordinator or licensing agency.

### Keynote Speaker

## Ashley Bland

The keynote speaker for Alumni College 2022 will be VCU School of Education alumnus and the 2021 Richmond Public Schools and Region 1 Teacher of the Year Ashley Bland (M.Ed. '16). Bland was a participant in the RTR Teacher Residency's Cohort 5 and earned her M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction from the VCU School of Education.

As an undergraduate student at VCU, Ashley Bland didn't give much thought to being a teacher at first. She was double majoring in biomedical engineering and physics and serving as pre-college initiative chair for the VCU chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers.

In her leadership role with the multicultural organization, she worked with middle and high school students in the Metro Richmond area, encouraging them to enter STEM fields. One of her engineering professors took notice and suggested that Bland consider the RTR Teacher Residency, a graduate program at the School of Education that recruits, trains and supports teachers for high-needs and hard-to-staff schools. She looked into the program and found that it was a "perfect fit."

Bland today serves as an instructional technology resource teacher at three RPS schools: John B. Cary Elementary School, Mary Scott Preschool, and Binford Middle School. For the past year, she's been dedicated to showing her students that they could master technology during a pandemic. For her efforts over the past year, she was presented with two coveted awards – Richmond Public Schools 2021 Teacher of the Year and Region 1 Teacher of the Year.



## Cutting-edge professional learning opportunities

Alumni College 2022 will feature professional learning opportunities by VCU School of Education faculty, staff, doctoral students and Richmond community partners on topics that meet the needs of today's educators, counselors and students. Below is a sample of the presentations planned for the Alumni College that highlight the cutting-edge learning and mission of the school.



### Design-thinking for Educators

**Brandi Daniels**, doctoral student, Ph.D. in education, concentration in educational leadership, policy and justice



This interactive session will fuse lecture, discussion and activity-driven delivery methods using volunteers from the audience. Inspired by an academic partnership with VCU's da Vinci Center for Innovation, Design-Thinking for Educators will help to transition the challenges in the education field from a deficit language to a values- and skills-based perspective. The lecture portion of the presentation will help to illuminate content connections and participant engagement via shared learning and experiences (i.e., storytelling). The Universal Design for Learning and Bolman & Deal's Four Leadership Frames for collaboration and productive conflict will be explored as well.

### When We Do It for the Culture: The Intentional Centering of Blackness in School-based Mental Health Systems

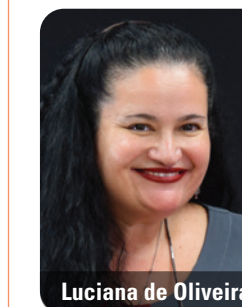
**Shenita Williams**, doctoral student, Ph.D. in education, concentration in educational leadership, policy and justice



Mental health services are often underutilized by Black students because selected programs and services are not designed nor implemented with the Black student in mind. Given the minimal research in the extant literature about how the mental health needs of Black students are addressed through school-based mental health (SBMH) systems, Williams' research and her presentation aim to help schools create inclusive and effective SBMH systems that consider the cultural influences and mental health needs of Black students. Using a lecture-style format, participants are introduced to Afrocentricity and its use as a framework for meeting the mental health needs of Black students.

### Culturally Sustaining Practices for Elementary Multilingual Learners

**Luciana C. de Oliveira**, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Graduate Studies; Jia Gui; Destini Braxton; Tara Willging



This presentation describes ways elementary teachers have continuously supported multilingual learners through culturally sustaining teaching practices. Presenters will draw from results of qualitative case-studies to examine how these teachers draw on students' cultural and linguistic affordances in classroom instruction. They will look at what was happening within specific classrooms to provide a comprehensive, holistic description of instruction in action. They will share excerpts of classroom instruction to showcase these teaching practices and discuss implications for classrooms in Virginia and beyond in the context of the new WIDA 2020 Standards.

Learn more about SOE's inaugural Alumni College at [bit.ly/AlumniCollege2022](http://bit.ly/AlumniCollege2022)

Register for SOE's Alumni College 2022 at [bit.ly/AlumniCollegeRegister](http://bit.ly/AlumniCollegeRegister)



# momentum

Fall 2021

## Alumni College special issue:

- Keynote speaker, Ashley Bland
- Highlights of cutting-edge professional learning opportunities
- Expert panelists
- Schedule of events, sessions and courses
- Register for Alumni College 2022 at [bit.ly/AlumniCollegeRegister](https://bit.ly/AlumniCollegeRegister)

Visit us at [soe.vcu.edu](https://soe.vcu.edu)




## Our Panelists

**Thomas H. Beatty, Ed.D.** Beatty is the director of the VCU Child Development Center (CDC), which is part of the VCU School of Education. He works with other units on campus to integrate additional services into the CDC to establish a more robust program. He is also working with Andrew P. Daire, Ph.D., dean of the School of Education, to expand the CDC. Beatty previously served as an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership, where he taught courses that prepared individuals for leadership roles within schools and provided teachers with a better understanding of the teaching-learning process. He subsequently served as executive director of secondary education in Richmond Public Schools, where he helped principals build capacity among their faculty and staff to facilitate a quality school environment. He worked with local universities to forge partnerships that enriched students' experiences, and he implemented several new initiatives, including the Middle School Renaissance, a collaboration between the Richmond-area business community and the middle schools. Beatty also served as a high school and middle school principal, as well as a high school English teacher. Beatty earned a bachelor's degree in English from VCU, as well as master's and doctoral degrees from The College of William & Mary.



**Nakisha Whittington, Ph.D.** Whittington joined the VCU School of Education in August 2021 as assistant professor in elementary education in the Department of Teaching and Learning. She earned her doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction from Penn State University, her master's degree in elementary education and teaching from Xavier University of Louisiana, and her bachelor's degree in political science and government from University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Whittington was named Holmes Scholar of the Month for June 2021 by the American Association of



**Rashard J. Wright (M.T./E'01)** Wright has provided empowering educational leadership for almost two decades. Proven and recognized for building successful academic settings quickly and efficiently, Wright's name is acknowledged throughout the state of Virginia and beyond as an accomplished academic, public speaker, teacher leader, and mentor for principal supervisors, principals and assistant principals. He is currently the chief of staff for Newport News Public Schools, appointed in July 2018. He previously served as the chief schools officer with Virginia Beach City Public Schools. An accomplished academic leader, Wright is known for inspiring leaders and championing rigorous school support plans which result in full accreditation for all schools. He has also designed leadership development and succession planning models for aspiring and existing school administrators. He is the recipient of the 2014 Marcus Foster National Distinguished Educator Award for his vision work in the area of change leadership and leadership succession planning. In September 2020, Wright was also selected to serve as the chairman of the African American Superintendent's Advisory Council (AASAC). The AASAC is charged with advising, informing, and providing professional insight on policy development and accountability for public education in Virginia.



Colleges for Teacher Education. She credits her academic and professional success partly to her involvement in the Holmes Program. She served as the historian on the AACTE Holmes Council 2020-21. Whittington's research interests include digital literacy practices of urban youth. She has published several articles on effective instructional practices to meet the needs of diverse learners. She also served as a co-director for Penn State's Summer Research Opportunities Program, Upward Bound instructor, reading specialist and editorial assistant for an educational research journal. Whittington previously served as an early literacy specialist during the 2015-2016 academic school year at Children's Literacy Initiative.



## Schedule of Events

Full session descriptions available at [bit.ly/AlumniCollegeSchedule](https://bit.ly/AlumniCollegeSchedule)



**Check-in:** 9-9:45 a.m.

**Welcome:** 10-10:15 a.m.

**Andrew P. Daire, Ph.D.,** Dean, VCU School of Education

**Keynote Address:** 10:15-10:45 a.m.

**Ashley Bland (M.Ed '16)**

**SESSION ONE:** 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

**An Overview of Tiered Supports for Undergraduate Students in Education**

**Presenters:** Kris Herakovich-Curtis; Kim Dupre; Anna Hebb, Ed.D.

**Session Description:** Teachers will understand the importance of teaching behavior expectations for all students to create an equitable learning environment, reduce time on discipline, and create a positive school climate built on student and family voice.

**Implementing Special Education Instruction & Services Post-Pandemic**

**Presenter:** Tameka Burroughs

**Session Description:** The session will explore concerns with students having disabilities returning to school by discussing some identified concerns from all constituents impacted including students, parents/guardians, related service providers, and special education teachers and case managers.

**Return to Learn – Lessons Learned, Opportunities, and Challenges of Post-Pandemic Instruction**

**Presenter:** Thomas Connolly, Ed.D.

**Session Description:** Session attendees will learn innovative practices that were born out of the 2020 shutdown that influenced full-time face-to-face instruction.

**Lunch:** 12-12:45 p.m.

A boxed lunch will be provided for all registrants.

**Panel Discussion:** 12:45-1:30 p.m.

**SESSION TWO:** 1:45-2:45 p.m.

**Culturally Sustaining Practices for Elementary Multilingual Learners**

**Presenters:** Luciana de Oliveira, Ph.D.; Jia Gui; Destini Braxton; Tara Willging

**Description:** This presentation will describe ways elementary teachers have continuously supported multilingual learners through culturally sustaining teaching practices. We will examine how these teachers draw on students' cultural and linguistic affordances in classroom instruction, and discuss implications for classrooms in Virginia and beyond.

**"We're Not Giving Up on You!" Employees with ASD and Success in Employment Prior to and During COVID-19: Qualitative Case Study**

**Presenters:** Carol Schall, Ph.D.; Paul Wehman, Ph.D.; Vicki Brooke; Jennifer McDonough

**Description:** We will provide an overview of a recently completed qualitative study of five youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who acquired and maintained employment prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ultimate message of this session is one of hope for youth with ASD to become full participants in their lives and communities.

**Enhancing Your Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices Through Action Research**

**Presenters:** Hillary Parkhouse, Ph.D.; Alma Kenup; Victoria Case; and Jesse Senechal, Ph.D.

**Description:** This session will introduce teachers to how they can use action research to become more culturally responsive educators. VCU faculty will

describe the theory behind action research, and experienced researchers from Richmond-area secondary schools will share how they carried out action research projects and the impacts these had on their culturally responsive teaching practices.

**SESSION THREE:** 3-4 p.m.

**RTR Teacher Residency: Supporting Teacher Professionalism Through Reflective Practice**

**Presenters:** Lisa Abrams, Ph.D.; Kim McKnight, Ph.D.; and Jesse Senechal, Ph.D.

**Description:** This session focuses on the central role of reflective practice in teacher development and professional growth. Session participants will learn how different tools and strategies have supported the development of beginning teachers prepared through a residency model.

**When We Do It for the Culture: The Intentional Centering of Blackness in School-Based Mental Health Systems**

**Presenter:** Shenita Williams

**Description:** This presentation aims to help schools create inclusive and effective school-based mental health systems that consider the cultural influences and mental health needs of Black students. Participants will be introduced to Afrocentricity and its use as a framework for meeting the mental health needs of Black students.

**Design-Thinking for Educators**

**Presenter:** Brandi Daniels

**Description:** Inspired by an academic partnership with VCU's da Vinci Center for Innovation, this presentation will help bridge the education field and its challenges from a deficit language to a values, skills-based perspective. It will also help to illuminate connectors for content connections and participant engagement via shared learning and experiences.