Dr. Rao engages donors in shared vision for VCU

For new Virginia Commonwealth University President Michael Rao, Ph.D., running one of the state’s largest universities is a family affair.

His wife, Monica, and sons Miguel, 10, and Aiden, 1, each play an important role in helping him execute his presidential duties.

Frequently, the Raos host guests for dinner in their home or the children will accompany them to official events, such as the recent kickoff of the VCU Year of the Environment at the VCU Rice Center.

“Our family is important in our lives, and we have found that involving the family is very helpful in our work. In fundraising, for instance, we know that families give to families. There have been many occasions in which I can certify that people gave generously to the university because of a particular fondness for Monica or Miguel,” Dr. Rao said.

He extends that focus on family and personal priorities when getting to know donors, an experience he and Mrs. Rao especially enjoy. He values the relationships he builds with donors and recognizes that they want to feel involved and give to areas that hold personal importance to them.

“We are very grateful for the generosity of our donors and enjoy engaging in discussions with them about a shared vision for VCU. We look forward to them being an integral part of the vision,” he said.

That vision is, first and foremost, focused on strengthening the student experience while also raising the university’s profile as an urban research institution.

“Everything we do must be done in the context of strengthening the living and learning environment for our students to ensure their success,” he said.

Another important lesson President Rao learned in his years of working in public higher education involves the challenges of delivering world-class learning opportunities in troubled economic times. Sometimes, he said, a lack of resources makes “our challenges clearer” and inspires creative thinking and decisiveness.

“It is in these economic downturns that we find opportunities to position ourselves for the upswing that inevitably follows,” Dr. Rao said. “Sometimes the economic cycles are trying to tell us to rethink what we know today.”

In addition to focusing on the university’s mission to foster student success, his priorities include focusing on cancer research, treatment, prevention and control; strengthening the university’s national academic profile; and increasing...
Dr. Rao, continued from Page 3

sponsored research. Dr. Rao recognizes that these goals are resource-intensive. To that end, he proposes resource diversification, explaining that VCU cannot be too dependent on any one revenue source, including public funding.

“The funding equation is shifting,” he said. “State support, without question, is diminishing and other parts of the equation are now increasing. Universities throughout the country are facing similar situations.”

He suggests that as a public university, VCU must ensure that it has sufficient resources such as scholarships to recruit qualified and motivated students who will benefit from being at VCU. He is also very focused on increasing the size of the faculty.

“Aggressive scholarship fundraising campaigns with our alumni and friends — many of whom struggled financially when they were students and therefore understand the needs of our students — as well as looking at other ways to increase all of our revenues could help to minimize the non-scholarship portion of financial aid,” Dr. Rao said.

The president will look to VCU alumni and donors to take an active role in the VCU community, and he and Mrs. Rao will make a concerted effort in the coming year to travel around the state and the country to meet with these constituents.

“I have learned over the years that there is no university stronger than one that is engaged with active alumni, and we will be exploring ways to engage all alumni and friends as partners in shaping the future of this great institution,” he said.

The next step in the evolution of the university is to challenge its students to raise their expectations.

“It’s not pushing people beyond their limit. It’s basically saying, ‘This is where we want to be because we know we can get there.’ With students in particular, they will all rise to a higher level if you challenge them,” Dr. Rao said. “Even if they don’t all reach that highest level, they will all feel better for stretching themselves and that will set the tone for the rest of their lives. It will change the way they look at themselves as leaders in our communities. It will change the way they look at their degree and what it meant to them, their overall experience at VCU.”

“Everything we do must be done in the context of strengthening the living and learning environment for our students to ensure their success.” – Michael Rao, Ph.D.

Alumni associations help raise scholarship funds

Whitney Conroy grew up hearing about Virginia Commonwealth University. So when the time came she naturally applied to the VCU School of Pharmacy. Her mother, Trish Smith Conroy (B.S., ’78), was thrilled.

Now as a second-year student, Whitney’s decision to carry on the family tradition is paying off. During Reunion Weekend in April 2009, Whitney was awarded the MCV Alumni Association of VCU Legacy Scholarship. The Legacy Scholarship supports a child or grandchild of a dues-paying member of the MCV Alumni Association of VCU. The VCU Alumni Association also provides Legacy Scholarships.

“This scholarship meant a lot to me because it recognizes that my mom went to nursing school here, and I am following in her footsteps,” Whitney said. “It also recognizes my accomplishments, the things I have achieved. I very much appreciate this help.”

The leaders of the MCV Alumni Association of VCU and the VCU Alumni Association hope to help even more students like Whitney. The associations, in collaboration with the university’s schools, launched Opportunity VCU, a campaign to raise $50 million for undergraduate and graduate scholarships and graduate fellowships.

The leaders of the alumni associations welcome the challenge ahead.

“Our two alumni associations saw the need to increase privately funded student financial support so we can reach our alma mater’s goals of raising our academic profile and providing essential support for our deserving students, while adding value for all alumni degrees,” said VCU Alumni Association President Donna Dalton (M.Ed., ’00). “Although we are humbled by the challenge, we are confident of success. We look forward to inviting all alumni to join us in supporting the students of today and tomorrow.”

MCV Alumni Association of VCU President Dr. James Revere (D.D.S., ’65) echoes Dalton’s appeal for student support.

“With the unemployment rate continuing to creep up and more and more families facing difficult economic decisions, the Opportunity VCU campaign comes at the right time,” he said. “As alumni, we remember the lean times during our college years. Some of us were fortunate to receive scholarship or fellowship support to make pursuing our degree a little easier. Either way, as alumni, we now have the responsibility and the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the next generation of VCU students.”

The scholarships are needed more than ever as the cost of higher education continues to rise and the amount of support VCU receives from the state continues to decline, the leaders agree, noting that this year VCU will receive $25.4 million less state support than it did in fiscal year 2000, despite enrolling nearly 9,000 more students.

All the university’s schools will participate in Opportunity VCU in addition to their ongoing annual and capital fundraising priorities. Gifts can be designated for a specific school or department; to the Opportunity VCU fund, a university-wide scholarship fund; or to the alumni associations’ scholarship funds.

To make a gift to the Opportunity VCU scholarship campaign, contact your school or visit www.advancement.vcu.edu/opportunityvcu.

Michael Rao, Ph.D.

TITLE: President of Virginia Commonwealth University, President of VCU Health System and Professor

LAST POSITION: Nine-year term as president of Central Michigan University

EDUCATION: Graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from the University of South Florida and earned a Ph.D. at the University of Florida

FAMILY: Wife, Monica, a professional watercolorist and graphic designer who serves in a half-time faculty administrative position working with VCU’s international alumni; and two sons, Miguel and Aiden

Scholarships help students like pharmacy major Whitney Conroy pursue degrees.
Corporate leader establishes engineering awards

As president and chief operating officer of James River Corp., Robert C. Williams, along with business partner Brenton S. Halsey, transformed numerous failing paper mills into a world leader among paper product manufacturers. Acquisitions fueled Richmond-based James River’s growth to No. 114 on the Fortune 500 list.

Over the years, many employees who had received leadership scholarships during their college educations enjoyed successful careers at James River.

Identifying, acknowledging and developing employees’ and students’ scholarship, leadership and creativity can lead to entrepreneurial success, Williams said.

With these truths in mind, Williams and his wife, Barbara, established the Eugene P. Trani Leadership Scholarships through the Bob and Barbara Williams Foundation to continue in perpetuity. Williams was among the corporate leaders who helped establish the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Engineering in 1996.

The new scholarships recognize Trani’s “extraordinary contribution to the school during his 19-year term as president of the university and the key role he played in growing the School of Engineering,” said Williams, who has retired. Trani retired as president of VCU and CEO of the VCU Health System on June 30, 2009.

Two full scholarships, one for an in-state student and one for an out-of-state student, will be funded annually at the VCU School of Engineering.

“Barbara and I wanted to do something special to serve as a lasting tribute to Dr. Trani’s legacy at VCU,” Williams said. “His leadership and creativity have set a standard of excellence at the School of Engineering, which we hope to extend through two new leadership scholarships at VCU from our family foundation program.”

The foundation has also established multiple scholarships at other universities.

“Bob Williams’ generosity in funding this scholarship exemplifies his commitment to VCU engineering since its inception,” Dean Russell Jamison, Ph.D., said. “As a founding member of the engineering foundation board, he has been committed to the development of ‘business-ready’ engineers. We are deeply indebted to Bob for his strong, sustained support of students.”

The Williamses received thank-you letters from both of this year’s recipients. Robert Williams describes the students as extraordinary young people who possess all of the characteristics necessary for entrepreneurship.

This year’s out-of-state scholarship recipient is freshman mechanical engineering major Matthew J. Schell of Brandford, Conn. Schell wants to combine business engineering with art and design, in hopes of forming his own prototype business.

Because the scholarship is sensitive to creativity, Schell feels a responsibility to give back to the university. “I also want to open up this opportunity to more kids like myself even if it’s through an organization I join later,” he said.

Senior Laura S. Kueny of Herndon, Va., was this year’s in-state scholarship recipient. She is majoring in biomedical engineering with guaranteed entrance into clinical labs, which protects the community from medical errors,” she said. “I’m incredibly grateful to [Williams] for all he’s done for VCU.”

To make a gift to the School of Engineering, contact Ike Tucker, assistant director of the VCU Foundation, at (804) 828-6491 or wtucker@vcu.edu.

CLS alumnae create innovative ways to give back

In April, alumna Janet Coon (B.S. ’59) returned to campus for the first time in two decades. Coon was one of three former medical technologists from MCV Hospitals who visited the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Allied Health Professions to mark their 50th graduation anniversary. The visit rekindled her affinity for her alma mater.

Coon meets monthly for lunch with a group of fellow medical technologist retirees, most of whom are also alumni. When it was her turn to organize the lunch this past July, she remembered her campus visit in April and arranged for her friends to visit the school. Teresa Nadder, Ph.D., CLS, MT, chair of the VCU Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences, welcomed the group by introducing them to faculty and helping them reunite with old friends in the department.

During the visit, alumna Doris Costley (B.S. ’71) revealed that she made provisions for a gift to VCU in her will. Costley, whose degree is in medical technology, the clinical laboratory sciences predecessor, worked as a medical technician for 22 years. Her son, Justin (B.S. ’04), earned his undergraduate degree from the VCU School of Engineering. Costley designated her bequest to benefit the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences and the School of Engineering.

Hearing about such generosity, paired with an exciting day at the school, sparked more ideas among the group for ways to help support the department.

For the past three years, the group of friends has skipped exchanging holiday gifts, instead pooling money to make a donation to a local charity. This year, Coon said, the group will make a gift to their alma mater.

In addition to helping the department monetarily, Coon hopes to spread the word about careers in the field, which is experiencing a shortage of trained workers. Clinical laboratory scientists play a vital role in patient diagnosis, Coon said, but they work mainly behind the scenes. Laboratory operators operate complex equipment and analyze, among other things, fluids and tissues.

“We have always felt that we were such a major part of diagnosis, and the patients never really knew about us,” she said.

After working 28 years in the field, Coon realized the skills she acquired had inadvertently prepared her for a second career. Her interest in politics, coupled with her abilities to troubleshoot, set priorities and organize, landed her the position of deputy general registrar of Richmond, Va., from 1987 to 1991 and then general registrar of Henrico County from 1991 to 2004.

Coon recently found a way to merge both of her interests by bringing together Del. John O’Bannon (M.D. ’73) and department chair Nadder to talk about pushing for statewide licensure for clinical laboratory scientists via the American Society of Medicine. Talks are in progress, Nadder said.

“Licensure in Virginia would ensure that only certified laboratorians would work in clinical labs, which protects the community from medical errors,” she said.

To make a gift to the School of Allied Health Professions, contact Jessica Gurganus, senior director of development, at (804) 828-3269 or jfgurganus@vcu.edu.
Scholar-in-residence shares real estate insights

The 2009 Charles G. Thalhimer Family Scholar-in-Residence Susan Wachter, Ph.D., kept a busy schedule during the first two days of October as she presented several programs on behalf of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business.

Wachter, a nationally known real estate expert, began by addressing a standing-room-only crowd with her presentation, "Can Another Crisis be Avoided, and What to Do Going Forward," during a breakfast program at Willow Oaks Country Club.

The audience included people affiliated with the VCU real estate program’s Real Estate Circle of Excellence and guests who are connected to the Richmond-area real estate industry; many were also VCU alumni as well as community members.

Wachter, a professor at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, spent the remainder of her first day in the classroom leading discussions with faculty and students. That afternoon, she met with student members of Rho Epsilon, the real estate fraternity, and she later presented “Asset Bubbles: Real Estate Pricing Across Space and Time” to a real estate finance class.

The next day, Wachter presented a research seminar, “Subprime Lending and House Price Volatility,” to faculty, students and guests. She concluded her visit with a seminar for Ph.D. students and junior faculty, “Building Your Career, Ethics and the Repeated Game.”

The Charles G. Thalhimer Family Scholar-in-Residence program began in 1986. Over the years, visiting scholars have discussed economics, management, marketing, leadership development and information systems.

The Thalhimer family has been extremely generous to VCU over the years, not only aiding the School of Business but also creating an endowed chair in the School of the Arts and providing crucial funding to the School of Medicine and the VCU Massey Cancer Center.

VCU neighbors establish engineering scholarship

Residents of The Prestwould, a 1920s-era luxury condominium building located across Monroe Park from the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Engineering, have established the Prestwould Scholarship for Engineering Excellence and Community Service.

The scholarship, renewable for up to four years, will recognize engineering students "for their excellent academic achievements; dedication to community service; and commitment to research that fosters innovative and global changes in technology and medicine that positively impact local, national, and international communities.”

“The Prestwould Scholarship signifies the community’s ongoing support of the School of Engineering and its commitment to our students’ success,” said Russell D. Jamison, Ph.D., dean of the VCU School of Engineering. “The scholarship will help generations of engineering students pursue their studies at the school, and for this, we are deeply grateful for the generosity shown by our friends across Monroe Park.”

Alumnus continues tradition of inspired giving

Glenn Duncan (B.A. ’04; M.S. ’06) knows the power of scholarships. As an undergraduate student at Virginia Commonwealth University, Duncan received the Julia Halley Latane Scholarship and the VCU Affinity Scholarship. He hoped to one day pass along the same opportunity to other students.

“I was very thankful,” Duncan said. “I immediately sent a thank-you letter and got one back.”

Last year, he realized his goal by establishing two annual scholarships that are now encouraging recipients to think about how they want to give back later.

The Glenn Duncan Scholarship is awarded annually to a sociology student in the College of Humanities and Sciences’ L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs; and the Climb Advertising Scholarship, named after Duncan’s new company, is given annually to a Brandcenter student. This year, student winners will receive $500 each.

This year’s Glenn Duncan Scholarship recipient is Heather Condon (B.A. ’08). After earning a bachelor’s degree in women’s studies from VCU in May 2008, she began her graduate studies in sociology that fall.

Condon looks forward to passing along the same opportunity to other students.

“I am grateful for the scholarship and appreciate the kindness of alumni,” Condon said. “Richmond and [the university] have been a wonderful influence on my life, and I hope in the future to be able to give back to VCU.”

Duncan had a similar experience at VCU, with his academic mentors making an indelible mark on his life and his career.

With a bachelor’s degree in sociology and anthropology, he contemplated graduate school but wasn’t sure what path to take. Duncan’s academic adviser, sociology associate professor John Mahoney, Ph.D., suggested how to combine his desire to improve society and help others with his interest and experience in the business world.

“Glenn wanted a major that would help explain the existence of social problems and suggest ways of alleviating them,” Mahoney said. “But he also demonstrated a practical, applied approach to life. I recommended that he look into VCU’s nationally recognized Adcenter, now the Brandcenter.”

Duncan took Mahoney’s words to heart, earning a Master of Science in Mass Communications with a concentration in advertising strategy in 2006. He immediately went to work for an ad firm in Richmond, Va.

This past February, Duncan and a partner formed their own agency, Climb Advertising. Before getting started on the venture, Duncan sought the advice of VCU Brandcenter professor Peter J. Coughter.

“At VCU, the professors are your professors even after you’ve graduated,” Duncan said. “I wouldn’t be here now with my own agency without the advice I received.”

Mahoney calls his former student one of the most generous people he has met in 25 years of teaching.

“Glenn did not forget VCU and, true to his generous character, has donated financial support to students,” he said. “[These scholarships] are one way of giving back to the organizations that have helped him achieve his own success in life.”

To make a gift to the College of Humanities and Sciences, contact Lois Badey, director of development, at (804) 827-0856 or lbadey@vcu.edu.
New staff members join VCU advancement team

Steven Hicks
Director of Development
Partnership for People with Disabilities
(804) 828-3876
shicks@vcu.edu
Formerly director of planned giving for the American Lung Association/Atlantic Coast

Linda H. Johnson
Development Assistant
School of Nursing
(804) 828-0724
lhjohnso@vcu.edu
Formerly administrative assistant to the dean and front office manager at the VCU School of Nursing

Kenneth J. Melvin
Assistant Director of Development for Gifts Administration
MCV Foundation
(804) 628-1963
melvinkj@vcu.edu
Formerly development assistant for the VCU School of Medicine

Amanda Ruymen
Assistant Director of Donor Relations and Special Events
MCV Foundation
(804) 828-9733
aruymen@vcu.edu
Formerly public relations coordinator for The Phoenix Center

Dorrie L. Smith
Advancement Assistant
School of Dentistry
(804) 628-3359
dlsmith@vcu.edu
Formerly continuing education assistant for the VCU School of Dentistry

Jessica E. Sumpter
External Relations and Events Coordinator
School of the Arts
(804) 828-3592
jesumpter@vcu.edu
Formerly admissions liaison for the VCU School of the Arts

Matthew Steele
Associate Director of Development Campaign Administration and Research
MCV Foundation
(804) 828-2393
steelemg@vcu.edu
Formerly analytical director at SIR Research

Brian S. Thomas
Executive Director of Development
MCV Foundation
(804) 828-0067
bsthomas@vcu.edu
Formerly vice president of the VCU School of Engineering Foundation

MCV Foundation board welcomes new members

The Sept. 21 meeting of the MCV Foundation board of trustees included the election of seven new members:
- Edward H. Bersoff, Ph.D.
- Louise Oliver Brooks (B.F.A. ’77; B.S. ’82)
- Mark J. Hourigan
- Rebecca T. Perdue (B.S. ’62)
- Harry R. Thalhimer
- Bruce V. Thomas
- Dianne H. Wright

The new trustees join Thomas N. Chewning, who became a board member July 1, 2009.

Following the board meeting, the foundation hosted a reception to welcome new Virginia Commonwealth University President Michael Rao, Ph.D., his family and the new board members. The crowd of 80 gathered under a tent in the Egyptian Building’s courtyard. Dr. John C. Doswell II (D.D.S. ’79), chairman of the foundation board, presented the Rao family with MCV Foundation shirts.

Established in 1949, the foundation’s mission is to inspire and steward philanthropy throughout VCU’s MCV Campus.

Massey benefit combines BBQ with bluegrass

Massey Alliance’s fourth annual Swinetangle, presented by Marshall Mechanical, was a great success with sunshine and many smiling people who came out for the annual barbecue event Sept. 27.

Richmond’s scenic Rock Bottom Island provided the perfect backdrop thanks to Ann Parker and Teddy Gottwald, who once again provided the location for the annual fall fundraiser.

Guests of this year’s Swinetangle were treated to classic barbecue fare from The Smokey Pig, beverages from Loveland and Pepsi, live music by The Atkinsons and a performance by the always-entertaining Jonathan Austin.

Co-chairs Matt Anderson and Morgan Guthridge were pleased at the level of support shown by the community during difficult times. The event netted $14,000 for the Virginia Commonwealth University Massey Cancer Center.

The Massey Alliance is composed of young professionals who have a passion for supporting the VCU Massey Cancer Center. Since its formation in 2002, the alliance has evolved into a 30-member junior board under the Massey Cancer Center Advisory Board. The alliance has donated more than $290,000 to date.
In other giving news . . .

- Dr. Gerald J. Brown (D.D.S. ’86) made a $75,000 pledge to the School of Dentistry at Virginia Commonwealth University. The gift will name a conference room in the school’s new W. Baxter Perkinson, Jr. Building.
- Dr. R. Lee Fletcher III (D.D.S. ’04) pledged $20,000 to support the Department of Periodontics in the VCU School of Dentistry. This gift is his second major commitment to the department in three years.
- Richard Newdick, former chair of the Department of Theatre in the VCU School of the Arts, established the Richard and William Newdick Theatre Scholarship with a $10,000 gift. Newdick, as well as his brother, William, is a longtime supporter of the School of the Arts.
- The Northrop Grumman Foundation donated $2,500 to the VCU University Career Center, which will support diverse and sustainable programs that create opportunities for innovation.

Fund supports future mathematics educators

The family of former Virginia Commonwealth University educator John A. Van de Walle, Ph.D., has created a professional development fund for future math teachers in his memory. Van de Walle was one of the most renowned mathematics educators in the country and author of “Elementary and Middle School Mathematics: Teaching Developmentally.”

Now in its seventh edition, this book continues to be the leading textbook and resource for teaching K-8 mathematics in the U.S. and Canada. The book became such a unique resource that many students reported back to him that it was the one textbook they kept.

The new fund will support professional development activities for students who demonstrate a strong commitment to mathematics education in the K-8 environment. The fund also will provide support to students to attend the regional Virginia Council of Teachers of Mathematics or National Council of Teachers of Mathematics conferences.

“This fund will have a special and profound impact on students in mathematics education at VCU,” said associate professor Ena Gross, Ph.D., who taught alongside Van de Walle for 24 years in the VCU Department of Teaching and Learning. “Creating the opportunity for a future teacher to travel to a regional or national conference to network and be inspired by others devoted to mathematics education can be career-changing.”

Van de Walle spent the majority of his career at the VCU School of Education where for 30 years he taught mathematics education to pre-service and in-service teachers.

Van de Walle also served as an active member of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and sat on its board of directors from 1998-2001. He retired from VCU in 2002, assuming the title professor emeritus, and continued to consult school divisions in the U.S. and Canada until his death in 2006.

To learn how to start an endowed fund to help support students in need in the School of Education, contact Magnus H. Johnsson, executive director of external relations and development, at (804) 827-1363 or johnssonm@vcu.edu.

$1.2 million gift supports Rice Center building

Longtime benefactor Inger Rice made a $1.2 million gift in recognition of the start of Dr. Michael Rao’s tenure as Virginia Commonwealth University president. The gift supports initiatives at the VCU Inger and Walter Rice Center for Environmental Life Sciences in Charles City County, Va.

“Mrs. Rice’s ongoing generosity of the VCU Rice Center exemplifies her commitment to the environment, education and future of our community and beyond,” said Dr. Rao. “I am thankful to Mrs. Rice for her magnanimous generosity and dedication to excellence, and I am confident that important work will continue to be accomplished at the center.”

The new Inger Rice Endowment Fund will provide funds to maintain the Walter L. Rice Education Building, the first LEED platinum building in Virginia — the highest sustainability rating possible — as well as grounds and roads at the property. Rice donated $2 million for construction of the education building in 2007.

“I am so pleased with the development of both facilities and programs at the center that I wanted to create a significant endowment for the Walter Rice Education Building,” Rice said. “It has always been important to me to show support and encourage others to join in. It will take all of us working together to positively impact the environment. I cannot think of a more important legacy. That is why I chose to make this gift during my lifetime so I could see its effect on the Rice Center and its impact on the environment.”

The VCU Rice Center was created from an ecology-rich, 343-acre parcel of land that Rice donated to VCU in 2000. VCU Life Sciences uses the property for research, education and outreach activities.

46-day bike ride raises $20,000 for Massey

On June 1, second-year medical student Charley Nottingham set out from Oregon to ride his bicycle across the U.S. to raise awareness and funds for the James D. Popp Student Research Fund at the Virginia Commonwealth University Massey Cancer Center.

The fund was created to honor Dr. Jim Popp (M.D. ’88), who died of cancer in the summer of 2007.

This three-part effort raised nearly $20,000 for the fund and will support a first-year medical student hoping to pursue cancer research during summer break, as Popp did.

Money was raised through donations in support of the 4,001-mile, 46-day trip; a welcome-back party, complete with bagpipes, barbecue and a silent auction; and a 75-mile “Rally Finale,” where 50 other cyclists joined Nottingham for his final leg to Yorktown, Va., and secured pledges as well.

“My favorite parts of the ride were the interactions I had with both total strangers and people I knew,” Nottingham said.

One of those encounters was in Keystone, Colo., where he met up with anatomy and neurobiology professor George Leichnetz, Ph.D., and his wife, Athalie. It was with wonderful meals from Athalie Leichnetz under his belt that Nottingham tackled the Hoosier Pass on June 20. At 11,539 feet, the Hoosier was the highest peak he would climb on his journey.
Donated white coats symbolize spirit of giving

Alumni donated about 10 percent of the white coats donned by the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Pharmacy’s Class of 2013 during the school’s annual White Coat Ceremony. The ceremony took place in August at the Greater Richmond Convention Center.

An annual White Coat Ceremony is a tradition at many health professions schools, marking the beginning of a student’s health education. The white coat has great responsibility attached to it.

Thanks to the following individuals who donated white coats for this year’s ceremony: Phillip Ball (Pharm.D. ‘03), Kevin Bluxome (Pharm.D. ‘05), Suparna Das Choudhuri (M.S. ‘05), Brandon Jennings (Pharm.D. ‘06), Kelli Jennings (Pharm.D. ‘06), Robert McClelland (Pharm.D. ‘02), Brian Miller (Pharm.D. ‘04), Kalpesh Patel (Pharm.D. ‘03), Nagesh Pulicherla (Ph.D. ‘08), Amy Jernigan Riggs (Pharm.D. ‘02), Karen Rymers (Pharm.D. ‘06) and Katie Underhill (Pharm.D. ‘06).

“This ceremony defines the role of the white coat in a public forum. … You must adhere to the highest standards. Remember, you’re being prepared for a career in pharmacy, not a job in pharmacy,” said Victor Yanchick, Ph.D., dean of the VCU School of Pharmacy, at the ceremony.

While donning the white coat is a symbol of students beginning to grow and mature, he said, the coat isn’t magic, nor should it be considered a bulletproof vest.

“Your professionalism will be challenged continually in your career,” Yanchick said. Beginning to learn how to handle that now “will help you grow into that coat as those have before you.”

Demographically, the School of Pharmacy’s Class of 2013 is 70 percent female and 43 percent minority. The age range is 21 to 38 with 92 percent of the class coming to VCU with a degree and 74 percent of those students having graduated from a Virginia college or university.

Corporations provided the rest of the coats and sponsored the event.

Pharmacy school dean hosts alumni reception

Victor Yanchick, Ph.D., dean of Virginia Commonwealth University’s School of Pharmacy, hosted a reception for alumni and students at the Virginia Pharmacists Association annual meeting in August. More than 80 alumni, faculty and students took a break from the busy meeting schedule to join Yanchick for cocktails at The Cavalier Hotel in Virginia Beach.

VCU Libraries celebrates its 2 millionth volume

The VCU Libraries recently celebrated a milestone in its history with the addition of the 2 millionth volume to its collection.

Virginia Commonwealth University donors, alumni, students and staff attended the Oct. 2 ceremony at James Branch Cabell Library on the Monroe Park Campus. The event was simulcast at the Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences on the MCV Campus.

Speakers included VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D.; Stephen Gottfredson, Ph.D., VCU provost and vice president of academic affairs; and John Ulmschneider, university librarian. Gordon McDougall, VCU’s assistant vice president for alumni relations, presented a resolution from the VCU Alumni Association and the MCV Alumni Association of VCU in honor of the occasion.

The 2 millionth volume is Marvel Comics’ “Amazing Spider-Man, #583” featuring President Barack Obama.

In just 16 years, the VCU Libraries’ collection, including books, journals, media and electronic resources, has doubled in size. Many of the collection purchases are made possible thanks to the generosity of donors. VCU Libraries’ donors have established 25 library endowments, which enhance the collection purchases for VCU Libraries. Such endowments are key to enriching collections with materials specifically tailored to the unique programs and history of VCU.

Donors recently created the Francis M. Foster African American History Endowment Fund to sustain and expand the popular Black History Month programs sponsored by the VCU Libraries, as well as to expand library collections in local and regional black history. This fund was established in honor of Dr. Francis M. Foster Sr. (1921-2008), a renowned historian of Jackson Ward and a respected central Virginia community member. Foster operated a successful dental practice in Jackson Ward for more than 40 years and was professor emeritus in the VCU School of Dentistry.

For more information about making gifts to the VCU Libraries, contact Kimberly Separ, director of development, at (804) 827-1163 or ksep@vcu.edu.

Engineering seniors make their mark with gift

The School of Engineering’s Class of 2009 set a new record in senior class giving for the school, raising more than $1,700.

More than 45 percent of the class participated in the Senior Class Campaign, which supports a student emergency endowment.

“The Senior Class Campaign enables students like me, who may not have much of a financial safety net, to know that they’ve got help should something drastic arise,” said Skylar Roebeck, a senior computer engineering student. “This campaign further strengthens the bonds of friendship and companionship that are already present in the School of Engineering.”

To make a gift to the School of Engineering, contact Naomi Crown, director of annual giving and alumni relations, at (804) 828-2909 or npcrown@vcu.edu.