

Dear colleagues,

I hope this message finds you well as we close out the Fall semester.

Earlier today, I had the opportunity to share my annual State of the Research address with VCU's Board of Visitors. During my remarks, I was proud to feature all that the VCU research enterprise has accomplished during this past year. I am pleased to report that this has been the best year for VCU Research and Innovation in our history.

Here are some highlights:

### **Record funding and international recognition**

In fiscal year 2024, for the first time, VCU [surpassed \\$500 million in sponsored research funding](#). The \$506 million milestone marks the sixth consecutive year of record funding and a 9% increase from the previous year. In addition, we have maintained our Top 50 ranking for research expenditures by public institutions.

A portion of VCU's sponsored funding was supported by the health sciences, with [19 departments and schools ranking in the Top 50 for public research funding](#) from the National Institutes of Health, the world's leading biomedical research supporter. In addition, the increase in sponsored funding was also led by important research being conducted on the Monroe Park Campus, led by our Top 20-ranked School of Education as well as other schools and colleges. Our research also resulted in 11 VCU faculty members ranking within the [global Top 50 of their respective fields](#), according to the 2024 Stanford Elsevier Top 2% of Scientists List.

### **Internal awards for external impact**

To further jump-start and support transdisciplinary research, the OVPRI funded more than 40 projects ranging from nearly \$10,000 to up to \$200,000 from internal funds that promote expansive exploration:

- The Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Fund facilitates and enhances the creation, production and dissemination of arts, humanities and social sciences research and creative activity. This year, the fund supported [10 projects](#) ranging from sculpture and swimwear to pediatric medical care and theater.
- The Breakthroughs Fund supports transdisciplinary teams to design unique, creative and innovative large-scale approaches to social grand challenges. It funded an additional [10 studies](#) focusing on issues ranging from reducing chronic pain in sickle cell disease patients to optimizing Black maternal health and identifying gaps in Virginia secondary education curriculums.
- The Quest Fund, aimed at affording all faculty an internal funding opportunity to support new, emerging or continuing research, supported [21 projects](#) ranging from developing therapies for cancer and opioid withdrawal symptoms to creating artificial wetlands for sewage treatment in urban settings.

In addition to these funding mechanisms, and the [Commercialization Fund](#) offered by the OVPRI, there were many other internal research funding opportunities provided by various schools and colleges, as well our research institutes centers on both our campuses that additionally contributed to the overall success and continued growth in our external sponsored funding.

In continuation of this ongoing commitment and support of our research enterprise, details of next year's internal research funding can be found on the [fund webpage](#).

### **Every Ram's a Researcher engages undergraduates**

This year, VCU launched [Every Ram's a Researcher](#), an initiative to expand transformative learning for undergraduate students. The program aims to equip all students with problem-solving skills, regardless of their major or career aspirations, by integrating research experiences into their General Education coursework.

In 2024, more than 5,500 undergraduate students and 2,250 graduate students engaged in research activity at the university.

These efforts were on full display during VCU Research Weeks 2024 as hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students presented findings during their [respective symposiums](#). The events underscored VCU's commitment to research experiences for students and the focus on interdisciplinary discovery that pushes the boundaries of knowledge.

### **Entrepreneurship powers VCU innovation**

Led by VCU [TechTransfer and Ventures](#), we were again [ranked in the Top 100 for utility patents among universities](#) by the National Academy of Inventors. VCU ranked 98th nationally, reflecting a continued commitment to advancing and commercializing faculty discoveries and inventions for public benefit and into the marketplace. The university also set a new record with 13 licences to startups.

In addition to advancing early-stage, innovative and commercializable research with the Commercialization Fund, in support of our faculty-led startups, TechTransfer and Ventures launched its first [Startup Accelerator program](#) to fast-track promising inventions born from university research. This initiative targets faculty entrepreneurs with commercially viable ideas by providing them with personalized coaching and business strategy development, culminating in a pitch competition with cash prizes and further assistance for the winners.

### **Building on VCU's rapidly-growing research enterprise**

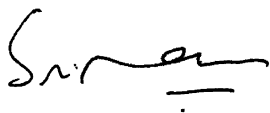
As our achievements of this past year illustrate, VCU is a nationally and globally recognized research powerhouse. The research that we are conducting at VCU is addressing society's grand challenges and lifting lives here in Richmond and across the country and the world. I am immensely proud and thankful to our faculty, postdocs, students, staff and everyone else who has engaged with research here at VCU.

With our new sponsored funding record and an increased commitment toward supporting targeted and impactful research projects, as well as a growing focus on research infrastructure, there has never been a better time to conduct research at VCU than right now.

Thank you for all that you do. I hope you have a wonderful winter break.

My best,

Sriram



P. Srirama Rao, Ph.D.,  
Vice President for Research and Innovation