DIVISION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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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 for Distinction, 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 home for community engagement. Community-engaged teaching, including programs such as ASPiRE and service-learning, connects students and faculty with activities that address community-identified needs through mutually beneficial partnerships that 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 AmeriCorps and America Reads programs serve as models of developing and sustaining high-impact community-university partnerships. Community-engaged research is a collaborative process between the researcher and community partner 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 participates in organized service activities that directly relate to the subject matter of the course and which meet community-identified needs. The students then participate in reflection activities, which are designed to increase their understanding and application of course content and enhance their sense of civic responsibility. The community organization defines the service need and the students learn and grow from their service through reflection on their experience. A listing of service-learning courses is provided in the Schedule of Classes (http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/scheduleofclasses) each semester. For more information, call (804) 827-8215 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 is a sister program to the VCU AmeriCorps program that 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) or they may also apply directly to the VCU America Reads Program at community.vcu.edu/outreach/america-reads/eligibility-requirements-and-application (http://community.vcu.edu/outreach/america-reads/eligibility-requirements-and-application).

VCU AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps (http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps) is a national service corps of more than 75,000 members that provides adults of all ages a chance to make a difference in local communities across the United States through one year of service. Members work together to address a community-identified need in critical areas like education, homelessness, disaster relief and organizational capacity.

VCU AmeriCorps is the largest and longest-running AmeriCorps program in Virginia. Established in 1995, the VCU AmeriCorps program has an educational focus with the goal of helping improve the literacy skills of children in grades K-3 attending Richmond Public Schools.

Applications are available beginning in March at community.vcu.edu/outreach/americorps/eligibility-and-application (http://community.vcu.edu/outreach/americorps/eligibility-and-application).

For additional information on the division's programs, visit community.vcu.edu (http://www.community.vcu.edu).