UNDERGRADUATE INFORMATION

General education requirements
To complete the general education requirements for the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, students must complete the general education requirements for undergraduate study for the College of Humanities and Sciences (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/college-humanities-sciences/undergraduate-information).

Virginia Capital Semester
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Virginia Capital Semester offers qualified students from VCU and other universities the opportunity to experience an internship in the state government while continuing their studies on a full-time basis through course work at VCU. Internships are arranged with the legislative and executive branches of Virginia government and with the advocacy and lobbying organizations associated with the state government. The program is offered in the spring semester and begins the first week of January, corresponding with the calendar of the Virginia General Assembly.

The select group of students participating in the program will assemble weekly in a policy-making seminar, GVPA 423, to hear from key leaders at the Capitol and to compare experiences from their various internship placements. Students will receive three credits for the seminar, and three credits and a $1,000 stipend for GVPA 494, the internship. Both courses are required of all students in the Virginia Capital Semester. Additional related courses taken from the VCU curriculum are recommended. Given the demands of the internship, however, students should not exceed a total of 15 credit hours during the Virginia Capital Semester. The program is designed for full-time students, but if space is available, students who do not wish to take a full course load may be allowed to enroll in the internship and policy-making seminar for six credits.

The program is open to all undergraduate students from accredited colleges and universities, both public and private, including those from colleges and universities in other states. Virginia Capital Semester also is open to graduate students on a case-by-case basis. Acceptance into the program is competitive. Program participants are selected by a committee comprised of faculty members and state officials, with preference given to full-time students who will have advanced sophomore, junior or senior standing at the time of enrollment in the program. Contact information, application procedures and deadlines are available on the Virginia Capital Semester website (http://wilder.vcu.edu/service/capsem).

Criminal Justice Scholars
Kristine Artello, J.D., Ph.D., M.S.S.A.
Assistant professor

Undergraduate criminal justice majors who are planning to attend a graduate or professional school are encouraged to participate in the Criminal Justice Scholars program. This is an opportunity to work closely with a criminal justice faculty member to complete a research project and present the results to the faculty with the additional potential to write a journal article. To be considered, a student must have obtained junior status. Transfer students must be juniors and must have completed at least 18 hours of undergraduate work at VCU. All applicants must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.25 or a minimum 3.5 in the major and must have earned a minimum grade of B in both CRJS 380 and STAT 210.

Applicants must meet with the Criminal Justice Scholars program coordinator prior to applying to the program to verify eligibility and discuss project ideas. Students should submit an application to the program coordinator by March 1 (for fall consideration) or Sept. 15 (for spring consideration). Once approved, students may enroll in CRJS 492 or GVPA 495 to facilitate the project.

The application, approximately two- to three-pages long, should include:

- A well-defined topic
- A clearly stated research question (or questions)
- A plan for obtaining relevant data in a timely manner (either through original data collection or an existing data set)
- A bibliography of at least 15 relevant academic sources
- A realistic timeline for completion of all tasks
- A list of criminal justice faculty members with whom the student wishes to work

Applications will be evaluated by a faculty committee based upon the criteria listed above. Acceptance into the Criminal Justice Scholars program is contingent upon a faculty member’s agreement to supervise the project and his or her assessment of the project’s feasibility.

Upon successful completion of the project, students will have “Criminal Justice Scholar” placed on their transcripts in recognition of their efforts and outstanding work.

Wilder School Scholars
John Mahoney, Ph.D.
Assistant dean for undergraduate academic affairs

Students in any Wilder School undergraduate major may apply for Wilder School Scholar status upon completion of their freshman year. Students must have a minimum 3.5 cumulative GPA or a 3.75 GPA in their major to be eligible to become Wilder School Scholars. Students must maintain this average in order to continue their Wilder School Scholar status. Transfer students must meet these same requirements after a minimum of one semester of VCU course work.

In order to graduate as Wilder School Scholars, students must:

- Maintain the GPA cited above
- Complete GVPA 499, a three-credit Wilder School Scholars capstone course or an honors thesis through the Wilder School Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program
- Complete at least 15 additional credits in Wilder School honors courses/variants/modules, with at least three of those credits completed each academic year, and at least three of those credits in an honors course outside the student’s major (but within the Wilder School)
- Attend at least three Wilder School events or seminars per academic year
The Wilder School offers an array of honors courses each semester. With the exception of GVPA 499, which is limited in enrollment to Wilder School students, these courses are open to students from all majors, since they are offered in conjunctions with the Honors College. Wilder School honors course offerings will include:

- At least once per year, GVPA 499. The exact structure and content varies from year to year. The course will focus on a topic of broad interest to all Wilder School students and disciplines (violence, equity, justice, etc.)
- At least two three-credit honors courses each year
- At least two honors sections of existing courses each year (generally these are sections of large, introductory-level courses)
- At least two honors variants in selected courses each year in which a student may receive honors credit while enrolled in a non-honors course by fulfilling additional requirements, including more advanced readings; extra meetings with the professor and other honors students enrolled in the course; group projects with other honors variant students; or other activities as deemed appropriate by the instructor (These honors variants are distinguished by a separate section number and a title indicating honors status. Limits may be placed on the number of honors variant students in any single course.)
- At least four 1.5-credit honors modules each year

The Wilder School Scholars program is explicitly linked to the VCU Honors College. Students within the Wilder School may graduate with one, or all, of three distinct levels of honors: honors in their individual majors (where available), Wilder School Scholar honors and University Honors. Students who graduate as Wilder School Scholars are designated as such at their graduation ceremonies, with a separate certificate, sash and other forms of recognition.

Students who wish to enter the Wilder School Scholars program or who seek additional information should contact the Wilder School Scholars director. Honors courses for each semester are listed in the Schedule of Classes.

**Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP)**

**Blythe A. Bowman, Ph.D.**

Associate professor

The Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program cultivates and supports research partnerships between Wilder School undergraduates and faculty. The UROP offers students the chance to work on cutting-edge research, whether they join established research projects or pursue their own ideas. As UROP participants, undergraduates are involved in each phase of standard research activity: developing research plans, writing proposals, conducting research, analyzing data and presenting research results in oral and written form. UROP projects take place during the academic year, as well as over the summer, and research can be done in any of the Wilder School's academic programs. Projects can last for an entire semester or may continue for a year or more. For their projects UROP students receive academic credit or pay, or work on a voluntary basis. The UROP experience enables students to become familiar with the faculty, learn about potential majors and investigate areas of interest. UROP participants gain practical skills and knowledge they eventually apply to careers after graduation or as graduate students. Most importantly, they become involved in exciting research.

Essential to all UROP projects are the following:

- Research work worthy of academic credit, regardless of whether or not credit is requested
- Active communication between the UROP participant and a faculty supervisor, who is responsible for guiding the intellectual course of the student's work
- A research proposal: a student-authored statement of purpose that describes the planned research
- Completing a UROP experience to present through oral presentation, poster or video (strongly encouraged)
- Enrollment in GVPA 495, a three-credit course, which can be counted one time toward any of the Wilder School's undergraduate majors (Students can take a total of six GVPA 495 credits during their undergraduate careers, but only three of those credits can count toward their major fields. Any additional GVPA 495 credits will count as upper-level electives.)

Each semester/year, the Wilder School will provide several grants of up to $400 each to support UROP projects.

**Eligibility and procedures**

Students in any undergraduate major in the Wilder School who have a minimum cumulative overall GPA of 3.25, or a 3.5 GPA in their major, are eligible to participate in the UROP. Students also must have completed the UNIV 200 and research methods courses, with a minimum grade of B in each course in order to be eligible to participate in the program. As a rule, freshmen are not eligible for the program, and it is strongly recommended that sophomores wait until their junior or senior year to apply for a UROP experience. Each year, however, a small number of incoming freshmen with outstanding potential may be identified as eligible for early participation in the UROP; the GPA requirement and course prerequisites are waived for these freshman participants.

Students wishing to enter the UROP or seeking additional information should contact the Wilder School UROP director.