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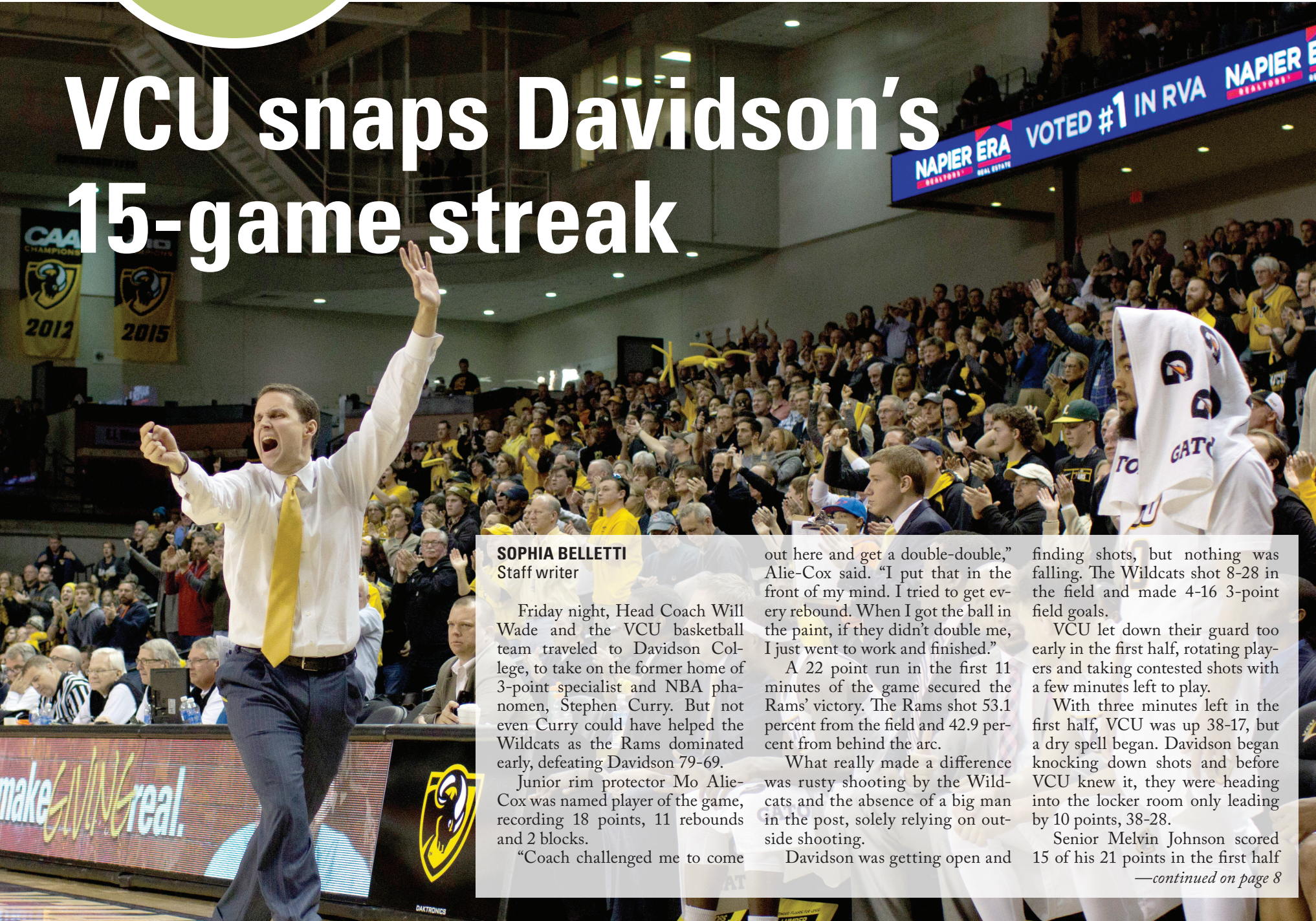
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VCU has won 13 straight conference games dating back to last season. The Rams have a +11.2 scoring margin over opponents this season.

VCU snaps Davidson's 15-game streak

SOPHIA BELLETTI
Staff writer

Friday night, Head Coach Will Wade and the VCU basketball team traveled to Davidson College, to take on the former home of 3-point specialist and NBA phenom, Stephen Curry. But not even Curry could have helped the Wildcats as the Rams dominated early, defeating Davidson 79-69.

Junior rim protector Mo Alie-Cox was named player of the game, recording 18 points, 11 rebounds and 2 blocks.

“Coach challenged me to come out here and get a double-double,” Alie-Cox said. “I put that in the front of my mind. I tried to get every rebound. When I got the ball in the paint, if they didn’t double me, I just went to work and finished.”

A 22 point run in the first 11 minutes of the game secured the Rams’ victory. The Rams shot 53.1 percent from the field and 42.9 percent from behind the arc.

What really made a difference was rusty shooting by the Wildcats and the absence of a big man in the post, solely relying on outside shooting.

Davidson was getting open and finding shots, but nothing was falling. The Wildcats shot 8-28 in the field and made 4-16 3-point field goals.

VCU let down their guard too early in the first half, rotating players and taking contested shots with a few minutes left to play.

With three minutes left in the first half, VCU was up 38-17, but a dry spell began. Davidson began knocking down shots and before VCU knew it, they were heading into the locker room only leading by 10 points, 38-28.

Senior Melvin Johnson scored 15 of his 21 points in the first half

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Proposed bill could legalize concealed-carry on campuses

ANDREW CRIDER
Staff Writer

A proposed bill in the Virginia House of Delegates could allow school boards and private schools to designate volunteers to carry a concealed firearm on Virginia elementary and secondary school grounds.

House Bill 76, introduced by Del. Robert G. Marshall (R-Manassas) and co-sponsored by Del. Mark Cole (R-Fredericksburg), is currently in the House Education Subcommittee, which has yet to vote on whether to bring the bill to the legislature.

The bill would allow the school board to appoint one or more persons, including any employee of the respective school or any member of the community, to conceal carry a firearm. Marshall said that having more concealed guns in schools creates a safer environment because the idea of staff members having concealed carry rights will deter

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PHOTO BY BROOKE MARSH

Project Downtown takes place after the Jumm'ah prayer on Friday, which is in the afternoon and usually followed by acts of community service.

Muslim Student Association aids Monroe Park's homeless

SAMUEL GOODRICH
Contributing Writer

In recent years, the media has given controversial representations of the Islamic community, but one student organization at VCU is trying to resolve this through acts of kindness.

Since 2008, the Muslim Student Association has helped feed many homeless around Monroe Park with Project Downtown, attracting a diverse number of students to provide community service.

Last week's event was slightly different, since the weather had moved many homeless to local shelters. Yet, this did not deter many members showing up to instead provide food and hot chocolate to students passing by the Baptist Collegiate Ministries building.

Project Downtown is always after the Jumm'ah prayer on Friday, which is a prayer given in the afternoon and is usually followed by practitioners conducting some kind of community service.

“Jumm'ah, (which is) the Arabic word for Friday, is viewed as the most virtuous day of the week in Islam,” said Azza Hussein, one of the community service chairs of the MSA. “It is viewed as a day where prayers are accepted, and good deeds are encouraged.”

During the prayer, the Iman, or the worship leader, will usually remind the congregation about the importance of good deeds in a Muslim's life.

Faisal Alshareif and Hussein are responsible for setting up events for the MSA; like sporting events, celebrating religious holidays, and other community services like Project Downtown.

“These reminders help ignite a sense of responsibility towards our community, leading to a collaboration of a big crowd under the same umbrella of community service,” said Hussein about the importance of the Jumm'ah.

“I try to find opportunities for everyone on campus to indulge in, especially volunteer work,” said Alshareif.

The MSA is one of the largest organizations at VCU and has received many awards for community service and even religious student organization of the year. Being so large, the MSA also has the added responsibility of representing the Muslim population of VCU.

Hussein said that the organization “Serves as a great tool to voice our concerns to the higher authorities in the university.”

Alshareif shared this

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OPINION

VCU begins to advance in efforts to increase diversity

HIBA AHMAD
Contributing Columnist

VCU begins to Advance in Efforts to Increase Diversity and Inclusion

One of the main aspects VCU prides itself in is its diversity. It's one of the factors that attract students not only from the States, but also from overseas, as students from all backgrounds crowd the sidewalks. It's the foundation of this institution.

Ironically, this is also the area where the university needs the most growth.

This past fall, VCU students staged a peaceful protest to stand in solidarity with the students of the University of Missouri who were encountering racial discrimination by their peers and faculty members on their campus. The protest was followed by a sit-in at President Rao's office to address student concerns regarding diversity on VCU's campus.

These events immediately caught the attention of administration and faculty members alike, leading to a forum to spearhead the issues.

At the forum, students and faculty members from all backgrounds voiced their concerns regarding the topics of diversity and inclusion. Some of the key concerns raised during the forum included the lack of African American faculty members, and increased action behind the promises made to students from the administration.

The President's Forum on Diversity opened up a line of communication that allowed both faculty and students to discuss growing concerns. It was followed up with collaborative efforts between the university and the student organizations.

One of the most notable actions the university has taken is introducing new faculty members that bring fresh perspectives to departments they serve.

Andrew P. Daire, the current associate dean for research in the College of Education at the University of Houston, will effectively be the new dean to the School of Education here at VCU.

Debra J. Barksdale, Ph.D, has been appointed as the new associate dean of academic programs at the School of Nursing.

Both individuals are African American.

In the process of molding a student into a professional during their undergraduate career, it is vital for the student to interact or encounter individuals from a similar ethnic background with a position of authority or hierarchy. This allows the student to picture him or herself as something greater than what society has led them to believe.

By placing these African Americans, or any other person of color, in a position of authority, students not only in the education department, but throughout the school will have someone to share their struggles or successes with that may only be unique among POC.

VCU is an institution that is constantly pushing their students to be their best. The professors on campus help students foster skills and techniques that will help them

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In this section: Tampon tax.
Crime rate. Concealed-carry.
Richmond economy. State of the
University. Transgender student.

briefs
NATIONAL

Makeshift memorial springs up on Oregon highway for rancher

About a dozen people paid their respects Sunday afternoon at a makeshift memorial that has sprung up where rancher Robert “LaVoy” Finicum was shot and killed by police last week on U.S. Highway 395 north of Burns.

The mourners wiped tears, prayed, and laid a copy of the U.S. Constitution on a large wooden cross that has been planted at the site.

The site is also surrounded by American flags and signs, including one that says “RIP LaVoy Finicum. A True American hero.”

Meanwhile, the four people occupying a national wildlife refuge held their position Sunday. They have demanded that they be allowed to leave without being arrested. The jailed group's leader, Ammon Bundy, and 10 others who were arrested last week remained in custody.

Through his lawyer, Bundy on Saturday again called on the remaining occupiers to leave. The FBI has said it's trying to resolve the situation peacefully.

Brief by the Associated Press

Attorney: Feud between motorcycle clubs started deadly brawl

A weekend brawl at a Denver motorcycle show that left one dead and seven others injured was between a club of off-duty law enforcement and another group, lawyers for both biker organizations said Sunday.

The groups are blaming each other for the clash that happened early Saturday afternoon at the crowded Colorado Motorcycle Expo, where members of motorcycle clubs from across the country had gathered. Three of the wounded were hit by gunfire. Another person was stabbed and three others suffered injuries from a fistfight, police said.

Brief by the Associated Press

Lawmakers, officials voice opposition to Atlantic drilling

Officials from several New Jersey shore towns joined with some members of the state's congressional delegation Sunday to oppose federal plans that would allow oil and gas drilling in the Atlantic Ocean.

Environmental and tourism groups also took part in the rally on the Asbury Park boardwalk, which drew a crowd of about 200.

U.S. Sens. Bob Menendez and Cory Booker and Rep. Frank Pallone, all Democrats, were among those who cited a potential for “catastrophic” oil spills that could cause economic and environmental harm at the Jersey shore and other areas along the East Coast.

“The Jersey Shore is one of our most precious natural resources, providing enjoyment for generations of New Jersey families and visitors alike. An oil spill threatens everything we hold dear about the Shore...and we have to do everything in our power to prevent it from becoming a reality,” Menendez said. “Let's call Atlantic drilling what it is: another handout to the oil industry.”

Brief by the Associated Press

LOCAL

2 Virginia Tech students charged in death of teen girl

Two Virginia Tech engineering students have been arrested in connection with the death of a 13-year-old girl whose disappearance last week from her Virginia home set off a frantic, four-day search.

Blacksburg Police say David Eisenhauer, 18, was arrested Saturday and charged with first-degree murder and abduction in the death of Nicole Madison Lovell, who disappeared from her home Wednesday. Natalie Keepers, 19, of Laurel, Maryland, was arrested Sunday and faces charges of improper disposal of a body and accessory after the fact in the commission of a felony.

Both are being held without bond at the Montgomery County Jail. A spokesman for the Blacksburg Police Department said officials would not know until Monday when the two would make their first court appearances.

Police said they have evidence showing that Eisenhauer and Lovell knew each other before she disappeared.

Brief by the Associated Press

Witnesses say possible fireball seen in sky above DC area

Witnesses say a possible fireball has been seen in the sky above Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia.

Video captured by Alexander Salvador on a dashcam at 6:17 p.m. Saturday shows a streak streaming through the sky above Falls Church, Virginia. Observers described it as “huge” and “very bright” but then noted it fizzled, disintegrating into fragments.

According to NASA, a fireball is an unusually bright meteor that reaches a specific brightness.

There were hundreds of fireball sightings reported to the American Meteor Society, which tracks fireballs, across the northeast. The organization encourages eyewitnesses to log a report with a description on its website.

Brief by the Associated Press

Bill introduced to remove tampon tax

MARGARET CARMEL
Multimedia Editor

Virginia's sales tax covers almost everything you buy, from athletic socks to milk. It doesn't, however, apply to medicine, contact lenses and certain other personal health items. Now, the General Assembly is considering adding feminine hygiene products to the list of exemptions.

Del. Mark Keam (D-Vienna) introduced House Bill 952, which seeks to remove the sales tax on tampons and sanitary napkins in Virginia. Currently, these items are taxed at the standard rate, like most other items: 6 percent in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads and 5.3 percent in the rest of the state.

“I think that most people, Republican and Democrats, would agree that this is an unfair tax,” Keam said Jan. 27 in an interview in his office at Capital Square. “It's not equitable for women to have to pay a tax on something that guys don't have to spend money on.”

Virginia is one of 40 states that taxes tampons and sanitary napkins. Of the 10 states that don't tax these products, five deliberately changed their laws to end the policy. The other five do not have a sales tax.

“I believe this is such an essential product for women that in the code of Virginia, we have a discriminatory impact on one gender and not on the other,” Keam said. “From a policy perspective, I don't think it makes sense for us to treat women differently from men in terms of what they have to buy as an essential product.”

The tax on tampons by many states has generated controversy and discussion on the internet re-



ILLUSTRATION BY SHANNON WRIGHT

cently. President Obama weighed in on the issue in an interview with YouTube personality Ingrid Nilsen for the news organization AJ+.

Obama said he has no idea why states would tax feminine hygiene products.

“I suspect it's because men were making the laws when those taxes were passed,” he said.

Keam's bill would add feminine

hygiene products to the list of miscellaneous sales tax exemptions in Virginia. The list currently includes such things such as firewood, eyeglasses and hearing aids.

“My goal is to make this a parity issue, and not turn it into a partisan fight over who supports women more,” Keam said. “I want to make this about making our tax law equitable for everyone.”

HB 952 has been sent to the House Finance Committee. Keam, who is a member of the committee, said the panel is awaiting the results of the economic impact study on the bill. The study would estimate how much revenue the state would lose by exempting tampons and sanitary napkins from the state's sales tax.

Keam believes changing the

policy is something all Virginians should care about.

“I like nontraditional messengers. I want men to say this isn't just a women's issue, but we as men should have responsibility for policy making that deals with these issues as well.”

Rao addresses “relevance” during State of the University

FADEL ALLASSAN
Print News Editor

VCU's “relevance” as an institution was the theme of President Michael Rao's annual State of the University address on Jan. 28.

Rao, now in his seventh year in office, cited a poll by the Pew Research Center which indicates fewer than half of Americans believe attending college is the best way to succeed, while in contrast, experts believe 60 percent of Americans need a degree for the nation to be competitive in the 21st century economy.

“The world has changed,” Rao said, “but universities haven't changed as quickly, and thus I must say we have fallen behind.”

The president acknowledged the increasing cost of attending college as signs that universities across the country were failing to meet the public's standard and that universities need to close the gap between the amount of underprivileged versus wealthy individuals

that graduate.

“We're not always relevant in the ways that we once were,” Rao said. “Too many universities are seen as institutions rather than opportunities.”

“The world has changed but universities haven't changed as quickly, and thus I must say we have fallen behind.”

— MICHAEL RAO

The president said VCU has played an important role in making higher education more accessible by being Virginia's leader in Pell grant awards, and said he plans to further efforts to make the university relevant to its students, the community and world.

Rao said one way VCU would accomplish this is by prioritizing undergraduate research involvement, and beginning in fall 2016

“all students will have a real world experience as part of their education,” which received significant applause from the audience.

“The way that students prefer to learn is changing, and so the spaces in which they learn have to change too,” Rao said, referencing the \$50 million Cabell library renovations and Academic Learning Commons, which opened in 2013.

Rao also touted a program created by VCU Trauma Center faculty which promotes anti-violence advocacy through partnerships with groups like the Boys and Girls Club, as well as emphasizing the importance of diversity within the university.

To be relevant to the world, Rao said the university must ensure we “look like the world that we lead,” and acknowledged that diversity has been a buzz-word in higher education — used more often for marketing than mission.

“It's unacceptable that someone might not succeed just because of what he looks like or how she



CT FILE PHOTO

Rao said beginning this fall, undergraduates would have a “real world experience” in their education.

thinks or who she loves or where she was born,” he said, referencing the university's diversity forum hosted before winter break in response to students standing in solidarity with their peers at the University of Missouri and organizing a sit-in at Rao's office.

“That's why I was so moved when our community came together before winter break, in what I consider to be a remarkable show of unity,” Rao said. “We will be at the intersection of hope and opportunity.”

Mcauliffe, Jones announce AvePoint arrival in Richmond

ANDREW CRIDER
Staff Writer

Gov.Terry McAuliffe and Mayor Dwight Jones announced on Jan. 29 that software vendor and manufacturer AvePoint opened an operation center in downtown Richmond, bringing 100 jobs to the city.

“Today is a great day for AvePoint and the City of Richmond,” Jones said. “AvePoint's decision to establish its presence in Richmond speaks to the City's strong business climate and ability to compete and retain new economy companies with international footprints.”

The New Jersey company specializes in software to accompany Microsoft Cloud technology. Richmond Times-Dispatch reports that the company's \$1.5 million investment will bring 100 jobs to Richmond.

Tom Lin, Avepoint's corporate vice president of North America sales, told NBC12 that Avepoint had been examining Richmond for a

long time. Lin said when he looked at other municipalities, Richmond presented the best opportunity.

“Here, the governor's office, the Mayor's office provided us with a lot of details of the environment, the economic benefits ultimately lead us to decide to come to Richmond, Virginia,” Lin said.

According to the mayor's office, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, a state-wide economics agency, worked with Richmond, Greater Richmond and Arlington County officials to secure the investment.

AvePoint will provide a number of benefits including subsidized training for its new employers, and other benefits from the Virginia enterprise zone program.

“Virginia clearly offers an unparalleled attractive business atmosphere with lower taxes, a lower cost of doing businesses and a highly talented labor force, the combination of which no other lo-



PHOTO BY BROOKE MARSH

Gov. McAuliffe and Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones came together for the announcement.

cation suitably matched,” said Brian Brown, AvePoint's Global General counsel. “Compared to other possible expansion locations, Virginia took the winning position by a wide

margin thanks to its commercial, social and cultural standing.”

AvePoint has a history of contracting with medical and financial firms, making Richmond a com-

petitive location. The company has not currently posted any internships.

Richmond’s violent crime rate hits lowest point in 45 years

SOPHIA BELLETTI
Staff writer

Mayor Jones announced the rate of violent crime in the city has dropped to its lowest level in 45 years. The rate decreased by 30 percent since 2009 and 12 percent since 2014. It’s also the largest year-to-year crime reduction rate in the past seven years. A significant drop in Richmond’s homicide numbers began in 2006 when former Richmond Police Chief Chris Magnus began his term in office. Jones attributed the dip in violent crime to initiatives the Richmond Police Department implemented in recent years. In 2005, the department began the Fugitives and Firearms Initiative (FFI), an annual effort which ran from May to August to target wanted

persons and illegal guns. When current Police Chief Alfred Durham took office in 2015, he launched an additional round of FFI that ran from November to December. According to the police department, the FFI has recovered roughly 240 firearms since its inception. In total, 802 illegal firearms were recovered in 2015 by additional efforts of officers and detectives, an increase from 2014. Richmond Police and its partners from the Virginia State Police and the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority Police have also focused their efforts in the city’s East End and Northside. There was an 80 percent reduction in aggravated assaults involving firearms in the city’s Northside. The city’s East End experienced the same number of aggravated as-

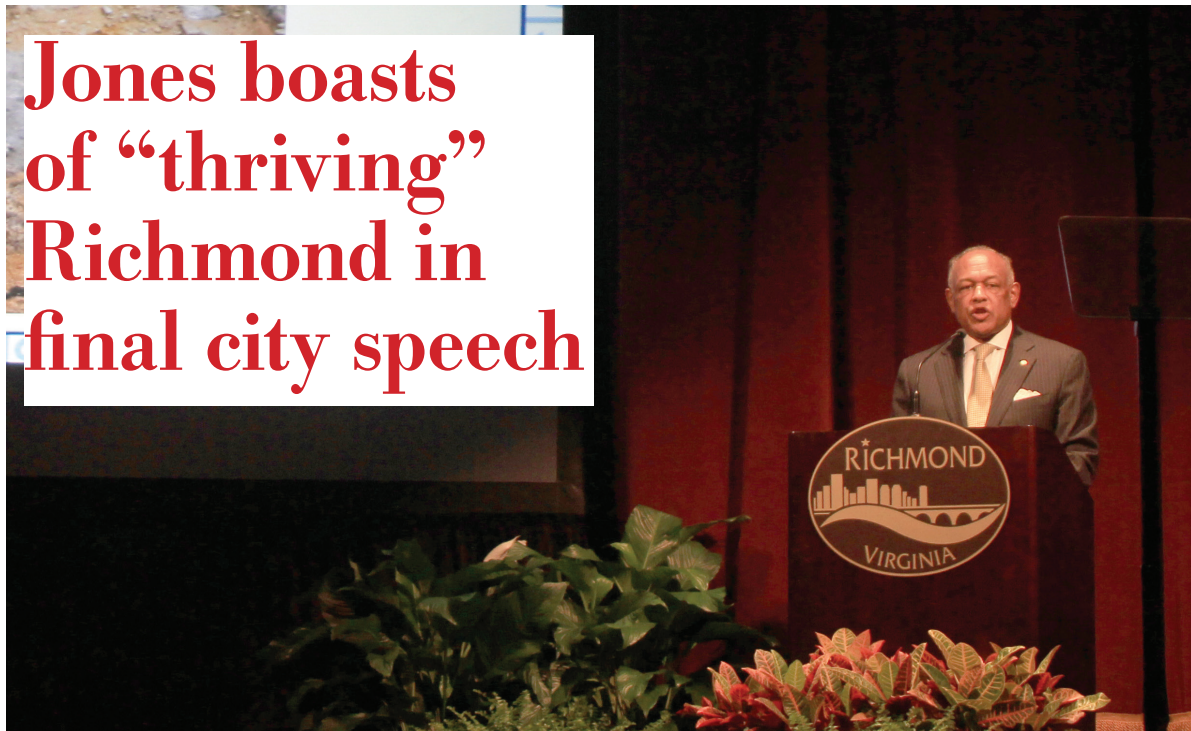
saults, two, compared to the same FFI period last year. This year, FFI will be back, along with another initiative called Guns 2 5-0, an anonymous way for people to inform the police about illegal guns on the street. “Guns 2 5-0 — 5-0 being the police, youngsters say — that is a safe and anonymous way for people to inform police and take dangerous weapons on the streets,” Jones said. Chief Durham said the most valuable strategy the police has is the trust of the community. When he took over the role as chief, Durham implemented five focus areas to have a successful police force. The five areas include customer care, the morale of the men and women of the police department, safeguarding the community, technology and youth engagement.

“(The community has) been working with us and I think that’s why we’ve had our success in reducing crime,” Durham said. “We’re apprehending criminals; that means the majority of these folks are not out here committing or re-offending folks in the community.” Last year, 28 of 39 homicides were closed. Chief Durham credits the high success rate to the result of civilians coming forward with information early on in the investigation. VCU Police Chief John Venuti, who spent 26 and a half years with Richmond Police, agrees that transparency between the department and the community is a major component to enforcing the law. VCUUPD was one of the first police units in the Richmond metropolitan to require officers to wear body cameras when it made the ad-

dition in Jan. 2015. Prior to the implementation of body cameras on its officers, VCUUPD had already reduced use of force by 81 percent. In the 2009-10 academic year, the department had 74 incidents of force used by an officer; in 2014, there were 14. Complaints were reduced by more than 60 percent over the last five years. “We didn’t (implement body cameras) to reduce force because we already did it,” Venuti said. “We didn’t do it to reduce complaints because we already did that. We did it to increase the level of transparency in the VCU community.” A recent survey asked students, faculty and staff about safety on campus. 96.4 percent of participants responded with very safe or safe. “Here at VCU, we’ve got the community on board and every-

one knows that safety is everyone’s job and everyone’s responsibility,” Venuti said. “If there wasn’t a high level of trust and transparency between the VCU police and the community, do you think that number would be 96.4?” Durham said the large drop in crime can be highly accredited to the relationship between the community and the new technology being used throughout city departments. “We have a partnership with our community and I think our officers really want to do the best that we can,” Chief Durham said. “Accountability leads to transparency and transparency leads to legitimacy and credibility out where we serve.”

Jones boasts of “thriving” Richmond in final city speech



Mayor Dwight C. Jones delivered his final State of the City address at the Sara Belle Neil November Theatre last week.

ANDREW CRIDER
Staff Writer

Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones highlighted Richmond’s economic growth and resurgence over the previous year in his final State of the City Address on Jan. 28 at the Sara Belle Neil November Theatre. The speech comes amid controversy surrounding the mayor’s involvement in the renovation of a church which he is a pastor of. In the nearly 40-minute speech, the mayor discussed his plans to raise community wealth, upgrade the city’s transit and raise funding for Richmond’s public schools. “I want to focus more on the direction we are going in,” Jones told the at capacity Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre. “Seven years ago, we came into a time of economic distress. I said we would not tax our way out, we would not cut our way out, but implement pro-growth strategies.” According to a report by Chmura Economics and Analytics, a local economics research firm, Richmond was hit harder by the 2007 recession due to its reliance on the banking and finance industries. However, the report says Richmond’s economy recovered at a rate higher than the state and the country during the Jones administration. “Economic development is what is all about,” Jones said. “We have one of the hottest housing markets for 2016.” Mayor Jones claimed that the

city’s economic growth would be permanent due to a series of regulations, reforms and investments which he introduced. However, in Feb. 2015, the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported that Julious Smith, the chairman of the city’s economic development authority, had called Richmond’s growth “unsustainable.” In the speech, the 67-year old mayor highlighted the resurgence of Richmond’s housing market which he claimed is due to the city’s violent crime rate hitting at 45 year low. Jones boasted the creation of the country’s first Mayor’s Office of Community Wealth Building. “The cities success depends on everyone’s success,” Mayor Jones said while speaking on the cities inequality. According to the American Community Survey, in 2012 the City had a poverty rate of 26 percent, a rate equal to that of Detroit. Jones also said he saw the 2015 UCI Road World Cycling Championship as a success despite a report by Chumra which indicated that while the tournament had more spectators than initially predicted, the economic impact fell short of UCI’s predictions by nearly \$60 million. “The numbers tell the story though 650,000 spectators, 170 million dollars of economic impact,” Jones said, “If you missed it, you’ve missed the best party we’ve ever thrown.” In September, October, Decem-

ber and January, The Commonwealth Times reported that small businesses around VCU had felt a negative impact during the race. Jones also discussed his education plan for the city. According to this year’s adopted biennial fiscal plan the school board has asked for a 60 percent increase in funding. Jones stated in the speech that he planned to give the school board a 37 percent increase. The mayor said the increase in funding would require as much as a 15 cent increase on residential taxes, along with other various tax increases. Jones, who originally proposed to pay for increased school funding last year without tax increases, said that Richmond needed to look at new taxes as an option. Mayor Jones announced that he would be in favor of a referendum on the issue in the upcoming November election. “These are serious decisions that should not be made by me in my office, or the council alone,” Jones said. “Such an increase is a major decision and one that the public should be deeply involved in.” The Times-Dispatch reports that on Jan. 14, Jones directed the Virginia state police to investigate the allegations that city public works director Emmanuel Adediran had violated the separation of church and state by using his city email to correspond with Church leaders. “My legacy will not be determined by news articles, editorials or interviews. My legacy is the voice of the citizenry,” Jones said.

Proposed bill could legalize concealed-carry

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would be mass shooters. “If someone considering coming into a school knows that it is possible that there are multiple people trained and ready to stop them they are less likely to consider attacking that school,” Marshall said. Marshall called concealed carry users are safe and reliable. The delegate said there are virtually no cases of people with concealed carry weapons permits being involved in unjustified shootings. A study by the Violence Policy Center in 2015 said that there were 722 fatalities nationwide in non-defensive shootings by concealed carry permit holders since 2007 -- The VPC study indicated that this number is likely representative of only a fraction of the actual total. According to a study released by the Crime Prevention Research Center in July 2015, the number of concealed handgun permits in the United States soared since 2007 from 4.6 million to over 12.8 million and in the same time the national murder rate fell from 5.6 killings per 100,000 people to just 4.2, about a 25 percent drop. Several studies, including a 2004 study by the National Research Council of the National Academies, could not find any evidence that concealed carry laws act as a deterrent to crime. A 2014 study by Stanford University claimed that concealed carry laws were actually linked to an increase in violent crime rates. VCU Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness professor, Dr. Will Pelfrey, said he worked in Virginia state law enforcement for two years. He said that a law allowing a concealed firearm carrier on school grounds could potentially do more harm than good. “Do we really want a shop teacher or a bus driver or a custodian or an assistant principal running to every argument or fight in a school because that person is the keeper of the gun?” Pelfrey said. Pelfrey said the legislation raises a host of complex issues such as a predicament where law enforcement responding to an active shooter shoots the armed volunteer erroneously and the possibility that non situations “Psychological research suggests that, when a weapon is present, people tend to be more aggressive,”

Pelfrey said. “The mere presence of a firearm could escalate difficult scenarios into violent scenarios.” The bill’s cole sponsor, Del. Cole, thinks the measures in the bill which require training for the armed volunteers will ultimately keep students and school faculty safe. “Any person designated to carry a concealed handgun must be certified and trained by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety or the National Rifle Association in the storage, use and handling of a concealed handgun,” Cole said. Pelfrey said a more sensible solution to the concern of violence on school grounds would be to have a School Resource Officer (SRO) on school grounds. Currently, only active law enforcement and school resource officers are permitted to carry firearms on school grounds. According to the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice, in 2015 63% of schools have a specific security personnel, and 31% of those

schools had a SRO. Marshall argued that school resource officers are too economically costly and do not provide adequate protection for students. Marshall also said he hopes that many school boards choose to have staff conceal carry, he claimed that there is broad support for his plan among educators. “My gut reaction is that I don’t want guns on campus,” said Thomas Hudgins, headmaster at Carlisle Private School in Martinsville. “But I think we are all willing to do anything to try to discourage crazies from showing up and opening fire.” Director of Administrative Services of Fredericksburg City Schools in Cole’s district, Dr. John Gordon, said the school board would not allow staff to conceal carry. “Fredericksburg City Public Schools is not comfortable with anyone carrying a concealed weapon on school property outside of a School Resource Officer or other law enforcement official,” Gordon said.



ILLUSTRATION BY GARETH BENYALL

Court hears transgender student’s appeal to use restroom

SARAH KING
Executive Editor

At 15 years old, Gavin Grimm stood before the Gloucester County School Board — twice — and listened to community members discuss his anatomy in a public forum. “I was terrified,” Grimm, now in his junior year at Gloucester High School, said this week. “I was in a room full of adults who thought it appropriate to have this sort of vulgar discussion, who would clap or cheer after every derogatory statement, of which there were many.” Grimm lives and identifies as male — and has been taking hormone therapy as recommended treatment for gender dysphoria. But the Gloucester school system has prohibited him from using the boys’ restrooms at the high school. On Wednesday, lawyers for the

American Civil Liberties Union appeared before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit to argue that the school district is violating Grimm’s constitutional rights by requiring transgender students to use “alternative, private” restrooms. The ACLU, which represents Grimm, said Gloucester’s policy violates federal nondiscrimination laws under Title IX and the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. This is the first time that a federal court of appeals is considering the issue. “Both sides presented arguments, and we now have to wait for the court to issue a ruling,” said Bill Farrar, director of public relations at the ACLU of Virginia. “Our best guess is that will take a couple of months.” As Grimm began his sophomore year in fall 2014, he and his mother notified school admin-

istrators about Grimm’s gender identity, and he was given permission to use the boys’ bathroom. Grimm did so for almost two months without any incident, according to a brief the ACLU filed with the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals. But on Dec. 9, 2014, the School Board adopted the new policy by a vote of 6-1, and Grimm has had to use an isolated restroom in the nurse’s office ever since. “The trek to the restroom in the nurse’s office each time it was necessary was similarly humiliating, similarly upsetting and ‘othering’ and dysphoria-inducing,” Grimm said in a statement Wednesday. “The only difference was that it was just slightly less conspicuous.” Specifically, Grimm said the School Board passed a policy limiting the use of restroom facilities to students with “corresponding biological genders” and required

students with “gender identity issues” to use alternative facilities. “Even if we use the separate but equal framework, it’s clearly not equal,” Joshua Block, senior staff attorney for the ACLU, said at a press conference after the appeals court hearing. “It’s basically a restroom from a converted closet that only Gavin has to use because other people hypothetically object to using the same restroom as him.” In June, the ACLU filed a motion for a preliminary injunction with the U.S. District Court in Newport News. It asked the court to rule in time for Grimm to be able to use the same restroom as other boys at Gloucester High School when classes resumed for the 2015-16 school year. But in September, U.S. District Judge Robert Doumar denied the injunction and dismissed Grimm’s claim under Title IX. The ACLU appealed that ruling

to the 4th Circuit Court in Richmond. A panel of three appellate judges — Paul Niemeyer, Henry Franklin Floyd and Andre Davis — heard the case Wednesday. “Schools can and should have privacy protections, but what they can’t do is exclude transgender students,” Block told the judges during the 45-minute hearing. Attorney David Corrigan, who represents the Gloucester School Board, said the school system’s policies are not discriminatory because the alternative unisex restrooms are open to anyone. “Our position is that all students are treated the same,” he said. After the hearing, Block described Grimm as a courageous young man. “Gavin, before he met anyone from the ACLU, was standing up by himself at a School Board meeting in front of a room of hostile adults explaining why he

should have the right everyone else has to use the bathroom in peace,” Block said. Both the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice have since ruled that, under Title IX of the U.S. Education Amendments of 1972, schools must allow transgender students to use the restrooms and locker rooms that are consistent with their gender identity. “I am fighting this fight because no kid should have to think so hard about performing a basic and private function of being alive,” Grimm said. “No kid struggling to be accepted, and struggling to accept themselves, should have to simultaneously battle for the right to use the correct bathroom.” The appeal in the Gloucester case comes on the heels of a landmark ruling by the Education Department in a similar case brought —continued on page 4

Sens. Kaine, Warner talk higher education

SARAH KING
Executive Editor

Constance Garner works two jobs while attending college, but her long hours aren't to line her pockets with extra beer money.

Garner, a Longwood University senior, expects to graduate owing more than \$35,000 in student debt; she works two jobs on campus to cover room and board.

"I am from a very small town in southern Virginia where students are lucky to receive any type of higher education, much less a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution," Garner said.

Stories like hers aren't uncommon – and last week, U.S. Sens. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, both former governors of Virginia, hosted a roundtable discussion in the nation's capital with student leaders from 20 Virginia colleges to discuss the increasing financial burdens of pursuing higher education.

"Sen. Warner and I hosted this roundtable to hear directly from student leaders at universities and colleges across Virginia on ways we can help alleviate the burden of student loan debt, which has surpassed credit card debt in America," Kaine said.

Nationwide, Americans owe more than \$1.3 trillion in student loan debt, which is more accumulated non-mortgage debt than credit cards and auto loans, according to the Federal Reserve.

Warner noted that about 60 percent of Virginia college students graduate with student debt and that the average debt load in Virginia now tops \$26,000 per graduate.

"As the first person in my family to complete college, I know that if I had graduated with today's levels of student debt, I would not have had opportunities to try – and to fail – with several of my early business ventures," Warner said.

Kaine and Warner, both of them Democrats, have worked to pass bipartisan legislation in Washington.

“As the first person in my family to complete college, I know that if I had graduated with today's levels of student debt, I would not have had opportunities to try — and to fail — with several of my early business ventures.”

— U.S. SEN. MARK WARNER

For example, Warner has teamed with Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, a Republican presidential candidate, to sponsor the "Student Right to Know Before You Go Act," which would provide tools for comparing colleges and universities on measures such as total cost, likelihood of graduating and potential earnings.

The issue of college affordability varies by state and by institution. Virginia's 15 public four-year colleges and universities and 24 community colleges depend on funding in the state budget approved by the General Assembly.

This year is critical for higher education, as legislators consider



U.S. Sens. Tim Kaine (left) and Mark Warner (right) hosted a roundtable discussion with student leaders from 20 Va. colleges and universities last week.

Gov. Terry McAuliffe's proposed 2016-18 budget.

A poll released in January by the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University found solid public support for financing both K-12 and higher education.

"Most people don't think current high school graduates are ready to succeed in the workplace," said Robyn McDougle, CEPI interim executive director. "For some, attending college is the next key step toward a career, but these responses suggest that the public supports a high school structure that provides career skills that match up with a student's vision for his or her future and the needs of employers."

According to the institute's survey, about two-thirds of Virginians think high school graduates are not prepared for the workplace but are prepared for college. More than 70 percent of respondents support restructuring high school to make employer-aligned skill sets for a student's desired career the focus of grades 11 and 12.

The poll indicated that the public sees community colleges as an advantage in adequately preparing students for the workforce. Almost three-fourths of the respondents said community college graduates are ready to join the workforce; a slightly higher proportion said the same thing of graduates of four-year colleges and universities.

Under McAuliffe's proposed budget, education and health and human services would receive the most sizable portions of state funding in the upcoming biennium.

"I don't know that it'll help things go over more smoothly, but it's always good to have nonpartisan data," McDougle said.

McDougle said that in creating the poll, the CEPI collaborated with Peter Blake, director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and Anne Holton, Virginia's secretary of education.

"Following the economic recession, our schools have been struggling to do more and more with less and less," she said.

Holton said McAuliffe has traversed Virginia and heard from teachers, students and parents concerned about the future of education in Virginia.

"That is why his proposed budget includes over \$1 billion in new, innovative investments for our public schools, colleges and universities," Holton said.

"The governor and I are committed to improving educational opportunities, supporting our fantastic educators and paving the way for every student to succeed in the new Virginia economy."

Higher education officials hope this legislative session goes more smoothly than two years ago when a partisan stalemate over the state budget for the 2014-16 biennium prompted schools to increase tuition and fees across the board.

Due to the legislative impasse, public colleges and universities

had to adopt their budgets for the 2014-15 school year not knowing how much funding the state would give them.

As a result, VCU raised tuition and fees 3.3 percent for in-state students – and that was the smallest boost among the state's major research universities. The increase was 4.3 percent at the University of Virginia, 4.8 percent at George Mason University and 4.9 percent at Virginia Tech.

Later in 2014, things got even worse. The state government discovered it had a budget shortfall of \$880 million, and McAuliffe or-

dered state institutions to cut their budgets 5 percent for fiscal year 2015 and 7 percent for the following year.

VCU President Michael Rao relayed the bad news in an email to the university community: "Now we face \$8.75 million in cuts to the budget for the fiscal year that has already begun, increasing to \$12.25 million in cuts for fiscal year 2016."

College officials hope to avoid similar problems during the next budget cycle.

BY THE NUMBERS — HIGHER ED FUNDING

Here is how much each state-supported institution of higher education is receiving this fiscal year (2016) from the state's general fund and the increase proposed by Gov. Terry McAuliffe for 2017, according to the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget. (The enrollment numbers are from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.)

Christopher Newport University
2016 Appropriation: \$30,680,321
2017 Intro Changes: \$2,224,189
2017 Total: \$32,904,510

College of William and Mary:
2016 Appropriation: \$43,739,360
2017 Intro Changes: \$3,624,884
2017 Total: \$47,364,244

George Mason University:
2016 Appropriation: \$142,881,281
2017 Intro Changes: \$11,728,847
2017 Total: \$154,610,128

James Madison University:
2016 Appropriation: \$81,996,990
2017 Intro Changes: \$7,502,701
2017 Total: \$89,499,691

Longwood University:
2016 Appropriation: \$29,395,815
2017 Intro Changes: \$2,269,003
2017 Total: \$31,664,818

Norfolk State University:
2016 Appropriation: \$51,211,803
2017 Intro Changes: \$5,227,372
2017 Total: \$56,439,175

Old Dominion University:
2016 Appropriation: \$132,697,173
2017 Intro Changes: \$13,146,329
2017 Total: \$145,843,502

Radford University:
2016 Appropriation: \$54,275,371
2017 Intro Changes: \$5,038,016
2017 Total: \$59,313,387

University of Mary Washington:
2016 Appropriation: \$27,258,203
2017 Intro Changes: \$2,660,842
2017 Total: \$29,919,045

University of Virginia:
2016 Appropriation: \$137,099,157
2017 Intro Changes: \$8,513,861
2017 Total: \$145,613,018

University of Virginia at Wise:
2016 Appropriation: \$16,035,000
2017 Intro Changes: \$1,601,911
2017 Total: \$17,636,911

Virginia Commonwealth University:
2016 Appropriation: \$199,048,008
2017 Intro Changes: \$15,533,523
2017 Total: \$214,581,531

Virginia Community College System
2016 Appropriation: \$405,711,667
2017 Intro Changes: \$37,936,964
2017 Total: \$443,648,631

Virginia Military Institute:
2016 Appropriation: \$13,605,980
2017 Intro Changes: \$931,431
2017 Total: \$14,537,411

Virginia Tech:
2016 Appropriation: \$174,543,831
2017 Intro Changes: \$14,383,976
2017 Total: \$188,927,807

Virginia State University:
2016 Appropriation: \$38,796,332
2017 Intro Changes: \$2,768,558
2017 Total: \$41,564,890

what's happening RECSports VCU

program details, rates, and locations at recsports.vcu.edu



ARC FA/CPR/AED recertification course
[Jan 28. 5pm – 9pm]
full certification course
[Jan 30. 9am – 3pm]

adult swim lessons session 1
[Jan 25 – Feb 28]
[register Jan 11 – 22]

children swim lessons session 1
[Jan 30 – Mar 5]
[register Jan 11 – 29]

U.S. master's swimming
[Jan 25 – Apr 29]
[registration ongoing]

weekly activities
– belay clinic
– climbing skills clinic
– kayak pool session
– peak shuttle

wintergreen day ski trip
[Feb 6. register by 2/2]

intramurals
registration Jan 19 – 28 at the CSG
– basketball
– indoor soccer
– 4 on 4 volleyball tournament
– racquetball ladder (singles)
– tennis ladder (singles)

Court Hears Transgender Student's Appeal to Use Restroom



Grimm and his attorney from the ACLU spoke at a press conference after court on Wed.

—continued from page 3
by the ACLU of Illinois. In that case, the Education Department held that a suburban Chicago school had violated federal law by denying a transgender female student access to gender-appropriate locker room facilities.

To date, several federal agen-

cies — including the U.S. Labor Department, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Office of Personnel Management — have agreed that transgender people should be able to use the restroom that corresponds with

their gender identity.

"I can say I did not set out to make waves; I set out to use the bathroom," Grimm said as he began tearing up at Wednesday's press conference. "It is scary. And it's not easy. But I will do my best to help anyone."

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VCU RecSports ios/android app



STAT OF THE WEEK

The Rams are 8-0 in league play for the first time since they opened 11-0 in the CAA in 2006-07.

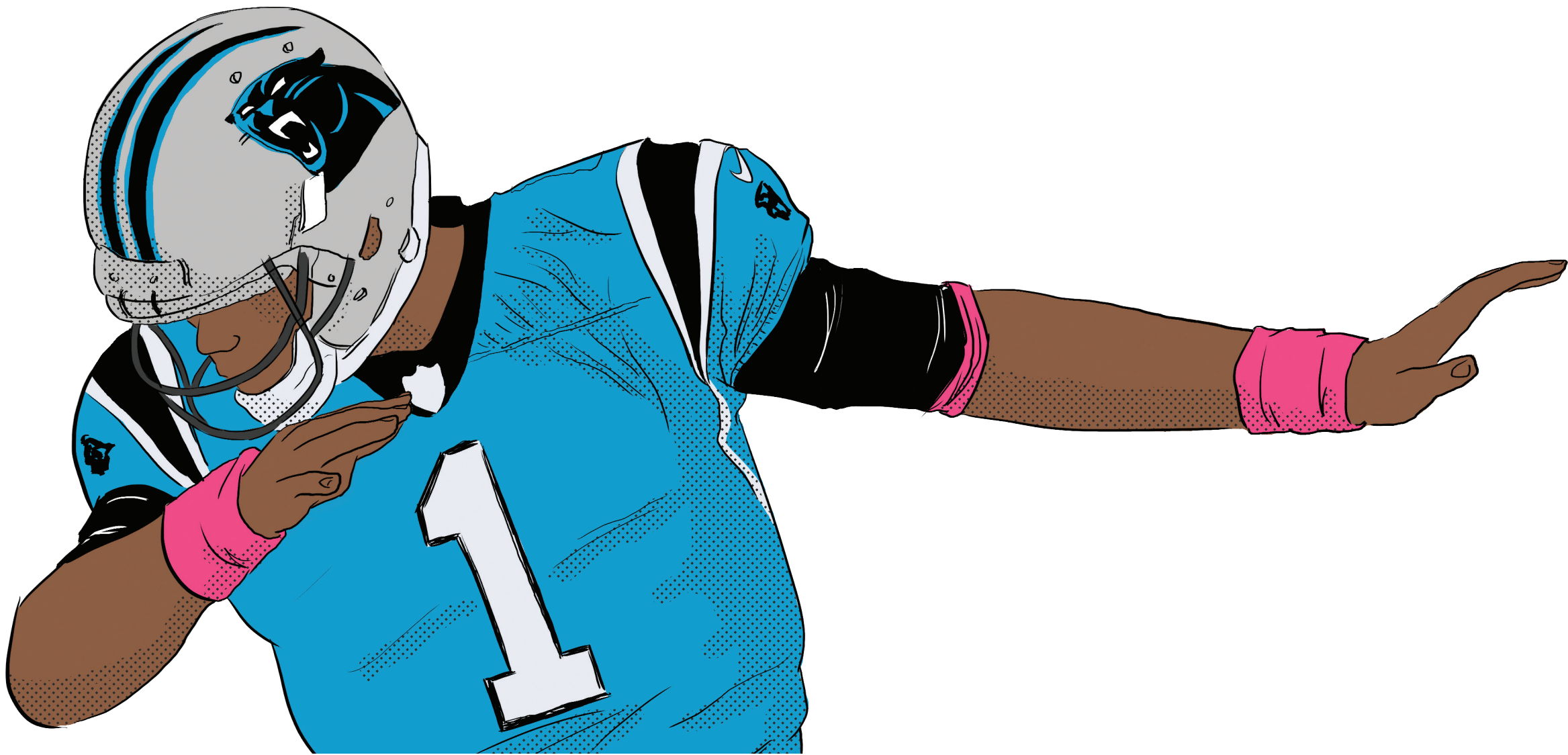


ILLUSTRATION BY SHANNON WRIGHT

Newton’s law of silencing the critics

BRYANT DRAYTON
Sports Editor

Kick-off for SuperBowl L is just under a week away, and all talk has seemingly revolved around a single issue.

Instead of anticipating the erratic commercials for an out-of-date cheesy flavored tortilla chip, or even a sleazily-dressed actress repping a logo in support of her unamused father, all commentary has honed in on the controversy surrounding the best player in the league — Cam Newton.

Newton and the Panthers are primed to give the sports fanatics in Charlotte a reason to smile. The Panthers, coming into the biggest game of the season with only one blemish on a near-perfect resume, have the chance to complete a season many doubted from the start.

Riding the tails of a lackluster season going 8-9-1 in 2014, the Panthers finished 15-1 this year, cruising through the NFC playoffs for a matchup with the aging sheriff Peyton Manning and his Denver Broncos.

The narrative for this game has shifted, though, and instead of

the world focusing on the stellar season the Panthers have produced, criticism has been the only acknowledgement placed on the team from the Tar Heel state.

Newton has taken most of the criticism, as skeptics have aforementioned the star’s antics both on and off the field.

Apparently, post-touchdown celebrations, and distributing footballs to kids whose parents paid half their mortgages to be in the front row, has become the most sacrilegious sin the NFL has seen to date.

But Newton, aware of the negative attention, hasn’t been quiet to harp back at the shade thrown his way.

“I’m a African-American quarterback,” Newton said. “That scares people because they haven’t seen nothing that they can compare me to.”

Boom, shots fired! And just like that, race has entered the equation.

It seems the underlying issue always comes back to the issue of unfairness pressed against black quarterbacks in the NFL — or maybe black quarterbacks who fit the “black stereotype” description.

Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson does not fit that mold. Known as an articulate leader for Seattle, Wilson has been called out for not being, “black enough,” by anonymous members of his team at times.

Foolish to say the least, the characteristics Cam Newton has grown to acquire are none short of being an ambassador to this league. Sure it’s easy to put on a nice smile and carry yourself with an innocent connotation when all is biscuits n’ gravy.

Bottom line: Cam is on top of the world right now, especially coming from what has occurred in his past. The maturation process is clear as day.

Newton was once Tim Tebow’s backup at Florida, only to have to attend Blinn College a year later after being kicked off the team for accusations around stealing a lap-top and not following team rules.

The star talent then found himself at Auburn, winning the Heisman Trophy and National Championship. What would prelude him was the No. 1 overall pick in the 2011 draft by the Panthers.

All eyes were on the kid from

College Park, Georgia.

In 2014, the Panthers were not able to ride the wave of the 2013 team, losing game after game; all the blame again went to none other than Newton.

In December of the same year, Cam found himself in a two-car accident that found his truck flipped over and him being thankful for his life.

“Somebody is supposed to be dead,” Newton said.

Escaping with only minor back pain, Newton and Carolina could do no wrong after. Carolina went on to finish the season on a four-game winning streak, and would carry that momentum into this season.

Reeling from 14 consecutive wins before falling to the Falcons Dec. 27, Cam is making the most of his \$118 million dollar contract, with \$60 million guaranteed. But it still isn’t enough.

ESPN colleague and “The Right Time” radio show host Bomani Jones said the, “simple reality,” is that the country “does not like black people very much.”

Is America still not ready for a black quarterback? A quarterback,

regardless of race, that has produced gaudy numbers this season of more than 3,800 passing yards, 35 touchdowns and a passer rating of 99.4?

What Cam has done this past year should be celebrated. His antics have been refreshing to a game that has deeper issues than post TD celebrations. Cam should go on to win MVP for his remarkable play this season.

I too found myself to be a Cam critic early on in his career, but have found myself slowly contorting to be one of his biggest fans. Not only based upon his on field production, but how he handles adversity.

Cam would do us all a favor if he wrote a book on how to silence critics.

I’m sure Peyton is in favor of all the stirred up attention being placed around Cam, I guess we all just forgot about the HGH allegations placed on Manning and his wife.

The same HGH Peyton admitted his wife took, that he failed to let anyone know about before the matter gained national attention. But instead, all focus in on

Cam. And as Vegas and others are expecting, Cam and the Panthers should have a field day come Feb. 7.

Whether a win or loss, Cam has majority of the league in his favor. He has learned the position many thought would never happen. He can finally relax knowing that his career is finally going the way he had planned and the best of his game is still to come.

There will always be controversy, there will always be a reason to point blame on an athlete when it is merited, but in this situation, Cam has done nothing worth the vilification thrown his way.

A black quarterback can thrive in today’s society, but can society thrive with a black quarterback? Time will only tell, but Cam is making the case for the entire league to garnish the studs’ play as legendary.

Providing comic relief to the situation, Newton also stated in an interview, “If I was white no one would care about me dabbing. Actually if I was white I wouldn’t know how to dab.”

I’m guessing Clemson’s Dabo Swinney would beg to differ.

Player spotlight: Egyptian native Ahmed Hamdy-Mohamed

ERIKA ROBINSON
Contributing Writer

VCU is known for its diverse student body, but for the men’s basketball team, a newcomer’s journey to Richmond is unlike any of his teammates.

The Rams big man, Ahmed Hamdy-Mohamed, is a native of Egypt.

Hamdy is new to the team this year, but is making a significant impact with his strong defense and rebounding.

While the Rams were projected to place fifth in the Atlantic 10 conference this season, they have shocked many — but Hamdy said the team was not surprised at all at how well they have performed thus far.

“We just proved them wrong first of all,” Hamdy said. “That yeah we can do better than what they thought, and they looked down on us a lot and stuff like that. I mean we proved that we can win the conference and maybe win the tournament and first place in the conference.”

On the court, Hamdy appears calm, cool and collected. He never gets too excited when he makes the 3-point play, or gets a put-back bucket from an offensive rebound, although his teammates celebrate enthusiastically around him.

While Hamdy does not like to talk

about himself much, he describes himself as a team player.

“I like to help my team win,” Hamdy said. “I don’t like to be selfish, but sometimes I do it in order to help my team. I’ve realized lately that I can help my team by not even scoring. I can help with my defense and rebounding, so I’m going to keep doing that.”

Hamdy has claimed his role on a team with many scoring weapons and has aspirations for the team and himself for the rest of the season.

“My team goal is to win the regular season and have a ticket for the NCAA Tournament, so that’s my main goal,” Hamdy said. “My personal goal is of course to help the team win, and I want to lead the conference in rebounds.”

While the Rams up-tempo style of play can be tiring, exhaustion does not enter Hamdy’s mind when he is on the court because he has a lot to play for other than himself these days. He plays for his family, teammates and coaches.

“What keeps me going is that I want to achieve my goals,” Hamdy said. “I know my parents are back home watching and it gives me a lot of motivation and energy, so even though I’m tired, I just think about that and keep going no matter what. I also think about us being in the tournament in March.”



Hamdy-Mohamed is shooting 49 percent from the floor with 5.8 points and 3.9 rebounds per contest.

CT FILE PHOTO

VCU snaps Davidson's 15-game home winning streak

—continued from page 1

15 of his 21 points in the first half and Alie-Cox added 12 of his 18 in the period.

Davidson's biggest threat was junior Jack Gibbs, who is among NCAA leaders in scoring.

Gibbs is the consensus mid-season player of the year in the Atlantic 10. Gibbs' stats as a junior are comparable to Curry's.

Gibbs has connected on 45 percent of his shots from the field — so did Curry. Gibbs is shooting 36.4 percent from behind the arc while Curry shot 41.2 percent.

On Friday, Gibbs started slow, but eventually found his rhythm after forcing VCU's Doug Brooks into foul trouble, ending the evening with 37 points, three rebounds and three assists.

The Wildcats came out of the locker room ready to go to war with the Rams.

Davidon improved their shooting from the field to 53.3 percent from the field and 46.7 percent from behind the arc.

The Rams battled back shooting 46.7 percent from around the paint but only made 2-7 shots from behind the arc.

With ten minutes left in regulation, things started to look dicey for the Rams when VCU's lead fell into single digits.

A 3-pointer by Gibbs cut VCU's lead to two, but junior point guard JeQuan Lewis quickly answered with a fast break layup down the court.

After Lewis' two-points, the Rams gained momentum and secured a 10 point victory, that can be accredited to how the Rams played



Senior Melvin Johnson and the bench have plenty of reason to smile as the Rams have erupted for a 11 game winning streak. VCU sits at 1st in the Atlantic 10 with a record of 16-5.

in the first half. Davidson and VCU both finished the second half with 41 points.

Lewis finished the evening with 17 points, three rebounds, three assists and three steals.

"We're not going to back down from a fight," Lewis said. "Once they got it down to two, we said, 'All right, it's time to buckle down.' We just stuck together."

Davidson, averaging just 9.7

turnovers, had 16 on Friday. Davidson was 10-0 at home prior to VCU's win. The Wildcats had won 30 of their last 31 at Belk Arena.

The Rams are 8-0 in league play for the first time since they opened

11-0 in the CAA in 2006-07. VCU finished 16-2 in the CAA that season and captured the league's regular season and tournament crowns before upsetting Duke in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

The Rams will look for their 12th straight win on Feb. 3, when they travel to take on La Salle University.

Women's basketball comes back with back-to-back wins

ZACH JOACHIM
Contributing Writer

After a tough start to conference play, women's basketball came away with a pair of pivotal come-from-behind victories last week to improve to 4-4 in the Atlantic 10.

"Conference play has definitely been tougher competition for us, but our lack of execution late in games is what has lost us games. It's just mental mistakes, you know, stuff we've reviewed," said junior guard Isis Thorpe.

Head Coach Beth O'Boyle and the girls defeated the University of Richmond Jan. 25 by a score of 53-42 after trailing heading into the fourth quarter, overcoming a 15 point halftime deficit to defeat Fordham University 61-51 the following Wed., January 27.

The Monday matchup with familiar uptown foe U of R was a back and forth affair. The Spiders were on top to close out the 1st and 3rd quarters, but a 26-21 halftime lead for VCU translated into a 53-42 victory. The Lady Rams are 13-2 when leading at the half this season.

The game was decided by a 10-0 Rams run to open the 4th quarter. Junior guard Keira Robinson and senior forward Adaeze Alaeze capped the onslaught with transition layups after their defensive intensity forced turnovers on the other end.

The Rams forced 12 turnovers in the contest and have reached double digits in that category every game this season — an impressive feat.

Sixth-man specialist Courteeona Brelove scored a career high 18 points to lead her team. When asked what turned the tide in the 4th quarter, Thorpe credited her team's defensive commitment and transition offense.

"We knew they were fatigued in the 4th quarter, and we tried to push the pace," Thorpe said. "Getting stops defensively that lead to our transition game is key for us."

The momentum would carry over to Wednesday's matchup with the Fordham Rams, but not initially.



Freshman Sandra Skinner (#23) has seen action in 14 games this season.

The other Rams came out on fire from long-range, shooting a gaudy 58 percent from 3-point land in the first half. Guard Hannah Missry had 15 points and did not miss a shot.

Center Samantha Clark chipped in 10 points and an imposing post presence, resulting in a 37-22 halftime deficit for O'Boyle and VCU to overcome.

The second half was a different ballgame entirely. VCU took its defensive intensity to the next level and opened the 3rd quarter with a 14-0 run, spurred by steals and transition buckets from Robinson and guard Ashley Pegram.

Fordham called a timeout with 2:03 to go in the 3rd in an effort to stop the bleeding. Out of the time-out, they went to Clark in the post for their first points of the half and would cling to a 42-40 lead going into the final quarter.

But Havoc was relentless in nature.

Robinson and Alaeze led the Rams 4th quarter charge by converting offensive chances created

by constant back-court pressure.

VCU grabbed its first lead since the 8:01 to go in the 1st quarter after a steal and 3-point play the old way by Alaeze. Robinson added a lay-in after stealing an inbounds pass with a minute to go to seal the deal and the real Rams came away with a hard fought 61-51 win.

When asked what she told the team at halftime, O'Boyle said she "told them that we had to be more disciplined defensively."

The Rams got the message, as they held Fordham to just 14 second half points and shut out their leading scorer Missry.

Conference play has definitely been tougher competition for us, but our lack of execution late in games is what has lost us games. It's just mental mistakes, you know, stuff we've reviewed.

— ISIS THORPE



Former VCU basketball star Treveon Graham (right) worked with Clarence McGill in 2014 at the Commonwealth's Junior Enterprise for his fall internship in school.

RVA public library hosts an evening with Clarence McGill for Black Emergent Readers Literacy series

BRYANT DRAYTON
Sports Editor

Richmond Public Library's Black Emergent Readers Literacy Program (BMER) is offering an evening of meeting local authors at the Main Richmond Public Library on Feb. 17, from 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

BMER will honor some of the most prolific black authors in the area in celebration of Black History Month. The program is highlighted by a discussion led by Clarence McGill, a native Richmonder who was one of eight black football players that boycotted the 1970 football season at Syracuse University.

McGill was a contributing writer in *Leveling the Playing Field: The Story of the Syracuse 8* written by David Marc, as he rendered his memories of the events that took place before the ultimate decision to boycott. The topic of discussion for the evening will be if there is a change in direction within the struggle?

"Basically I am comparing our (Syracuse 8) first civil disobedience event ever in the country

in terms of athletics to the 2015 University of Missouri boycott," McGill said. "I hope that I can lead that into leadership and to expose the community into the African-American authors in our are and the quality of their work."

Many similarities can be compared to the Missouri football team from McGill's Syracuse team back in 1970. One of the key issues facing the black SU players was the inability to gain a meaningful degree. That is a degree that would be deemed as honorable coming from such a prestigious university.

"All the black kids that came in as freshman were led to pursue a general education degree, which led you nowhere," McGill said. "So what I did to get around it, was take my card to register for classes, would fill out my information to the advisers in pencil, then would go back and change it to what I wanted."

This is the battle the players had to endure in order to gain their full academic privilege. Meldon Jenkins-Jones, Master of Science in library information systems, is organizing the event

to give young readers empowering texts that motivate them to read.

"The basic underlying idea is to give kids reading material they find interesting or relevant to their experiences," Jenkins-Jones said. "Enabling texts that appeal to the young men's sense of social justice, their higher human concern."

VCU students are urged to attend this event, to gain a better understanding of the civil injustices that were infinitely prevalent in the lives of college students of previous generations. Understanding the history behind the struggle and fight for students to be capable of fulfilling their full edification of learning.

"The opportunity to expose the struggles, differences and similarities between the civil disobedience protests in the late 60's and the civil disobedience today at VCU or Missouri," McGill said. "Also the historical aspect that students might not know in terms of personal, first hand accounts of events."



spectrum



ON THIS DAY ...

in 1885, president of the Mormon Church John Taylor disappears to avoid federal prosecution for his stance on polygamy.



KRS-One hops off the stage and into the crowd at the National for a rap battle during his “Stop the Violence” campaign.

JOSHUA BUCK
Contributing Writer

Rapper and activist Kris Parker, more commonly known by his stage name KRS-One, spoke at VCU on Jan. 27 in a presentation for his “Stop The Violence” forum series, which was followed by a performance at the National the next night.

Parker was joined in the Student Commons Theater by VCU instructor in the African-American (AFAM) studies department Chioke l’Anson and Virginia State

University professor Zoe Spencer for a panel moderated by VCU’s Dr. Kimberly Brown who chairs the AFAM studies department.

The panel spent two hours fielding questions from a crowd that overflowed the 280-seat auditorium. The crowd featured a community cross-section of VCU students mixed with older adults, high schoolers and children. The crowd’s diversity set the stage for the panel’s discussion of how hip-hop is packaged to black youth.

Parker cited President Obama’s famous 2009 meeting with Jay Z,

and how it brought about mixed emotions for him as both a hip-hop artist and an advocate for black advancement.

“You’re the first African American president and you’re gonna meet with a crack dealer,” Parker said. “This is who the President of The United States decides to meet with. What (black children) are being told is ‘follow the crack dealer’s role and you too could be in the White House.’”

The panel agreed that some of the things glorified in hip-hop need to be changed. When asked about

misogyny in hip-hop, l’Anson said he’s uncomfortable with what he considers “equal parts profound reflection and ‘bitches and ho’s”

a combination he finds “corrosive and destructive.” Parker received the night’s loudest reaction when he urged the students to hold onto their soul when they graduate and are given their “receipt.”

When asked about the state of hip-hop in 2016, Parker was careful to separate hip-hop and rap, referring to the former as “conscious movement.” He said that while hip-hop was doing very well and

expanding globally, rap was suffering because artists are being forced to sacrifice their integrity.

“30 percent of the rappers you hear are actually sell out human beings, but 70 percent are trapped human beings,” Parker said.

This idea of sell outs and systemic outsider control of rap music and black culture in general was a recurring theme. VSU’s Spencer took the media to task for manipulation, saying that “whoever controls the media controls the dissemination of the information...” and adding that they “Jumped in and kidnapped our art form.”

The panel also urged the audience to look at toxicity within the community, with Parker saying too much pressure was coming from outside of the community, that many problems are “black people doing this to black people.”

Spencer said “we are the only species that funds our own genocide.”

A member of the audience took offense at this statement, saying that depictions of violence and incarceration are important because it’s part of the black struggle, and needs to be visible.

L’Anson countered by saying there needs to be a distinction in rapping between visibility and glorification.

The second half of Parker’s “Stop The Violence” campaign was a concert at The National. KRS-One made his first appearance at the show by joining the end of a rap made up of his mostly local opening acts. Sporting a Virginia Union University hoodie--but making sure to also shout out VCU — he freestyled four bars before disappearing for almost an hour.

Beginning with the 1996 “Step Into a World (Rapture’s Delight), KRS-One turned the National into an hour long guided tour through his impressive back catalog in an event that was equal parts history lesson and sermon.

Classics like “MC’s Act Like They Don’t Know” and “Sound

of Da Police” sent jolts through a healthy but not-quite-packed crowd, as KRS bounced around the stage with a permanent smile and an almost unbelievable amount of youthful energy.

He frequently “tested” the audience’s knowledge of classic hip-hop by cutting out lyrics and and taunting the crowd to fill in the blanks.

He also performed a few newer tracks, the most resonant of which was “American Flag” off of his 2015 album, “Now Hear This.” Over a muted instrumental, he rapped that the racism associated with the Confederate flag are just as inherent in the American flag itself. The track seemed particularly charged, given

“Thirty percent of the rappers you hear are actually sell-out human beings, but 70 percent are trapped human beings.”
— KRS-ONE

Richmond’s recent heated debates over the former.

Parker took frequent breaks to deliver impassioned mini lectures on a variety of social issues, politics and spirituality, including one impassioned fifteen-minute interlude that may have gotten a bigger reaction than any of the songs. KRS-One ended the evening by coming off stage, microphone in hand and starting a rap battle in the middle of the crowd.

Audience members poured out their drinks to create a wet battle floor and local rap hopefuls got their chance to literally go toe-to-toe with a living legend. Each MC was up to the challenge, and battles continued until 11:30, when audience and artists were finally urged to leave by the event staff.

Construction of VCU’s Institute for Contemporary Art underway

SOPHIA BELLETTI
Staff Writer

In 2017, The Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University will take over the corner of West Broad St. and North Belvidere St., sitting at the fringe of VCU’s campus.

VCU’s 41,000-square-foot institute is a \$37 million project. The ICA Campaign Committee has raised \$34.8 million to-date. Contributions have come from various generous individuals, corporations and foundations. An endowment campaign to help support the operations of the museum is also an ongoing effort.

of today. The ICA hosts rotating exhibitions, commissions works of art, and brings internationally respected artists and scholars to Richmond.

“(The ICA will be a) landmark designating that Richmond has a really thriving art scene,” said Matt King, Chair and Associate Professor of Sculpture and Extended Media. “The building itself will be the most interesting and iconic new building that the city has seen.”

King called the ICA a symbolic gesture, saying the city is committed to and invested in contemporary art.

The ICA is set to become the institutional hub for a growing

community of art and design lovers who want to surround themselves with creativity and innovation. The ICA will stimulate visitors imaginations and improve the quality of their daily lives.

“We are hopeful to close the campaign soon,” Frieman said. “It really helps a lot to have the building materializing so quickly at the corner of Belvidere and Broad now.”

According to U.S. News & World Report, VCUarts is the No. 1 public university art and design program in the United States. The school believes there is a need for an arts institution to commensurate with the level of

work produced at the university.

“Students today have somewhat limited access to seeing actual works of art by internationally recognized artists in person,” King said. “We don’t have an institution with really in depth exhibitions featuring internationally recognized artists making contemporary art involved in the same conversations students are involved in.”

The ICA will not only benefit students by providing more lecture space to host visiting lectures--giving them the opportunity to study contemporary art in person--but also to provide internships as well.

The ICA offers participants

hands-on training in museum professions and a comprehensive overview of museum operations.

“One of the beautiful things art does is it stirs conversation and brings people together,” King said. “By having this venue that is especially for that, it provides more opportunities for students and faculty to engage in new ideas and interact with one another in new ideas.”

Freiman, like King, anticipates the opening of the ICA, calling it “a point of pride for Richmonders and recognition of the city’s place in the nation’s cultural landscape.”

Ram Reverb:

MOTH BY CHAIRLIFT

JOSHUA BUCK
Contributing Writer

In 2013, Brooklyn duo Chairlift teamed with Beyonce for writing sessions that resulted in the contribution of “No Angel” to her culture-shifting eponymous album.

It seems that spending two weeks next to pop music’s solar nexus has melted the icy veneer of the band’s first two releases. On first listen, I found it almost impossible to get all the way through their new album, Moth. This should in no way be taken as an insult.

The album simply features an opening 4 song suite so repayable that I found myself stuck in a loop. It culminates in lead single “Ch-Ching.” A gleeful victory lap of a track, Caroline Polacheck’s diamond sharp voice dances over a trip-hop beat and a Jenga block tower full of hooks.

The beauty of the album is that it doesn’t lose steam at that point, instead it begins to explore new ideas. From the elegant pining of “Crying in Public” and the moodily industrial “Ottawa to Osaka” to the shimmering disco of “Moth to the Flame,” the album changes gears often but never ceases to feel of a whole.

Much of this is due to the fact that it Moth completely embraces a central theme. This cohesion gives previously released cuts new life. Second single “Romeo” was already a standout, but now its playful chase lyrics, “So roll me, race me/ With all your tricks and all your heart/ I’m not wishing you luck...” sound simultaneously more tragic and more whimsical inside an album full of Polacheck igniting and extinguishing relationships at breakneck speed.

It seems no coincidence that a 10 track celebration of the messy rush of new love was gifted to us so close to Valentine’s Day.

SOUNDS LIKE:
Glass on a keyboard.

PERFECT FOR:
The moody pregame.

“One of the beautiful things art does is it stirs conversation and brings people together. By having this venue that is especially for that, it provides more opportunities for students and faculty to engage in new ideas and interact with one another in new ideas.”
— MATT KING

Lisa Frieman, director of the ICA, said the committee is ahead of schedule in fundraising and brought in over \$40,000 in unsolicited contributions for the campaign before the end of 2015.

“Forbes” magazine listed Richmond as one of the top ten up-and-coming cities in the world for entrepreneurial startups, calling it “a hotbed of activity.” Praising its quality of life, tactical location, thriving cultural arts scene, tax incentives and great universities.

The ICA, a 15-year-project designed by Steven Holl, will be dedicated to the arts and issues



The first walls going up during construction of the Institute for Contemporary Art at the intersection of Broad and Belvidere.



Members of the Muslim Student Association on Floyd Street.

MSA aids Monroe Park’s homeless

—continued from page 1

ity by adding “(The MSA) also acts as a major force to better represent the Muslim community and clear some of the unnecessary stereotypes that the media can portray at times.”

Both Hussein and Alshareif also view the association as a “safe haven” for VCU’s Muslim population.

“It makes sure they (Muslims) feel comfortable outside of their homes,” said Alshareif, with Hussein adding “I feel like having an association, like the MSA, to repre-

sent Muslim students really helps in humanizing the image of Muslims.”

Yet, Alshareif also wants non-Muslim students to take a look at the association as well, saying that “It’s not something you have to apply for, one you’ve gone to a few meetings, most of the students treat you like you’re one of them.”

The MSA holds Project Downtown at the Baptist Collegiate Ministry at around 2:15 every Friday. For more information on the organization and Islam in general, go to their website at <http://www.vcumsa.org/>.

The significance of big name musicians visiting RVA

MUKTARU JALLOH
Staff Writer

Within the past year, there has been resurgence of big name artists performing in Richmond, with an expanding range of genres taking the stage in Virginia’s capital city.

Richmond, a city known for its artistic scene and cultural aesthetic, is a place that would seem like a no-brainer stop for artists on tour. Still, the city has always played third fiddle to more larger cities like D.C., Norfolk and Virginia Beach. This is because Richmond is caught in-between the two areas and for many artists in the past, a stop in Richmond proved to be unnecessary.

In the past, the only acts to perform in Richmond were young, up and coming artists with little-to-no following or veteran artists who perform for older crowds as

a part of a group bill. This circumstance has vastly changed, however, and musically relevant artists are now choosing Richmond on their tour dates.

Richmond holds several venues for shows, most notable are Richmond’s historic Altria Theater, AEG Live’s The National, the Richmond Coliseum and the independently-owned Broadberry. Since early 2015, rappers such as platinum-selling artist J. Cole, Chance The Rapper, Talib Kweli, Future, Wale and legendary singers Bob Dylan and Gladys Knight have all performed at

these venues, many of which were sold out.

This has come as a delight to many concertgoers, including VCU junior De’Von Henderson.

“For a long time, I had to drive hours just to see my favorite artists,” he said. “It’s a great feeling now that they are coming to the city. It’s not only good for the artist but more so for the fans.”

Speaking to his point, many artists have often shied away from Richmond due to assumptions about the city. Now, though, many artists are starting to see the city for what it really is and not word-of-mouth. KRS-One, legendary rapper and activist, performed at The National on Thursday January 28. At his show, the rapper spoke of his

time in Richmond.

“I was caught in the storm and got a chance to see the real Richmond and not what you hear. The food was delicious. The people were great. I had an amazing time here and definitely will be back,” KRS said.

The rapper loved his time in Richmond so much he decided to visit the city’s colleges VCU and Virginia Union University.

Another artist who seemed to have found solace in Richmond was Grammy-award winning artist Macklemore. Caught in last week’s snow blizzard, the artist and his band were stuck in the city for a few days. At his show last Sunday, Macklemore referred to Richmond as his “second-home now.”

With artists like Grammy-award winning rapper Lil Wayne and popular rock band X Ambassadors set to perform in here next week, Richmond natives and residents should have no doubt that their city is now becoming a premier location for artists on tour.



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ADRIEL VELAZQUEZ
Contributing Writer

VCU's Division of Student Engagement is partnering with Richmond Public Schools to bring tutors to Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School and give them the opportunity to aid middle school students in English and math while providing school

On Feb. 5, volunteers from VCU will travel to Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School to tutor students after being rescheduled from this past Friday due to the weather. In addition to tutoring, VCU is also sponsoring a pencil drive and essay contest for the middle school students.

The Division of Student Engagement reached out to the middle school

"We had a meeting to say, 'this is what we're doing for MLK week, how can we partner up with MLK middle school and how can we collaborate on something?'" said Beverly Walker, associate director of the University Student Commons and Activities. "So we were thinking about short term and long term activities. One of the items they said was... (providing) volunteers for tutoring for a day."

"So we'll have students that will be involved in the classes. It's just one day, math and English. And then we'll also have students going in and reading in sixth grade English classes as well," Walker said.

In addition to tutoring, VCU is also hosting a

"We also had an essay contest," Walker said. "We got about 35 submissions for the entire school and we had VCU staff members read them and we have selected the winners. On Sunday we are having an MLK community dinner and the winners of the contest are coming to read an excerpt from their essays."

Walker says that anyone interested in

"Maybe there's a student that's a different major but still have an interest in math, an interest in English, and based on the material in class that day, they're still comfortable. They can definitely still contact us," Walker said.

Walker hopes that these volunteer opportunities continue to expand in the future and looks forward to more collaboration with Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School.

"We're working on some things because there is a process that you have to go through in working with Richmond public schools. But we're working on future opportunities to volunteer... and at a much larger scope," Walker said. "We've had some good responses and collaborations with [MLK middle] school so we definitely want to go again."

If you're interested in volunteering, visit the event's page through the student orgs website. The link is <https://vcu.collegiatelink.net/organization/slic/events>



Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School is just a few minutes from the MCV campus. VCU students will be volunteering at the school tutoring English and math this week.

PHOTOS BY AUSTIN WALKER

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Students must face the facts to “Make it Real”

EMILY HIMES
Contributing Columnist

It’s a pretty safe assumption that— compared to most universities in Virginia— VCU has one of the least traditional campuses. Integrated into the city, the lines between what is VCU and the rest of Richmond can become very blurred. College students spill into nearby neighborhoods and businesses, assimilating to what they believe is the rhythm of Richmond.

Coffee shops appear and are instantly filled with hip young adults, apartment complexes and townhouses are renovated and are quickly inhabited by students while VCU facilities creep into historical districts. The swift transformation that Monroe Ward has occurred to accommodate more than 31,000 students who have migrated into the city to obtain their degrees here at VCU, really is a sort of “havoc.”

The kicker is, we just keep getting bigger and as incorporated as the VCU campus may be into the preexisting city, the institutional bubble that students reside within blinds them to the very real and dwindling communities that once existed in a place that now bleeds yellow and black. Students are also

oblivious to the fact that Richmond is bleeding from something different and not near as spirited. Gentrification. The assailant? The rams we all know and love: VCU.

Money and property are topics that are becoming more and more common within university headlines. With the new practice facility now open and operating, the Institute for Contemporary Art underway and what was previously known as the Sahara Hookah lounge recently being purchased, to any member of the VCU student body it would seem that the university really did “build this city.”

The hard reality of the harsh conditions that come with gentrification are difficult to swallow, but the very least that can be done is acknowledge what happens when a very wealthy and powerful institution moves into a neighborhood that is home to, according to First Things First of Greater Richmond, a community whose households are 60% are single-parent.

Property values rise, forcing residents onto the streets as rent has risen approximately one-hundred dollars since 2005. Buildings fight community access with key card swipes and iris cameras, waving money in the faces of those who can no longer afford to live where

they grew up. Millions of dollars are poured into VCU facilities to make way for our ever expanding student body— large even for a state school— while just across the street entire neighborhoods fall apart and the people who reside within them are consequently labeled as “ghetto” by incoming students.

The ignorant students who avoid the residents of Jackson Ward because of stereotyping, become oblivious to the ugly face of gentrification.

Are people really wary of Jackson Ward because of dangerous conditions, or are they resistant to step foot into something that isn’t branded by VCU? Students need to be aware that it is a place where POC suffer in poverty due to generation after generation suffering at the hands of institutionalized racism. If a university has enough cash to purchase Sahara Hookah Lounge for \$ 2.5 million you would think that their community outreach program would be the best in Virginia. Considering were located in an area where, according to the Richmond 2013 census, 25% of people live in poverty.

Instead, students will occasionally take it upon themselves to aid the homeless that filter onto VCU campus before they are

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“The ignorant students who avoid the residents of Jackson Ward because of stereotyping, become oblivious to the ugly truth of gentrification.”
– Emily Himes



swept away by staff members on VCUPD. VCU Aspire works with community engagement to aid underprivileged individuals in the surrounding community, and student organizations provide a large variety of services for displaced peoples in Richmond. Yet, it oddly feels like we try our hardest to prevent our campus from “making it real” by pushing the reality of Richmond off campus. Key card

swipes restrict access to a library funded by state taxes and Cary street gym is closed to all VCU affiliates. If we are going to build and grow into communities that are already established we cannot, with right conscious, ignore the families we are affecting.

Who am I to talk? I live here, I study here, the job that I have is funded by the alternative adults that thrive in The Fan District. By pay-

ing my tuition, I’m contributing to the overall problem. All I can hope for is to be heard, and in turn, give those who are in need what they are desperately asking for: a voice. By choosing to live in the city, to work in the city and to study in the city, you choose everything that comes along with that. We cannot pick and choose the aspects of Richmond that we wish to experience, and neither can VCU.

Our nation’s supposed well-being

MIKAELA REINARD
Contributing Columnist

On Tuesday, January 12, President Obama gave his final State of the Union speech. His speech outlined a lot of hopes for reform, accomplishments since 2009, and lessons for the citizens of the United States that made Democrats jump with glee and Republicans sit in disappointment. For someone like me, a self-proclaimed Libertarian, it caused a lot of confusion. His societal concerns seemed to make a lot of sense and created a sense of hope that something might change, but his talks regarding increasing government spending and expanding the government involvement caused a lot of uneasiness.

Towards the beginning of his speech, President Obama laid out the format for the one-hour speech by stating four “big” questions: “How do we give everyone a fair shot at opportunity and security in this new economy?,” “How do we make technology work for us, and not against us —especially when it comes to solving urgent challenges like climate change?,” “How do we keep America safe and lead the world without becoming its policemen?,” and “How can we make our politics reflect what’s best in us, and not what’s worst?”

When first acknowledging our economy, President Obama was very quick to say “the U.S. has the strongest and most durable economy in the world.” He quickly followed by stating, “Anyone claiming that America’s economy is in decline is peddling fiction.” It’s slightly ironic that this statement was said so boldly when recently the Dow Jones had an average plunge of over 560 points and then closed down at 249 points.

Although a rally on Wednesday, Jan. 20, allowed stock prices to lift a little bit, the fact that the stock market plummeted they way it did does not hold promise for a strong and durable economy.

As he suggested, it is crucial to make an economy that works better for everybody; however, I disagree with his idea on how to soundly execute the birth of a better economy for the American public. The distribution of wealth has nothing to do with a better economy for the American public, it comes down to people having to strive and really give their best shot, make smart financial decisions, and practice self-discipline.

Today, people’s wants tend to be prioritized over their needs with the idea that somehow the government will cover the needs. In addition, many people take on various responsibilities when they are not in the financial position to do so, leading them to take out loans that they can’t pay off or file for bank-

ruptcy. This ideology is becoming more and more popular with those who identify as Democrat and Populist, but does not sit well with those who claim themselves to be Republican or Libertarian.

In addition to his segment on economics, President Obama mentioned Medicare, Social Security, the Affordable Healthcare Act (more commonly known as ObamaCare), and a potential wage insurance. His proposed wage insurance would give Americans coverage when a new job doesn’t pay as much as an old job or when someone is in between jobs. Some may find this to be a good idea; however, I find this to be an example of the government trying to be far too involved in the ups and downs of life. The proposed program may have good intentions, but it would only be added to the litany of broken and failing entitlement programs that are “secured” under the U.S. government.

President Obama’s last proposal for economic reform pertains to college, one of the most controversial economic subjects for anyone who follows politics. President Obama stated, “We have to make college affordable for every American.” Again, this signals the government trying to expand its grasp on the life of the average American citizen. College isn’t meant to be cheap. Not only are you paying for the education you receive, but if you’re one of many who leave home and live in a different city for the time you’re working to attain your bachelor’s degree, you’re also paying for the experience.

Scholarships, grants, and federal loans are waiting to be picked up. According to USA Today, around \$2.9 billion of federal Pell Grants, which is free money that doesn’t have to be paid back, was left unclaimed by eligible high school seniors. There are several ways to make college education cheaper, but no one said it would be easy. There are always exceptions where people will pay more than they have in order to get an education that they feel they deserve, but that is the risk that comes with making major financial decisions, and funding a college education is not an outlier to this rule.

Following his economic reviews and propositions, came his points regarding technology and how we can use it to vastly improve the status of our health and the world’s well being. Obama set a mission for “America to be the country that cures cancer once and for all” while juxtaposing his call to action to that of NASA’s mission to get a man on the moon after Sputnik. He also urged the importance of switching to solar and wind energy, as well as the need to cut carbon pollution.

These provisions to aid in the eradication of climate change are good and the citizens of the United



States should do all they can to make it a normality, but ultimately, every country in the world would have to follow these habits that America would adopt in order to cease the progression of climate change.

Following these points, President Obama stressed his societal wishes for the citizens of the United States, focusing on the two questions “How do we keep America safe and lead the world without becoming its policemen?” and “How can we make our politics reflect what’s best in us, and not what’s worst?” With the first of the two questions, President Obama focused in on ISIL, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and how to approach the situation.

“He stated, ‘But (ISIL) does not threaten our national existence. That’s the story ISIL wants to tell; that’s the kind of propaganda they use to recruit. We don’t need to build them up to show that we’re serious, nor do we need to push away vital allies in this fight by echoing the lie that ISIL is somehow representative of one of the world’s largest religions.’”

— MIKAELA REINARD

President Obama stressed the fact that ISIL does not represent the religion of Islam, which is a common misconception in the United States, especially due to radical members of the GOP talking negatively towards those who follow the Islamic religion. President Obama’s bit on ISIL holds a lot of promise, but as someone who follows politics

VCU begins to advance in efforts to increase diversity

—continued from page 1

in their practical lives. Yet, because the faculty does not reflect the overall mission of the diversity, students suffer from a lack of representation.

It is commendable that VCU has created such an atmosphere on campus where these tough conversations can be held. The effort comes not only from student organizations, but from administration, who were both eager to finally start working towards addressing the underlying issues regarding inclusion on campus.

Other issues that were raised during the forum were awareness, sensitivity and tolerance in and outside of the classroom. The topic spanned between religion, culture, sexual orientation or other deviations of identification.

When the spring semester began, student organizations held an impressive array of discussions to increase communication. The Black Lives Matter Symposium held Jan. 20 discussed issues from police brutality to inclusion on campus. An interfaith panel discussion held the following day discussed today’s issues within the religious hemisphere, and another more comprehensive discussion followed on Jan. 28.

Another group of students raised their concerns about safety and sensitivity in the classroom at the forum. The Muslim community on campus is concerned about the growing animosity toward the American Muslim community in the states. This environment does not make it easy for students who have to constantly defend themselves for practicing a certain faith.

Conversations in classrooms regarding the topic are relevant, but sometimes they enter

a realm of prejudice and ignorance. Muslim students often find themselves fending for not only themselves, but their entire population, because some professors seemed to not be equipped with the tools to handle these difficult conversations.

Muslims may not have a problem speaking up for their community, but just like any other group of individuals on campus they have very real concerns. Professors should be able to maneuver these often difficult conversations so everyone involved can walk away having learned something.

There was significant response from various administrative offices to address the students’ concerns.

After the forum, the VCU Police Department reached out to the Muslim Students Association to increase communication regarding safety concerns, which was especially reassuring. The President’s office made a statement standing in solidarity with the community, along with the Student Commons, Office of the Dean of Humanities and Sciences, and various other departments across campus.

The encouragement that the Muslim community received from the administration put a significant amount of tension to rest, and paved a way to start having new discussions to tackle the growing issues in the world.

The collaborative effort between the university and student organizations is beginning to scratch the surface of the issues the community faces. Although the university is beginning to take strides in the right direction, there is still plenty of work that needs to be done, conversations to be had and substantial changes to be made.



Millenials of 2024 by Christine Fouron



Bundy's Blunder by Garteh Bentall



It's all fun and games until someone gets hurt.

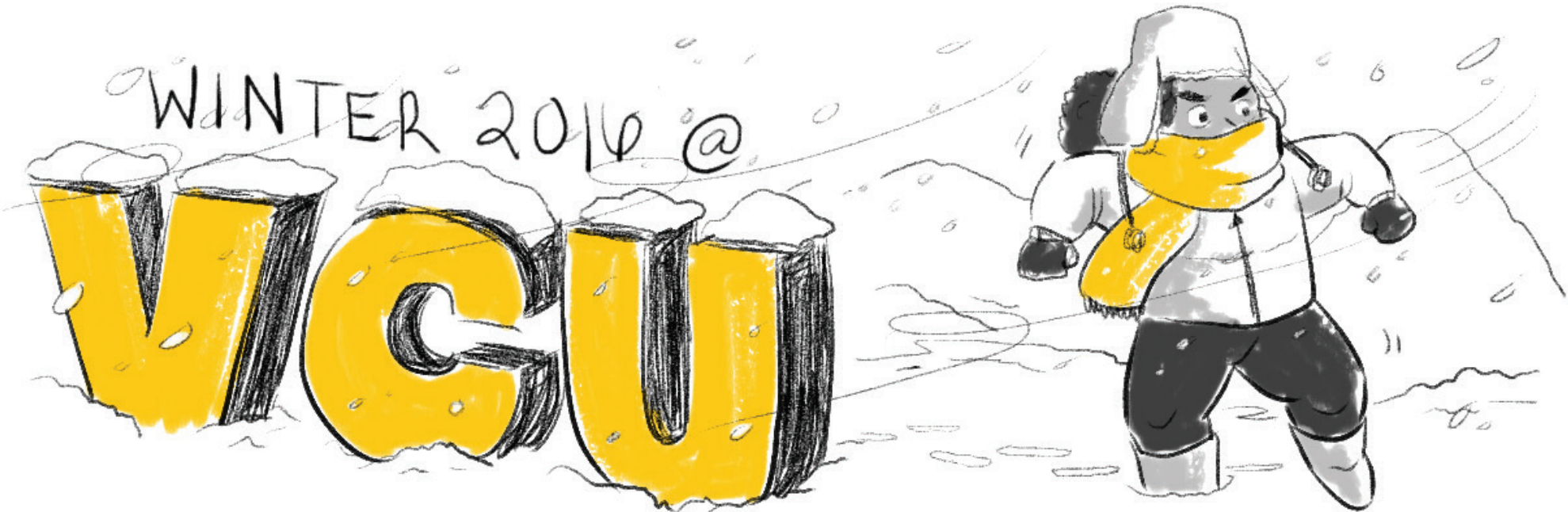


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