

UNDERGRADUATE INFORMATION

Virginia Capital Semester

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wilder.vcu.edu/students/student-success/virginia-capitol-semester

(<https://wilder.vcu.edu/students/student-success/virginia-capitol-semester/>)

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 (<https://wilder.vcu.edu/students/student-success/virginia-capitol-semester/>).

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.