



# Shaping the Future

Annual Research Report 2021

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**P. SRIRAMA RAO, PH.D.**  
**VICE PRESIDENT FOR  
RESEARCH AND  
INNOVATION**



To view Dr. Rao's 2021 State of the Research presentation, <https://bit.ly/3yz0ntl>

# Shaping the future through transformative innovation

VCU is uniquely positioned to shape the future through transformative innovation. Our faculty, staff, trainees and students are a talented and engaged driving force, reflective of our diverse, urban community. We collaborate to bring creative solutions where others see boundaries. Our creativity and innovation are integrated with community values and the entrepreneurial ecosystem that surrounds us. Every day, our faculty researchers shape the future through their teaching and training of undergraduate and graduate students, post-docs and other trainees, as well as through engaging in numerous efforts to enrich the lives of those in our local community and finding new and potential solutions to society's grand challenges.

Among our many ongoing efforts to shape the future that are bearing fruit now the birth of a liver institute late in 2021 has led to VCU's largest donation ever (<https://bit.ly/3Lu8Qlw>) to support treatment and research; and the renaming of a \$100 million initiative to increase diversity in clinical trials in honor of the VCU Massey Cancer Center's director (<https://bit.ly/3L8mme>), whose work regarding health equities is nationally recognized, and much more.

The One VCU Research fosters our transdisciplinary culture across our diverse campuses and disciplines to achieve public impact across the region, the state, the nation and the globe. We are built for breakthroughs.



## ONE VCU RESEARCH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES PLAN

# Shaping the future

The One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan (<https://bit.ly/3wrVVtC>) is our blueprint for transformative innovation. Through our inclusive culture of collaboration, engaged community and creativity, we focus on delivering results that make a difference, addressing today's real-world challenges. These are the challenges that are sometimes hard to see clearly, solve easily or make sustainable. This is where we make breakthroughs happen.

We do this by investing in our strengths, our community-partnered success, our transdisciplinary impact areas focused on enriching the human experience, achieving a just and equitable society, optimizing health and supporting sustainable energy and environments.

In 2021, VCU entered the first two-year phase of this university-wide, six-year plan, with investment commitments to advance public impact research priorities. The plan aligns with our mission and our vision as well as the forthcoming recalibration of the university's overall strategic plan.



# The One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan

One VCU Research fosters our transdisciplinary culture across our diverse campuses and disciplines to produce transformative innovation with public impact. We collaborate to bring creative solutions where others see boundaries. The breadth of our scholarship across disciplines addresses local challenges with our community partners to deliver bold and practical solutions with global implications.

- Enriching the human experience
- Achieving a just and equitable society
- Optimizing health
- Supporting sustainable energy and environments





# THE ONE VCU RESEARCH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES PLAN

VCU research flourishes by changing the game. We are highly creative and passionate about our community, with a great breadth of knowledge. To help facilitate growth of knowledge and research, the OVPRI released four funding opportunities and another joint funding opportunity with the Provost's office:

**Accelerate fund** (<https://bit.ly/3MeEOCu>)

**Arts, humanities and social sciences fund**  
(<https://bit.ly/3L8sfr0>)

**Breakthroughs fund** (<https://bit.ly/3MeEOCu>)

**Commercialization fund** (<https://bit.ly/3I7WIOC>)

**Quest fund** (<https://bit.ly/3MeEOCu>)

# Current research rankings

**4**

School of the Arts  
(2nd among public institutions)\*

**13**

Pharmacology\*\*

**16**

Addiction\*\*\*

**17**

School of  
Dentistry\*\*

**25**

School of  
Pharmacy\*\*

**25**

School of  
Social Work\*

**26**

School of  
Education\*

**32**

School of  
Nursing\*\*

**58**

Among U.S. Public  
Research Universities\*\*\*\*

**64**

School of  
Medicine\*\*

\* VCU graduate schools ranked in the top 50 by USN&WR

\*\* Blue Ridge Ranking

\*\*\* NIH RePORTER

\*\*\*\* NSF HERD ranking among public universities



# National research rankings

**12**

in liberal arts and other  
non science disciplines

**33**

in health sciences

**44**

in life sciences

**32**

in psychology

**38**

in Department of Health  
and Human Services funding

**50**

in biological and  
biomedical sciences

# 2021 Record external sponsored funding

Year after year, VCU research breaks its own external sponsored funding records



**\$363 million**

Sponsored program awards



**\$56 million**

State awards



**\$57 million**

Industry awards



**\$165 million**

Federal awards



**\$85 million**

Other (foundation, gifts)

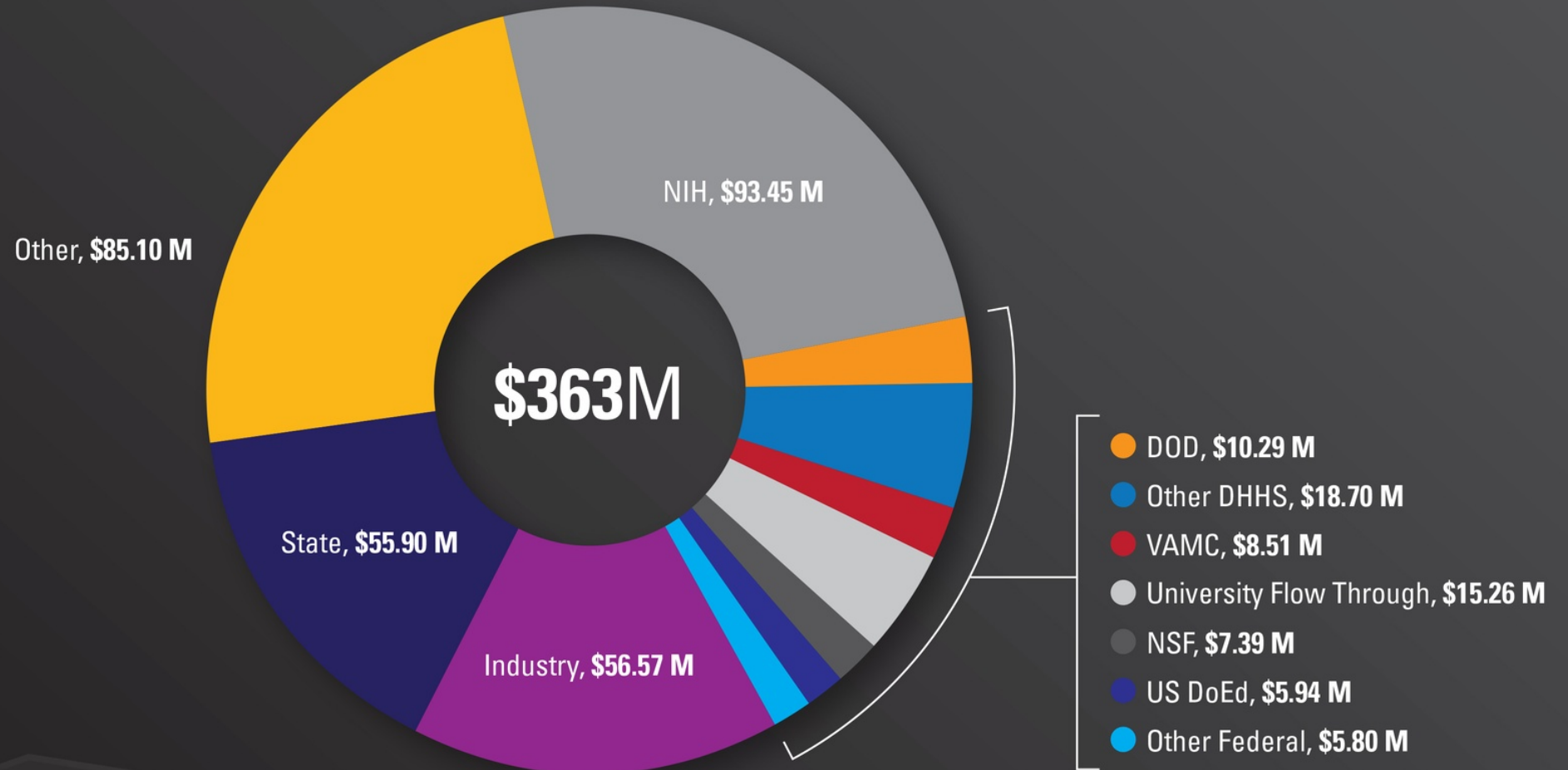
# FY2021 Sponsored program areas - up 8% over FY2020

\*in millions of dollars

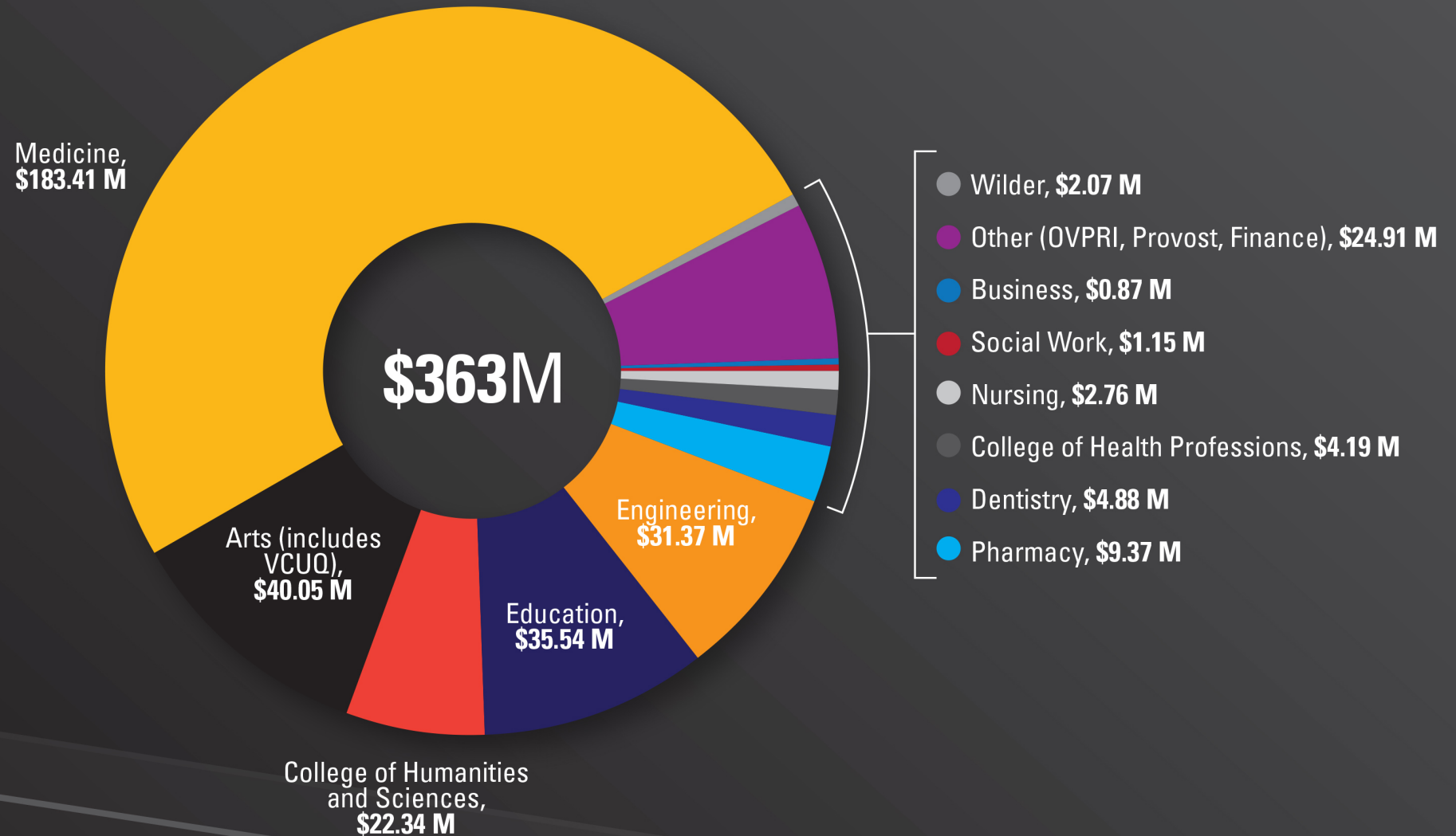




# Awards by source



# Awards by school/college



# Clinical research

\$34 million - Up by 26% over previous year



**5,732**

TOTAL ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS  
ENROLLED IN CLINICAL RESEARCH



**36**

VCU FACULTY-HELD FDA APPLICATIONS  
FOR NEW DRUGS/DEVICES



**650**

ACTIVE CLINICAL  
TRIALS AT VCU /  
VCUHS

**1,015**

ACTIVE CLINICAL  
STUDIES



**133**

INVESTIGATOR-INITIATED  
TRIALS



# Bringing ideas to life - VCU Innovation Gateway

10 years of impact



**>\$30 million**

Licensing revenue



**≈\$80 million**

Startup funding



**172**

Licenses / options



**49**

Products to market



**1,213**

Invention disclosures



**192**

Patents issued



**60+**

Startups



**>1,540**

Patents filed

# VCU's notable honors

## Fellows

**Supriyo Bandyopadhyay, Ph.D.**, Jefferson ScienceFellow, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine

**Barbara D. Boyan, Ph.D.**, fellow, Orthopaedic Research Society

**Krzysztof Cios, Ph.D.**, fellow, Asia-Pacific Artificial Intelligence Association

**Henry J. Donahue, Ph.D.**, fellow, Orthopaedic Research Society

**Milos Manic, Ph.D.**, fellow, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers; president-elect, IEEE Industrial Electronics

**Amy Salisbury, Ph.D.**, fellow, American Academy of Nursing Shelly Smith, DNP, fellow, American Academy of Nursing

**Shawne Soper, DPT**, Worthingham fellow, American Physical Therapy Association

**Sarah Spiegel, Ph.D.**, international fellow, American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

**Gary Tepper, Ph.D.**, fellow, International Association of Advanced Materials

**Bennet Ward, Ph.D.**, fellow, National Academy of Inventors

**Cang Ye, Ph.D.**, fellow, American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering

## Others

**Dipankar Bandyopadhyay, Ph.D.**, Outstanding Statistical Applications Award, American Statistical Association

**Sompop Bencharit, D.D.S., Ph.D.**, distinguished researcher award, American College of Prosthodontists

**David Cifu, M.D.**, Magnuson Award for Outstanding Achievement in Rehabilitation Research and Development, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

**Jose Cortina, Ph.D.**, distinguished career award, Academy of Management Research Methods Division

**Susan Gooden, Ph.D.**, president, Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration

**Robert Winn, M.D.**, inaugural Cancer Health Equity Award, Association of American Cancer Institutes

## VCU Notable Honors, continued



### Rosalyn Hobson Hargraves, Ph.D.

**VCU Engineering professor to lead National Science Foundation's Division of Undergraduate Education.**  
(<https://bit.ly/3N5I9om>)

Hargraves will serve at the NSF for up to four years as its director of the Division of Undergraduate Education. She is a professor of electrical and computer engineering in VCU's College of Engineering and is a recognized leader in advancing equity, excellence and inclusion in STEM education.



### Arnethea Sutton, Ph.D.

Among the researchers First Lady Jill Biden, Ed.D., met while visiting the Massey Cancer Center, was Sutton, who spoke about her research on disparate survivorship of minorities with cancer. Sutton, a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Health Behavior and Policy at the School of Medicine, had a remarkable 2021. In addition to meeting the First Lady, she received a prestigious NIH K99 grant to study health disparities in breast cancer and was declared a "wunderkind," one of the 27 "most impressive doctors and researchers on the cusp of launching their careers" by the news site [STATnews.com](https://www.statnews.com). She is the first from VCU to win this honor.



# VCU Notable Honors, continued



**Arun Sanyal, Ph.D.**

## **New Stravitz-Sanyal Institute for Liver Disease and Metabolic Health**

<https://bit.ly/3x8hyzG>

VCU's new Institute for Liver Disease and Metabolic Health, under the leadership of liver disease specialist and researcher Arun Sanyal, will build on the success of VCU's nationally recognized hepatology and liver transplant programs.

The institute will make VCU a global leader in research and education about liver diseases and metabolically driven disorders and in the care for patients with these conditions.



**Milos Manic, Ph.D.**

## **VCU named National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Research**

<https://bit.ly/3sxCdeP>

The National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security have designated VCU as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Research. The CAE program promotes higher education and research in cyber defense to reduce vulnerability in the national information infrastructure.

The designation reflects VCU's highly interdisciplinary approach to cybersecurity research, which includes its computer science, electrical and computer engineering, information systems and homeland security and emergency preparedness departments.



## VCU NOTABLE HONORS

# A legacy of learning

(<https://bit.ly/3waoJrU>)

With a recent renewal, VCU's Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology's T32 training program has secured 50 years of continuous funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Since the grant was initially awarded, it has provided more than 600 student or trainee years of funding, which includes money for tuition, equipment and supplies.

Bill Dewey, Ph.D., first secured the T32 grant in 1976 and has been able to renew it every five years since. This funding source has provided over \$24M in support for students and trainees.





## VCU STUDENT RESEARCH

# VCU undergraduate research symposium

Following COVID's disruption to campus life, including the in-person recognition of student research, VCU earlier this year resumed its undergraduate research symposium. There were 231 presenters, with representation from every department and discipline.

"It was extraordinarily fulfilling to host the return of our annual Symposium for Undergraduate Research and Creativity at VCU after a two-year hiatus during COVID. Research may have faced delays, setbacks and unprecedented challenges during the past two years, but it never stopped at VCU. That's a testament to the perseverance and unbounded passion for inquiry on the part of our students and faculty," Herbert H. Hill, director of undergraduate research and creative inquiry.





# VCUARTS QATAR

## Shaping the future

VCUarts Qatar contributes to the human, social, economic and environmental development of Qatar and the region by educating creative problem solvers and art makers.

The faculty's influences on their society are significant, through the education they offer as well as through their research measures. Much of their research is relevant not only to their region but also more broadly across many fields: materials science and nanotechnology to artificial intelligence and advancing pedagogy through research.

**Read more about the collaboration:**

<https://bit.ly/3yzISKG>



# VCU's notable honors, continued

Federal career development and recognition awards

## National Institutes of Health Research Career Development Awards



**Caitlin Martin, M.D.**, director of OB/GYN Addiction Services in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, was given a Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Career Development Award (K23) from the National Institute on Drug Abuse



**Frank Raucci, M.D.**, associate professor, Division of Pediatric Cardiology, holds a Mentored Clinical Scientist Research Career Development Award (K08) from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

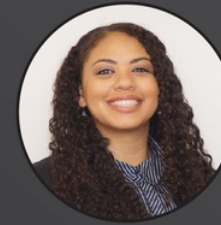
## National Science Foundation Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) honors



**Carlos Castano, Ph.D.**, assistant professor, Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering, College of Engineering, received his NSF award from the advanced manufacturing program of the Division of Civil, Mechanical and Manufacturing Innovation (CCMI)



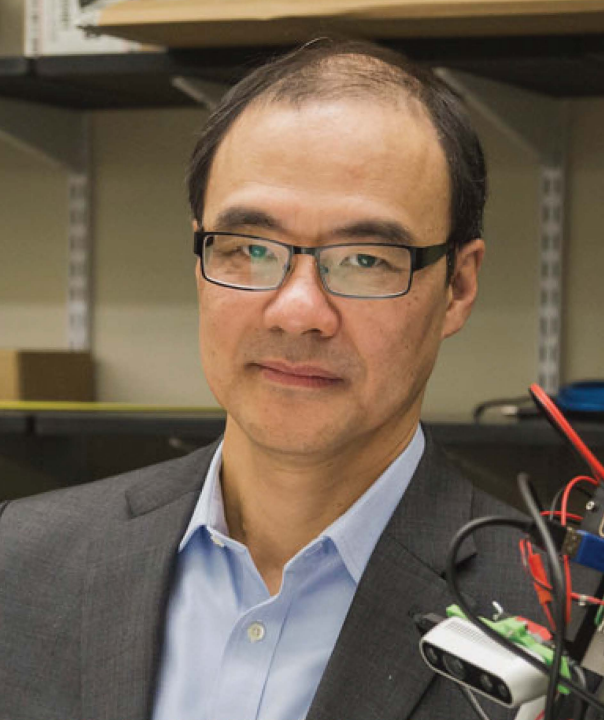
**Catherine Hulshof, Ph.D.**, assistant professor, Department of Biology, College of Humanities and Sciences, received her award from the NSF Division of Environmental Biology



**Fantasy Lozada, Ph.D.**, assistant professor, Department of Psychology, College of Humanities and Sciences, received her award from the NSF Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences



**Jennifer Puetzer, Ph.D.**, assistant professor, Department of Biomedical Engineering, College of Engineering, received an award from the NSF biomechanics and mechanobiology program in the CCMI division



# Enriching the human experience

Modernizing white canes

Cang Ye, Ph.D. (top left) (<https://bit.ly/3I6lpqT>)

Improv and homelessness

Elizabeth Byland (top right, middle) (<https://bit.ly/3Ck0YOq>)

Addressing youth violence

Nicholas Thomson, Ph.D. (bottom right); Terri Sullivan, Ph.D. (bottom left) (<https://bit.ly/3I3cFCe>)





# Achieving a Just and Equitable Society

Combating inequities in lung cancer

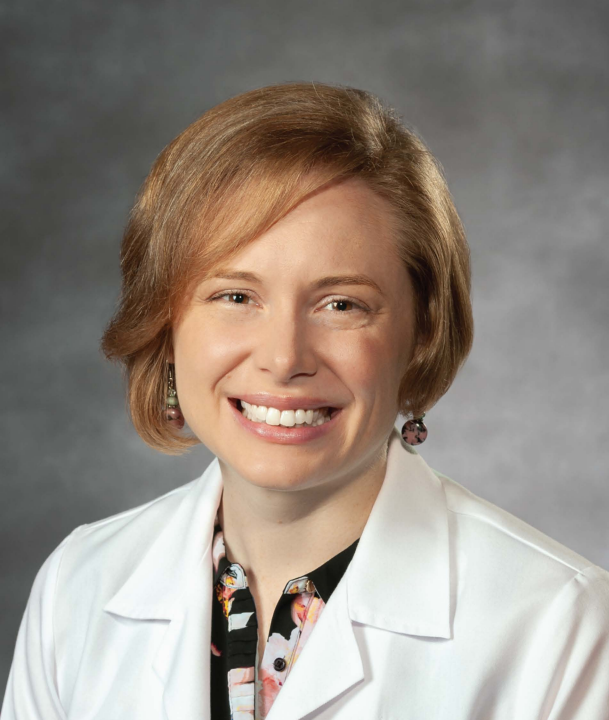
Robert A. Winn, M.D. (left) (<https://bit.ly/3yy8N49>)

Conversations during crisis

Brittany Haupt, Ph.D. (top right) (<https://bit.ly/3PfvY9f>)

Segregation in education

Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, Ph.D. (bottom right)  
(<https://bit.ly/3Na2ilN>)



# Optimizing Health

## Fighting the opioid crisis

Caitlin Martin, M.D. (top left) F. Gerard Moeller, M.D. (top right)  
(<https://bit.ly/3jQlb7l>)



## Tackling sickle cells

Martin Safo, Ph.D. (bottom left) (<https://bit.ly/3wp5R7d>)

## Treating triple-negative breast cancer

Senthil Radhakrishnan, Ph.D. (bottom right)  
(<https://bit.ly/3l6Bdvy>)





# Supporting Sustainable Energy and Environments

Breeding ecology of prothonotary warblers

Cathy Viverette, Ph.D. (top) (<https://bit.ly/3Nf2czb>)



Renewable hydrogen

Ram Gupta, Ph.D. (bottom left) (<https://bit.ly/3Qce3kz>)



Tracking air quality

Stephen Fong, Ph.D. (bottom right) (<https://bit.ly/39banyh>)



# Designation of VCU-wide research institutes and centers

Following a review in 2021, nine institutes and centers earned the designation as a university-wide “VCU Research Institute and Center.” These facilities were recognized for not only advancing VCU's overall research funding and enterprise, but for fostering increased collaborative research among various schools and colleges and across our campuses and overall impact.

- **Center on Health Disparities** (<https://healthdisparities.vcu.edu/>)
- **Center for Rehabilitation Science and Engineering** (<https://pmr.vcu.edu/research/>)
- **Center on Society and Health** (<https://societyhealth.vcu.edu/>)
- **Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development** (<https://clarkhill.vcu.edu/>)
- **Institute for Drug and Alcohol Studies** (<https://idas.vcu.edu/>)
- **Institute for Research on Emotional and Behavioral Health** (<http://cobe.vcu.edu/>)
- **Institute for Structural Biology, Drug Discovery and Development** (<https://bit.ly/3mdFr3l>)
- **Institute for Women's Health** (<https://womenshealth.vcu.edu/>)
- **Partnership for People with Disabilities** (<https://partnership.vcu.edu/>)





# The Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry

([matr.vcu.edu](https://matr.vcu.edu))

Based in the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation at VCU, the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry plays a role in research across many disciplines and topics, including the heredity of alcohol and drug abuse, psychiatric outcomes of bullying victimization, depression in women, childhood behavioral problems and the long-term biological consequences of sexual assault.

With more than 50,000 participants, the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry is the largest twin registry in the United States and one of the largest in the world. Twins and other multiples who participate offer researchers the opportunity to study “nature versus nurture.”

“As a natural experiment, MATR twins enable us to study the interplay of both nature and nurture, transforming the way we understand complex genetic and environmental influences on mental and physical health,” said Judy L. Silberg, Ph.D., scientific director of MATR.

In addition to pairing twins with researchers, the MATR also supports research projects by carrying out data collection, project coordination, institutional review board submissions and providing grant applications support. Learn more about the MATR online or by emailing [matr@vcu.edu](mailto:matr@vcu.edu).

**Read how the registry is supporting cancer research at VCU.**

<https://bit.ly/3wa26nt>





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