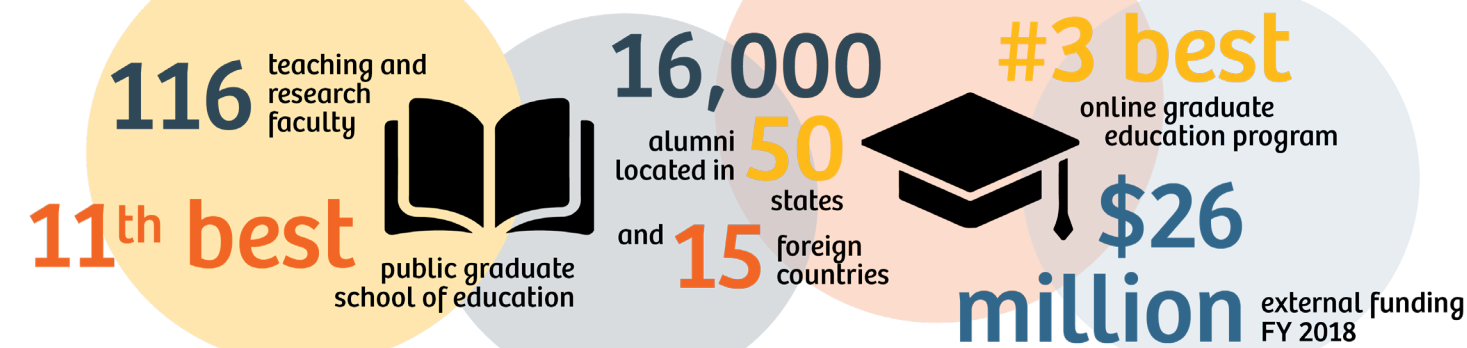


momentum



Dear Friends,

This has been an exciting academic year for the VCU School of Education (VCU SOE) and I could not be more proud of the hard work and dedication of our faculty, staff and students.

VCU SOE once again ranks among the top graduate schools of education in the country, according to U.S. News & World Report. The school comes in at **No. 20 overall** in the newly-released 2020 rankings, up six from last year. The school is also **No. 11 among public graduate schools** of education. Our **online programs are also ranked No. 3** in the nation.

These rankings demonstrate not only the exceptional quality of our faculty, staff and students, they also confirm the impact of our teaching, research and service to the surrounding communities.

In addition, we have been hard at work toward the launch of five new undergraduate programs that will lead to initial licensure as Bachelor of Science in Education degrees. Once approved by SCHEV and VDOE, these programs will be:

- BS.Ed. Elementary Education & Teaching
- BS. Ed. Early Childhood Education & Teaching
- BS.Ed. Secondary Education & Teaching (with a concentration in Engineering Education)
- BS. Ed. Health & Physical Education
- BS. Ed. in Special Education & Teaching

These programs will open up new opportunities for current and incoming VCU students and a much needed pipeline of well trained educators for our state. We expect additional updates in the upcoming months as these programs get approved. In the meantime, if you have any questions please contact Jenna Lenhardt, recruitment specialist at SOEinfo@vcu.edu.

Of course, none of this would be possible without your continued support – so thank you on behalf of the entire VCU SOE community.

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

Make it Real Campaign

Students and faculty are greatly benefiting from the generosity of alumni and friends of the VCU School of Education. During the Make It Real Campaign, a greater number of alumni are giving back to the school, more than at any time in our history. Of our donors, more than 60 percent have given multiple times, and most every day we see new donors participating.

“Participation has truly been key to our success,” said Ed Kardos, senior director of development for the school. “With a year left in our campaign, we hope to invite more alumni and friends to participate with a gift that is meaningful to them. We have gifts ranging from \$25 to two seven-figure gifts, but it takes all gifts to create energy, excitement and the momentum necessary for success.”

Based on historic giving information and an analysis of future giving, the campaign

leadership set an ambitious goal of \$7.5M. We are happy to share that our percent of goal is now over 153% with \$11.5M invested to date.

Giving Day 2019

On April 24 we held our first ever School of Education Giving Day. We were excited to provide an opportunity to alumni, faculty, staff and friends to contribute to our mission. Giving Day was a great success with 62 donors participating and \$9,326 raised. Thank you to all who participated!

Donors to date have invested in people—our students and faculty. Forty-six percent of all gifts and pledges will go to scholarships, professorships and other programs associated with students and faculty. Twenty-seven

percent of all dollars raised will go toward endowed scholarships. “With the generosity of our donors, the number of students who will receive scholarships will rise by nearly 300 percent. This is only the beginning as we will look to continue to build this endowment as the demand will increase with our new undergraduate program coming on line this fall,” Kardos said.

Building on a strong alumni engagement foundation, the emphasis of our evolving program is to integrate our faculty and students to enrich their experience. “We are very happy that 23 percent of our alumni have invested in our school, but this is only the start of things to come,” said Dean Andrew Daire.

\$1.75M Gift to Fund School of Education Scholarships

Largest gift in school history honors legacy of two retired professors



Elise Blankenship, Ed.D.

Elise Blankenship, Ed.D., a retired associate professor in the VCU School of Education, recently pledged a \$1.75 million estate gift to provide scholarships for full-time upper-level and graduate students in the school. The gift is the largest single donation in the history of the School of Education.

Blankenship’s pledged gift will be added to the Jean E. Lokerson and M. Elise Blankenship Endowed Scholarship in Education, which Blankenship previously created on behalf of her friend and colleague, Jean Lokerson, Ph.D., emerita associate professor at the school.

“We are honored and thrilled to receive this generous gift from Elise Blankenship on behalf of Jean,” said Andrew Daire, Ph.D., dean of the VCU School of Education. “Through this fund, we will keep their dream alive to teach the teachers of the future so they can transform the lives of those we serve in our communities.”

Blankenship and Lokerson came to VCU in 1974 to enhance the school’s newly approved graduate program in learning disabilities. They taught at the school for more than 22 years, and both remained active at VCU until Lokerson’s death in 2016.

“I cannot express enough, how very much I enjoyed my tenure at the VCU School of Education, and the same joy was expressed by Jean so many times,” Blankenship said. “We truly appreciated the support of the administration; President Eugene Trani; our dean, Dr. John Oehler [dean of the school from 1985 to 2002]; and our dedicated, competent colleagues in the school.”

During their time at the VCU School of Education, Lokerson and Blankenship were known as pioneers in the area of educating teachers and parents in understanding other dimensions of learning disabilities. In the early 1970s, they co-developed learning disabilities simulation modules, which provided hands-on experience toward understanding cognitive function and dysfunction in child learning. As a result of their work, they traveled across the country and internationally, enhancing the understanding of learning disabilities.

“The Lokerson-Blankenship Endowed Scholarship — and Elise Blankenship’s generous estate gift — are a fitting reflection of their legacy, and it will help prepare educators for many years to come,” said Edward G. Kardos, senior director of development for the School of Education.



Jean E. Lokerson, Ph.D.

PPD Grants Target Improved Outcomes

Two awards aim to deliver more effective and economical services to people with disabilities

The Partnership for People with Disabilities, a center affiliated with the VCU School of Education, was recently awarded two grants totaling \$692,000 that will help determine which services for people with disabilities lead to the most effective outcomes.

Identifying Predictors for Enhanced Outcomes for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

This three year, \$600,000 study – funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research – will determine what individual and service characteristics are associated with better outcomes for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, and how these factors interact with costs.

Dr. Parthy Dinora, principal investigator, said that this will be the first study of its kind in the U.S. to examine individual data sets rather than aggregate data.



“There is significant investment in Medicaid services, particularly in the area of intellectual and developmental disabilities, so it is important to understand what services and supports lead to the best outcomes,” Dinora said.

Drs. Michael Broda from the School of Education and Matthew Bogenschutz from the School of Social Work are collaborators on the project.

Special Olympics International

The Partnership also recently received a \$92,000 award from Special Olympics International (SOI) to provide consultation on measuring health outcomes for athletes around the world.

Dinora, principal investigator, said that while there is a great disparity in health outcomes between people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the general population, SOI is actively trying to close the gap.

“A lot of people know about Special Olympics’ athletic events, but most people don’t know that SOI does a lot to improve overall health outcomes for these athletes, including nutrition, fitness and social/emotional education outside of athletic competition,” she said.

The Partnership’s Kayla Diggs Brody, Angela West and Kit Hammar will join Dinora in conducting this work with the SOI team and international partners.

Momentum Spring 2019

Editor: Diana Burkett, APR
Designer: Julia Penny, B.F.A. '20

Education Alumni Council Roster

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Ex-officio members

Andrew P. Daire, Dean; Edward G. Kardos, Senior Director of Development; Meredith P. Melo, Development Specialist; S. Corey Humphrey, Leadership Annual Giving Officer

Members

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VCU Alumni representative

Patrick Heckel, Associate Director of Alumni Outreach and Engagement, Lifelong Learning

Advancement Council Roster 2019

Members

Brian C. White, Chair; Dale C. Kalkofen (M.A.E. '76), Vice Chair; William H. Carter (B.S. '79); Michael B. Gill (M.S. '02, Post-Master's Cert. '06, Ed.D. '11); Hattie W. Hamlin (B.S., Ph.D. '11); Linda R. Melton; Anna Lou Schaberg (M.Ed. '70); Gregory Schnitzler; Sandra A. Taylor (M.B.A.); James (Jim) E. Ukrop (L.H.D.); Vicki Godsey White (B.S. '75, M.Ed. '82); Mary Ann H. Wright (M.Ed. '84, Ph.D. '97)

Emeriti members

Andrew P. Daire, Dean; Edward G. Kardos, Senior Director of Development; Meredith P. Melo, Development Specialist; S. Corey Humphrey, Leadership Annual Giving Officer

momentum

Make it real.
CAMPAIGN FOR VCU

SOE Building World Class Partnerships Dr. Cole broadens experience and skillsets of OSE team

The VCU School of Education's Office of Strategic Engagement (OSE) is a resource for regional, national and international partners who want to prepare their educators to work effectively in high needs schools. The OSE team combines unique skillsets and experience to deliver solutions that meet individual needs – and the addition of Dr. Joshua Cole, who joined the team as its executive director in January, will take the office to a new level.

Dr. Cole previously worked for Chesterfield County Public Schools, serving as principal of Ecoff Elementary School for eight years. Prior to that, he taught in rural Michigan, inner-city Detroit, and internationally in Australia, which gives him a unique local-to-global perspective of students, their families, and their communities.

With the addition of Cole, the OSE team now has national and international experience in teaching and administration, in both urban and suburban areas, from K-12 to higher education.

"I'm really excited about our team. We've been in the trenches in the classroom, and we understand the bigger issues that teachers face. We can also easily move from one of these extremes to the other along the educational continuum, which is truly unique," said Cole.



Joshua Cole, Ph.D. & Amanda Hall, Ph.D.

DEI Committee: Continuing the Conversation Workshops for faculty, staff and students focus on diversity and inclusion

The VCU School of Education's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee recently sponsored a series of workshops on diversity and inclusion for SOE faculty, staff and doctoral students.

The workshops, which began in December and continued through March, were conducted by the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, a non-profit organization that helps schools, businesses and communities across Virginia achieve success through equity and inclusion.



1st Workshop – Unconscious Bias 201: provided an overview of unconscious bias and shared practical tips and approaches that faculty, staff and students can use to make better, bias-free decisions.

2nd Workshop – Microaggressions: Preventing and Processing: defined the term "microaggressions" (everyday slights, snubs, or insults that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages) and gave participants the opportunity to learn more about preventing and processing them.

3rd Workshop – The New Majority: Understanding Demographic Trends: explored demographic trends in higher education as they relate to race and ethnic origin and explored how campus culture can be supportive of all.

The final workshop – Proactive Planning: Supporting and Including LGBT+ Students and Employees – reviewed best practices for supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students and employees. Participants explored policies, practices and procedures that should be in place to foster an inclusive climate.

Cassandra Willis: A Father's Sacrifice; a Daughter's Calling

Cassandra Willis grew up in Richmond, Virginia, during a time when limited citywide busing was being used as a means to desegregate Richmond Public Schools. The first in her family to attend college, Willis earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia, her master's degree from the VCU School of Education, and expects to earn her Ph.D. in Education with a concentration in Special Education and Disability Leadership this May in SOE's Research to Policy Advocacy program.



Cassandra Willis, Ph.D. Candidate

What drew you to the field of education?

Back in the 1970's, African-American children in my Highland Park neighborhood were being bused to Mary Munford Elementary School in the western part of the city. My father didn't want me to be caught up in that political tension. He wanted me to get the best education possible. He talked to some of his friends whose children were in Catholic schools and made the decision – the sacrifice, really – to send me to Catholic schools from preschool all the way through high school. I went to Holy Rosary Catholic Church, St. Patrick's Grade School in Church Hill and Marymount High School. I attended the University of Virginia for my undergraduate degree.

I was the only African-American student in the special education program when I was at U.Va. Partly because I had a very good education when I was growing up, I recognized that everyone else should have a good education, too. As a teacher, I believed that I could provide that. It felt like it was my calling, and I believed that I belonged to the community that needed it. Many years later, here I am.

When you applied to graduate school, what made you choose VCU SOE?

My family lives in Richmond, as does my husband's family. We had just gotten married when I started my master's program at SOE. By the time I finished the program, I was pregnant with our first child. Moving has never really been an option for us. After getting my master's degree here, I knew that SOE had the programs I wanted. I didn't look anywhere else.

Any highlights from your most recent semester?

One big highlight was when I received the 2018 Jane West SPARK Award at the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children Conference in November 2018. It's named after Jane West, a national leader in advocating for disability policy and special education. She's also an adjunct professor at VCU SOE, and she teaches the policy portion of our RTPA (Research to Policy Advocacy) program. It was so special to win an award that's named after someone I admire so much and who is so entrenched in my field of interest.

Undergraduate Programs Coming Soon!

The VCU School of Education is working toward the launch of five new undergraduate programs. These programs will lead to initial licensure as Bachelor of Science in Education degrees, once approved by SCHEV and the Virginia Department of Education this May, with anticipated launch in Fall 2019. Pending approval, the programs will be:

B.S.Ed. Elementary Education & Teaching

B.S. Ed. Early Childhood Education & Teaching

B.S.Ed. Secondary Education & Teaching (with a concentration in Engineering Education)

B.S. Ed. Health and Physical Education

B.S. Ed. in Special Education and Teaching

Additional updates about these programs will be available in the upcoming months. In the meantime, if you have any questions please contact soeinfo@vcu.edu.

Continue Your Education Journey!

Enroll in a class as a non-degree student today! Learn from anywhere with our online courses or take evening classes on our Monroe Park campus. Learn more by visiting: soe.vcu.edu/non-degree.

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