

# DIVISION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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901 West Franklin Street  
 Box 843062  
 Richmond, Virginia 23284-3062  
 Phone: (804) 828-8848  
 Fax: (804) 828-2756  
[community.vcu.edu \(http://www.community.vcu.edu/\)](http://www.community.vcu.edu/)

The Division of Community Engagement mobilizes university-community partnerships that generate innovative solutions to societal challenges and prepares the engaged citizens of tomorrow. In advancing VCU's mission and strategic plan, Quest 2025: Together We Transform, the office:

- Facilitates and coordinates innovative academic programs, on and off-campus, to enhance the community's access to VCU
- Supports the involvement of faculty and students throughout the university in community partnerships
- Creates opportunities for interdisciplinary, community-based collaborations that integrate research, teaching and service

The Division of Community Engagement resides within the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and serves as the university's central hub for community engagement. Community-engaged teaching, including programs such as ASPIRE and service-learning, offers experiential student learning that is embedded in the community; through mutually beneficial university-community partnerships, students and faculty participate in activities that address community-identified needs and deepen students' academics and civic learning. Community-engaged outreach actively enlists students, faculty and community members in efforts to identify social issues and provide innovative solutions. The Mary and Frances Youth Center and the VCU America Reads programs serve as models of developing and sustaining high-impact community-university partnerships. Community-engaged research is a collaborative process between researchers and community partners that creates and disseminates knowledge and creative expression with the goal of contributing to the discipline and strengthening the well-being of the community.

## Service-learning

Service-learning integrates community service with traditional academic courses in order to enhance academic learning, facilitate the development of students into responsible citizens and meet community-identified needs. Each student in a service-learning class participates in organized service activities that directly relate to the subject matter of the course and meet community-identified needs. The service needs are defined by community organizations in partnership with service-learning faculty. All service-learning students participate in reflection activities, which increase their understanding and application of course content, enhance their sense of civic responsibility, and encourage them to learn and grow from their experience. A listing of service-learning courses is provided in the Schedule of Classes each semester. For more information, email [servelearn@vcu.edu](mailto:servelearn@vcu.edu) or visit the Service-Learning website (<https://servicelearning.vcu.edu/>).

## VCU America Reads

The America Reads initiative began as a challenge put forth by former President Bill Clinton to "ensure that every child can read independently by third grade." Citizens from across the nation and all walks of life have answered the call to improve the literacy skills of struggling readers. VCU has responded to the challenge by setting aside college work-study funds for eligible students who want to make a difference in the life of a child.

The VCU America Reads program places college work-study students in local elementary schools to provide comprehensive reading support to students who are below grade level in reading.

Interested students can apply through the VCU work-study jobs portal on the Financial Aid website (<https://finaid.vcu.edu/types/workstudy/>).