



VCU Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation

Editor's note: The graphic of VCU rankings has been updated.

VCU: shaping the future through transformative innovation

The \$104 million gift for [the Stravitz-Sanyal Institute for Liver Disease and Metabolic Health at VCU](#) is just one, albeit a very significant, recent piece of good news about the VCU research enterprise. This transformational gift will expand the success of our nationally recognized hepatology and liver transplant programs and will solidify VCU as a global leader in the field.

VCU receives **\$104 million** gift to advance
the **Stravitz-Sanyal Institute**
for Liver Disease and Metabolic Health.

Largest individual gift in **VCU history**

Largest publicly shared gift for
liver research in **U.S. history**

Second-largest publicly shared
gift to a university in **VA history**



The gift came soon after the university learned that the latest rankings from the National Science Foundation list [VCU as 58th of public universities](#) nationwide for federally funded research expenditures, putting the school within reach of its goal to break into the top 50 of its peers.

Our graduate schools and programs ranked in the top 50

1st Fine Arts — Sculpture	25th Social Work
1st Nurse Anesthesia	29th Public Management and Leadership
2nd Fine Arts — Printmaking	34th Best Nursing Schools: Master's
3rd Fine Arts — Glass	35th Best Nursing Schools: Doctor of Nursing Practice
4th Fine Arts	35th Public Affairs
4th Fine Arts — Graphic Design	43rd Clinical Psychology
4th Rehabilitation Counseling	44th Biostatistics: Doctoral
5th Health Care Management	48th Best Medical Schools — Primary Care
5th Time-based New Media	*Ranking is based on the most recent U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges rankings.
9th Nursing Administration — Online	
12th Fine Arts — Painting/Drawing	
15th Occupational Therapy	
20th Nuclear Engineering	
20th Nursing — Online	
20th Pharmacy	
20th Physical Therapy	
25th Best Education Schools	

Rankings based on federally funded R&D expenditures

#12 in liberal arts and other non-science disciplines	#38 in Department of Health and Human Services funding
#32 in psychology	#44 in life sciences
#32 in nursing	#50 in biological and biomedical sciences
#33 in health sciences	



The [U.S. Department of Education has provided Virginia Commonwealth University with Minority Serving Institution \(MSI\) eligibility](#), effective July 1. VCU's MSI eligibility is based on a focus on students who are from Asian American and Pacific Islander backgrounds. The university also qualified for the Strengthening Institutions Program, which recognizes colleges and universities serving a high proportion of low-income students. The formal identification of VCU as an institution that serves a high percentage of minority students provides VCU researchers access to certain federal grant programs available to minority-serving institutions. Additional information is available at research.vcu.edu/resources/msi/.

Qatar trip provides insights on campus research



VPRI Sriram Rao, Ph.D. (r), and Provost Fotis Sotiropoulos, Ph.D., recently traveled to the vibrant and energetic VCUarts Qatar campus to learn more about the growing transdisciplinary research conducted there. The [Qatar campus faculty's work](#) relates not only to the region but also more broadly across many fields: from materials science to improving AI's ability to read Arabic calligraphy and advancing non-Western pedagogical methods of teaching math.

Massey director recognized with fellowship program



At the opening ceremony of the American Association for Cancer Research conference, **Massey Cancer Center Director Robert Winn, M.D.**, was honored with a \$100 million fellowship in his name: [The Robert A. Winn Diversity in Clinical Trials Award Program](#). The program includes two awards: one for early-stage investigator physicians who are from diverse backgrounds and/or committed to increasing diversity in clinical trials and a second for medical students who are underrepresented in medicine.

VCU faculty inventors honored for innovations



[Bennett C. Ward, Ph.D.](#) (above), a retired associate professor in the College of Engineering, was named a fellow in the National Academy of Inventors, the highest professional distinction accorded solely to academic inventors. **Martin Mangino, Ph.D.**, a professor of surgery and associate chair for basic research in the School of Medicine, (lower left) and **Massimo Bertino, Ph.D.**, a physics professor in the College of Humanities and Sciences, were [named senior members](#) to the academy.



[Eight faculty researchers were inducted](#) into the VCU chapter of the National Inventors academy. To qualify for chapter membership, researchers must hold at least two U.S. patents.

The VCU 2022 inventor inductees are:

- **Daren Chen, Ph.D.**, professor and Floyd D. Gottwald Sr. Chair of the Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering, College of Engineering
- **William Dewey, Ph.D.**, professor and chair of the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, School of Medicine
- **Jonathan Isaacs, M.D.**, professor and chair of the Division of Hand Surgery, School of Medicine
- **Puru Jena, Ph.D.**, distinguished professor in the Department of Physics, College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Art Kellermann, M.D.**, senior vice president of VCU Health Sciences and CEO of VCU Health System
- **Dana Selley, Ph.D.**, professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, School of Medicine
- **Gary Tepper, Ph.D.**, professor and chair of the Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering, College of Engineering
- **Erdem Topsakal, Ph.D.**, professor and chair of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, College of Engineering



VCU Innovation Gateway collaborated with faculty to finish 2021 with a record 160 new invention disclosures — a 20% increase over the previous year. Read more about how ideas were brought to life in [Innovation Gateway's annual report](#).

Scholars examine ageism, travel's cultural impact on African American artists, role of 'Two-Spirits'



New books by VCU faculty:

"Ageism Unmasked: Exploring Age Bias and How to End It," by [Tracey Gendron, Ph.D.](#), director of the Virginia Center on Aging at VCU, challenges societal misconceptions about aging.

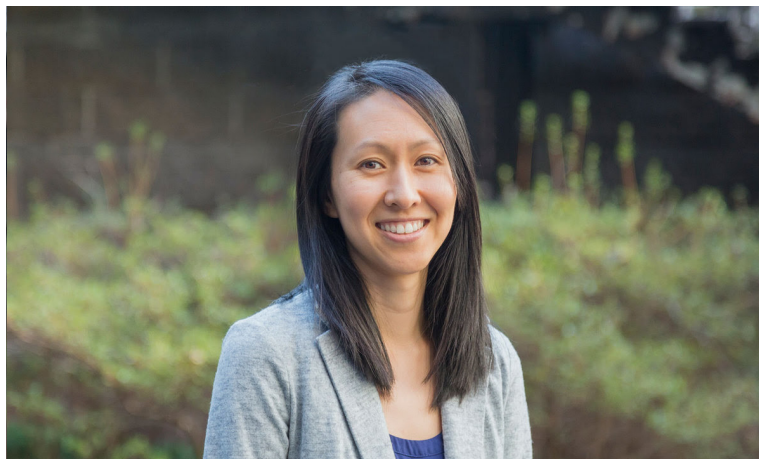
Assistant professor of English [Michael Ra-shon Hall, Ph.D.](#), wrote "Freedom Beyond Confinement: Travel and Imagination in African-American Cultural History," to examine the impact that travel, with its paradox of freedom and confinement, had on artists from post Reconstruction to the present.



History professor [Gregory Smithers, Ph.D.](#), explores the history and modern perspectives of a Native tradition in his new book, "Reclaiming Two-Spirits: Sexuality, Spiritual Renewal and Sovereignty in Native America."



Hwang, Roach, earn national grants



Priscilla Hwang, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the Department of Biomedical Engineering in the College of Engineering, received a prestigious [Faculty Early Career Development Award](#) from the National Science Foundation to support her efforts to recruit, mentor and retain diverse students into STEM fields.



Catherine Roach, Ph.D., an associate professor of art history, is the first faculty member from VCUarts — and the second from VCU — to receive a [coveted National Humanities Center fellowship](#). It will support research for her book, “The Shadow Museum: A History of the British Institution, 1805–1867.” The British Institution was a private 19th-century society in London formed to exhibit the works of living and dead artists.

Meet the Humanities Research Center fellows

[Meet the five interdisciplinary scholars](#) who are this year’s residential fellows at VCU’s Humanities Research Center. The fellowship program provides faculty the opportunity to work on projects around a similar theme, “Race, Ethnicity and Social Justice.” The cohort includes a faculty member from the School of Education and one from the School of the Arts in addition to three faculty members from humanities departments and schools in the College of Humanities and Sciences. This year’s fellows are:

- **Indira Sultanic, Ph.D.**, assistant professor of Spanish translation and interpreting studies, School of World Studies
- **Jonathan Molina-Garcia**, assistant professor of photography and digital futures, School of the Arts
- **Michael Hall, Ph.D.**, assistant professor in the Department of English, College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Michael Dickinson, Ph.D.**, assistant professor in the Department of History, College of Humanities and Sciences
- **Kevin Clay, Ph.D.**, assistant professor, School of Education

Changes in OVPRI leadership roles

The OVPRI has reconfigured some of its [leadership team’s roles](#). **Lisa Richman Ballance**, associate vice president for strategy and regulatory affairs, guides the One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan and oversees VCU’s comprehensive regulatory affairs programs. **Tina Cunningham, J.D.**, associate vice president for research administration, oversees the Division of Sponsored Programs and now the export compliance program, the controlled substances program, the policies and compliance notices program, and general non-compliance investigations. As assistant vice president for innovation, **Ivelina Metcheva, Ph.D.**, adds oversight of faculty entrepreneurship and start-ups, along with regional economic development and all technology commercialization activities at Innovation Gateway. **James Ward**, assistant vice president for research computing, oversees all aspects of the Research Computing Center and Division of Research Information Systems across the VCU research enterprise.



High Performance Research Computing core director named

Alberto Cano, Ph.D., an associate professor in the College of Engineering's Department of Computer Science, is now [the faculty director](#) of the VCU's High Performance Research Computing Core facility. The HPRC is modernizing its high-performance computing systems, including operating systems, software, and submission systems for each cluster. Core staff will work with users to ease the transition to the modernized submission systems for each cluster as they are updated. The core's new website is hprc.vcu.edu.



VCU RAMS forum scheduled for May 18

The [Research Administration & Management Symposium Forum](#), co-sponsored by the Legal, Audit, and Compliance Job Family and the Research Job Family, offers its next, hybrid presentation on research-related topics. Speakers for the May 18 forum include:

- Enriching the Human Experience: Why Robotics Needs Dance (**Kate Sicchio, Ph.D.**; **Patrick Martin, Ph.D.**)
- Supporting Sustainable Energy and Environments: Toward a World with Abundant and Clean Energy (**Puru Jena, Ph.D.**)
- Achieving a Just and Equitable Society: Empowering Youth Activism through Socioemotional-Focused Action Research (**Fantasy Lozada, Ph.D.**)
- Optimizing Health: Harnessing the Power of VR for Rehabilitation (**James Thomas, Ph.D.**)
- Culture of Collaboration: Cross-unit Collaboration: Tips, Tricks, and Best Practices (Panel Discussion led by **Ashley Tankesley**)
- Taking Care of You: The Science of Happiness (**Marcie Walsh, Ph.D., MSW**, University College)

[Register here](#)

VCU research and innovation highlights

Enjoy these stories featuring [some of VCU's creative scholars and researchers](#):

- [Dynamic Duos](#)
- [How a homeland security major ended up contributing to oral health research](#)
- [Research and design prototypes on display for Capstone Design Expo](#)
- [Creating high-tech tape for fixing and aligning injured peripheral nerves](#)
- [Massey joins new consortium to fight racial inequities in lung cancer](#)
- [Short-term, agile planning proved to be best approach during pandemic supply chain disruption](#)
- [Connecting environmental planning to social equity](#)
- [Patients undergoing treatment for cancer more susceptible to COVID-19 misinformation](#)
- ['Almost Dead' reveals how the urban Atlantic was shaped by Black lives](#)

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