The School of Medicine opened on Nov. 5, 1838, as the medical department of Hampden-Sydney College, and became the Medical College of Virginia in 1854. Full-time clinical faculty members were first appointed in 1928, and improved facilities became available between 1936 and 1941 with the completion of the 600-bed West Hospital, A.D. Williams Clinic and Hunton Hall dormitory, located on the current site of the Main Hospital building. Growth in faculty, students and facilities continued after World War II, leading to the development of today's academic health center.

Hospital facilities on the MCV Campus include both inpatient and outpatient facilities. MCV Hospitals of the VCU Health System is licensed for 902 beds. In addition, the hospital at the McGuire Veterans Affairs Medical Center (600 beds) provides excellent patient care, training and research opportunities for the School of Medicine through its affiliation programs.

In the School of Medicine, advanced degree programs are coordinated through the Office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Education, who acts for the dean of the School of Medicine on all issues related to administration of these programs. Each advanced degree program is represented by a graduate program director. Graduate program directors are appointed either by the chair of the department administering the program or, in the case of interdisciplinary programs, by the associate dean for graduate education in consultation with the chairs of participating departments. Graduate program directors administer all aspects of their programs and represent their programs within and outside of the School of Medicine.