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Cover photo: VCU breaks ground on a new, $20 million building for the VCU School of Dentistry. From left: Gus Vlahos (D.D.S. ’81/D), president of the Virginia Dental Association; Ronald Hunt, dean of the VCU School of Dentistry; Eugene P. Trani, Ph.D., VCU president; W. Baxter Perkinson Jr. (D.D.S. ’70/D), VCU School of Dentistry alumnus; and Sheldon Retchin, vice president for health sciences and CEO of VCU Health System.

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VCU breaks ground for third dental school building

In the late 1950s, 12-year-old Baxter Perkinson lived at Semmes Avenue and Porter Street, a then not-so-good area of Richmond, Va.

Once a week, he'd stand at the corner and wait for the crosstown bus. For his 5-cent fare, the bus would transport him to another world — a world that he had never seen before, a world where dental health and education were valued and important.

At the School of Dentistry clinic, Perkinson would hand over another 50 cents, earned by delivering newspapers, and have a cavity fixed. He had one in every tooth.

Those years spent taking the bus to have dental students use his mouth as a training ground left Perkinson with much more than a pretty smile. He found a career; a passion that has served him very well over the course of his adulthood, said Perkinson, who earned his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from the school in 1970.

“There hasn't been a year that has gone by since I was 12 that I haven't been a part of the School of Dentistry,” he said in late October as ground was broken for the W. Baxter Perkinson, Jr. Building at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry. “It's hard to say where I stop and VCU starts.”

Last year, Perkinson, his wife, Elaine, and their four children donated $2.5 million — the largest private gift in the school's 113-year history — as an unrestricted gift. Because of Perkinson's many contributions to VCU, the Board of Visitors voted to name the third School of Dentistry building in his honor. Perkinson, who is vice president of the VCU Health System Authority, has served twice as rector of the VCU Board of Visitors, as a member of the School of Dentistry's Advisory Board and as a member of the MCV Foundation Board of Trustees.

He and his family have provided other significant financial support for the dental school, student-athlete scholarships, the VCU Inger and Walter Rice Center for Environmental Life Sciences and the VCU School of Nursing.

In 2006, leaders from VCU and the Virginia Dental Association teamed up to secure $9.15 million from the Virginia General Assembly for the construction of the $20 million, 55,000-square-foot building situated at the corner of Leigh and 11th streets.

Legislators, said VCU President Eugene P. Trani, Ph.D., recognized that a segment of Virginia's population does not have adequate access to care, which ultimately burdens communities that are dependent on a healthy work force and adversely impacts the state's economy.

see Dental school building, continued on Page 5
Adam Schwarz always dreamed of following in his father’s footsteps, and that meant earning his medical degree from the School of Medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University, his father’s alma mater.

“I always secretly hope to be half as great a doctor as my father,” he said. Now, he is well on his way.

Adam, the son of Dr. Maurice C. Schwarz (M.D. ’73/M) and Jane S. Schwarz (B.S. ’71/SW), entered the School of Medicine in 2006 and was the first recipient of the MCV Alumni Association of VCU Legacy Scholarship.

“The debt of medical school can be overwhelming. This scholarship has enabled me to concentrate more on glomerular filtration rates and less on interest rates,” he said. “My family and I are grateful for the alumni association’s generosity.”

Last year, the MCV Alumni Association of VCU and the VCU Alumni Association were looking for a way to recognize the legacy alumni bring to the university when one or more of their children or grandchildren enroll at VCU. Association board members thought creating a Legacy Scholarship program would be the perfect opportunity to offer a special benefit to dues-paying association members.

“It is important so for our alumni associations to award scholarships as a way to give back and to provide opportunity, to give back to those who have been a part of the university experience and to provide opportunities to bright and talented individuals who need financial assistance to make their education possible,” said Kimberly F. Taylor, Ph.D. (B.G.S. ’89/H&S; M.S. ’87/AHP), an assistant professor in the School of Allied Health Professions’ Department of Gerontology and chairman of the MCVAA’s Scholarship Committee.

The Legacy Scholarships are awarded to freshman children or grandchildren of dues-paying members of the alumni associations.

In addition to Schwarz, Richard Patrick Proffitt, a 15-year-old freshman in the School of Engineering, received an inaugural Legacy Scholarship in 2007.

VCU Alumni Association President Dan Massey (B.S. ’92/B) sees the Legacy Scholarship program as a vital component to the future success of the association.

“Awarding Legacy Scholarships helps the VCUAA meet a core objective by creating lifelong connections with students as they become alumni. This scholarship program supports students financially, supports the university in attracting and retaining top students and helps to grow the influence and impact of the VCU alumni community,” he said.

This program, however, is just one of many scholarship opportunities funded by the alumni associations.

- The VCUAA provides an endowed scholarship for students in the VCU Honors College.
- The African-American Alumni Council sponsors a merit scholarship for freshmen, a leadership scholarship for upperclassmen and an executive scholarship for upperclassmen or graduate students based on achievement, leadership abilities and contributions to the community.
- The MCVAA provides $1,000 awards to outstanding students in each of the following seven academic programs on the MCV Campus: allied health, basic health (Ph.D. program within the School of Medicine), dentistry, dental hygiene, medicine, nursing and pharmacy.

see Legacy scholarships, continued on Page 5
Dental school building, continued from Page 3

As the only dental school in the state, said Dean Ron Hunt, the school has always focused on serving Virginians.

“To meet the current and future oral-health needs of this commonwealth, however, we needed more space,” he said. “We needed more space for expanded enrollment to help meet Virginia’s dental labor-force needs — more dentists and more dental hygienists. We needed more space for expanded patient care to help meet the needs of dentally underserved Virginians.”

President of the Virginia Dental Association Dr. Gus Vlahos (D.D.S. ’81/D) knows firsthand the difficulties facing patients and dentists in underserved areas. He practices in Pulaski County, Va., where he grew up.

“After finishing dental school here in Richmond, I returned home to start my practice,” he said. “I quickly found out that numbers do matter. According to statistics by the state, my county needs five more general practitioners and two specialists.

“The good news is that I am as busy as I care to be. The bad news is that there are people who can’t be served either for financial reasons or simply because they can’t get an appointment.”

The new facility, which also offers expanded research space and new opportunities to educate Ph.D. students, will allow the school to recruit and train an additional 10 dentists a year from rural Virginia in hopes that they will return to those underserved areas to practice. In addition, the undergraduate dental hygiene class will grow from 20 students to 40 per year, Hunt said.

Perkinson dreams about improving patients’ lives: “To me, this is about better access to care for people like the boy I was.”

For more information about making a gift to the School of Dentistry, contact Ed Kardos, senior director of advancement, at (804) 828-0324 or egkardos@vcu.edu.

Legacy scholarships, continued from Page 4

• The MCVAA offers two $1,000 books-and-supplies scholarships annually to participants of the acceleration program, which is one of several initiatives designed to recruit and retain minorities and educationally or economically disadvantaged students interested in careers in health care. After completing their studies on the Monroe Park Campus and upon acceptance into a program on the MCV Campus, students are eligible to apply.

“Without the support of our alumni associations, we would not be able to provide scholarships and support programs that offer educational assistance to current students,” said Gordon McDougall, assistant vice president for University Alumni Relations. “We are fortunate to have such involved and generous alumni.”

For information about joining the alumni associations or donating to one of their scholarship funds, visit www.vcu-mcvalumni.org.
Center researches the benefits of animal bond

When Tiger the poodle died, he had lived a long and happy life. But his human companion, William Balaban, wasn’t prepared for the impact his dog’s death would have on him.

“I stayed in bed for two weeks watching TV. Whenever a dog food commercial would come on, the tears would come,” Balaban said during an early December visit to Virginia Commonwealth University’s MCV Campus. “After a while, my friends said, ‘It was only a dog.’ Then my family said, ‘Come on!’”

Finally, he had a revelation. He called the Southern California Veterinary Association and asked how to establish a scholarship. Thirty minutes later, he had a call from the University of California, Davis. The scholarship was set, he showered, got dressed and started to function normally.

“I was totally cured,” he said.

That was the start of an almost-three-decade push to encourage more research about the medical benefits of human-animal interaction.

The spring before the scholarship ceremony, UC Davis officials assumed the new fund would be called the William Balaban Scholarship. Instead, Balaban asked meekly, “Could I name it after my dog?”

The Tiger Memorial Scholarship became the first student-aid fund at the UC Davis vet school named for an animal. In May 2007, Balaban traveled from his new home in Roanoke, Va. — “It has everything I need to be happy, the St. Francis Service Dogs and the Virginia Tech vet school” — to California to meet the 30th recipient of Tiger's scholarship.

After his career as a television producer/director came to an end, Balaban began to pursue his second calling. He became a consultant with the Delta Society, the leading international resource for the human-animal bond. He volunteered at the UC Davis vet school, giving lectures on topics such as “What a client wants” and “Assistance animal medicine” and started to amass an amazing collection of 1,500 tapes and DVDs showing animals in the media, as part of a research project. He plans to donate the collection to VCU’s Center for Human-Animal Interaction upon his death.

Today, Balaban is still a huge believer in research and the power of innovation. Since his first gift, he has directed money, time, ideas and advice toward many organizations in hopes of encouraging progression in the study of the human-animal bond.

About two years ago, a mutual colleague in the field introduced Balaban to Sandra B. Barker, Ph.D., the director of VCU’s Center for Human-Animal Interaction.

The center, part of the VCU School of Medicine, was created in 2001 to enhance patient well-being through pet visitation, to provide students with educational opportunities and to conduct research on the health benefits of human-animal interaction. Recent center studies tested the influence of animal interaction on human stress hormones and recorded humans’ brain waves when interacting with therapy dogs.

That type of research is what Balaban hopes to foster.

“This field has not progressed as far as I think it should have,” he said. “Giant half-steps don’t cut it. We need to find people who are willing to pursue original research. There are so many areas that haven’t been researched, and Sandy is starting to investigate some of those areas. On TV, I had over 100 ‘firsts’ — some were ludicrous, but

✫ see Animal bond, continued on Page 7
On the 22nd annual National Philanthropy Day, Nov. 15, 2007, the Association of Fundraising Professionals Central Virginia Chapter recognized the “great contributions that philanthropists have made in our lives, our communities, our nation and our world.” Two couples nominated by Virginia Commonwealth University were honored at the ceremony.

The Pauley Family Foundation, led by Dorothy and Stanley Pauley, earned the Foundation Philanthropist of the Year award.

The Pauleys’ philanthropic philosophy: “Education, medicine and the arts are what this community is about. We look for projects that meet a need, consider the timing and give a gift that makes sense.”

Dianne and C. Kenneth Wright were recognized as Individual Philanthropists of the Year.

“We support those institutions and causes with which we have a personal connection,” said Mr. Wright. “At 82, it feels good to still have something to offer.”

Reilly, who visits patients as part of the Dogs on Call program, shares a smile with a nurse at the VCU Medical Center.

Animal bond, continued from Page 6

they were firsts. I’m trying to do the same thing here, to get people to do new things.”

For example, Balaban hopes to work on a project to study the impact of pets in the workplace with Randy Barker, Ph.D. He is a professor of management in the School of Business, a member of the Center for Human-Animal Interaction’s executive committee and Sandra Barker’s husband and frequent research collaborator. Balaban and Randy Barker have also discussed the innovative idea of designing a full-service veterinary facility situated among an array of businesses where employees could drop their pets off for day care or medical care and have the opportunity to visit throughout their workday.

Balaban thinks the field is ripe and ready for exploration. Barker and others like her, he said, need the support of their universities and the public, who ultimately would benefit from this work.

“Original master’s thesis studies completed in the 1980s are still being cited in today’s journals,” he said. “That’s why this center can come up with stuff to amaze people.”

To make a gift or to learn more about VCU’s Center for Human-Animal Interaction, contact Director Sandra B. Barker, Ph.D., at (804) 827-PAWS (827-7297) or sharker@mch-vcu.edu.

Gifts also can be made online at www.medschool.vcu.edu/alumni/giveonline.
With scholarships, Hardy helps others succeed

If students want to advance in either the business or the private sector, earning a master’s degree is key, said community leader and Dominion executive Eva Teig Hardy, who ranked No. 52 on Style Weekly’s 2007 “Power List.”

That’s why in June 2007, Hardy made gifts to Virginia Commonwealth University to endow two renewable scholarships.

The first scholarship is available for a student seeking a Master of Public Administration degree through the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs in the College of Humanities and Sciences. The second is available for a student seeking a Master of Business Administration degree through the School of Business.

Hardy chose to endow these scholarships, she said, because of her own successes in the public and private sectors.

“If think there’s never enough state funding, and it has to be augmented by private, philanthropic donations,” she said. “I think that if you really want a school to achieve, you have to help as much as you can, either through volunteering on a board, giving your own personal dollars for scholarships or both.”

Hardy exemplifies the role of a community leader, said Robert D. Holsworth, Ph.D., dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences, because of her dedication to the welfare of Virginia and its citizens.

“As a local government leader, as a [state] Cabinet secretary and as an informal adviser to dozens of leaders, she has worked tirelessly to make Virginia a better place,” Holsworth said.

Hardy, executive vice president of External Affairs and Corporate Communications at Dominion, spent 17 years in the public sector, first as an urban planner in Portsmouth, Va., and then serving as secretary of health and human services during the administration of Gov. Gerald L. Baliles.

Hardy’s relationship with VCU dates back more than 15 years. She served on VCU’s Board of Visitors and the School of Engineering Foundation board during the ’90s — a decade marked by VCU’s expansion and the university’s revitalization of Broad Street. She is also a founding trustee for the School of Business Foundation Board of Trustees.

“Being on the board gives you a very good perspective on what’s going on in the university down to the level of detail. I was very proud to be on the board when plans for the [university’s] expansions were being made,” Hardy said. “My work with the business school foundation … and getting to know some of the professors, like Dr. Holsworth, have really given me a personal involvement.”

Hardy is an exemplary role model for VCU students, Holsworth said, because of her practical know-how, intelligence and compassion.

“Ms. Hardy has also served as a mentor to hundreds of young individuals making their way in both the public and the private sector. She has long been a model for how citizens can contribute to the welfare of their communities,” Holsworth said. “The Wilder School and the College of Humanities and Sciences are honored to have her support and will work to educate students who exhibit the knowledge and the values exemplified by Eva Teig Hardy.”

For more information about how to donate, contact Douglas Knapp, School of Business director of development and alumni affairs, at dgknapp@vcu.edu, or Lois Badey, director of development for the College of Humanities and Sciences, at labadey@vcu.edu.

– Rebecca Landau is a contributing writer for “The Power of Personal Philanthropy.”
New staff members join VCU advancement team

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For a complete listing of VCU Advancement staff, visit www.advancement.vcu.edu.
Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology professor Louis S. Harris, Ph.D., and his wife, Ruth, have established the Ruth Harris Fellowship/Professorship, which is the first faculty-support endowment in the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Education.

The Harrises have been longtime supporters of VCU, previously funding two professorships, a scholarship and a student-support endowment, among other initiatives.

The Ruth Harris Fellowship/Professorship will allow doctoral students to receive training in the area of reading/language disabilities with a focus on dyslexia and to develop instructional strategies to accommodate the learning of children and adolescents with this lifelong disability. Mrs. Harris is a dyslexia expert.

“This gift is the first of its kind for the School of Education, and we are honored to be the recipient of the Harrises’ wonderful philanthropy,” said Dean Beverly J. Warren. “We pledge to work to accomplish the primary goal of preparing more teachers who have an understanding of the learning needs of children with dyslexia and other reading language disabilities in our public schools.”

Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center’s Evans-Haynes Burn Center has received several significant gifts over the past year.

In June, FedEx donated $50,000 to support the burn center. The international shipping giant made the gift after local FedEx employee Eddie Heussler was severely burned while trying to save a woman from a burning house he encountered on his regular delivery route. After undergoing extensive treatment at the Evans-Haynes Burn Center, Heussler has now fully recovered from his burns.

In addition, the Rotary Club of South Richmond Foundation donated $28,000 to the unit, and Gerdau Ameristeel, formerly Chaparral Steel Co. in Petersburg, Va., raised almost $14,000 through a golf tournament. The Gerdau Ameristleel gift will be used for different educational programs and will help establish an endowment for Tutie’s Kids, a program dedicated to a former burn unit nurse that will allow the unit to provide various supplies, clothing, toys and other items for children.

In 2008, the Evans-Haynes Burn Center will move into the new Critical Care Hospital, increasing the number of intensive-care beds from 12 to 16. The unit will feature the latest technology for the treatment and reconstruction of burns.

“Burn units are actually decreasing across the country,” said Dr. Andrea Pozez, director of the burn center and professor and chair of the VCU Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. “I think it is wise that we are increasing the size of our unit. It is important to offer the people of Virginia our preparedness for potentially unforeseen catastrophes.”
Ginder marks 10 years at Massey Cancer Center

This year’s annual Celebrate Massey reception not only honored the more than 300 supporters who gathered at the Country Club of Virginia, but also recognized Dr. Gordon Ginder’s 10th anniversary as director of the VCU Massey Cancer Center. Several heartfelt tributes to Ginder, followed by a touching slide show, helped make a truly memorable evening.

Pink Carpet Premiere promotes cancer research

At the Oct. 12, 2007, Southeast premiere of the “The Breast Cancer Diaries,” an award-winning documentary about a young woman and her family’s poignant and uplifting journey through cancer, more than 300 guests crowded into the IMAX Dome at the Science Museum of Virginia. “The Richmond Diaries,” a 10-minute segment featuring local women (and men) who have their own cancer story to share, also was shown.

Community volunteer and photographer Patricia Lyons and her planning committee worked to create a Hollywood-inspired Pink Carpet Premiere event. More than $80,000 was raised to support cancer research at VCU’s Massey Cancer Center.

The filmmaker, Linda Pattillo, is a former ABC News and CNN producer. She and the subject of “The Breast Cancer Diaries,” Ann Murray Paige, also formerly worked for Channel 6 in Richmond.
Grateful scholarship students thank their donors

To Samuel Jordan, a student in the School of Allied Health Professions’ Health Administration program, receiving the HCA Scholarship for Emerging Healthcare Leaders means he will have the chance to enhance the lives of others — “something I had not thought one could experience at work.”

Jordan was just one of 93 scholarship winners and 77 donors honored during the third annual MCV Campus Endowed Scholarship Brunch, held Oct. 28, 2007, at The Jefferson Hotel.

MCV Foundation President Bill Kotti told the crowd that, through the generosity of private donors, the foundation distributed more than $1 million in scholarships during the 2007-08 academic year.

As part of the ninth annual Monroe Park Campus Endowed Scholarship and Professorship Dinner, held Nov. 15, 2007, at the Commonwealth Club, more than 100 scholarship students thanked 150 donors and guests for their generosity in helping them to earn a college degree. Faculty members who hold professorships and chairs also were honored.

The dinner was co-sponsored by the School of Business Foundation, the School of Engineering Foundation and the VCU Foundation. Collectively, these three foundations hold $262 million in assets, including 20 chairs and professorships and 367 endowed scholarships.

(From left) Speakers Mary Hill, recipient of the Unity Scholarship in the School of Nursing, donor Harry Grandis and Samuel Jordan, recipient of the HCA Scholarship for Emerging Healthcare Leaders, gather after the MCV Campus Endowed Scholarship Brunch.
Pollak Society enjoys Markels’ art collection

The Pollak Society, the leadership donor group of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, celebrated at a November 2007 party at the home of longtime VCU friends and supporters Kathie and Steve Markel.

The Markels welcomed 75 guests, who were invited to browse the home’s wonderful collection of modern and contemporary art, much of it created by Richmond artists and VCU alumni. At the event, VCU President Eugene P. Trani, Ph.D., announced plans for a preliminary campaign to build an on-campus gallery for contemporary and modern art.

The Pollak Society, named for Theresa Pollak who founded the School of the Arts, honors donors who have given at least $1,000 annually to the School of the Arts. Members are treated to a variety of behind-the-scenes arts shows and other special events.

Youth center opens its doors in a grand fashion

More than 150 guests celebrated the Sept. 28, 2007, grand opening of the Mary and Frances Youth Center.

The center was funded through a personal gift from Michael Fraizer, chairman and CEO of Genworth Financial Inc., and his wife, Elizabeth, and named in honor of their mothers.

At the start of the event, Lobs & Lessons children worked with guests to create a paper chain. Following remarks by VCU President Eugene P. Trani, Ph.D., the Fraizers, Richmond Mayor L. Douglas Wilder and former tennis star and youth educator Junius Chatman, the youths asked the Fraizers to add their links to complete the chain, symbolizing how the center is bringing together the community.

In addition, representatives of the ECMC Foundation, which supports the CollegePlace program, gave $33,000 to Lobs & Lessons after hearing about its mission and accomplishments.

The Mary and Frances Youth Center, located at the corner of Linden and Cary streets on VCU’s Monroe Park Campus, houses the Lobs & Lessons program, which teaches life skills lessons through tennis to at-risk youth; the CollegePlace, which helps high-schoolers with financial-aid and college entrance applications; and Especially for Nonprofit classes, where employees of area nonprofit groups can receive training and information.

To help create that atmosphere, gold stars bearing guests’ names lined the gallery floors, and School of Dentistry Dean Ron Hunt encouraged the nearly 200 attendees to complete their star-quality attire by opening the boxes at their tables and donning the outrageous sunglasses inside.

Throughout the evening, dental and dental hygiene students dazzled alumni and friends with music, dance and comedy performances. During the annual dinner, the school honors and thanks its donors while providing them with an update about the progress on campus.

Milan Simanek, a first-year student in the School of Dentistry, soaks up the Hollywood atmosphere with his mother, Radomira Simankova. His father, Dr. Charles D. Kirksey, graduated from the school in 1973.

The Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine has kicked off a $10 million campaign to establish a Parkinson’s Disease & Movement Disorders Multidisciplinary Clinic. A reception at the Commonwealth Club in October 2007 was one of a series of events that have introduced the Richmond community to the medical school’s plans for a comprehensive center where movement disorders can be addressed through research and treatment.

On hand were FitzGerald and Margaret (B.S. ’78/H&S) Bemiss, whose $1 million gift to endow a chair in neurodegenerative diseases has jump-started the effort. The family’s vision is for the holder of the Bemiss Chair to lead a team of researchers who will translate basic science advances to new treatments.

At the dinner, faculty from the Department of Neurology shared information on new developments in the field with about 60 attendees. Guests also heard from Dean Jerome Strauss III, M.D., Ph.D., about the need for a comprehensive center and his commitment to double leadership gifts to the center by matching them dollar-for-dollar. Additional private gifts will allow for the recruitment of more researchers as well as endowing laboratories, providing flexible funds to support innovative studies or creating a perpetual resource for equipment purchases.

School of Medicine Dean Dr. Jerome Strauss (left) meets with honorees FitzGerald and Margaret Bemiss and their son Samuel. The Bemiss family’s gift of $1 million has created an endowed chair that will be used to recruit a nationally recognized researcher who will lead a center where scientific advances are translated to patient care.

The Power of Personal Philanthropy

School, donors partner for Parkinson’s research

Dr. Alan Towne and his wife, Betsy (M.P.H. ’07/AHP), talk with Dr. Charlie Bryan, president and CEO of the Virginia Historical Society, and Cathy Strauss. Bryan is leading the effort to establish the Parkinson’s Disease & Movement Disorders Multidisciplinary Clinic.
Longest earns Qimonda engineering professorship

Worth Longest, Ph.D., was formally installed as the Qimonda Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering in November 2007. Longest joined the faculty in the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Engineering’s Department of Mechanical Engineering in 2004 and received a joint appointment as assistant professor in the VCU Department of Pharmaceutics in 2006.

Qimonda is a major supporter of the school, donating $2 million and directing $5 million in education grants from the commonwealth of Virginia for support of the company’s major expansion to the School of Engineering for scholarships, endowed professorships, curriculum development and other related needs of the microelectronics industry. Qimonda is also a major employer of the school’s students and graduates.

River cruise shows the James, Rice Center

In October 2007, about 100 friends of the Virginia Commonwealth University Inger and Walter Rice Center for Environmental Life Sciences enjoyed a sunset cruise down the James River. The three-hour Eagle Cruise left from Shirley Plantation, passing the VCU Rice Center and Berkeley and Westover plantations. Inger Rice, VCU Rector Tom Rosenthal, VCU Rice Center Board Chairman Randy Gordon and board members Bob Harman, Stuart Grattan, Fred Fisher, Harrison Tyler, Daniel Fort, Gilbert Smith and Ed Mitchell, among others, talked with student researchers who showcased their work and shared details of their projects. Representatives from area community organizations and corporations, including Smurfit Stone, James River Association and Philip Morris USA, as well as MeadWestvaco’s President Jim Buzzard, also took part in the event.

Currently, construction is under way at the 343-acre parcel of land that Inger Rice donated to VCU in 2000 on a “green” education building, illustrating how sustainable practices can be implemented. Scheduled to open this spring, this nearly 6,000-square-foot facility features a geothermal heating and cooling system, photovoltaic solar collectors, a state-of-the-science sewage disposal system and sustainable and recycled building materials. The building design also maximizes the use of daylight to reduce the need for artificial lighting.