

Chronicle of Giving

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL TRIALS

Philanthropy is driving positive change through the national Winn Awards.

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The School of Public Health attracts early support for its bold mission.

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A LABOR OF LOVE

Alum creates scholarship for medical lab sciences.

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Dear friends,



At the MCV Foundation, we believe in educating the next generation of health care leaders, uncovering lifesaving treatments and cures, and providing the best possible care for all who need it. Thanks to you — our dedicated donors and partners — the foundation continues to support and foster VCU Health and VCU Health Sciences in achieving all of these goals.

We are proud this spring to bring you stories that illustrate just how impactful MCV Campus donors can be. From a large corporate donor helping to improve the processes and reach of clinical trials, to individual donors who are supporting the new School of Public Health, future medical lab scientists, dentistry students, nursing students and much more, the positive imprint we're making together on health care is enormous.

This year, more than ever, philanthropy plays a vital role in shaping the future of health care. Outside realities — economic shifts, policy changes and global uncertainties — have made private support an essential lifeline for innovation, research and patient care. Because of your commitment, we can continue to advance critical initiatives, provide life-changing resources and ensure that those who need care the most receive it.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for making a difference in the lives of so many. Your generosity is not only shaping the present, but securing a healthier future for all.

Sincerely,

Darius A. Johnson
Board Chair

Margaret Ann Bollmeier
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The MCV Foundation supports and fosters VCU Health and VCU Health Sciences through philanthropy, stewardship, innovation, communications and collaboration. The foundation supports the education, research and clinical care mission of the VCU College of Health Professions, VCU School of Dentistry, VCU School of Medicine, VCU School of Nursing, VCU School of Pharmacy, VCU School of Public Health, VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, and VCU Medical Center. Through more than 2,000 funds, the MCV Foundation provides scholarships, professorships and funds for research and programs to support the lifesaving work occurring at VCU Health.

ON THE COVER | Participants in the Winn Excellence in Clinical Trials Award Program from around the country gathered in Richmond to hear updates from the program's cohorts and research projects.

PHOTO: TERRY BROWN

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The Massey-led Winn Awards program offers tools to develop and implement clinical trials that lead to better outcomes for all.

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A Labor of Love

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Gary Iskol, D.D.S., shares why he made a gift through his will to provide future support for the VCU School of Dentistry.



TRUSTEE'S CORNER

From Student to Steward

The monumental columns of the iconic Egyptian Building on the MCV Campus are just a few of the beloved structure's revered architectural details.

For Michele Romano, M.D., the four columns represent more than structural integrity. They are the figurative pillars on which VCU Health and VCU Health Sciences stand today: cutting-edge research, world-renowned education, the epitome of great medical care, and — maybe among the most important — a deep sense of community that stretches well beyond Richmond's city limits.

A former nurse, a retired family practice physician and a 1984 VCU School of Medicine alum, Dr. Romano joined the MCV Foundation Board of Trustees in 2018. She previously served on the VCU Board of Visitors from 2002 to 2010, as well as the VCU Health System Authority Board of Directors from 2003 to 2009 and the VCU School of Medicine Advisory Council from 1989 to 2005.

She's seen an evolution at VCU over the decades from her time as a student and later as housestaff at the hospital. What Dr. Romano said she is most proud of today is the strong relationship forged between the MCV and Monroe Park campuses.

"We're not silos anymore — we're cross-collaborating, and that's very good for everyone," Dr. Romano said. "Each campus appreciates the other's strengths and what they bring to the table, and it allows us to do the work we need to do to improve health everywhere."

This collaboration has cemented VCU's status as a top-tier university and health system.

"It used to be that VCU Health was thought of as a hospital and health system for indigent care, and maybe it did a little research," she said. "Now we are an outstanding research, teaching and clinical hospital and health care system that also takes care of our most vulnerable people."

Dr. Romano said the MCV Foundation's success in supporting its campus partners is driven by a board that fully understands its mission.

"We all come together, and we have different backgrounds and skill sets, but when we go into board meetings, we put our politics and personalities aside," Dr. Romano said. "We work together for the sake of our donors, our partners and the community."

A Season of Outreach and Discovery



The Discovery Series RVA last fall highlighted the VCU Medicines for All Institute with panelists B. Frank Gupton, Ph.D. (center), the founder and CEO of M4All, and Ryan Littich, Ph.D. (left), the institute's head of research and development, in discussion with Mike Osberg, the institute's chief commercial and strategy officer. Photos: Daniel Sangjib Min, MCV Foundation

Last fall, the Discovery Series and its associated outreach initiatives saw a record number of events that connected community members with the MCV Foundation.

Established in 2013 in Williamsburg, Va., the series raises awareness of the outstanding medical research, care and education on the MCV Campus. The program expanded to Richmond in 2019 and includes several extensions for specific audiences. In 2015, the Discovery Society was formed to honor Williamsburg-area donors who support the MCV Campus through annual gifts. Today, the society boasts nearly 300 members who

have collectively given more than \$14.3 million.

Two of the fall Discovery Series events were titled "Breathing New Life Into VCU Health's Lung Transplant Program" and included a variety of VCU Health experts in pulmonary diseases and critical care fields such as lung transplantation. The series also hosted an additional Richmond event highlighting the VCU Medicines for All Institute's work to innovate the production of lifesaving medications, increase access to key drugs and help fuel progress by producing medicines for clinical trials and research.

FALL 2024 EVENTS

DISCOVERY ALLIANCE

Multigenerational Caregiving
Sept. 26, 2024

DISCOVERY SERIES RVA

Medicines for All
Oct. 1, 2024

DISCOVERY SERIES WILLIAMSBURG

VCU Health's Lung Transplant Program
Oct. 15, 2024

DISCOVERY SERIES RVA

VCU Health's Lung Transplant Program
Nov. 14, 2024



Top: MCV Foundation lifetime honorary trustee Charles Crone (second from right) and his wife, Ginny Crone (far right), serve on the Discovery Series Host Committee in Williamsburg. Also pictured are Bob Hershberger (left), Margaret Hershberger and Garry Maynor.

Middle: Tad Thompson (center), the son of the late W.T. Thompson Jr., M.D., for whom VCU Health's W.T. Thompson Jr. Professor in Pulmonary Medicine was established, enjoyed the panel discussion during the MCV Foundation's Discovery Series RVA event. The Discovery Series offers connections between VCU Health and the community. As a result, hundreds of individuals who otherwise would not have known about the leading programs and research on campus have chosen to become patients, donors or passionate ambassadors for the health system.



Above (L to R): Discovery Series RVA panelists included Daniel Grinnan, M.D.; Alpha "Berry" Fowler III, M.D.; moderator Art Saavedra, M.D., Ph.D.; Patricia Sime, M.D.; and Vipul Patel, M.D.



MCV Foundation
DISCOVERY SOCIETY

BY THE NUMBERS

280+

**DISCOVERY SOCIETY
MEMBERS ANNUALLY**

32

**NEW SOCIETY MEMBERS
THIS YEAR**

\$3.1
million+

**GIVING IMPACT
SINCE JULY 1**

\$14.3
million+

**CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF
DISCOVERY SOCIETY GIVING**

Multigenerational Caregiving Discussed at Discovery Alliance

The Discovery Alliance launched in Williamsburg in 2022 as a companion to the successful Discovery Series program to raise the visibility and awareness of VCU Health among a new and developing constituent group.

The Discovery Alliance hosted a panel discussion last fall in Williamsburg titled “The Sandwich Generation: Maintaining Your Well-Being as a Multigenerational Caregiver.” The topic was timely and relevant for the generation of attendees who care for both aging parents and young adults.



Above (L to R): The evening was moderated by Michael Elliott, Pharm.D., senior vice president and chief operating officer of VCU Health. Panelists included Brittany Craven, M.D., associate professor in the Geriatrics Division of the Department of Internal Medicine; Nicole Cook, LCSW, program manager in the VCU Department of Psychiatry; and Victoria Findlay, Ph.D., co-leader of the Cancer Prevention and Control Program at VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center. **Below:** Guests at the annual Discovery Alliance have the opportunity to listen to and meet a panel of VCU Health physicians, faculty and researchers who highlight several of the university and health system’s areas of excellence. Photos: Daniel Sangjib Min, MCV Foundation



Raising Friends and Funds for Women's Health



In November, more than 100 guests gathered to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the renowned VCU Institute for Women's Health and to launch efforts to endow a professorship at the institute.

MCV Foundation trustee Susan Kornstein, M.D., executive director of the Institute for Women's Health, and her husband Lee Krumbein, an MCV Foundation lifetime honorary trustee, hosted the event at their home to bring together community members in support of women's health research. Once endowed, the professorship will ensure VCU remains at the forefront of women's health research and care while continuing to mentor the next generation of leaders in this field. The professorship will ultimately be named to honor Dr. Kornstein.

"For too long, women were left out of medical research and clinical trials," said Dr. Kornstein, a professor of psychiatry and obstetrics and gynecology at the VCU School of Medicine, who has been working for more than 30 years to improve women's health through research, education and direct patient care. "We now know women can present with different symptoms, have a different course of illness and respond differently to treatments. I'm proud of the work the institute has helped lead across so many disciplines and excited about the momentum to advance critical research happening at VCU in women's health."

If you would like to support VCU's efforts to improve and enhance women's health, please contact Samantha Charlet, assistant director of development at the MCV Foundation, at 804-628-2584 or samantha.charlet@vcuhealth.org.

Above left: MCV Foundation trustee Susan Kornstein, M.D., delivered remarks highlighting the important work of the Institute for Women's Health. **Above right:** Wendy Klein, M.D., institute co-founder and host committee member; Zach Ellis, M.D., host committee member; and Lisa Ellis, M.D., host committee member, enjoyed the event. **Below:** Attendees included Juanita Leatherberry; Leslie Strickler, steering committee member; and Diana Cantor, host committee member. Photos: Daniel Sangjib Min, MCV Foundation





Scholarship donors, recipients and guests enjoyed the annual MCV Campus Endowed Scholarship Brunch at the Dewey Gottwald Center at the Science Museum of Virginia. Photos: Daniel Sangjib Min, MCV Foundation

Celebrating the Impact of Scholarships

This spring, scholarship recipients met with and thanked some of the donors who have changed their lives through support of VCU Health Sciences students at the annual MCV Campus Endowed Scholarship Brunch.

“It is always heartening to see scholarship recipients and donors coming together to celebrate our students,” said Margaret Ann Bollmeier, president and CEO of the MCV Foundation. “This event is a vivid reminder of how important our mission is and how vital scholarships are for keeping a world-class education in the health sciences within reach for tomorrow’s leaders.”

On the MCV Campus, more than 563 endowed scholarships support health sciences students. Since last March, donors have created 22 new scholarships. Including both endowments and current fund scholarships, around \$9.6 million in scholarship support was available for students in the 2024-25 academic year.

Guest speakers at this year’s brunch included Clifton Porter II, a VCU College of Health Professions alum, and his wife, Deborah, a graduate of the L. Douglas Wilder School of

Government and Public Affairs at VCU. The couple established the Porter Legacy Scholarship in 2021.

“Having support is transformational,” Porter said. “Sometimes we don’t know what we’re capable of until someone makes an investment in you and says, ‘I believe in you.’ It is incredibly important for us to educate future leaders who can identify with patients they’re serving, with those patients’ stories, and with staff.”

Hayden Dux, a third-year student at the VCU School of Medicine, offered a reflection on the impact being a scholarship recipient has made on his time on the MCV Campus. Dux received the Harry and Harriet Grandis Scholarship.

“Scholarships support students who have tremendous things to offer medicine, and the world, through a career in health care, and who may not otherwise have the means or opportunity to pursue this calling,” Dux said. “The scholarship I received was the catalyst for all of the incredible learning experiences I’ve had during the past few years.”

If you are interested in supporting an existing student scholarship or starting a new fund, please contact Brian Thomas, the foundation’s executive vice president and chief development officer, at 804-828-0067 or brian.thomas@vcuhealth.org.



Above (L to R): Brian Thomas, the foundation's executive vice president and chief development officer; Margaret Ann Bollmeier, foundation president and CEO; board chair-elect Steve Gaidos and his wife, Susan, enjoyed the event with Tobi Ojo, recipient of the Porter Legacy Scholarship; VCU president Michael Rao, Ph.D.; and guest speakers Deborah and Clifton Porter II.



Several current MCV Foundation trustees, leadership council members, and close friends and supporters of the MCV Campus attended, including (L to R, seated) Judy Brown, Mary Jo Qureshi and Ghulam Qureshi, M.D., and (L to R, standing) Kay Clary, Richard Clary, M.D., Julia Monroe, Fred Rahal, M.D., and Michelle Whitehurst-Cook, M.D.



Student speaker Hayden Dux.

MCV CAMPUS SCHOLARSHIPS

By the Numbers

\$9.6+
million

**CURRENT AND ENDOWED
SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS AVAILABLE IN
ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-25**

563

ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS

22

**NEW SCHOLARSHIPS CREATED
SINCE LAST YEAR**

The new VCU School of Public Health aims to build a healthier future for all. Pictured are faculty members Andrew Barnes, Ph.D.; Kellie Carlyle, Ph.D.; founding interim dean Vanessa Sheppard, Ph.D.; and Mikhail Dozmorov, Ph.D. with doctoral student Malik Phillips, M.P.H.



For the People

The newest school on the MCV Campus is attracting support for its bold vision and mission to address public health and health equity challenges in Virginia and beyond.

By Paul Brockwell Jr.

Photos by Daniel Sangjib Min

“**A**n ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

What Benjamin Franklin first said centuries ago is a truth recognized for decades by faculty on the MCV Campus who knew there was a missing piece to VCU’s academic enterprise in health sciences: public health.

In 1996, the university’s Master of Public Health program received accreditation within the VCU School of Medicine. The degree offering was a natural outgrowth of faculty desire to train students to understand the disparities in care at the state’s largest safety-net hospital while also studying and developing effective interventions to address gaps in access to care and overall health outcomes in vulnerable populations.

“Our safety-net mission has always extended beyond clinical care — it also includes how we approach education, research and community service,” said Marlon Levy, M.D., senior vice president for VCU Health Sciences and CEO of VCU Health System. “Establishing a dedicated school of public health is testament that our impact in that area is on par with VCU’s other exceptional professional schools dedicated to health sciences.”

The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the importance of a strong public health workforce and accelerated long-term plans to create a new school focused on the discipline. In 2023, VCU created the School of Population Health when it reorganized three existing academic units (one division; two departments) within the VCU School of Medicine to become the four founding departments in the new school — Biostatistics, Epidemiology, Health Policy, and Social and Behavioral Sciences.

In 2024, its permanent name as the VCU School of Public Health was formally approved by the state.

“This is a significant milestone for VCU and a testament to our past work in public health,” said Vanessa B. Sheppard, Ph.D., interim founding dean. “Our new status as a school recognizes our academic and research success

“Our new status as a school recognizes our academic and research success and enhances our visibility; more importantly, we are able to expand our programs to better train the workforce to improve the health of Virginians.”

**VANESSA B. SHEPPARD, PH.D., INTERIM FOUNDING DEAN
VCU SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

and enhances our visibility; more importantly, we are able to expand our programs to better train the workforce to improve the health of Virginians.”

The school’s bold vision of working toward a healthier world for all by understanding and breaking down barriers and disparities was inspiring to alumna Angela Middleton, M.D., who earned her Master of Public Health and a medical degree from VCU. She and her husband, Ryan

Mitchell, recently gave to support the new school. For Dr. Middleton, it was an exciting opportunity to be part of something new and impactful as it is being built. She recently joined the school’s advisory council as well.

“One of the reasons we support VCU, aside from the alumni connection, is we see how important the health system is in Richmond and beyond as the largest safety-net hospital in Virginia,” Dr. Middleton said. “I believe the School of Public Health is going to be really helpful in our community and beyond by diving deeper and bringing multiple perspectives under one roof. Its faculty researchers will help get to the root of longstanding problems and pilot solutions for how we can remove obstacles to access and care in ways that improve health outcomes for everyone.”

The discipline of public health takes a preventive perspective, recognizing that health disparities exist and creating programs to address or mitigate those inequalities with regard to access and health outcomes across populations. The goal is to ensure that people have the best available educational resources and care regardless of where they live.

“We didn’t put any restrictions on our gift because we trust the leaders will know how to achieve the greatest impact where it’s most needed,” Dr. Middleton said. “We’re excited to see the School of Public Health take off, and I am sure it will make an important impact on solving some of the big-picture problems around health access and education.”



Angela Middleton, M.D., and her husband, Ryan Mitchell, recently made a gift to support the new VCU School of Public Health. Dr. Middleton earned her Master of Public Health and a medical degree from VCU. Photo: Tyler Trumbo, MCV Foundation

WHAT PUBLIC HEALTH MEANS

For faculty and students, the School of Public Health represents continued growth in important work that was already happening on campus. It's also an opportunity to expand the impact of insights gleaned from engaging in a real-world public health education and working on research to improve the lives of all Virginians. The school is home to the first Master of Public Health program with a concentration on cancer health equity.

"We have accomplished a lot in our first full year as a school," Dr. Sheppard said. "Through our commitment and strong community partnerships, I am even more excited about the work ahead and the progress we can help make to address public health and health equity challenges in Virginia and beyond. This gift will allow us to launch new initiatives that will connect our students to work hand-in-hand

with community members and researchers on high-priority concerns such as maternal mortality and other issues that need our attention."

The School of Public Health will be a rich engine for insights as the only school of its kind affiliated with an academic health system that has a teaching hospital, children's hospital, National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center, and a center for clinical and translational science. In fact, the school recently secured a \$9 million grant, one of only four awarded in the country, to establish a pioneering Cancer Control Equity Research Center.

This grant will help expand research and community partnerships in Virginia, particularly for residents living in income-based housing communities in the Greater Richmond Region and Hampton Roads.



The new VCU School of Public Health is poised to improve the lives of people in Central Virginia and beyond by training public health professionals across an array of disciplines including biostatistics, epidemiology, social and behavioral sciences and health policy. The school is training future leaders who can research and understand community health challenges while effectively advocating for policies and programs that save and improve lives.



The goal is to expand on work the school has done through similar partnerships like the recently concluded TRUTH Project with the Chickahominy tribe. That initiative started with a phone call from a concerned community member who was tracking higher rates of cancer in tribal housing near the Charles City County, Va., landfill.

Faculty from the School of Public Health entered into a partnership with the community to test water, conduct field interviews and research the Virginia Indian community's heightened risk of cancer. They considered that community's lack of trust in health care and worries about water safety due to reliance on wells and proximity to the landfill.

"This proposal was designed to dig deeper into the health issues affecting the community, especially cancer," said Kathryn Y. Tossas, Ph.D., an assistant professor of epidemiology at the school. "Working in partnership with the tribal community, we conducted in-home interviews with those in the proximity of the tribal center, particularly within a four-mile radius, prioritizing residents with either a personal or familial history of cancer in the past two decades. These individuals are not only participants in our project but also its driving force, receiving compensation for their invaluable contributions. With their deep local knowledge, they assist in identifying interview candidates and extending participation invitations through general mailings."

VCU Health remains the largest safety-net health system in Virginia, and additional MCV Campus programs in medicine, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy and health professions make the new School of Public Health an ideal place for training the next generation of leaders to engage in interdisciplinary health education and research that improves lives beyond Richmond.

"Together with our public health partners, we will create a workforce that will make Virginia a hub for developing, evaluating and implementing high-impact programs to reduce disparities in health that impact millions of people across the country," Dr. Levy said.

If you would like to support the VCU School of Public Health, please contact Laura Keller, director of development in the Office of Medical Philanthropy and Alumni Relations, at 804-628-8907 or KellerL3@vcu.edu.

Chasing Excellence in Clinical Trials

The Massey-led Winn Awards program offers tools to develop and implement clinical trials that lead to better outcomes for all.

By Holly Prestidge





Keri Maher, D.O., was 19 years old when her world was rocked by an invisible force. Someone close to her was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia, or AML, a blood and bone marrow cancer commonly diagnosed in middle-aged and older adults.

As a young woman grappling with this sudden shock, Dr. Maher had no perspective on health disparities or their impact. She only knew that from her rural California community, with its dirt roads, the nearest hospital was a 30-minute drive. Better-equipped treatment centers for AML, which progresses rapidly when untreated, were much farther away. Lack of coordination between the larger and the local hospitals only made things worse for the patient.

Ultimately, Dr. Maher lost someone she loved, in part because the right treatment wasn't available in her rural community.

Today she's focused on making sure others don't suffer the same fate. Dr. Maher is a hematologist and clinical scientist in VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center's Developmental Therapeutics program. As director of the center's Acute Leukemia and Myeloid Malignancies program, she sees treatment for acute leukemias through a much different lens.

THE WINN AWARDS

Dr. Maher is one of nearly 250 clinical investigators across the country who received a Robert A. Winn Excellence in Clinical Trials Career Development

Award, which is part of the larger Winn Excellence in Clinical Trials Award Program. The Winn Awards train, develop and mentor a national network of nearly 500 early-stage investigator physicians and medical students committed to improving access and participation in clinical trials. The Winn Awards began in 2020 with a \$100 million commitment from the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation.

In April 2021, biopharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences joined as a funding partner, followed by biotech companies Amgen in 2022 and Genentech in 2024. Since 2023, the MCV Foundation has played a critical role in retaining, stewarding and supporting the Winn Awards. Through careful and deliberate stewardship of the grant, the MCV Foundation hopes to extend this partnership and program in the years to come.

The Winn Awards are based at Massey under the direction of Robert A. Winn, M.D., the center's director and Lipman Chair in Oncology. Dr. Winn is renowned for his ability to foster trust within communities that have historically been disenfranchised from clinical research, and at the time of his appointment in 2019, he was the only African American director of a National Cancer



Keri Maher, D.O., checks on Pearl Thomas, a patient participating in a clinical trial at VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center. Dr. Maher specializes in treating acute leukemias. Through the Winn Awards, she has learned to develop solutions to address health disparities in clinical trials. Photos: Daniel Sangjib Min, MCV Foundation

Institute-designated cancer center in the country. The program seeks to honor his passion and commitment to improving participation of patients from all communities in clinical trials.

“Clinical trials have given rise to some of the most groundbreaking treatments and therapies of the 21st century. These innovations have brought about new hope for preventing and treating some of the most serious illnesses the world faces today, but if only a select few can benefit from these innovations, if they only change potential outcomes for some, then we’re not doing enough,” said Catharine Grimes, president of the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation. “We established the Winn Awards program in 2020 in pursuit of this fundamental mission — because lack of inclusion in clinical trials is one of the most pressing health issues of our time.”

According to the FDA, roughly 80% of all clinical trial participants are white, Grimes said, a concerning statistic that demonstrates the unfortunate reality

that the science informing treatments is leaving too many people out.

“When new treatments are tested on a narrowly representative population, there’s a risk of missing important information about safety and side effects that might impact those groups who are excluded,” Grimes told Winn scholars late last year while in Richmond. “We cannot just passively expect patients to come forward. The Winn Awards exists because that status quo is unacceptable, and your participation is an important step toward enabling us to develop treatments that are more responsive to patients’ needs and increase equitable access to lifesaving treatments.”

Dr. Winn emphasized VCU’s research prowess and the power of collaborative, multidisciplinary approaches to clinical research.

“VCU is an institution that looks very much like our communities,” he said. “It’s also an institution that brings people with those intuitive abilities and



“Clinical trials have given rise to some of the most groundbreaking treatments and therapies of the 21st century. These innovations have brought about new hope for preventing and treating some of the most serious illnesses the world faces today, but if only a select few can benefit from these innovations, if they only change potential outcomes for some, then we’re not doing enough.”

**CATHARINE GRIMES, PRESIDENT
BRISTOL MYERS SQUIBB FOUNDATION**

those community senses into the research arena, into the scientific process, so that they can take what they bring from their communities and address those needs with accepted practices that ultimately save more lives.”

REAL WORLD IMPLICATIONS

Since the program’s inception in 2020, each year brings a new cohort of Winn Career Development Award scholars who will spend two years working in the program. Dr. Maher is in her second year.

She explained that curative treatment for acute leukemias often involves a bone marrow transplant — a long, intense treatment that can significantly reduce the rates at which patients relapse and ultimately extend their lives.

But it is only available to those who have the right insurance, around-the-clock caregiver support, the ability to take a year off work to go through treatment, and who can live within 30 minutes of the transplant

center for the first several months after the transplant.

Compounding the issue is that minority populations are already at a disadvantage when it comes to finding matching donors. Without the transplant, median overall survival rates can be as short as a year after diagnosis.

“Race and donor availability are easily identifiable barriers, but then there’s insurance, caregiver support, psychosocial support, transportation issues — all of these things are just massive barriers to underserved people and it’s just heartbreaking,” Dr. Maher said. “We watch these otherwise potentially curable folks end up relapsing and passing away because these barriers were too much to overcome.”

While awareness is vital, having tools to overcome those barriers is often where efforts fall short.

Dr. Maher said the Winn Career Development Award has given her the tools to take on those barriers by teaching her protocol design, equity and engagement strategies, biostatistics and more, which



she uses to design and identify clinical trials that promote access for all.

For example, she's working with fellow VCU Health nurses to create a childcare program for parents who need it in order to seek treatment. She is growing a network of physician champions throughout Virginia from different health systems who can travel to remote and rural areas to help people who can't get to acute leukemia clinics.

She's working to find existing therapies that could prolong the lives of patients who are eligible for stem cell transplants but can't get them because of any number of health disparities.

Dr. Maher has been able to develop clinical trials that reach deeper into communities.

"Metrics do not explain the breadth and depth of change the Winn program creates," she said. "By intent, this program trains us to think in a different way, and to methodically tackle health care disparities in a multi-modal team-based approach that includes the communities themselves."

Dr. Maher said the program has given her a seat at that table — even the head of the table, sometimes — that she would not have had otherwise.

"It has given me a voice," she said, "which better enables me to give my patients a voice."

If you are interested in learning more about how to support the Winn Awards, please contact Joy Jones, executive director of the program, by emailing winnawardinfo@vcu.edu.

“VCU is an institution that looks very much like our communities. It’s also an institution that brings people with those intuitive abilities and those community senses into the research arena, into the scientific process, so that they can take what they bring from their communities and address those needs with accepted practices that ultimately save more lives.”

**ROBERT A. WINN, M.D., DIRECTOR
VCU MASSEY COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER
AND LIPMAN CHAIR IN ONCOLOGY**

A Labor of Love

Medical Lab Sciences alum creates scholarship to inspire next generation of lab professionals at the VCU College of Health Professions.

PHOTO: MATTHEW ODOM



PIONEERS: VISION

Science always came easy to Lisa M. Pinkney, D.M.

The analytics, the formulas — she loved it all, especially when she applied it to the science of the human body and, in particular, blood.

Initially thinking she'd pursue medicine, Dr. Pinkney instead became fascinated with medical laboratory sciences (MLS). In hospitals and medical labs everywhere, MLS professionals administer and analyze blood and other tests, identify new strains of bacteria and study how to fight them, research immune system responses to infections, and so much more. During the COVID-19 pandemic, lab professionals were critical leaders in developing rapid antigen tests that allowed health providers to test for the novel coronavirus.

Dr. Pinkney earned her bachelor's degree in the Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences at the VCU College of Health Professions.

The program unlocked her potential, leading the Washington, D.C., native to a fulfilling career in lab sciences. Now a Georgia resident, she retired in 2022 from a role as program manager in the Office of Regulatory Management at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

She said VCU gave her the tools to succeed professionally as well as a strong network of alumni on whom she could lean when she needed support. In thinking about ways to give back, she wanted to help others find their calling among MLS disciplines like immunology, hematology and microbiology.

She established the Dr. Lisa M. Pinkney

Scholarship in 2022 for students pursuing medical laboratory sciences at the college.

"VCU was the institution I needed at that point in my life, and I'm very proud of how it's grown and become one of Virginia's strongest institutions," she said. "VCU was a safe space for me to learn and grow, and I loved the environment there. I made some very close friends I've known for 40 years."

The scholarship will help ease financial burdens for students while promoting careers in medical lab sciences.

"Education is very important to me," Dr. Pinkney said. "A lot of people work full time while studying medical laboratory sciences, which is very challenging, so I'm hoping the scholarship aids people who may be struggling and who want to make a difference in the field."

Dr. Pinkney said the field of medical laboratory sciences is projected to have significant staffing shortages over the next decade — potentially as many as 100,000 jobs. She hopes the scholarship will encourage future students to consider these rewarding career paths.

"Medical laboratory science is often underappreciated as a medical profession, but we're just as critical as direct care providers to understanding and improving the patient care experience," Dr. Pinkney said. "It's important to promote the industry and show its value, because these roles truly help provide essential context for the health and safety of patients."

If you would like to support the Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences at the VCU College of Health Professions, please contact T. Greg Prince, Ed.D., the college's senior director of development, at 804-828-7247 or tgprince@vcu.edu.

A Global Pharmacy Gift

For VCU School of Pharmacy graduate Arzu F. Moosvi, Pharm.D., going abroad during pharmacy school made a profound impact on her career, her life and her view of the field of pharmacy.

“It’s always good to travel,” said Dr. Moosvi, who earned her Pharm.D. in 2020. “It opens your mind; it expands your horizons in a very different scenario, and that professional expansion continues to benefit those around you after the fact.”

Dr. Moosvi, who also earned her undergraduate degree at VCU, attended the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) World Congress as a student in 2019 and again after graduating.

“The energy at a meeting like this is different from what I’ve experienced in the U.S. You are meeting pharmacists from all around the globe — people are so welcoming and willing to get to know you,” Dr. Moosvi said. “This conference helps you learn how pharmacy abroad is practiced and how people are enhancing the level of pharmacy in their country, which was a big deal for me as a student, because I only knew pharmacy from a U.S. context.”

Inspired by her experiences, she decided to give back by establishing the Arzu F. Moosvi Global Medicine Travel Award, which will allow future students to benefit from similar opportunities.

The opportunity to go abroad as part of her educational experience deepened Dr. Moosvi’s already strong resolve to pursue a career focused on global health, particularly in Pakistan, her family’s country of origin. Prior to pharmacy school, she volunteered with one of Pakistan’s largest hospital systems, counseling patients about medications. She credits her faculty mentor David Holdford, Ph.D., with encouraging her to attend the world congress and to find funding to

“This conference helps you learn how pharmacy abroad is practiced and how people are enhancing the level of pharmacy in their country.”

ARZU F. MOOSVI, PHARM.D.

enable her travel to the conference.

Today, Dr. Moosvi works as a nonprofit clinical pharmacist for UMMA Health in Los Angeles, and she credits the experiences she had abroad with helping build long-term relationships with patients from various backgrounds. From 2020 to 2021, she also served as a pharmacist in Karachi with doctHERS, a network of clinicians providing Pakistani women with access to better health care. She is currently working to open a nonprofit in Pakistan and credits her international engagement and interaction with people of different cultures with helping her become a better pharmacist.

“My goal is to dive deep into their lives and understand more fully how I can make a difference,” said Dr. Moosvi, who was honored by VCU in 2023 as one of 10 Under 10 alumni stars. “Those small moments and gestures can lead to changes that have a big impact.”

If you would like to support students at the VCU School of Pharmacy, please contact Louie Correa, the school’s senior director of development, at 804-828-3016 or lacorrea@vcu.edu.



VCU School of Pharmacy alum Arzu Moosvi, Pharm.D., funded a travel award to enable a student to attend the 2025 FIP World Congress in Denmark. *Courtesy photo*



Idaho native and first-year dental student Bracken Curtis received this year's VCU Dental Care/Abrahamian Superstar Scholarship. Photo: Daniel Sangjib Min, MCV Foundation



Scholarship Supports a Family Tradition for First-Year Dentistry Student

Bracken Curtis laughs when asked if he's following in his family's footsteps by pursuing a dental career.

Four men in his family, including his dad, two uncles and his grandfather, are all dentists. Curtis, one of four children, has two older brothers. The oldest is at VCU, in the orthodontics program, while the other is at dental school in Iowa. He jokes that his sister is the lone holdout career-wise.

A graduate of Brigham Young University, Curtis said he started applying for dental schools and sought out the VCU School of Dentistry on the advice of his oldest brother. He also reached out to current students for insights into their experiences, and it did not take long for Virginia's only dental school to rise to the top of his list.

"I wanted early clinical exposure and then increased access as you progress through years three and four of dental school," he said. "VCU stood out in that way — the didactic learning is great here, but there are a lot of chances to work hands-on and practice dentistry."

As Curtis began hearing from programs elsewhere around the country in the fall of 2023, none of them felt like the right fit, he said. By the end of that year, he still hadn't heard from VCU and began to wonder if he'd missed his opportunity. Annually applications top 2,000 for roughly 100 seats in the D.D.S. program. Then came the email in late January 2024 inviting him to an interview. Two weeks later, he got a phone call from the School of Dentistry offering him a spot.

From there, the surprises continued.

"I didn't even know the scholarship existed," Curtis said, on learning he'd received the VCU Dental Care/Abrahamian Superstar Scholarship. "The scholarship was just really surprising — I don't know of any other dental schools that have a scholarship like this. I'm really grateful and humbled because I know that I'm surrounded by a lot of very qualified individuals at this school. It was exciting to feel valued in that way."

The scholarship was created in 2022 and is the largest in the School of Dentistry's history, providing up to \$50,000 a year for four years. It is the only scholarship awarded to dental students before they begin their first year.

Lyndon Cooper, D.D.S., Ph.D., dean of the School of Dentistry, said the Superstar Scholarship, which recognizes students who have the potential to be gifted clinicians, scholars and national leaders in their fields, is one more way that VCU stands out nationally among dental schools.

"VCU's reputation already attracts the best and the brightest students, but the Superstar Scholarship solidifies our commitment to advancing our field by educating tomorrow's dental leaders," Dean Cooper said. "Growing this fund means more students will have the opportunity to leave their mark and ultimately elevate oral health care for everyone."

If you would like to support the Superstar Scholarship at the VCU School of Dentistry, please contact Gloria Greiner-Callihan, associate dean for development, at 804-828-8101 or gfcallihan@vcu.edu.

Supporting VCU Health's Palliative Care Nurses

Kelly Smith's journey to becoming a palliative care nurse started with her own craniotomy.

It was 2011, and Smith was working as a teacher and a freelance writer and editor when she woke up one morning with extremely blurred vision.

A doctor's visit confirmed the unimaginable: an inoperable brain tumor.

But, as a young mother, Smith refused to believe this was the end. She posted about her diagnosis on social media until she was connected to the neuroscience department at the Johns Hopkins Hospital where she underwent a successful craniotomy to resect the tumor.

After she woke up in the ICU, Smith was overwhelmed by the compassionate care of her nurses. It was then, she said, that she knew her life's trajectory would change.

"I want to be a nurse," Smith said. "I told myself, this is what I want to do."

Six months later, she was taking prerequisites for nursing school.

"I jumped into anatomy and physiology with a shaved head, and the rest is history," said Smith, who is now the nurse manager of the Thomas Palliative Care Unit at VCU Medical Center.

She has been awarded the Paul Alton Dresser Jr. Palliative Care Nursing Education Scholarship, which will

support her continued growth in that role. For Smith, this scholarship means an opportunity to gain knowledge and inspiration from an annual convening of hospice and palliative care providers.

"I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to expand and invigorate the care we provide on the unit," Smith said. "When I return from the conference, I will lead lunch-and-learn sessions for my colleagues so we can all benefit from the conference's offerings."

The Dresser Scholarship was established in 2017 by Julie Baxter, a retired palliative care nurse. Baxter was inspired to support hospice and palliative care nurses through scholarships that support professional development opportunities. During her career, she found this type of learning vital for growing professionally and always improving care at VCU Health.

"The forward-thinking, persistent pioneers of the palliative care movement who created the body of science and certification are aging out and retiring, and I'm excited there are Kelly Smiths coming along!" said Baxter, who remembers purchasing DVD recordings and handouts from the same conference to share with colleagues back home. "I know this will be a wonderful experience for her to go to the annual conference."



If you would like to make a gift to the Paul Alton Dresser Jr. Palliative Care Nursing Education Scholarship, please contact Andrew Hartley, senior director of development in the VCU Office of Medical Philanthropy and Alumni Relations, at 804-628-5312, or aphartle@vcu.edu.



Above: Kelly Smith, RN, the nurse manager of the Thomas Palliative Care Unit at VCU Medical Center, received the Paul Alton Dresser Jr. Palliative Care Nursing Education Scholarship to support her professional development. Photo: Daniel Sangjib Min, MCV Foundation **Left:** Kelly Smith with Paul Dresser at VCU Health's Week of the Nurse Scholarship Tea in 2024, an annual awards ceremony that connects scholarship recipients with donors who share a passion for professional development and lifelong learning in the nursing field. Photo: Skip Rowland



Nursing Scholarship's Price Is Invaluable

For Judith Price, RN, the benefit of an education always outweighed the cost.

A retired nurse, Price is the proud granddaughter of immigrants who arrived at Ellis Island from Russia. Like her parents and grandparents, she was determined to achieve, and she went on to become the first in her family to earn a college degree, eventually receiving an associate's degree, two bachelor's degrees, a master's degree and a nurse practitioner's certificate.

"My mother valued education, and I enjoyed learning," said Price, "so I kept on getting degrees until she finally told me, 'You have enough degrees now. You can stop.'"

Price's nursing journey began when she earned her associate's degree in nursing at the beginning of the Vietnam War. She worked as an emergency nurse in New York City until she moved to Richmond in 1982, where she completed her bachelor's degree in nursing on the MCV Campus.

"I was a nurse for 20 years before I came to MCV, and I thought, there's nothing else they can teach me," said Price, who currently lives in Fredericksburg, Va. "I'm grateful to MCV because the bachelor's in nursing program was transformational, and the biggest impact was learning how to do care planning — good care planning brings you to a good diagnosis."

Her experiences as a student inspired Price to make a blended cash and planned gift and establish the Isidore and Evelyn Price Endowed Nursing Scholarship for graduate students at the VCU School of Nursing. The scholarship is named in honor of her late parents who supported all her educational pursuits.

She hopes the gift will encourage nursing scholars to never stop learning. Price recognizes both the value of education and the importance of having financial freedom in education. Aside from tuition to earn her psychiatry nurse practitioner's certificate, all her education over the years was defrayed through tuition-free colleges or by her employers.

"I've always had as much education as I've wanted, and it didn't cost me anything," she said. "Now I would like to contribute to somebody else on that journey and allow them to make the most of their time as students."



Judith Price named a scholarship for her parents, Evelyn and Isidore Price, with whom she is pictured in this 1950s photograph of the family in Queens, N.Y.
Courtesy photo

Judith Price hopes that by establishing an endowed scholarship at the VCU School of Nursing, future nurses will be inspired to never give up on their educational dreams.
Photo: Daniel Sangjib Min, MCV Foundation

If you are interested in supporting the VCU School of Nursing, please contact Pam Lowe, the school's senior director of development, at plowe@vcu.edu or 804-827-0020.



PHOTO: MATTHEW ODOM

A Bequest to Benefit Dentistry's Future Needs

As Gary Iskol, D.D.S., made his way through college decades ago at the City University of New York, he started to doubt his career choices.

Armed with geology and psychology degrees, he could have easily landed a job on the frigid Alaska pipeline, he recalls thinking back then. That became less and less appealing as he neared graduation. He could work as a school or clinical psychologist, but that, too, left him feeling like he missed his calling.

When a relative who happened to be a dentist offered him shadowing opportunities in a dental office, Dr. Iskol took them — and felt an instant connection. He applied to a number of dental schools, including the VCU School of Dentistry, based purely on hearing about the school from his relative and others in the dental community.

“The school had a really good reputation,” said Dr. Iskol, though being an out-of-state student, he knew

odds were small that he would get in.

Luck, however, was on his side.

Dr. Iskol graduated in 1980, and except for a few years in Florida, he ran an Atlanta-based general dentistry practice for decades. Today, he is semi-retired.

He is not ready to stop working, he said with a smile, because the spark that ignited in him all those years ago remains. He credits the VCU School of Dentistry with preparing him for a successful career that was fulfilling

IMPROVE THE LIVES OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

from a professional standpoint, and because of the close relationships formed over generations.

“I don’t know if I ever want to completely stop working,” Dr. Iskol said. “I still have a lot of patients I’ve known for 30 years or more, and it’s a joy to visit with them every six months.”

It’s this deep sense of gratitude that prompted him to think about the VCU School of Dentistry in his financial plans. Dr. Iskol has made arrangements through his will for an unrestricted bequest that will benefit the School of Dentistry.

“VCU gave me the foundation to have a great, successful career,” Dr. Iskol said. “Without my dental education, I don’t know where I would be.”

While Dr. Iskol is leaving the decision to the school’s leadership about how his gift is best used, he feels strongly about helping students who are equally as passionate as he was about dentistry, but who may face financial need.

“I know how expensive education is now, and any help to students would be greatly appreciated and needed,” he said. “I feel very fortunate and very blessed that I received such a great education, which allowed me to establish a successful practice.”

HOW WILL OR ESTATE GIFTS WORK

Making an estate gift is an act of generosity that can improve the lives of others and benefit the community. It does not cost you anything now and can be modified if your circumstances change.

NEXT STEPS

BEGIN BY REFLECTING ON WHAT MATTERS TO YOU.

Many of our supporters establish future gifts to ensure resources will be available for cutting-edge medical research or to increase the accessibility of medical education.

EXPLORE WAYS OF GIVING AND THEIR BENEFITS.

Some gift structures are more beneficial than others. Planned giving, legal and financial professionals can help ensure your gift is structured to optimize tax or other benefits while honoring your wishes.

COMPLETE THE APPROPRIATE PAPERWORK.

Update your will or trust, a beneficiary designation form, or another planning tool, depending on how you structure your gift.

NOTIFY BENEFICIARIES OF YOUR FUTURE GIFT.

This crucial step ensures your beneficiaries can plan for your gift and understand how you want it to be used. It also allows them to express their gratitude to you.

GIVE NOW

To include a gift for the VCU College of Health Professions, VCU School of Dentistry, VCU School of Medicine, VCU School of Nursing, VCU School of Pharmacy, VCU School of Public Health VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, or VCU Health in your estate, use the following information:

Legal Name: MCV Foundation

Tax ID: 54-6053660

Address: 1021 E. Cary St., Suite 1100, Richmond, VA 23219

If you have already included a gift in your estate and not previously told us or would like to explore your options with a planned giving professional, contact Jason Chestnutt, CFP®, executive director of planned giving, MCV Campus, at 804-828-1671 or chestnuttjr@vcu.edu.



A Watchful Eye

The MCV Foundation's new offices overlook the Capitol grounds and the MCV Campus.