

# VCU Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Annual Report (2025)

## 2025 Accomplishments

### Goal 1: Access & Success.

Ensure equal access in all student and employee programs and practices, reflecting a culture where success is supported and everyone matters and belongs.

#### Objective 1: Increase educational access and support student success

- In Fall 2025, overall enrollment increased by 1.59% (+457) over Fall 2024. VCU's enrollment strategy is multi-faceted to attract a variety of learners at different life and career stages. VCU has also intentionally and carefully focused on affordability using financial aid optimization and cost-effective program structures. For students from families earning **less than \$110,000**, net price has remained flat
- VCU Libraries has implemented wide-reaching curricular affordability strategies. As of July 2025, the following efforts have resulted in more than \$12M in textbook cost avoidance for more than 135,000 students impacted since 2016.
  - Leveraging and promoting library collections for use in courses
  - Faculty incentives and support for developing open educational resources
  - Strategic participation in the VIVA statewide consortium for eBook access and grants
- As of Fall 2025, 100% of undergraduate degree programs and concentrations have at least one transformative learning experience (ex. internships) for graduation. This goal was reached one year earlier than projected.
  - In Summer 2022, VCU launched the Internship Funding Program (IFP) to remove financial barriers for undergraduate students pursuing unpaid or underpaid internships. By providing direct financial support, IFP empowers students to engage in meaningful professional experiences that enhance their career trajectories. This year's funding cycle reflects positive growth in both reach and impact. We achieved a 1% increase in total financial distribution and a 14% increase in the number of student awardees, rising from 88 in 2024 to 110 for 2025. Additionally, the proportion of applicants receiving funding rose from 40% in 2024 to 59% this cycle, demonstrating strengthened accessibility and engagement in this initiative.
  - In 2025, VCU was awarded a SCHEV Pell Initiative for Virginia (PIV) grant, securing \$2.3M in its first year to launch Career Bridge, a pioneering program designed to enhance career exploration, networking, employer partnerships and professional development for first-time/full-time Pell-eligible freshmen. With a strong emphasis on equitable access, Career Bridge ensures that each student in the pilot cohort (n=25) secures a paid internship by their second year — offering a structured foundation for success and workforce integration.
- The introduction of interdisciplinary curricula in artificial intelligence and mixed and immersive realities prepares students to thrive in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. These innovations — ranging from general education to advanced degrees — ensure that every VCU student, regardless of major, can become literate in the tools and ethics of the [AI era](#).
- VCU continues investing in microcredentials and non-credit programming to create pathways for current and prospective students. The institution has created 29 credit-inclusive microcredentials and issued 590 digital badges.
- Program productivity analysis, the introduction of interdisciplinary minors and degrees, and the ["Every Ram's a Researcher"](#) campaign ensure that our students graduate with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in their careers. The [LED Studio](#) for online course leadership continues to empower educators and learners to create innovative, student-centered, online learning experiences.
- VCU remained a leader in the national Work+ Collective, supported via Arizona State University and the Strada Foundation to focus on elevating the student employee ("working learner") and supervisor experience on our campus. With a focus on integrating career readiness into campus work opportunities, VCU began piloting this initiative in Fall 2023, collaborating with institutions across the country to develop new strategies that enhance the educational and professional value of student employment. Key achievements in 2025 included:
  - Hosted VCU Work+ Mini-Conference to bring together ~100 student employees and supervisors annually for shared learning and networking, including presentations by leaders from across campus, including VCU HR
  - Continuing to grow the Transforming Federal Work-Study On-Campus Internship Program, engaging approximately 50 faculty/staff supervisors and 80 students per academic year. This initiative is supported by the original SCHEV grant to pilot the program for the first two years, as well as earning a scaling grant for three additional years to grow the program to 150 supervisors and 300 students by 2029.
  - Launching a career readiness-focused workshop series for student employees and supervisors with monthly sessions facilitated by leaders across campus, including badging for those completing all eight workshops over the course of the academic year.
- In partnership with the National Institute for Student Success (NISS), VCU successfully implemented the following initiatives to boost retention and graduation rates by systematically using data to deliver timely, coordinated and personalized support to students at scale:
  - Deployment of a "D, Fail and Withdraw" grade/status dashboard to Deans and Associate Deans
  - Implementation of a new "transition advising team" and expanded supports for undeclared majors
  - Creation of a student success financial team within the Student Financial Management Center to provide enhanced customer service to students and families and proactively address issues before financial holds

- prohibit course registration
- Engaging with schools reprioritize and redeploy advising resources to reach university smart goal ratios of 200:1 first year students and 250:1 for upper division/school-based advising
- Published 2 year course schedule
- \$200k NISS quality of care grant used to 1) provide leadership development for advising directors, 2) advance projects that support interdisciplinary advising partnerships, enhance advisors ability to provide career advice and support graduation planning, and 3) purchase Ellucian SmartPlan and Award course planning software, a tool that will provide automatically generated graduation plans for students.

#### Objective 2: Drive equal opportunity for faculty success

- VCU launched an annual faculty hiring plan process with each college and school dean to align strategic academic priorities and develop the infrastructure for hiring faculty in thematic areas, This process enhances academic excellence and enables VCU to be strategic and quickly respond to emerging societal needs.
- We continue to drive excellence through faculty awards like the National/International Recognition Award (NIRA) and the Pedagogical Excellence and Innovation Award (PEIA), the Commonwealth and University Professorships, and the Distinguished Faculty Awards, among others. The utilization of academic analytics also contributes to a culture of excellence and support for our faculty.
- Investments in faculty hiring to support enrollment growth and improve student-faculty ratios, particularly in general academic instruction, and to elevate research excellence.
- Investments in faculty mentoring and learning communities to grow faculty skills through interactions with each other.
- Revising and developing faculty policies that support a focus on faculty excellence.
- Engagement in the COACHE faculty satisfaction survey and faculty retention and exit survey to identify areas of strength and opportunity for ensuring faculty excellence.

#### Objective 3: Drive equal opportunity for staff success

- VCU's Staff Senate and Human Resources office host an annual career development conference with almost 50 presenters (primarily from VCU) presenting 27 sessions, drawing over 1,300 employee participants from both VCU and VCU Health.
- The central HR team participates in veteran recruitment fairs and fosters strong relationships with organizations supporting employment of persons with disabilities.
- VCU provides significant support for staff career development, with external recognition of our quality programming demonstrated by requests to speak on the topic by multiple regional and state-level professional organizations. VCU HR team members presented on this topic to the Hampton Roads Peninsula Society for Human Resource Management (September), DHRM Conference (October), and the Richmond Compensation Association (December)
- We have reduced staff turnover from 12.25% in CY 2024 to 11.74% in CY 2025. We have intentionally targeted reductions in turnover in key strategic areas including academic advisors and research staff.
- The Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence and the Office of Faculty Affairs offer regular workshops for faculty professional development.

## Goal 2: Welcoming & Respectful Culture.

Nurture an institutional climate that is caring, welcoming, respectful and aligned with our commitment to community engagement.

#### Objective 1: Support a culture of care and respect

- The [VCU Cares](#) initiative demonstrates our commitment to understanding and supporting our students.
- The *Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy* and *Concealment of Identity* (both finalized in November) focus on keeping our campus safe and welcoming to all while protecting free speech.
- VCU provides many mental health and well-being resources including:
  - Multiple websites that provide mental health and well-being resources, including [RamStrong](#) and HR's [Work/Life](#) page
  - Faculty and staff discounts
  - TimelyCare, a 24/7 mental health service line that provides real time support to faculty, staff, and students
  - Year-round Employee Health clinics and seasonal Flu Clinics
  - Critical Incident Response guidelines for faculty and staff
  - An online resource called "Navigating Uncertainty: Resources on Resilience"
  - Student and employee health services
- VCU administers twice annual pulse surveys to monitor staff's sense of belonging, support, respect, and appreciation.

#### Objective 2: Connect with our community to improve student access to internship opportunities and improve the lives of those in the communities we serve

- VCU has launched the Academic Internships Office as a one-stop unit for credit and noncredit internships. The Academic Internships Office is charged with scaling high quality internships through students' degree programs.
- VCU is growing service learning as part of a holistic community engagement strategy that aligns with our Carnegie

- Community Engaged classification, reflecting our dedication to fostering meaningful connections with our community.
- In 2026, VCU completed an economic impact analysis conducted by Lightcast, a global labor market intelligence company, that identified VCU's value and impact on the city and state economy, as well as its return on investment for students, taxpayers, and society at large. Lightcast determined VCU's current economic impact on the Commonwealth of Virginia to be \$18.5B, noting that the activity of VCU and its students supports more than 95,700 jobs (one out of every 61 jobs) in Virginia.
- VCU's [Strategic Research Plan](#) supports our goal of improving lives.
- This spring, VCU launched the development of a new university-wide strategic plan that will position the institution for long-term success in a rapidly evolving higher education environment. The plan is expected to focus on enhancing student outcomes, expanding research and innovation, strengthening workforce alignment, increasing operational effectiveness, and reinforcing VCU's role as a nationally prominent public research university that serves the Commonwealth while competing on a global stage.
- VCU's clinical and translational research promotes prevention and treatment of diseases that matter for Virginians.
- We have enhanced our longstanding high school dual enrollment efforts with Henrico County and Maggie L. Walker Governor's School. Potential expansion into Richmond City Public Schools is being examined. We maintain an open line of communication with the region's community colleges to ensure all dual enrollment efforts are complementary rather than competitive

## Goal 3: State Agency DOI Infrastructure and Training.

Implement an organizational infrastructure to support, sustain and scale success initiatives.

Objective 1: Ensure employee practices are open to all and drive excellence

- VCU's Executive Search team plays a pivotal role in supporting executive-level recruitments and enhancing the quality of candidate pools. Their success is driven by dedicated recruiting professionals who create strong talent pathways to attract high-caliber candidates. Since its inception, this team has provided strategic and operational value by identifying and securing leaders who drive the institution's success.
- VCU utilizes a centralized advertising plan ensuring that all of our postings are included in relevant online job boards including ChronicleVitaee, HigherEd jobs, and TheEDULedger (formerly DiverseJobs.net).
- VCU HR establishes relationships with local and state organizations who support the employment of individuals with disabilities, including the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Service (DARS). The team collaborates with these agencies to increase the recruitment and retention of IWDs at VCU.
- VCU HR participates in and contributes to career fairs to attract individuals including veterans and IWD (as mentioned). Examples include the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) sponsored career fairs and resource fairs as part of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) at Fort Gregg-Adams.
  - In compliance with the Code of Virginia, we continue to ensure preferential hiring for veterans and their qualifying family members.
- VCU provides effective training, professional and career development opportunities. Examples of this include:
  - Hiring managers, search committees, HR business partners and other staff involved in each recruitment process are trained in effective hiring practices, including ways to eliminate bias in all facets of our hiring process. This includes training in how to facilitate a highly-structured interview process to ensure all candidates are asked the same set of interview questions and are assessed via a predefined evaluation rubric, customized for each role. In 2026, a core project will be improvement and streamlining of these trainings which will result in greater employee capabilities and decreased risk during the recruitment process.
  - A dynamic career development program offers learning opportunities for employees to improve current job effectiveness, prepare for career advancement, and enhance personal career development.
  - Career communities made up of individuals doing similar work or having similar career interests provide opportunities for employees to connect with opportunities and access tools to explore their career path, share best practices, and build their professional networks.
  - A robust Career Pathing Program allows employees to plan their careers, enhance their knowledge and skills to master their current jobs, and identify paths toward potential promotions and internal VCU transfers.
  - The provision of career coaching services to staff assists employees in owning and sculpting their own careers, enhancing their ability to self-advocate and plan their career trajectories.
- VCU is a member of the [NCFDD](#) which provides faculty mentoring.

### 2026 Goals

**Goal 1: Ensure equal access in all student and employee programs and practices, reflecting a culture where success is supported and everyone matters and belongs.**

**Goal 2: Nurture an institutional climate that is welcoming, respectful and aligned with our commitment to community engagement.**

**Goal 3: State Agency DOI Infrastructure and Training: Implement an organizational infrastructure to support, sustain and scale success initiatives.**

