Renovations help build VCU into leading institution

LAUREN LOMAKA
FRONT/OPINION EDITOR

As recently as spring 2006, our university began an expansion plan known as 2020 Vision of Excellence. In a message released from VCU, President Eugene Trani said, “VCU 2020 Vision of Excellence provides an exceptional roadmap for us to continue to fulfill our mission as a leading urban research institution for the 21st century, while at the same time allowing us the flexibility to embrace unforeseen opportunities that will undoubtedly present themselves along the way.” Many aspects of the Monroe Park and MCV campuses will be drastically altered. Some of these include an improved Cary Street Gymnasium, a new Business and Engineering Building, and a new dormitory.

According to a recent Blackboard poll, the majority of students were most looking forward to the Cary Street Gym renovations. This project will start at the end of this semester with the shutting down of facilities. The roughly $50 million expansion is slated to take up to two calendar years. Ruben Rodriguez, associate vice provost and dean of student affairs, said part of the reason the renovations will take two years is because they are “working within the confines [of the building], and want to keep the current architecture of the facility.” The additions and renovations there will include at least one pool, tennis courts, two racquetball courts, and four new basketball courts. The top level will have an elevated running track. Perhaps the most revolutionary renovation is the addition of a free standing climbing wall the height of the building.

A second exciting addition to Monroe Campus is the new Business and Engineering Building. The building, set to start classes in January, will be home to the Business Department and the Computer Science and Mechanical Engineering concentrations of the Engineering Department. Classes will be moved from Oliver Hall.

Engineering students will find themselves with more up-to-date labs to perform their research. Business students will have the use of a room with a real-time “tickertape” showing the most recent stock news. A cafe area in the building will give students a chance to socialize.

Georgia Esposito, a representative of the Engineering Department, said, “Perhaps the showpiece for the School of Engineering in the expansion will be the octagonal tower that anchors the building. In it, we will locate the Da Vinci Center for Innovation in Product Design and Development. “The Da Vinci Center will bring students together from Engineering, Business and the School of the Arts to work on projects involving the technical and commercial aspects of successful product development. [This is] a new and engaging step for us and we’re very excited about the prospects for the program.”

The dorm being built directly across the street from the Business and Engineering Building will be open to upper class students majoring in the areas of business, engineering, and art. The dorm is part of the university trying to promote interdisciplinary majors in these areas. The dorm will provide year-long apartment style living arrangements for 400 students. The bottom level will hold appealing retail options for students, with a full service Chili’s restaurant and possibly another Starbucks.

Many see the expansion plan as a way to boost VCU’s national standing as an accredited university. “We want to become a leading institution of research and academic programs; our aim is high quality student experiences … It’s an exciting time to be at VCU. We have several programs nationally ranked, and we’re trying to enhance that,” Rodriguez said.
What I am doing around behind [the gym]. So the building will be wrapped we put a new roof on it. Then collapse several years ago so torn down actually had its roof The one that is going to be one is going to be torn down. Behind the gym that VCU owns; TD: facilities?

Whereas now, it's not a very and go about your business. get back together and socialize an hour and a half later you all run around the track and then a treadmill, somebody might weights, somebody might use workout, somebody might lift basketball, somebody might play racquetball, somebody play basketball, somebody might play floor hockey, field hockey, box where we play indoor soccer, the pool will be what is called four basketball courts. Above will be two aquatic centers, Cary Street Gym will become an inside will be gutted or emptied. four walls will stay, but the called Cary St. "Box." The four walls will stay, but the insode will be gutted or emptied. And then what it will become is the fitness center. So the main Cary Street Gym will become an entrance and 18,000 square feet of fitness on the two floors, and wrapped around the building will be two aquatic centers, four basketball courts. Above the pool will be what is called [the] ‘Multi-Activity Center’ where we play indoor soccer, floor hockey, field hockey, box lacrosse, dodge ball, intramural football -- two racquet ball courts, and a running track above the gym. We’re gaining a lot of things. There will also be a climbing wall in the center of the fitness room, and we’re looking at the possibility of a climbing wall on the pool, so if you climbed up and fell, you would just fall into the water.

What message would you like to give to students about this project?

We’re building a wonderful facility for them to use and we’re still looking forward to some input; there are some building meetings that the members of SGA and students are invited to. If people want to contact me, I can tell them [what they want] to know and we’re more than willing to meet with anyone to go over the plans. We are close to finalizing the project, but there is some room for input. We’ll be seeking input from our SGA on both campuses and as we go along over our policies and procedures and buy our new equipment.
Diverse culture brings life to community

AMANDA HANN
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

JASMIN SINGH
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

India Bazaar:
Food, clothing, music and jewelry vendors from many states gathered on the weekend of Oct. 6 and Oct. 7 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center to promote and sell their goods. Throughout the day and into the night, dancers of all ages shook their beat to various Bollywood songs. They performed in traditional folk dances called Bhangra as well as religious dances called Bharata Natyam.

Fall Fest:
The annual VCU Fall Fest was held Oct. 11 to Oct. 14. The festivities dabbled in some Richmond traditions, such as a “Haunts of Richmond Walking Tour” and an architecture tour of the city. Other events served to acquaint parents and students with what the university has to offer, such as Greek life and study abroad opportunities. Art and music attracted attention, with events such as Mayan weaving, The Time For Change Band, and Tania Isaac. Ram Madness was included in the festival as well.

Grace Street Festival:
The annual Grace Street Festival, held Oct. 13, featured dancers performing to music of diverse cultures and held stalls for those wishing to sample some good food from different nations. VCU students performed in the cultural show and some committed to volunteering in order to support the event.

Dracula:
TheatreVCU exhibited a play entitled Dracula, which had an extended playtime due to its popularity among students, faculty, and the public. Its first showing was Nov. 8 and it continued to play throughout November and the beginning of December.

African Student Union Gala:
Nov. 29 at 6:30 pm the ASU held a cultural fest with performances, plays and food representative of various African cultures.

Kwanzaa:
A pre-Kwanzaa celebration took place Dec. 4 at 7 p.m. in the Commons’ Commonwealth Ballroom. Cultural dance, drums, storytelling and crafts were featured at the festival. Jamaica House catered traditional Kwanzaa dishes to really spice up the party. The Black Caucus collected canned goods for the Central Virginia Food Bank, and books and toys for needy children to be delivered through the YMCA.

Richmond Nativity Pageant:
The Richmond Nativity Pageant continues its holiday tradition at the Carillon in Byrd Park Dec. 23 at 6 p.m. The 30-minute production features a choir and a cast of hundreds of performers, who present a re-enactment of the nativity scene. According to www.richmondnativity.com, some of the performers have participated for “30, 40 and some 50 plus years.” The nativity pageant is annually witnessed by thousands of Richmond residents and draws people from all over Virginia. The event is free to the public and is actually considered to be one of the oldest, if not the oldest, public Christmas tradition in all of Richmond.

Ukrop’s Christmas Parade:
The 24th annual Ukrop’s Christmas Parade was Dec. 1, at 10 a.m. The parade ran nearly three miles long, beginning in front of the Science Museum of Virginia (located at 2500 W. Broad St.) and ending on 17th Street. This year, the parade has added 17 new acts, including cultural dance groups. The parade will be broadcasted on WWBT Dec. 15 and Dec. 25 from 1 to 3 p.m and on WCVE Dec. 23 from 1 to 3 p.m. Last year, the parade attracted 250,000 spectators from all over Virginia.

GardenFest of Lights:
The Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden’s GardenFest of Lights features nearly half a million lights that are formed to create “flowers, fairies and woodland creatures.” The display is open 5 to 10 p.m. until Jan 7, and directions can be found on their Web site, www.lewisginter.org.

The botanical garden also features Merry Mondays, which provide a bonfire for s’more-roasting and include storytelling for children. The event is free for children under 3 years of age, $6 for children 3 to 12, $5 for members, $10 for adults, and $9 for those 55 and older. The 40-acre garden is considered the mid-Atlantic’s only classically styled Conservatory open to the public.
Ram Madness shoots off the season

TEJAS SHAH
SPORTS EDITOR

Hundreds of VCU students stood outside the Stuart C. Siegel Center Oct. 12 to kick off Ram Madness, an annual showcase of the VCU basketball and volleyball teams. This event came at the heels of the tremendous success of the Rams basketball team last year, winning theCAA Championship and defeating the Duke Blue Devils 79-77 in the first round of the NCAA “March Madness” Tournament. The tournament features the best teams in the men’s basketball league. When asked to compare this year’s Ram Madness to last year’s, Kelli Lemon, director of the event, said, “I don’t think they’re comparable. The team maybe was in third place in the conference with a new, unknown coach, and then they beat Duke and the coach almost left us to go to a top-playing NCAA team. Everyone is excited. There is no comparing the two Ram Madness events.”

At 7:30 p.m., fans poured into the Siegel Center to meet the 2007-2008 Rams basketball team and get a preview of the season to come. The first 1,500 students received a free Ram Madness T-shirt, free food and raffle tickets for prizes such as free tuition and iPod Nanos. The event was attended by 1,700 students (4,000 people total).

For the first hour, fans were able to meet the members of the Rams Women’s and Men’s basketball teams and get their autographs, as well as watch the Rams cheerleading and dance teams in action. “The atmosphere was very exciting, especially because we were able to get courtside seats so we could see the players up close,” freshman Samarth Gola said. “The introductions were very captivating, I definitely enjoyed it. Coach Grant for President!” The first event of the evening was a preview of the Rams women’s volleyball team with their coaches, James Finley and Andrea Fischer. The team is nearing the end of its season with a record of 7-16 overall, 3-6 for the conference.

The Rams women’s basketball team this year lost graduates Michele Cosel, who plays in the Romanian Basketball League’s first division, and Miranda Smith. The team welcomed back its top scorers junior Quantira Hollingsworth (Center) and senior Krystal Vaughn (Forward), both All-CAA Second Team selections for the 2006-2007 season, as well as eight other scholarship players. The Rams have also signed freshman Ebony Patterson (Guard), Jessica Taylor (Guard), and Stacy Griffith (Forward), as well as junior Radoslava Bachvarova (Small Forward), this season. The Rams women’s team has been selected fourth in the CAA preseason poll for the 2007-2008 season. Its first game took place Nov. 2 against Virginia Union (an exhibition game) at 5 p.m.

The final event of the evening was the introduction of the Rams men’s basketball team, as well as a team scrimmage. The men’s team enjoyed great success last year with an overall record of 28-7 and a conference record of 16-2, setting a school record for victories. The team, led by junior Eric Maynor, beat George Mason University 69-65 to win the CAA Championship and made it as far as the second round of the NCAA Tournament, beating Duke 79-77 but losing to Pittsburgh in overtime, 79-84. This season, the team lost graduates Calvin Roland and B.A. Walker, but retained many of its star players, including Maynor. It also added six outstanding freshmen to its roster. The men’s team has been selected second in the CAA preseason poll for 2007-2008. Its first game (exhibition) took place on Nov. 1 against Virginia Union.

The VCU Lady Rams women’s basketball season has started out with an overall record of 5-4, with its most recent win against East Carolina University Dec. 1 (the final score was 64-53). Its next games will be against the University of Richmond Dec. 5, against Radford Dec 8, and against Georgetown Dec 16. The team’s first conference game is Jan. 6 at Northeastern.

The VCU Rams men’s basketball record is 3-3 overall, with wins against Maryland-Eastern Shore, Houston and Elon, and losses against Miami, #18 Arkansas, and Hampton. The team’s next games will be against Maryland Dec. 2, William and Mary Dec. 5 (the team’s first conference game and Richmond Dec 8.

Highlights

The VCU women’s volleyball team finished its season with an overall record of 12-21. It finished its season with a 3-2 win over Georgetown and a 3-2 loss to Long Island in the VCU Thanksgiving Invitational at the Alltel Pavilion in the Siegel Center.

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Opinion

Student finds means of protests disruptive, unnecessary

JENNY FORNOFF
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

It is with growing trepidation that I have been venturing out of my dorm over the course of the semester. Every day it seems like there is a new religious group demonstrating in some way on our campus. It has grown from simply handing out fliers and Bibles to students on their way to class, to standing in the dorms, to a very graphic anti-abortion protest. While these groups have a right to be where they are, their tactics have grown disruptive to the community and are bringing animosity from the student body.

I believe very much in free speech, in people’s right to demonstrate, and in people’s right to have their own opinions. I think that given VCU’s history of political involvement, it’s a good thing to still see student demonstrations for causes that they are passionate about. However, in the case of many recent demonstrations by religious organizations, the people demonstrating have not been students. I personally have been offered a Bible by a much older gentleman and have seen adults preaching in the Commons Plaza. I don’t think that these people should be allowed onto our campus to potentially influence students. Although we do have an open campus that allows for university-community interaction, the school exists primarily for the exchange of information by and around the students. Therefore, the causes displayed on campus should be student opinions, expressed by the students.

The main cause of my unease are the tactics being employed by these groups. Graphic posters displaying body parts of unborn babies are meant to incite reactions, not to provoke thought about an issue. The student reactions included shouting and throwing cups of coffee at the protesters. When a group provokes that retaliation from the students, it is a sign that they do not belong there and should find another venue to protest. As a resident of Brandt Hall, I have frequently seen and heard sermons of how, as students, we are all going to hell, preached through megaphones aimed at Brandt and Rhoads Halls. This is disturbing the peace. It is neither the time nor the place to be expressing that viewpoint, nor any viewpoint for that matter—it is time to leave the students alone so we can go to bed.

I think that if these groups would present themselves in a more reasonable manner, as those wishing to discuss their points of view rather than preach them, the students would be more likely to listen. Preaching implies condescension, and no one likes to be patronized. If these protests are to continue, their attention-getting methods must be moderated. Campus demonstrations should reflect the views of students by being produced by them, not by outsiders. It is imperative that this be the case to preserve the peace of the student body.

Pro-Life Day of Silent Solidarity Considered Huge Success

Started by Brian Kemper four years ago, students have given up their voice for those who will never have one. This past year over 150,000 students across America participated. “We are standing up for what we believe in, what we know is know is right, and we are not doing it by yelling at our fellow students. Hateful anti-abortion is the wrong approach. We are silent and compassionate in solidarity with the voiceless unborn,” Abdelnour said. Brian Kemper remarked the ensuing day of the protest, “Imagine something as simple as the word ‘life’ written on your mouth can cause such hatred and anger. This shows us more now than ever that the pro-life message needs to be Christ-centered. The only thing that can turn that anger and hatred around is the hope we find in our loving savior, Jesus Christ.”

Research Corner
Student receives first place for paper on duality between bodies, people

CORIN FOX
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I recently attended a philosophy conference in Asheville, North Carolina. This was the 10th Annual Southern Appalachian Undergraduate Philosophy Conference. My presentation was regarding a paper I wrote on substance dualism and possible instantiations. I argued that there are important properties that people have that their bodies do not and cannot have. I held that these properties, which were referred to as “modal properties,” supported an important duality between bodies and people. Specifically, I held that there were validity problems with a common materialist objection to the central argument for substance dualism. This problem is best seen through consideration of these “modal properties.” In presenting my work, I experienced an important academic exchange that philosophy is built upon. That is, I experienced the rigor of presenting and defending one’s philosophical thesis. Though this was not my first experience with presenting, I gained much knowledge of the importance of clarity and conciseness in displaying one’s work. For those that are interested and have yet to pursue conference presentations, I highly recommend submitting work to conferences and journals. It opens up an avenue of experience that will permeate your academic future in a profound way. Further, I find that work of this nature (in whatever field you may be in) helps in the decision making process for post-graduation plans. I and others I have known found that the conferences provide great motivation. This may be just the spark you will need to decide among your post-graduation options.

Overall, the event in Asheville went very well. I received a first place award. I am indebted to both Dr. Eugene Mills and The Honors College for help with the preparation of my paper and the trip itself. I am now working on applying to graduate school, as well as pursuing some work I hope to present in the near future in meta-ethics.

Disagree?
Want your opinions heard?
Submit a Letter to the Editor for our next issue!
Backpage

Student recounts an intellectual summer at Oxford

THOMAS LOTT
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

This summer I participated in the VCU Honors in Oxford program at St. Hilda’s College of Oxford University in the United Kingdom. In this program, six students from the VCU Honors College (Thomas Lott, Rachel Harris, Fatima Syed, Elaine Kelley, Roshan George and Jared Kobulnicky) took classes with students from San Diego State University and Texas State University on the campus of St. Hilda’s College. Dr. Timothy Hulsey of VCU and Dr. Christopher Frost of SDSU taught the Honors Module entitled “Science, Religion & the Quest for Meaning.” Dr. Hulsey, Dr. Frost, and Dr. Steven Beebe of Texas State University collectively taught the Honors Module entitled “Lewis & Freud on Self, World, and God.” These courses were conducted in the seminar style, meaning that assigned books were read before class and topics from these books were debated among the students and professors during the entirety of the class sessions. These modules were the two most intellectually demanding courses that I have ever taken. In the “Quest for Meaning” module we studied mankind’s different methods of finding absolute truth. Absolute truth can be described by the following three questions: “What are we?,” “Where do we come from?”, and “Where do we go after we die?” Not only did we examine the psychoanalytical philosophies of authors Richard Dawkins and Allen Wheelis, but we also studied the religious messages of Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu, Siddhartha by Hermann Hesse, and The Creation by E.O. Wilson. In addition, we engaged in several religion vs. science debates between Freud (Dr. Hulsey) and Lewis (Dr. Beebe). Many of us also visited the Tate Modern Museum, Salisbury, Canterbury, the Isle of Wight, Cowes, the Globe Theatre, Cardiff, Inverness and Loch Ness. Our group even participated in a two-hour, private tour inside the mysterious ruins of Stonehenge. This was such an amazing experience! I would like to personally thank the Honors College for giving me this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

Upcoming Concerts and Plays in Richmond

Daughtry with The Midway State: 8 p.m. Dec. 13 at The Norva

Babyface: 8 p.m. Dec. 14 at Chrysler Hall

Richmond Ballet: Nutcracker: 7 pm. Dec. 14 through Dec. 23 at the Landmar Theater

Boyz II Men: 9 p.m. Dec. 15 at The Norva

Nutcracker Sweets Party: 4 p.m. Dec. 15, Dec. 21, Dec. 22 at the Landmark Theater

Chris Brown & Bow Wow: 6:30 p.m. Dec. 19 at Hampton Coliseum

Hatebreed & guests: 4:30 p.m. Dec. 21 at The Norva

Trans-Siberian Orchestra: 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. Dec. 22 at Richmond Coliseum

Keith Sweat: 7 p.m. Dec. 30 at Hampton Coliseum

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