

# **Report on the Services of Virginia Commonwealth University in Response to the Aging of the Population**



**PREPARED FOR  
THE GOVERNOR AND  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**

**September 22, 2006**

**Provost and Vice President  
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The Honorable Timothy Kaine, Governor  
Members of the Virginia General Assembly  
Commonwealth of Virginia  
Capitol Square  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Kaine and Members of the Virginia General Assembly:

On behalf of Virginia Commonwealth University, I am pleased to submit this **“Report on the Services of Virginia Commonwealth University in Response to the Aging of the Population”** pursuant to §2.2-5510 of the Code of Virginia.

I am quite pleased with the positive steps that VCU has taken in response to the aging population, and particularly pleased that the activities span both of our main campuses in Richmond.

If you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Stephen D. Gottfredson  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

## **HB 110 Report for Virginia Commonwealth University**

As required by Va. Code § 2.2-5510, as amended by HB 110 (2006 Session) to state that “each agency shall report by October 1 of each year to the Governor and to the General Assembly its progress for addressing the impact of the aging of the population in at least five specific actions,” Virginia Commonwealth University submits the following report of programs, services, publications and plans which serve Virginia’s older adults.

1. To the extent such data is available, the number of persons who received services from the agency in the past fiscal year who fell into each of the following age ranges: 65-74; 75-84; and 85 and older. If the agency can provide data that compares such numbers to numbers of senior citizens served in the past, please do so. If the agency lacks specific information about the numbers of senior citizens it serves, but has other evidence indicating that it is serving more or fewer senior citizens than it has in the past, please describe the basis for that estimation.

### Free Tuition

Under the provisions of the Senior Citizens’ Higher Education Act, citizens over 60 years of age are eligible to audit up to three courses per semester, tuition-free. The table below provides the information on the age ranges of senior citizens’ exercising this option at VCU in the past fiscal year.

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Total</b>
60 – 65	17	17	2	36
65 – 74	26	34	7	67
75 - 84	14	6	1	21
85 & older	2	2	0	4
<b>Total</b>	59	59	10	128

### Virginia Center on Aging

The Virginia Center on Aging at Virginia Commonwealth University was created by the General Assembly to be “an interdisciplinary study, research, [and] information and resource facility for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Virginia Center on Aging is the only such center in the Commonwealth, and is home to a number of programs and services for older adults, although not specifically for those 65 and older:

- The VCU Elderhostel program is the largest Elderhostel program in the Commonwealth, and the 16<sup>th</sup> largest in the country. It serves approximately 1,060 learners age 55 and older from Virginia and throughout the United States.
- The Virginia Center on Aging is a founding sponsor and assists in the administration of the Lifelong Learning Institute in Chesterfield, which offers over 100 courses to 346 midlife and older adults.

- Through its *Age in Action* and other educational materials, the Virginia Center for Aging disseminates aging-related information and resources to older adults and their families and caregivers. In addition, the Center's Web site (<http://www.vcu.edu/vcoa>) provides direct links to information and resources provided by other agencies that serve older adults.
2. Identify the agency services that are utilized by senior citizens 65 and older in significant numbers. Indicate whether the agency has the capacity at present to serve all interested seniors or whether the demand for certain services exceeds the agency's capacity. If so, does the agency maintain waiting lists for services?

#### Services for Retired Faculty

Retired faculty are valued members of the VCU community and receive a number of continuing benefits for their service to VCU and the Commonwealth. Retired faculty are entitled to free parking; keep their VCU email accounts and receive discounts for internet access; have the same access and borrowing privileges at VCU Libraries as active faculty; receive free VCU Theatre tickets; and are provided with discounts for the VCU Bookstores, VCU musical productions and VCU sporting events. The Retired Faculty Council meets four times a year and is open to all retired faculty. There are no waiting lists for services to retired faculty.

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3. Identify current agency programs, specifically designed to serve seniors 65 and older, that fall into any of the following six categories: Health Care/Wellness; Education; Public Safety; Recreation; Financial Security (including Housing); and Transportation.

#### Recreation

The university has annual alumni events specifically for Richmond Professional Institute (RPI) graduates. RPI existed under that name from 1939 until 1968 when MCV and RPI merged to become Virginia Commonwealth University. The overwhelming majority of RPI graduates are in the age range of 65 and older. While there are some educational components of the annual event, the participants view it as an opportunity to socialize with other alumni in their graduating classes.

4. Identify the extent to which your agency provides "consumer-oriented" publications and websites online that are designed to be "senior-friendly." If the information you

currently provide is not readily accessible to seniors, identify any steps your agency is taking to improve accessibility.

While the VCU Web site is designed to serve our primary constituencies – current and prospective students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni – the VCU Web site does offer a number of features that make it “senior-friendly.” All Web pages linking to the main VCU Web site are required to be accessible to the visually impaired. The main VCU Web site has recently been redesigned to make it easier for members of the community, including older adults, to find information. Furthermore, the VCU Web site provides up-to-date information about services for retired faculty, and employment opportunities for older adults. Finally, as noted above, the Virginia Center for Aging publishes *Age in Action* and other aging-related information and resources for older adults and their families and caregivers, and provides direct links to information and resources provided by other agencies that serve older adults through its website.

5. Describe any other services or programs that the agency has implemented or plans to implement in the future to address the impact of the aging of Virginia’s population.

VCU has made a concerted effort to recruit mature workers and retirees by advertising in targeted newspapers, through the internet, and by developing a healthy-employee referral system. VCU values mature workers and hires retired VCU employees, retired state employees, and other retired employees on an hourly or adjunct instructor basis when possible. VCU’s recruitment practices were a major reason that the AARP named VCU as one of the “Best Employers for Workers over 50” in the United States for the second year in a row.

VCU has recently demonstrated its ongoing commitment to serving older adults through the adoption of its new strategic plan: *VCU 2020 Vision for Excellence*. *VCU 2020* calls for a number of initiatives that will improve or increase VCU’s services for older adults:

- Improving communication between VCU and its communities, including older adults, to increase access to the services and expertise VCU has to offer;
- Being a leader in the Commonwealth among those working to solve the problems of health disparities among Virginians, including those among older adults;
- Identifying and achieving the ideal mix of part-time and full-time faculty, including the optimal use of VCU’s retired faculty in teaching, research, and service activities;
- Developing a University-wide plan for workforce transition planning among VCU’s faculty and staff, including continued engagement of the large numbers of VCU’s faculty and staff who will be retiring over the next decade; and
- Expanding education, research and patient care services to all Virginians, including older adults.